REIFICATION IN THE WORKS OF EAST EUROPEAN JEWISH AMERICAN AUTHORS: ABRAHAM CAHAN, ANZIA YEZIERSKA AND EVA HOFFMAN

Merve Özman

Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of American Culture and Literature

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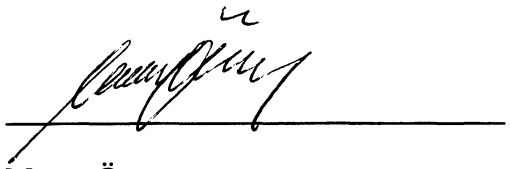

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ÖZET

ÖZMAN, Merve. "Doğu Avrupalı Amerikalı Yazarların Eserlerinde Şeyleşme: Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska ve Eva Hoffman," Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2009.

Göçmenlerin çoğu, Amerikan rüyasının peşine takılarak geldikleri ülkede aradıklarını bulamaz ve hayal kırıklığına uğrar. Bu durum göçmenlerin hayatının hemen her evresinde maruz kaldığı "şeyleşme" ile açıklanabilir. Genel bir tanıma göre, şeyleşme, "somut kavramların soyutlaştırılması" veya "soyut kavramların somutlaştırılması" anlamına gelir. Bu dönüşüm somut obje veya kişilerin ve soyut kavramların potansiyellerini, karakteristik özelliklerini ve anlamlarını sabitler, sınırlar. Şeyleşme göçmenlerin fiziksel potansiyelini kapitalist sisteme hizmet eden işçi gücüne, kimliklerini toplumca kabul edilmiş kimlik kalıplarına, konuştukları dildeki anlamları da sabit ve sınırlı anlamlara indirger. Bu anlamda, şeyleşme, göçmenlerin yeni ülkede karşılaştıkları sorunlara ve deneyimlerine ışık tutar. Göçmenler için Amerika'da maddi başarıyı elde etmenin yolu şeyleşmeyi içselleştirmekten geçer ve bu durum göçmenlerin Amerikan rüyası ile ilişkilendirdikleri diğer manevi beklentilerinin gerçekleşmesini sorunlu hale getirir.

Rüyalarını gerçekleştirmede diğer etnik gruplara göre başarılı sayılan Doğu Avrupalı Yahudiler bile şeyleşmenin olumsuz etkilerinden kaçınmayı başaramamış, maddi olanaklar konusunda bir ilerleme elde etseler bile, manevi olarak mutluluğu yakalayamamışlardır. Şüphesiz bunda Amerikan rüyasına yükledikleri anlamları şeyleştirmiş olmalarının etkisi büyüktür. Bu çalışmada şeyleşmenin göçmenler üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri, Yahudi Amerikalı yazarlardan Abraham Cahan'ın *The Rise of David Levinsky* (David Levinsky'nin Yükselişi), Anzia Yezierska'nın *Salome of the Tenements* (Varoşların Salome'si) ve Eva Hoffman'ın *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (Tercümede Kayboluş: Yeni Bir Dilde Yeni Bir Yaşam) başlıklı eserlerinde, "fiziksel," "kimliksel" ve "anlamsal" şeyleşme olmak üzere üç temel başlık altında incelenir. İncelenen eserlerin otobiyografik ve yarı-otobiyografik nitelikleri ve ele alınışlarındaki kronolojik sıralama, şeyleşmenin zaman içinde geçirdiği evrimi gözler önüne serer.

Anahtar Sözcükler: şeyleşme, fiziksel şeyleşme, kimliksel şeyleşme, anlamsal şeyleşme, Amerikan rüyası, göçmenler, Doğu Avrupalı Yahudiler.

ABSTRACT

ÖZMAN, Merve. "Reification in the Works of East European Jewish American Authors: Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, and Eva Hoffman," M.A. Thesis, Ankara, 2009.

Upon their arrival in America, many immigrants realize that the promises attributed to the American dream are false and the dream is no more than an illusion. This situation can be explained with the effects of reification on the lives of the immigrants. According to a general definition, reification "converts the concrete into abstract" and "concretizes the abstract." Such a transformation fixes and limits the potentials, characteristics, and meanings of both concrete beings and abstract concepts. Reification reduces the physical potentials of immigrants to serving in the capitalist system as laborers; it reduces their identities to the socially accepted patterns of identity and fixes meanings in the language they speak. Reification, in this sense, sheds light upon the immigrant experience in America. Material success in America is only possible through internalizing reification; however, reification also problematizes and challenges the actualization of the spiritual expectancies from the dream.

Even the East European Jews, who have gained a recognizably rapid success in comparison with other immigrants, could not avoid the negative effects of reification. Although successful in ensuring material possessions, East European Jews were not always able to attain spiritual fulfillment. The wrong interpretation of the American dream, due to the reified meanings attributed to it, plays a major role in this situation. This thesis will show the adverse effects of reification on immigrants under the subtitles of "physical reification," "reification of identity" and "semantic reification" through the works of Jewish American writers: Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky,* Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.* The partly-autobiographical nature and the chronological order of the literary works under analysis will help to present the evolution of the concept of reification in time.

Keywords: reification, physical reification, reification of identity, semantic reification, American dream, immigrants, East European Jews.

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INTRODUCTION

As birds were its only inhabitants then, Ellis Island, which was called "gull-island" by Indians in 1630s, is known today, ironically, as a historical place through which more than twenty five million immigrants from all over the world entered the United States. In 1891, the first immigration station was officially opened on the island and it went on processing immigrants until 1954 (*Ellis Island Foundation*). There have been four major waves of immigration in American history. The immigrants who came with the first wave (1700-1776) were mostly British pilgrims seeking a place to practice their religion. The second wave (1820-1870) brought about seven-and-a-half million immigrants especially from Great Britain and Ireland and Western Germany. The number of immigrants which made up the third major wave of immigration (1881-1920) was nearly twenty-three-and-a-half million. Among these immigrants there were Austro-Hungarians, Italians, East Europeans; mainly Russians. Immigration between the years 1920-1960, on the other hand, brought sixteen million people to the country and was composed of Central and South Americans, Mexicans and Carribeans who headed to the United States; and non-Europeans, namely Chinese and Japanese, who entered the United States not only from Ellis Island but from the southern and western borders as well.

In an America, where, in 2042, the white population of European descent is expected to be no longer the majority (BBC News), there are immigrants from various national, cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds, all of whom contributed to the making of today's America. As it is clear from the number of the immigrants who came to America, immigrants play a major role in American history, and thus have contributed to and received enormous attention in American literature. What brought all these immigrants to America was the hope for a better future for themselves and their families. They were under the spell of a common drive—"the American Dream"—one of the most discussed and indispensible subjects of American culture and literature.

The term "American Dream" has always been devoid of a common definition and its promises are claimed to be many. For some immigrants, it meant freedom, equality and

opportunities to lead a decent life, whereas others tended to ascribe all their needs, dreams and wishes to the dream, turning it rather into an illusion. Encountering the desired conditions was not always as easy as immigrants thought or wished. The *reified* quality of the American dream kept the immigrants from achieving their hopes to the fullest extent. R*eification* of the dream (coming from the word "res," which means "thing"), turned laborer immigrants into "machines" in a society where the rules of labor comply with capitalism. Yet, reification is not only applicable to the American dream. The immigrant workers are also transformed into purely rational "objects" and they feel obliged to fit in the socially determined patterns, in other words, to be assimilated for the sake of a *better* future. Consequently, they lose their individual values, such as their traditions, beliefs and native tongue. Some immigrants were more successful than others in terms of material gains due to their cultural, religious, social or political backgrounds. East European Jews, who came with the third wave immigrant group, seem to be one of those well-accomplished ethnic groups.

Like other immigrant groups, not all East European Jews managed to achieve their American dream, partly due to the existence of reification in each phase of their lives. This thesis will discuss the concept of *reification* under the titles of "physical reification," "reification of identity" and "semantic reification" in Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989) respectively. Such a study will show that reification has had its negative effects on all immigrants in America, including East European Jews, who have achieved their material ideals in an evidently more successful and rapid way in comparison with other immigrants from diverse ethnic groups. This study will consist of description, analysis and discussions of the East European Jewish community, the American dream, the concept of reification in related fields of study and the mentioned literary works.

The definition of the term "American Dream" has always been a matter of intellectual debate. According to Robert H. Fossum and John K. Roth, only few terms are defined so "loosely" (5). The term was used for the first time by James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*. For him, the American dream is a dream of opportunities for everyone without any discrimination, according to their talent and

success, to have a better, richer and fuller life. (214-215). According to the *Barnhart Dictionary of New English 1963 to 1972,* "American dream" refers to "a widely used catchphrase for the ideals of democracy, equality and freedom upon which the United States was founded." *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* of 1983, on the other hand defines the term as "an American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material success." Eventually, in the 1993 definition of *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*, the dream's constituents are reduced to merely material ones: "The U.S. ideal according to which equality of opportunity permits any American to aspire high attainment and material success." Immigrants, who came to America with great expectations, ascribed all their wishes and hopes to an idea which did not originally exist in their culture and transformed it into a fantasy that was at its best unreal. Interestingly, the core of what the American dream referred to was defined best by a popular song composer and singer, Bruce Springsteen. He describes the dream as nothing more than the idea that "everybody is going to have an opportunity and the chance to live a life with some decency and some dignity and chance for self-respect" (qtd. in Hochschild 16). The common point among these various definitions is their association with another characteristically American concept, individualism. The dream is a dream of the individual, rather than of the community.

Jürg P. Keller, in his book *The American Dream Gone Astray* (1995), traces back the origins of such a dream to the philosophers, historians or utopists who were looking for or dreaming of an "ideal world" centuries ago. America, the new world, turned out to be the place to which all these ideals could be projected (49). Joseph L. Daleiden, a statistician, economist, public policy analyst and demographer, lists the ideals that are attributed to the dream in his *The American Dream: Can It Survive the 21st Century?* (1999), among which he mentions "freedom to religious persecution; the opportunity to work one's own land; a chance for a fresh start; 'a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage;' the right to vote; equal opportunities and the chance to achieve fame, power and fortune" (2). All these attributes rest on certain grounds and assumptions. Peter Freese, a Professor of American Studies at Paderborn University, in his 1990 book, *America: Dream or Nightmare,* explains the facts that laid the ground for the American dream from social, religious and political points of view:

1- the mythic projection of America as a land of milk and honey and an El Dorado in which the Fountain of youth bubbled forth in a pastoral landscape.
2- the religious concept for America as the site of the New Jerusalem and a land in which Christ's second coming would establish a new paradise on earth.
3- the political promise of America as a country in which the tyrannical restraints of the Old World would be replaced by human equality, liberty and brotherhood. (91-92)

In addition to the mythic projection, religious background and political promises of the dream, Herbert Spencer's formula, according to which economic competition is dominated by the law of the survival of the fittest, encouraged the hope in people to be able to move from rags-to-riches (Hofstadter 45) and was taken as proof of the attainability of the dream. Freese considers the very idea born from Spencer's assumption as one of the most important constitutive elements of the American dream. He presents these elements under the titles of: the belief in the general attainability of success, the belief in progress, the belief in manifest destiny, the idea of continual challenge of new frontiers, the belief in the American form of government of the people, by the people and for the people as the sole guarantor of liberty and equality, the conviction expressed in the notion of the melting pot and its historical mutations from cultural pluralism to multi-ethnicity, the cult of newness, the glorification of youth, the belief in unhampered mobility and the chances for ever new beginnings (94-95).

As stated above, it has not been easy nor quite possible for everyone to achieve and attain the promises of the dream. Eventually, the dream disappointed many new comers. The major reason was probably that they:

> . . . expected all social problems to be solved. [They] expected business cycles, economic insecurity, poverty and racism to end. [They] expected almost limitless personal freedom and self fulfillment. For those who couldn't live life to its fullest (as a result of old age, disability or bad luck) [they] expected a generous social net to guarantee decent lives. [They] blurred the distinction between progress and perfection . . . [They] transformed American Dream into American Fantasy. (Samuelson xiii)

As a result, most immigrants left empty-handed at the end of their quest for the dream, whereas some others achieved material success without spiritual fulfillment. Alexis de

Tocqueville, in this sense, explains the wide existence of the rich-but-unhappies with the fact that "[they] never stop thinking of the good things they have not got. . . . They clutch everything but hold nothing fast and so lose grip as they hurry after some delight" (627).

The poor laborer immigrants do not have the means to support themselves or attain spiritual fulfillment. Moreover, the dream is used ideologically, to keep the workers producing as much as possible for the sake of the material gain of the wealthier class and for the advancement of American industry. The dream transforms the individual into a capitalist commodity whose only motivation is to work more in order to accommodate personal needs, which will turn him/her to be the factory hand of the employer who pays the most. Thus the worker is reduced to a commodity that could be bought and replaced anytime by a "homogenous" other. This is one of the results of "reification," but not the only outcome. Loss of personal, cultural, religious values and adopting new "given" ones, which are often related to the dominant or prejudiced points of view, are also among the negative results of reification.

Besides negative outcomes of reification for the individual, there are some positive incomes for the community, especially in the making of America. The promise of success, which is promised to be attainable only for those who work hard, caused immigrants to work constantly. Believing that their efforts would bring them the opportunity to realize their dreams, immigrants worked for the good of *their* country. They formed an incredible labor-power for America. As Freese suggests, the two qualities of the dream "the belief in individual success" and "the concomitant belief in societal progress" smoothed the way to the making of the newly founded nation (101). Having been the "victims" of an illusion, immigrants kept working but often failed to fulfill their American dreams, yet, the success of the following generations is partially their legacy. If it had not been for this "reified" dream, they might not have worked as hard as they did for the so-called promises of the dream. In order to clarify the difficulties immigrants faced, a more detailed examination of reification is necessary.

The Latin origin of the term reification is *res*, which can be translated into English in various ways such as "thing," "object," "matter," "concern," "affair," "business,"

"property" etc. To reify is thus "to turn something into a *res*" (Pitkin 264). Another widely accepted definition for the term is that, it "converts the concrete into abstract" and "concretizes the abstract" (Berger and Pullberg 208). Although the term is neutral in itself, it is often considered in terms of its negative effects. Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukács is the one who introduced this idea for the first time, using the terms "objective" and "subjective" to make the distinction between the two types of reification. He maintains that, in the process of reification,

> [o]bjectively a world of objects and relations between things spring into being. . . . Subjectively . . . a man's activity becomes estranged from itself, it turns into a commodity which must go its own way independently of man just like any other consumer article. (History 86)

A good example for Lukàcs's understanding of "objective reification" could be the American dream which is often identified with owning a large house with its lawn perfectly mown and a luxurious car in its garage. An example for the "subjective reification," on the other hand, is the situation of the immigrant laborers, who are considered as nothing but factory-hands, whose personal qualities, skills, emotions, are ignored as they are considered to be replaceable commodities which the system may discard or renew whenever necessary. Yet, both cases bring with them the same problem: "neither objectively nor in his relationship to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary he is a mechanical part incorporated in a mechanical system" (Lukács 89).

In Marxist approach, reification is often used together with the term alienation. Yet, each term applies to different situations although they are closely related with each other. Reification is "a social process more limited than alienation," and one that can be "subsumed under alienation" (Israel 269). Reification can be defined as the social result of alienation—an originally economic process—on individuals and the society. Some sociologists and psychologists consider alienation "to have a more social-psychological interpretation, with interpretations such as of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement and social isolation" (Krahn and Lowe, 358). In this sense, too, reification of the individuals can be considered to be a result of alienation.

References to the definitions of the two terms might be useful, at this stage, to demonstrate the points where the two terms differ from each other.

According to Marx, alienation is a consequence of private ownership, the societal division of labor and the market relationships. All these elements of the capitalist world dominates social relations and thus labor is routinized, the product of labor turns out to be something "alien to" and "independent of" the laborer. Marx defines this process as alienation ("Estranged Labor").

As for sociologists, Berger and Pullberg, reification is "objectification in an alienated mode" (201).[1] While objectification is an anthropologically necessary process, as Berger and Pullberg suggest, it turns out to be harmful for the individual when it is done in an alienated mode (201). Originally, the term reification harbors the idea of "rationalism," in addition to the "commodity fetishism" which alienation and reification have in common (Arato 195).

George Ritzer numbers the results of Marx's understanding of alienation of *objects*, *processes* and *self*: 1) the assignation of detail work to workers, 2) separation of mental and manual labour 3) monotony of repeated tasks, 4) labour which is not creative but merely concerned with possession (60). When the results of the sociological understanding of alienation—results such as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement and social isolation—are considered; failure, aimlessness in life, loss of individual values, decline of interpersonal relationships and thus suffering from loneliness among the crowds could be added to these results. Reification of objects, processes and self, however, create additional results which is the point of this thesis. Alienation alone does not explain all the mentioned outcomes. As consequences of reification, [ideological] meanings are assigned to objects according to their exchange values. Passing judgements is controlled by fixing of several points of view into one single point, while all other possibilities are put aside, not necessarily but

[1] See page 10 for Marx's understanding of "objectification." Berger and Pullberg take "objectification" as a different process than that of Marx. According to them, objectification is made by people "by means of language," giving objects, concepts or groups "a 'name' that is 'known' to [them] from then on and that [they] can communicate to others" (200), which is an example of the case of semantic reification in this thesis.

generally due to the reign of the dominant ideology. Roles and identities of individuals are made into things by fixing them through language. And, thus, potentials of individuals are reduced to those of mere laborers or assimilated immigrants which aids the dominant ideology in the society.

In the field of sociology, Lukács's objective reification is mostly ignored. Sociologists are, rather, in favor of a certain concept called "reification of identity" or "of the total self." They tend to define this concept with a state of mind that yields to "excessive identification of a person with a typical role or a stereotypical category" (Pitkin 272) which includes stereotypification - as in anti-Semitism - and inauthenticity—referring to the denial of one's options and of responsibility in one's actions. As a consequence of the stereotypification and the rejection of one's options, people begin to conceive actions as "roles" and themselves as the "embodiment of these roles;" and finally role-playing "precedes" or even "replaces" existence: The individuals adopt a "false consciousness," which makes them ready to believe that "they have no choice" because they are "the bearers of this or that role" (Berger and Pullberg 206).

Lukàcs' definition for reification[2] and reification of identity are closely related to one another. Reification of meanings in language[3], on the other hand, is closely related to both of these concepts more so to the reification of identity. Semantic reification simply indicates the condition when words refer to "fixed" and "determinate" meanings as the Spanish professor of philosophy, José Medina suggests. According to Medina, semantic reification is caused by two circumstances; thinking of meaning in an objective realm and thinking of it in a subjective realm (3). In the first case, people tend to internalize socially accepted meanings of the words in language, forgetting the wide and multiple meanings words originally have. In the second case, on the other hand, meanings of the words in language are defined from privileged points of view, out of subjectivities. For Medina, both approaches are wrong because "nothing is self-interpreting, neither the mind, nor the world" (10). Inheritance of wrong usages of language from the past and ideological usages of language also contribute to semantic

[2] Lukacs' understanding of reification will be referred to as "physical reification" throughout the thesis, which indicates individuals who are considered as physical objects and abstract concepts taken as concrete realities.

[3] Reification of meanings in language will be referred to as "semantic reification" throughout the thesis.

reification. According to Soviet-Russian linguist, Vallentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov, who has produced works in the field of Marxist theory, "everything ideological possesses semiotic value," and "it is [this] semiotic character that places all ideological phenomena under the same general definition" (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*), which comes to indicate that language is the *sine qua non* for all types of reification that serve for a certain ideology. "[W]henever sign ["word," if language is considered] is present, ideology is present too (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*).

On the other hand, according to Louis Althusser, it is impossible to access the "real conditions of existence" due to the [people's] reliance on language; however, through a rigorous "scientific" approach to society, economics and history one can perceive at least "the ways that are inscribed in ideology" ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"). Althusser believes that ideology does not "reflect" the real world but represents the "imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence" ("Ideology"). Language also does the same. It does not "reflect" what one thinks, but "represents" it. The main purpose of ideology, for Althusser, is constituting concrete individuals "as subjects" ("Ideology"). Therefore, it would be possible to maintain that fixed meanings in language have a reifying effect on the individual. When such meanings are employed with ideological purposes by the dominant groups, the repressed groups are usually considered as the "other." This reasoning works in the same way in the case of immigrants. The immigrants yearn to be accepted and work toward changing their class predicament, but cannot escape their "outsider" position. An immigrant is an outsider, first of all because of his/her origins. S/he is considered as an "un-American" which is often used with negative connotations. The logic behind such labeling is explained by Adams and Markus:

> That is by naming or describing an observed pattern as "American" or "Dutch," one takes something that was dynamic and flowing and renders it—at least for a moment—static and fixed. One proposes a baseline or implicit standard against which deviations or innovations appear "un-American" or "not Dutch." Those individuals who already do not fit the modal pattern or who would produce innovation get marginalized, labeled as "bad" members and have less influence over the meaning and direction of ethnic categories. (285)

Such categorization even exceeds personal definitions as in Adams' and Markus's example and shows itself in categorizations of actions and behaviors. Berger and Pullberg gives an appropriate example for this case, through the identification of an "uncouth" gesture (204). A person performs a gesture which is defined as "uncouth" by the other participant. Without being evaluated whether it is really uncouth or what the term uncouth refers to and by ignoring the individual story of the person that has made him perform the very gesture, the uncouthness of the gesture is taken for granted (204-205). This situation refers to the existence of reification:

> In this designation the gesture is alienated from the active process of producing it as well as from the particular intention of its producer. It becomes an "uncouth gesture" in and of itself. The gesture is thus fixed in an inert objectivity available to all, with a significance conceived of as belonging to it intrinsically rather than as expressive of something else. The gesture becomes reified, that is, it becomes a thing-like facticity separated from its human source. Thus, *ab initio*, reification entails a dehumanizing of its object. . . . [I]f one reflects about a gesture as a defined inertness, one thereby calls into being a reifying apparatus by which any gesture is no longer a specific expression of the others or one's own life, but rather becomes a quality that serves to characterize the other or oneself in a typical and anonymous manner. That is, the world is divided into couth and uncouth people, who are couth and uncouth in the same way as tables are brown or grey. . . . no longer is the gesture an expression of the person, but the person is defined as the embodiment of an abstract quality of which the gesture is the symbol. Following this reification. . . . there may develop a general psychology that defines persons as embodiments of abstract qualities or states. . . . . For instance, one reifies action by saying that it is performed *because* (or, one may say—*because of course*) the actor is an X-type person. (204-205)

While the disciplines of psychology and sociology approaches the term objectively, taking into consideration both its positive and negative effects on human life, Marxist scholars often focus on the negative effects of reification. Lukács explains the concept of reification by combining Karl Marx's "commodity fetishism" and Max Weber's "rationalization" (Arato 195). Although Marx scarcely used the term in his works, he often employs terms that are related to the process of reification such as "estrangement," "alienation," "ideology," "mystification," "fetishism" and "objectification." Lukács argues that reification is central to Marx's thought (Pitkin 264). In order to prove his point, Lukács quotes from Marx's *Capital I*, where he has

given a similar definition of reification to his own, without mentioning the term reification:

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. . . . It is only a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relationship between things. ("The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof")

Marx also defines a similar concept, *objectification.* According to objectification ideas can be turned into concrete objects making use of raw materials and tools. Since both "objectification" and "reification" end up with a "thingified" product, they can be considered to be similar. Marx's approach is open both to positive and negative possibilities as a result of the process, whereas Lukács presumes only negative conclusions. Befitting this very distinction between the two approaches, Pitkin portrays an important difference between these two points of view (269). Marx's objectification could end triumphant in the sense that it might come up with a beneficial product, whereas Lukács's reification would, at its best, end up in capitalism. This distinction makes Lukács's approach unique. According to Lukàcs, as Arato underlines, the basis of commodity fetishism, is the "hidden dynamic" of capitalism (95). Lukàcs associates commodity fetishism with the transformation of the relations between people into "the character of a thing" and thus these relations acquire a "phantom objectivity, an autonomy that seems so strictly rational" (83). Moreover, it "stamps its imprint upon the whole unconsciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are *things* which he can 'own' or 'dispose of' like the various objects of the external world" (Lukács 100).

The other constituent of Lukács's theory, "rationalization," also contributes to the adoption of a reified consciousness with its motto "without regard for persons" and tendency to eliminate everything "irrational, qualitative, sensuous and mysterious" (Arato 191). The immigrant experience in the Lower East Side, the conditions under

which these people worked were very suitable to internalize this rationalist mentality. The proletarian immigrants specialized on one step of the working process, for example, sewing buttons. In this case, all one person did, became sewing buttons from day to night and, as a result, that person became a part of the mechanical system, which led his/her passage to a "second nature," in Lukács' terms (Lukàcs 194). The specialized, abstract and rational operations made the worker lose contact with the finished product (88) and resulted in "the destruction of every image of the whole" including himself (103). The worker transformed into "a mere object of the process of production" (167), seeing himself only as the "owner of his labor-power" (92), which he gives up in exchange for his wages.

Psychologist James Woodard believes that reification shares similar characteristics with those of "projection," "hallucination," "delusion," "wishful thinking" and "naiveté" since all these concepts are based on loss of reality (qtd. in Pitkin 278). Therefore, it would be wrong to see it as a "cognitive fall from grace" (273). For Axel Honneth, a German professor of philosophy, this loss of reality is due to "forgetting." People forget valuing *initial perceptions* and instead *take for given* the generally accepted meanings or missions of the object or subject "in order to react in an *appropriate* way" (128); in short, "recognition comes before cognition" (113). Honneth also criticizes Lukács, claiming that he failed to see the fact that reification is a *strategic* tool of the modern world (102). In this light, one can say that the American dream, as a dream strategically reified, has also worked as a strategic tool. It was not just a coincidence that presidential candidates and those in politics evoked and imposed the dream, especially when addressing immigrants during the public speeches for various purposes. An example for the strategic usage of the reified dream could be seen in Richard Nixon's Inaugural Address on January 20, 1969, where he used the concept in order to motivate people to work as hard as they can for the sake of their country:

> The American dream does not come to those who fall asleep. . . . As we measure what can be done, we shall promise only what we know we can produce, but as we chart our goals, we shall be lifted by our dreams. (Freese 69)

Similarly, Governor Michael S. Dukakis's nomination acceptance speech on July, 21 1988 uses the reified dream for political sovereignty;

> . . . . We're going to win because we are the party that believes in the American dream. A dream so powerful that no distance of ground, no expanse of ocean, no barrier of language, no distinction of race and creed or color can weaken its hold on the human heart. . . . And my friends, if anyone tells you that the American dream belongs to the privileged few and not to all of us, you tell them that the Reagan era is over, you tell them that the Reagan era is over and that a new era is about to begin. (Freese 73)

But, of course, mere manipulation is never enough to make people believe in an idea. Immigrants were already seeking such an ideal. They were already looking for a "protective bubble" (Baudrillard 43), which would distract them from the "unpleasant realities" of their lives, such as the people they left behind, their identities they denied in order to become Americans, racist and prejudiced approaches and the tough working conditions. Such unpleasant realities would have given rise to a tendency of existential inwardness, if the ideal of the American dream had not existed. Tyson explains the nature of the escape from such an existential inwardness:

> Financial worries, the inevitability of aging and death, the possibility of accident or illness and the fear of emotional pain, all number among the kinds of unforeseeable events—historical contingencies—that increase and complicate the anxieties inherent in being human, in having a consciousness that is aware of itself in a context of unanswerable questions: "Why was I born? What is the purpose of life? What should I believe and how should I behave? What will happen to me after I die? . . . [E]scape existential inwardness is to escape the awareness of historical contingency and the responsibility to respond it conscientiously. This escape is accomplished through what Jean Paul Sartre calls bad faith (mauvaise foi), the various lies we tell ourselves, in order to shift the responsibility for our own actions onto persons or forces outside ourselves. (8-9)

Illusions to achieve better life standards did not work flawlessly. Because of the reified quality of the dream, many immigrants could not manage to be happy even after achieving their financial dreams. According to Tyson, "one's 'stature' in America is usually judged as a function of one's socioeconomic status" and thus the American dream can well be called a "dream of commodity" (5). Such an idea implies the fact that a person's "spiritual worth" and "well-being" can only be valued by his/her

commodities (Tyson 5). As a result, attention to the spiritual needs is often disregarded. The main focus turns out to be the success and progress the dream professedly offered.

Success has always been associated with the dream. People have come to believe that America would provide them a "can do" and "can 'get on with' anything," potential (Fossum and Roth 21). Most of the time, what one "can do" and "can get on with" is understood as gaining financial success and dealing with all the difficulties in achieving it. Yet, the basis of the dream, taken as individual material success and progress, brought much opposition with it. Some believe that "the heedless pursuit of material success would exact the price of the spiritual failure, that unchecked scientific progress would turn against mankind and that instead of realizing their dreams, the adherents of success and progress would finally find themselves caught in a nightmare" (Freese 101). This point of view supports Tyson's definition of the commodity as "self-emptying" (87). According to this approach, emptiness due to the lack of the fulfillment of the spiritual needs cause discontentment in some people despite their material success. The case of East European Jewish immigrants in America could present the lack of spiritual contentment of well-accomplished immigrants, due to the negative effects of reification in fulfilling their dreams. Although Jewish immigrants were one of the most successful ethnic groups in America, they also suffered from the negative effects of reification. German Jews and East European Jews differed as immigrant groups. German Jews came to America for "the search for better economic conditions" in the nineteenth century (Lowenstein 25). German Jews did not express much admiration for America for opening its doors to them; even if they sometimes "paid lip service to such admiration" (Lowenstein 25). Since they often had nostalgia for Europe, they are sometimes called "bei unsers" who always said "bei uns" which means "back home" (Lowenstein 42). East European Jews, however, were tying to get away from political and religious oppressions and poverty (Kabakoff 41). The American dream, in this sense, was more intensely persued by the Eastern European Jews in comparison to the German Jews. East European Jews attributed their dream of a Goldeneh Medina (a Golden Country) to America (Marcus 70). Achiving the American dream meant a lot to them. In this sense, the experience of the East European Jews presents a better exemplary case to show the effects of reification on immigrants. A glance at the history of the immigration of the East European Jews will be useful to clarify the immigrants'

status, their material success and their discontentment because of the lack of spiritual fulfillment.

According to 1880 data, six million of the seven million seven hundred thousand Jewish population of the world lived in Eastern Europe and of these six million Jews, four million were living in the Russian Pale of Settlement (Olitzky 11). After 1881, Jews began to flee to America due to wars, political unrest and increasing oppression in the region. As Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus maintains, as a result of the emancipation of the serfs in the 1860s and the beginning of industrialism, Russia was a land "wrecked by famine, typhus, cholera, economic depressions and agrarian crises" (13). Jews were suffering from restrictions in commerce, industry, the civil and military services and the practice of professions, namely law. Moreover, they were confined to the Pale of Settlement. The May Laws of 1882, according to which Jews were prohibited to settle in rural areas and own property, forced many Jews to leave their land. There were also limitations in schooling, college education and teaching for the Jews; they could not engage in jury duty and they had to pay large amounts of taxes. Due to the Sunday laws, they had to work two more days in the week: Saturday and Sunday, the first of which was a religious day for the Jews.

In 1911, in addition to all these difficulties, Mendel Beilis case obstructed the Jewish life in Russia even more.[4] Beilis, a Jewish artisan, was charged of ritual murder which started an anti-Jewish movement. After the revolution of 1917, Jewish religion was interdicted, hundreds of "pogroms"—a term originally used for violence against Jews including killings and destruction of homes and public places—took place and many Jews decided to leave Russia (Marcus 13-15).

It has been estimated that, between 1881 and 1920, four million East European Jews left their homes due to these conditions. Two million came to the United States. Among these immigrants twenty percent were from Austria-Hungary and less than four percent

[4] Known also as "Beilis Blood Libel Case." In March 1911, the tortured body of a Christian boy was founded in a cave. Although a criminal gang "had almost certainly committed the murder," Mendel Beilis, an uneducated and non-observant Russian Jew who worked in the brickworks halfway between the boy's home and the cave was accused of the murder. In the funeral, leaflets "making blood accusation of Jews" were distributed. The murder was attributed to "the entire nation" instead of an individual who was accused of the crime (Pasachoff and Littman 244-245).

were from Rumania, while seventy percent were from Russia. By 1920, thirty percent of all New York population was composed of Jews (Marcus 16). Statistics show that there were five million two hundred seventy five thousand Jews in the U.S in 2006 which is the largest Jewish population in the world after Israel (*The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*).

The profile of the Jewish immigrants was almost homogenous. They were mainly lower and middle class rather than the upper classes or the intellectuals. According to Marcus, they were different from other immigrants in the sense that "they came with their families; they intended to remain; they were poor . . . many could read no language . . . [they were] Yiddish-speaking, Orthodox . . . some were political radicals" (727). Although many avoided factories and wanted to be self-employed, they often had no other choice. Relatively luckier ones were in trade, shop-keeping and peddling (Marcus 70). It was easy to observe that most of the immigrants, who arrived between the years 1902-1904, were artisans. Statistics Marcus refers to show that nineteen thousand of these immigrants were tailors and seamstresses, over twenty four thousand were craftsmen, three thousand four hundred were merchants and clerks, nine thousand were female servants, eight hundred fifty were professionals and eight thousand were unskilled laborers (260). Due to the demand in clothing industry, most of them worked in the related fields. An unskilled laborer could work in this industry, since s/he had to master only one step of the production process (Marcus 198). Most of the immigrants worked in sweatshops for very low wages for thirteen to eighteen hours a day, often seven days a week (Maffi 82). Dim lighting, heat, dissatisfactory sanitary conditions in basements and attics opened the way to diseases (Marcus 199). With the coming of the Progressive Age however, working conditions improved, owing to the newly established worker unions (Marcus 204).

Between the years 1880 and 1930 New York's Lower East Side was the main destination for Jewish immigrants. The place was like a ghetto. People were not forced to move there, but cheaper rents, small communities for each nationality and availability of jobs despite low wages and harsh working conditions offered a certain comfort. The Lower East Side, starting from the late seventeenth century, became an immigrant and working class neighborhood which included today's East Village (the area including

2nd Avenue, 1st Avenue, Avenue A, The Bowery, St. Mark's Place), Alphabet City (the area bordered by Houston Street, 14th Street, East Village, Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village), Little Italy (bordered by Bayard Street, Bleecker Street, Lafayette Street and the Bowery), Nolita (North of Little Italy), the Bowery (bordered by East Village, Canal Street, Chinatown, Allen Street and Little Italy) and the Chinatown (bordered by Canal Street, The Bowery, Worth Street and Baxter Street). As Mario Maffi, in his book about the Lower East Side, states, by the turn of the nineteenth century, "some five hundred thousand persons lived in the area with a density, in some streets and blocks of three hundred and thirty thousand per square mile" (*Gateway to the Promised Land* 65). Although there were numerous ethnic groups which would indicate heterogeneity under other circumstances, the inhabitants of the Lower East Side were homogeneous, as an all-proletarian community (Maffi 143). "Northeast from the tip of Manhattan, a mile and a half from the point where the immigrants landed, the Jewish East Side of New York began. By the turn of the century, it extended Northward from Henry Street to Tenth Street and eastward from the Bowery almost to the East Side River" (Higham 81). After the 1930s, new legislations reduced the rush of immigrants to the area and the inhabitants began to move to better places.

As Marcus explains, East European Jews were Orthodox in religion (236). They believed in an omniscient god, in a Messiah to come, in the Jewish Sabbath, in the Holy Pays, in keeping kosher, in numerous religious ceremonies and the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments, which is of great importance for Jews, are composed of religious necessities and prohibitions of belief in God; prohibition of improper worship; prohibition of oaths; observance of sacred times; respect for parents and teachers; prohibition of physically harming a person; prohibition of sexual immorality; prohibition of theft; prohibition of harming a person through speech; and prohibition of coveting (Rich). Jews find their ethnics superior to all others. The religion itself is a "folk religion," "a sense of kinship," as well as a part of Jewish culture (236). However, orthodoxy has not been an obstacle in the process of Americanization. Many East European Jews embraced Americanization for the sake of a smoother path to success. By the end of the twentieth century, as Marcus suggests, Orthodox Jews were the smallest religious group among the United States Jewry (Marcus 775). With the

movement of "Reconstructionism" in the leadership of Morde cai Menahem Kaplan, from 1921 on, the determination to reconstruct Judaism became popular (Marcus 774). Anti-Semitism also pushed many of them to embrace right wing political views (Marcus 778).

Jewish community began to collect the rewards of their sacrifice early in the twentieth century. By 1900, it was possible to see the growth in the number of the East European middle class. Statistics show that Jewish white-collar workers were in the meantime two times the Italian white - collar workers (Marcus 269). It is believed that by 1905, fifty percent of all New York Jews were white-collar workers; by 1910, a great number of them moved away from the ghetto; in 1916 only twenty three percent of all Jews were living in the lower parts of New York (Marcus 268). In 1918 Jews constituted twenty five percent of the New York population, yet thirty-eight-and-a-half percent of the college students were Jews. In an order from the most popular to the less, they were studying commerce, finance, medicine, engineering, law and dentistry (Marcus 297). Today, Jews are among the most highly educated ethnic groups in the United States. As Paul Ritterband suggests, they are doing "extraordinarily" well and that approximately twenty five percent of the four hundred richest Americans list of *Forbes* are Jews, though they constitute only two-and-a-half percent of the American population (379).

Although they came to America later, the Eastern European Jews rapidly caught up with the success of the German Jews. According to Warner and Srole, due to the open class system in America, Russian Jews climbed the ladder to success faster than any other ethnic group, so fast that they could compete even with groups who had been there already one or two generations (Hurvitz 117). Hurvitz claims that there are four socio-historical forces which have contributed to the rapid upward social mobility of American Jews: "the Jewish religious tradition," "the business ethic of the Jewish people," "the urban psychology of the modern Jew," and "the minority group status of the Jew in modern history" (119).

The Jewish religious tradition was advantageous for the immigrants to adapt to the new surrounding which embraced a rationalized capitalist economy. It was not very difficult for the Jews to adopt the logic of the new world, since Judaism is a religion "free of

magic and all forms of irrational quests for salvation" (Shroeder 72). Besides, both systems attached great importance to literacy, education, cleanliness, sobriety, family purity and the concept of chosenness (Hurvitz 120). Jews were used to mobility, which eased their passage to the white collar class. Three other cultural values made Jewish adaptation to the life in America easier. For Yerushalmi, these were "halakhah" (jurisprudence), "Jewish philosophy" and "Kabbalah" (110). Halakhah is the set of practices and rules in Jewish way of life "that affect every aspect of life," such as what one can eat, wear, how one should treat God, observe religious holidays, conduct business or who can one marry (Rich). Jewish philosophy refers to the "philosophical inquiry informed by the texts, traditions and experiences of the Jewish people" (Goodman). Kabbalah, on the other hand, is "Torah's expression of the way the world works." "Like science, the Torah gives . . . the grander abstract picture of the facts" (Leiberman). According to Judaism, the knowledge of kabbalah, halakhah and Jewish Philosophy alone have the potential to lead one to truth and happiness even without any prior knowledge of American history, which annihilates the disadvantage of the Jews in America as newcomers. Another East European Jewish tradition that is helping others, also contributed to their success. People most of the time attended more than one mutual-benefit societies. They helped new-comers, with the strong sense of Jewish kinship (Marcus 177).

The second reason that contributed to the success of the Jews was the business ethic. In the American capitalist economy, the Jewish money-lender was welcomed. Jewish characteristics such as "opportunism," "anticipation of alternatives," and "cultivation of clients and customers" were advantageous for the commercial environment. The protestant ethic of this new surrounding, as Hurvitz quotes from Kingsley Davis' "Mental Hygiene and Class Structure," was parallel to the Jewish values and had the following characteristics:

> 1- *Democratic* in favoring equal opportunities to rise socially by merit rather than by birth.
> 2- *Worldly* in emphasizing earthly values such as the pursuit of calling, accumulation of wealth and achievement of status.
> 3- But at the same time *ascetic* in stressing physical abstinence and stern sobriety, thrift, industry and prudence.

> 4- *Individualistic* in placing responsibility upon the individual himself for his economic, political and religious destiny and in stressing personal ambition, self reliance, private enterprise and entrepreneurial ability.
> 5- *Rationalistic and empirical* in assuming a world order discoverable through sensory observation of nature.
> 6- *Utilitarian* in pursuing practical ends with the best available means and conceiving human welfare in secularized terms as attainable by human knowledge and action. (118)

In addition to such a parallelism between the protestant ethic adopted by America and the requirements of Jewish values, East European Jews have had an urban psychology different from many other immigrants. They had been town dwellers since the Middle Ages whereas most of the other groups were experiencing city life for the first time (Hurvitz 121). In this sense, East European Jews seemed to have no problems with adjustment to the physical environment, which Herbert Spencer thinks is a requirement for survival. Besides, having lived under worse conditions in Russia, difficult conditions in America did not really seem to bother Eastern European Jews as much as it did the immigrants from other parts of the world.

The minority group awareness of the Eastern European Jews, as the fourth socio-historical force in their rapid upward mobility, helped them in developing an urge of group survival. As Hurvitz suggests, the individual was always under the superintendence of the Jewish community, since one person's mistake would be projected to the entire Jewish community by the non-Jewish administration and thus, the anti-Semitic prejudices might increase (122).

In spite of the advantages East European Jews had, attaining success and thus achieving the American dream was not easy. Jean Baudrillard thinks the experience of the American, in general, resembles a marathon, which is like an "end of world show" (19). For him, this marathon is nothing but "suffering" or "servitude" "freely entered into" (19). He identifies the marathon man as a "bare-chested," "looking skywards," man seeking "death by exhaustion" and he adds that such a death was the fate of the first marathon man (19-20). This depiction fits the American immigrant perfectly, in the sense that they have been running and running yet the problem is that they have "lost the formula of stopping" (39). At the end of the race different results are achieved

by different ethnic groups, similar to the fates of Baudrillard's three types of marathon runners: "athletic types who arrive first to the wrecks," those "who are literally carried to the finishing line by their friends," and "the handicapped who do the race in their wheelchairs" (19-20). In the Lower East Side experience, there have been examples for each type. Some immigrants achieved the financial success but could not be successful. Yet, most of them lost some personal qualities and values due to the adopted reified consciousnesses and the imposed or willingly adopted reified dream. East European Jews, in this sense, belong mostly to the second group but with exceptions, to the first group, due to the negative effects of reification.

The negative effects of reification are avoidable, yet, it is still not easy to discard them from daily life. As a universally existing concept, reification can also be observed today. Hannah Fenichel Pitkin suggests that many people "feel helpless to influence the conditions that constrain their lives" in the reified world. The two sociologists blame reification for the problems of modern life today and complain that people do not try to alter their situation (286):

> Millions of Americans turn their backs on politics, judging that engagement in it would make no significant difference. Millions of members if the underclass feel worthless—though also filled with diffused rage—because society seems to have no use for them. Almost all of us function in large organizational systems, whether as part of the machinery or materials being processed and have learned to take that condition for granted. We function on an economy that depends on a system of international banking and finance that everyone knows to be in constant danger of collapse. Almost all of us submit without question to the "technological imperative" that daily exhausts our resources, destroys our health and poisons the earth. And we march like sleepwalkers down the road marked "deterrence" and "non-proliferation," toward nuclear doom. (286).

Theorists and sociologists offer possible ways to discard such effects, according to the type of reification the individual suffers from. For physical reification, for example, Lukàcs suggests "constantly renewed efforts to disrupt the reified structure" (197). He believes that the proletariat "can be transformed and liberated only by his own actions and that "the educator must himself be educated." "Any transformation," Lukàcs says,

"can only come about as the product of the action of the proletariat himself" (208-209). He adds:

> . . . [I]t must be emphasized that 1) structure can be disrupted only if the immanent contradictions of the process are made conscious. Only when the consciousness of the proletariat is objectively impelled, but which it cannot travel unaided, will the consciousness of the proletariat awaken to the consciousness of the process and only then the proletariat become the identical subject-object of history whose praxis will change reality. . . 2) Inseparable from this is the fact that the relation to totality does not need to become explicit, the plentitude of the totality does not need to be consciously integrated into the motives and objects of action. What is crucial is that there should be an inspiration towards totality of the process. . . . 3) Hence when judging whether an action is right or wrong, it is essential to relate to its function in the total process. (197)

Lukàcs believes, in order to dare to change the reality of reification, "man must be able to comprehend the present as a becoming . . . by seeing in it the tendencies out of whose dialectical opposition he can *make* the future." Then, he believes, the present will be "a process of becoming that belongs to him" (204).

For the reification of identity, on the other hand, Berger and Pullberg present three "socio-historical constellations . . . that are conducive to de-reification:" *catastrophic disenchantments* as they bring skepticism towards the collective assumptions; *culture shock* as it leads to "a crisis in knowledge;" and *effects of socially marginal groups in action* (209). According to Tyson, on the other hand, individuals naturally create "false realities," but, it is always possible to get rid of these false assumptions;

> According to an existential model, social factors may largely establish our initial identity . . . they do not freeze us at that stage without our daily consent. While our options are certainly limited by the society in which we live and the circumstances of our birth, we are nevertheless responsible for our existence. All of the "guarantees" upon which we hang our well being—god, human nature, rationalist belief systems, the progressive nature of time—are products of our own creation; they represent our attempts to deny the reality that we are alone in a universe that has no meaning beyond what we assign to it. There is no higher plan or essence to which human life conforms; rather existence precedes essence, which is to say that there is no "essence" at all. There is only existence and what we make of it. We are thus "condemned" to freedom: it is up to us what we make of our lives, of our communities, of our planet. (Tyson 3)

Axel Honneth believes that in order to get rid of reification, recognitions should be replaced by cognitions (129). Nancy Fraser, with whom Honneth co-authored an article, suggests a similar solution to that of Honneth. "What is needed" to get rid of reification of identity, for her, is "an alternative politics of recognition" which is for her "the status model" (120). She thinks that politics of recognition "aims to repair internal self-dislocation by contesting the dominant culture's demeaning picture of the group" by proposing its members of the misrecognized groups to reject old recognition forms and make their own self-representations to create "a self-affirming culture of their own" (109). If this could be achieved, recognition would mean "an undistorted relation to oneself" (109) Such an approach would bring a solution for sexism, racism, colonization and cultural imperialism. However this solution has a weak point. Since politics of recognition, in this case, is seen equal to identity politics, reification is encouraged (109-110). In order to avoid reification, what she calls the "status model" should be adopted instead. This model is, for her, the version of recognition which is not reduced to a question of identity (113). It aims at "overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest" (Fraser 113). It views recognition as a matter of status, "examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors." Only when these social actors are seen as "peers" and start to participate in the society, then can one talk about a status equality" (Fraser 113).

Finally, in order to avoid semantic reification, "the theoretical presuppositions of the reifying perspective that invites the indeterminacy problem" should be identified and "an alternative perspective that does not rely on those presuppositions" should be suggested, according to José Medina. "Only in this way," Medina believes, "can the reifying perspective and its skeptical implications be shown to be, at best, optional and avoidable" (8). Individuals, on the other hand, could avoid reification in language by "revis[ing] [their] concepts tailored to . . . situations" (Demmerling). Sometimes the already existent concepts are not enough to explain or define situations. In such cases, a wrong "description of situation" might lead to a wrong "judgment" which would be taken for granted. Therefore, one must "be open to" new definitions and perspectives (Demmerling).

Dealing with the effects of reification in the East European Jewish attempt to fulfill the American dream under three subtitles of reification—physical reification," "reification of identity" and "semantic reification"—this thesis will analyze Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989). All three works highlight the East European Jewish experience in America and portray their characters under the effect of the American dream. The main characters of each work achieve their ideals within the framework of the American dream. Yet, each of them has to give up the authority over their selves or their original identities in exchange for success. Such sacrifices, which bring them closer to their dreams, actually prevent them from reaching full contentment, because of the invisible hegemony of reification on their lives. Each literary work will be examined to exemplify one subdivision of reification namely "physical reification," "reification of identity" and "semantic reification." Each chapter will show how literary characters deal with different types of reification and how they try to avoid it, although neither of the works takes the problem as "reification".

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on physical reification in Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Abraham Cahan (1860-1951)—a Lithuanian Jewish American socialist newspaper editor, writer and journalist—touches upon three themes in this partly autobiographical novel: "the Americanization of an immigrant Jew;" "the development of American industry and organized labor;" "the apologia of a driven but an irresolvably divided man" (Sanford 139). The novel portrays the lives of the East European Jewish immigrants in America through the life story of a Talmudic student in Russia, David Levinsky, who later turns out to be a successful "American" businessman. However, his financial success costs him spiritual failure which will mainly be explained through Marx's and Lukacs's understandings of reification.

The second chapter analyzes "reification of identity" in Russian-Poland born Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements*. This semi-fictional work focuses on the love affair between a millionaire and a once-sweatshop-laborer Sonya, which details the attempts of the millionaire to transform her into an American woman. Having a different and more optimistic ending than that of Cahan's, this novel's main character manages to see what is being dictated to her and starts a new life, by beginning to work

for the good of her community. In this novel, reification can be observed in the case of the assimilated, Americanized or simply stereotyped immigrants, who adopt American role models or get stuck in the patterns they are forced to fit in. A sociological approach toward the concept of reification will be employed and works of Peter Berger, Stanley Pullberg, Thomas Luckmann, Hannah Fenitchel Pitkin, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth will be used toward a detailed understanding of the concepts at work.

The third chapter focuses on "semantic reification" in an autobiographical work by the Poland born Jewish American writer and academic Eva Hoffman, titled *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.* The book follows the struggle of young Eva who is trying to express herself through English language. She finds communication impossible, since in this new language "the signifier has become severed from the signified" (106). With the introduction of a new language to her life "the picture and word show is gone" (107), because words harbor different meanings, which are simply derived from prejudices, ideological assumptions, widely accepted but unquestioned "facts." Throughout the book Eva's two separate selves, each of which adapts Polish or English, contradict each other. The second language, English, forms a "second consciousness" in Lukács' terms, which is always in conflict with Eva's intrinsic consciousness. In this section, social and semantic reification theories of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann and Bryan D. Palmer's, together with the linguistic approaches of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida will be employed to show the role of semantic reification in the lives of the immigrants.

By analyzing *The Rise of David Levinsky*, *Salome of the Tenements* and *Lost in Translation* in the light of the mentioned theoretical background, this thesis will try to demonstrate the negative effects of reification in the example of the East European Jewish immigrants in America, claiming that it has had both positive and negative effects on them: Reification has helped East European Jewish immigrants to achieve their American dreams materially, yet, the same reification has challenged and problematized their spiritual fulfillment. Choosing autobiographic and semi-fictional literary examples from both male and female writers, a more realistic examination of the effects of reification on the experiences of immigrants will be made. Moreover, by examining the issue of reification under subdivisions; the role of reification in these

immigrants' lives will be presented from a multi-angular perspective. The evolution of the concept and the wearing off of the negative effects due to the development of successful and thus stronger immigrant identities in the course of time, could well be observed in the chronologized order of the literary works under debate.

CHAPTER 1

"PHYSICAL REIFICATION" IN ABRAHAM CAHAN'S *THE RISE OF DAVID LEVINSKY* (1917)

. . . [L]abor has been equalized by the subordination of man to the machine or by the extreme division of labor; that men are effaced by their labor; that the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives. Therefore, we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcase. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything; hour for hour, day for day. . . .

Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*

The American dream is itself a "consumer product which Americans 'buy into'" as the primary myth by means of which they mold their interpersonal relations to resemble relations of capitalist production, which are relations among commodities.

Lois Tyson, *Psychological Politics of the American Dream*

The term physical reification refers to Georg Lukàcs' understanding of reification, which is based on Karl Marx's commodity fetishism and Max Weber's rationalism as briefly mentioned above. This approach can be considered under two subdivisions 1) the laborer turning into a physical object, losing his/her "quality" to highly regarded "quantity" due to the rational mechanization processes and becoming a commodity whose labor is "bought" by his employer, ("subjective" reification in Lukàcs' terms); 2) abstract concepts or ideologies reduced into physical objects (commodities) or unquestionable realities under the veil of rationalization ("objective" reification in Lukàcs' terms), which is known as "hypostatization" in psychology. In this section, reifiation will be explained through the case of David Levinsky, the main character of

Lithuanian born American journalist, social activist and author Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). Subjective reification is going to be analyzed in relationship to Frederick Taylor's concept "Taylorism," which he introduces in his *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). The term is based on "allocation of tasks" and "standardization of tools and implements" in order to develop a wage system based on performance and labor based on time-saving (*vanderbilt.edu)*, which contributed to the reification process of the laborers. The second dimension of physical reification, in the case of David Levinsky, is due to the concretization of abstract concepts; namely that of history, social relationships, social institutions and the American dream. Effects of reification on David Levinsky as a capitalist employer and on his employees as laborers will be analyzed through examples.

Born in 1860 in Lithuania, Cahan's life was similar in some respects to that of his character David Levinsky. He came to the United States in 1882, upon the Jewish pogroms that took place after the assassination of Alexander II, but also because he was sought to be arrested for being a socialist (Sanford 13-14). Here, he worked in a cigar factory, later at a tin factory and then turned to radical politics and helped organize the first garment workers' union, which was followed by his engagement in journalism as the editor of the famous Yiddish socialist newspaper *Jewish Daily Forward* (Cahan ix). The "Bintel Breif" column of the newspaper, in which workers ask for advice for their troubles at work, seems to have been a great source for Cahan to become a master of the problems of his fellowmen in the garment industry. In 1913, he was asked to write articles for *McClure's Magazine* on the success of the Jewish businessman in the United States, which was later made into the semi-autobiographical novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (Sanford 30). The title itself is ironic in the sense that it is thematically quite the contrary of an 1885 novel by William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham.* The former deals with an immigrant's "amoral acquisition of wealth," whereas the latter depicts the financial descent of a Lapham with his concurrent moral rise (Sanford 30). This novel was Cahan's last fictional work. His 1896 novel, *Yekl, a Tale of the New York Ghetto*, which is Cahan's first published literary work, also deals with the transformation of the Jewish immigrant, Yekl, who goes through a similar path of experiences with that of the character in *The Rise of David Levinsky.* Following this novel, Cahan published *The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories* (1898). The most

famous short story in this collection, "The Imported Bridegroom," does not break Cahan's convention, in the sense that the main character of the story, the rich Boston widower, searches for spiritual fulfillment which he fails to attain with his wealth and power. This time, Cahan's character hopes to achieve such a fulfillment by returning to his home country. *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902), a study of the Jewish Quarter of New York, was Cahan's next work. This is followed by his 1905 novel, *The White Terror and the Red*, which is concerned with revolutionary Russia. Among Cahan's popular themes in his works that deal with the Jewish immigrant experience in America, are "sharp business practices," "exploitative and cynical labor relations" and an "anxiety to become 'Americanized' in speech and general deportment" (Cahan xiv).

The Rise of David Levinsky, Abraham Cahan's semi-autobiographical novel about the garment industry, is a literary example of the effects of physical reification on individuals and on abstract concepts, as it serves both as a historical and a literary source on East European Jewish experience in America. In this work, Cahan presents his main character, David Levinsky, both as a laborer and as a capitalist businessman in time sequence, providing a fertile ground for the analysis and observation of the effects of reification on Levinsky's two antithetical identities. Although David never tells much about his life as a worker, since the story-teller persona is the capitalist David, it is possible to observe the life of the workers from the way David Levinsky treats his workers as an employer.

David Levinsky's success story begins with his arrival in America in 1885 from Antomir, Northeast of Russia. His life in Antomir is dominated by poverty and orphanage. His mother is killed by the "gentiles" living in the far end of the street they live, after an unsuccessful attempt to talk to the father of a child who has beaten David for anti-Semitist reasons. Before her death, his mother takes the first steps for his son's religious education by sending him to a school for religious instruction, "cheder," for which she does not pay like the other parents but instead literally begs the principle of the school in the name of God. After her death, David continues his religious education as a "day-eater," eating dinner every day with another family who welcome the idea of supporting a poor boy to help him continue his religious education. He attends "Talmudic seminary or yeshiva" where he spends seven years, still with the help of

better-off families. The daughter of one of these charitable families beguiles him with stories of Talmud students who has gone to America and received university education there to be doctors and lawyers. Despite teasing David with her sexuality in every opportunity, which is David's soft spot in his youth, she gives David the money to go to America.

Upon his arrival in America, David's slow transformation begins from "an object of pity" (18), "a master of dreams" (62) and "a cross between a beggar and a recluse" (69); first to a "greenhorn" (93), then to "a cockroach manufacturer" (283), "the fittest" (283), "Mr. Capitalist" (479) and finally "a moneybag" (530). As it is clear from the change in the range of definitions made by Levinsky for himself, he transforms from a poor unsuccessful "individual" into a wealthy and successful "thing," a "physical object"—a moneybag—which is "worth two million dollars" (3). At first, he tries to earn his living as a peddler, but later an acquaintance encourages him to work at a cloak shop, by means of which he rises to be a master of garment trade. Although David, at the end of the novel, seems to have forgotten the days in his life as a worker in garment sweatshops; torturing his workers as his employers have once tortured him, he is actually haunted by the past. He is all alone without a single friend or family member, having lost himself to his ambition to be "fitter," richer, more successful and more respectable and eventually, forgetting the actual reason for which he has come to America. The novel closes with a mature David desperately realizing that "there are cases when success is a tragedy" (529).

The Rise of David Levinsky illuminates the East European Jewish immigrant experience in America. It has semi-autobiographical characteristics and gives actual data about the conditions in Russia, the economic history of America between 1885 and the beginning of World War I, the garment industry, the working conditions of the immigrant, the worker unions and the psychology of both the workers and the employers. The novel focuses on the success story of David Levinsky who arrives to America "with four cents in [his] pocket," but becomes a famous millionaire (3). The novel displays David's ambition to reach his target. However, when he questions whether he is happy at the end of the novel, the answer, not to the reader's surprise, is "No" (526).

David's failure to be content as a laborer can be explained with Abraham Cahan's statement that in America "the worker [is] reduced to being a dead tool" (Sanford 18), but David cannot find happiness as a member of the "bourgeoisie" either, in spite of all the wealth and dignity he has acquired. Both situations could best be explained through physical reification. It is a fact that the first generation immigrants in America, like David Levinsky, were affected from physical reification more than those who came to America later. The reason for such a fate, according to Marx, could be explained by the historical facts of the time period:

> When . . . we ask ourselves why a particular principle was manifested in the 11th century or in the 18th century rather than in any other, we are necessarily forced to examine minutely what men were like in the 11th century, what they were like in the 18th, what were their respective needs, their productive forces, their mode of production, the raw materials of their production—in short, what were the relations between man and man which resulted from all these conditions of existence. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*)

The America of the 1880-1920 period, in this sense, possessed different characteristics than any other time. According to the 1996 article of Hirschmann and Mogford, in 1880 almost half of the workers in America were working in the field of agriculture. The manufacturing sector, on the other hand, was employing only one in seven workers. In 1920, however, due to the development of "capital-intensive production" of steel, mechanical and electrical machinery and garments, the situation changed. One in four workers was employed in manufacturing and one in four in agriculture. This forty-year-period was a period of industrialization, immigration and urbanization. During the four decades, population grew from fifty million to hundred million, twenty million of which was composed of immigrants. Hirschmann and Mogford suggest that such an increase in the number of the immigrants resulted in lowering the wages for unskilled jobs. Immigrants were mainly employed in:

> . . . hard and dirty jobs in coal and iron ore mining, blast furnaces and steel mills and the sweatshops of the garment and apparel trade. In examining comparable data, the author of the 1920 census report on immigrants commented, "It would seem that, generally speaking, the foreign born population is engaged in more laborious, disagreeable and probably, less

> skilled and less remunerative work than are the native born white." (*Immigrants and Industrialization in the American Economy, 1880 to 1920*)

Garment and apparel trade was the major area of working force for most of the East European Jews. In addition to the laboriousness of the job, there were other disadvantages of this sector. As Sanford underlines it, workers were paid per hour, per piece or per task. The latter was the most beneficial for the sake of the employer since "contractors increased the number of items per task without a commensurate increase in pay and some workers could tailor more garments than others within the same span of time (7)." Immigrants worked six days a week, yet the working hours varied from "sixty four to eighty four hours plus overtime." Wages were, on the other hand, between seven to twelve dollars per week for men, whereas it was almost half of it for women and less than that for children (Howe 62). Moreover, heat and dissatisfactory sanitary conditions in basements and attics posed threats to the health of immigrant workers. (Marcus 199). An immigrant worker recalls the working conditions in American factories, in Hareven and Langenbach's book, which shows the worker's dissatisfaction:

> My job was my *via crucia*, my misery, my hatred and yet I lived in continuous fear of losing the bloody thing. THE JOB, that damnable affair, THE JOB. Nightmare of the hunted, THE JOB, this misery, this anxiety, this kind of neurasthenia, this ungrateful, this blood-sucking thing. THE JOB, this piecemeal death, this fear that grips you in the stomach, this sovereign lady who leaks terror, who eats the very heart out of man. (Hochschild 229).

Adam Walaszek, on the other hand, displays how Poles worked like "cattles" in America. Hochschild gives a quote from Walaszek's book on *Polish Peasant Immigrants and Their Industrial Work in America*, in which the working conditions for the Polish immigrant could be seen:

> Many abhorred the work. "There is no freedom here at all" from the eye of the foreman and the demands of the time of the clock. "God only knows how many tears I shed in the evenings" because of an inability to understand instructions barked out in an unknown language. (229)

Such depictions of the job in the American factories seem to belong to laborers who have not adopted a physically reified consciousness or at least have realized and faced

their false consciousnesses, unlike David Levinsky as a laborer and that of his laborers. In Levinsky's case, all the individual can think about would be fulfilling the requirements of the limited role imposed on him by the reifying system, not necessarily welcomed, but somehow internalized which reduces the existence of the individual to a mere commodity, as if that person functions as a part of the mechanism of a machine. The worker is reduced to a commodity but his/her behaviors and actions begin to be motivated by the acquisition of commodity on one hand and s/he begins to explain and evaluate social relationship with the possession of commodity on the other. As Marx suggests, the term "commodity" in economy refers to "'any thing necessary, useful or pleasant in life,' an object of human wants, a means of existence in the widest sense of the term" ("Commodities"). Each commodity has a use value as well as an exchange value. While the "use value has value only in use," exchange value is the socially determined value of a commodity. For example, the value of linen can have an exchange value of a definite number of boots ("Commodities"). For the worker, the exchange value of his/her labor is his/her wages. Yet, as a result of the exchange of labor for wages, worker's labor power is bought, and thus, he loses control over his own actions. He becomes the commodity of his employer. This transformation results in the physical reification of the laborer. In short, the individual is dehumanized. According to Marx, again, the laborer is indeed "the most miserable commodity possible," and as he creates more commodities he is further commodified. The more "the value of the world of things" increase, the more the value of human beings decrease and as a result "the loss of and *slavery to the object*," occurs. Befitting the idea that the laborer turns into a slave, Marx comes to the conclusion that capitalism means "foreign power over other human beings," therefore "a coerced rise in wages . . . is nothing more than a better *salary for slaves* and would not recover for the laborer or for labor its human meaning and dignity" (*The Alienation of Labor I*). Moreover, for Marx, the laborer is "the most miserable commodity possible" in political economy and terminology. Marx maintains that the labor relationships that transform the laborer into a "hand," also deprive him/her of his full human potential. He likens this transformation to the effects of religion: "The more people place in god, the less they retain in themselves." Similarly, "the laborer places his life in the object but now [his life] belongs less to him than to the object" (*The Alienation of Labor I*).

The transformation of the laborer to commodity is achived through rationalization, the second force that lies behind the formation of reification. As Lukàcs suggests, rationalization is imposed on the individual in two stages: the labor process is divided into specialized operations and a time limit is determined for finishing each given task:

> On the one hand, the process of labor is progressively broken down into abstract, rational, specialized operations so that the worker loses contact with the finished product and his work is reduced to the mechanical repetition of a specialized set of actions. On the other hand, the period of time necessary for work to be accomplished (which forms the basis of rational calculation) is converted, as mechanization and rationalization are intensified, from a merely empirical average figure to an objectivity calculable work-stint that confronts the worker as a fixed established reality. (88)

With the introduction of separating the labor into time-controlled units, in other words, Taylorism, laborers' psychology and humanly qualities are totally ignored. For Andrew Arato, Taylorism is "the final step in the mechanization of the worker, separating and controlling 'his psychological attributes,'" as well as the final step in "the de-magicization" or rationalization (196). The worker is seen as a mere "locomotive" that has to reach its destination in the scheduled time. Time turns out to be the most important determiner (Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*), whereas the laborer is considered to be a *part* of the mechanism which could be replaced anytime with a homogeneous spare part, another laborer. Realizing the importance of time and the worthlessness of the human being, Lukàcs states rightfully that "reification is . . . the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in a capitalist society" (197). Naturally, rationalization, one of the ideas behind reification, also plays an important role in the formation of capitalism. The roots of rationalization, on the other hand, can be traced back to Protestantism. Protestant ethic has attached importance to this-worldly affairs, thus making money and having possessions are considered desirable.

According to Calvinism, people work "because and so long as they are poor" (Weber 61). Such an approach is traditionalist, as it suggests that people do not "'by nature' wish to earn more and more money" (Weber 60). However, Max Weber completely disagrees with the idea, predicating the roots of capitalism on rationalism and

rationalism in Protestantism. For him, man takes the idea of making money as "the ultimate purpose of life" and "economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs" (4). Such an insatiable material desire is, for Weber, "the spirit of modern capitalism" (4). It takes its source from the concept of "calling" from which springs the "this-worldly asceticism" of Puritanism, a sect of Protestantism. According to this-worldly-asceticism, the most important moral obligation of a person is to fulfill his duty in "worldly affairs," a sharp contrast to the Catholic ideal of leading a "monastic life" out of a "mundane existence" (4). Protestantism also ignores the strict Catholic notions of "the cycle of sin," and "repentance and forgiveness" (4). As for the idea of calling, a person "should wait for his call" and "serve God in it" (Weber 94). According to this point of view, if God offers one a prosperous life through labor, it would be wrong to reject it. In this light, for Weber, Protestantism is "a stage prior to the development of purely rationalistic philosophy" (76). The individual, who answers the call, begins to value work more highly, which makes up for capitalist economic action. The former understanding of "capitalist economic action" used to rest on "the expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange that is on (formally) peaceful chances of profit," whereas it has transformed into "the rational capitalistic organization of (formerly) free labor" by the dominant group (Weber 17, 21).

For Jewish immigrants, adaptation to the new definition of the capitalistic economic action dwelling on rationality and submission to the requirements of the process were probably easier than it was for immigrants from other religious backgrounds. Their god, Yahweh, is "a source of both harm and benefit" (Schroeder 72). As Schroeder puts it "Judaic believers were not primarily trying to understand the meaning of their inward experience, but seeking to discern the god's mysterious and yet rationally understandable purpose" behind whatever befalls on them (73).

In *The Rise of David Levinsky*, David is accepted as a trustworthy businessman in the trade with his ability to adapt the rationalized world view easily, partially because he is a Jew. He does everything to provide a rationalistic justification for his inexpensive goods either honestly or dishonestly. Even when he is a peddler selling underwear, he makes up logical reasons for his modestly priced goods. He announces to passerbys that

"he had struck a miraculous bargain at a whole bankruptcy sale," or "crumple[s] up new underwear and even wet[s] it somewhat and then show[s] that [he] could sell it "so cheap" because it [is] slightly damaged" (107). Lying, like pirating others' designs, is not a problem for him; "so long as the product is sold, everything is taking its regular course from the standpoint of the capitalist production" (Lukàcs 106). Later, when he becomes a businessman, he employs rational explanations; he informs customers, honestly this time, that the reason why he could sell products for lower prices than other businessmen is not that they lack quality but that he employs good workers for lowest wages and that he avoids employing workers that are members of the union (211).

Rationalism helps David to become successful in the garment trade. He is able to get the best job done for the lowest wages (341). He has his workers work on a single design for a long time to train their speed. He is proud that even "the big men in the business wouldn't even know where the hands of this kind could be got" (211). Workers are aware that they could earn more in other factories. They stay with Levinsky because in his place they can dress in traditional Jewish clothes and they can work on Sundays instead of Saturdays (270). Levinsky knows how to turn situations to his advantage: "Whereas in the genuine union shops the regular workday [has been] restricted to ten hours," he makes his "hands" work overtime, for lower wages; for which he thinks they should be happy (272). Even when the union makes it existence felt strongly, Levinsky pretends as if he is paying his workers the union-determined amount of wages; yet, he takes some of the money back from his workers when the union people are not around (285). He thinks his workers are and should always be happy to have a job, to be able to work overtime and to receive less but constant wages. He always tells how his workers feel from his point of view and the reader is not exposed to the thoughts of his workers. Even when David Levinsky recalls his own working experiences, he never speaks against the labor process or payments. However, he mentions how people in higher positions mistreat laborers like him, befitting "taking-the laborer-as-commodity-paid for" mentality. This mistreatment actually causes David to set up his own business with the designer Chaikin. Once he drops a bottle of milk and some of it is spilled over some silk coats. Jeff Heimer, the German-American inside-man, treats him "as an inferior race." He tells David that the factory is not a barn and calls him a "lobster," which he cannot tolerate (87). This incident causes Levinsky to feel ambitious to be a *millions-*

worth businessman, whom everyone would respect and puts an end to his American dream of going to college with the intension of becoming a doctor or a lawyer.

Although the workers' point of view is never mentioned explicitly in the novel, it is not difficult to observe their physical reification, since how the capitalist-minded employer David Levinsky treats his workers is quite obvious. He tells his life story as a wealthy businessman, "a capitalist," as he proudly calls himself, therefore, he always has the perspective of an employer. David Levinsky reads Darwin and Spencer and feels as though they had "plagiarized a discovery of [his]" (282). He thinks that the union leaders, who watch the rights of the laborers, are "jealous of the brains, industry and efficiency" of people like him (283). He thinks they "have neither brains nor a desire to work" (274). A working man and those who are poor are objects of "contempt" to him, "misfit[s]," "weakling[s]," "failure[s] of the ruck" (283). After abandoning his previous religion and hopes for a university education, Levinsky's new "religion" comes to be Darwin and Spencer's ideology (379). However, at the very end of the novel, he seems to be aware of the fact that he has been wrong. He fires a socialist worker who starts a strike among his workers for higher wages and less working hours, only because he feels the boy disturbs his conscience (518). Ironically, he begins to think that the socialist might be right (519).

The physical reification of the wealthy businessman David Levinsky is more explicit than the physical reification of the laborers, though the negative effects for both are clear. For Berger and Pullberg, reification is "in its most radical widespread" characteristic of modern capitalist society. They maintain that bourgeoisie and the working class share every aspect of reification. The only difference is that the bourgeois does not mind the effects of reification (201). Marx explains this failure with the existence of alienation in the experience of reification:

> The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognizes estrangement as *its own power* and has in it the *semblance* of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence. (*The Holy Family*).

Parallel to the idea that bourgeoisie is content with its position in spite of the alienation they go through, Levinsky, towards the end of the novel, feels proud to be a member of the bourgeois, although he is not very happy with his personal life. Upon reading an article of attack on him in a socialist newspaper, he feels a kind of pride:

> I read the paragraph with mixed rage and pain; and yet the sight of my name in print flattered my vanity and when the neat of my fury subsided I became conscious of a sneaking feeling of gratitude to the socialist editor for printing the attack on me. For, behold, the same organ assailed the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Rothschilds and by calling me "a fleecer of labor," it placed me in their class. I felt in good company. I felt too that while there were people by whom "fleecers" were cursed, there were many others who held them in high esteem and that even those who cursed them had a secret envy for them, hoping some day to be fleecers of labor like them. . . . (273)

Physical reification, in the capitalist factory owner David's case, is as effective as it is in the case of the laborers. Throughout the book David encounters three main tenets about how one can achieve success in business life: 1) "If you want to make a decent living, you must put all other thoughts out of your mind and think of nothing but business" (105); 2) "Do not know the other fellow and do not talk too much" (321); 3) "When a fellow is a new beginner it's a good thing if he has a credit face. . . . People of this kind can do a big business without a cent of capital" (202). These doctrines contribute to Levinsky's physical reification, turning him into an emotionless "thing" in a world in which only commodity is valued. Even relations between people are all based on commodity interest, instead of feelings. The first tenet, which focuses on nothing but business and the second one, not establishing close relationships with others, transforms David into a "moneybag" (530), an object without feelings. He says that he is "*worth* more than two million dollars" (3), which literally proves that he also sees himself as a "moneybag," an object whose worth can be equal to a certain amount of money. His transformation is marked by carelessness to humanly feelings and values which is the actual reason of his loneliness. Since he cannot establish close or sincere bonds with others and always views relationships in terms of their exchange values, he fails to find someone to celebrate his birthday with at the end of the novel (377). He pities himself for being lonely over the years in spite of possessing all the material goods he has dreamed of. The last tenet, on the other hand, the importance of having a credit face,

makes him value the appearances, namely, the exchange value of objects and people. People trust those who have a credit face. Similarly, having a noble, fashionable, American outward appearance turns out to be one of the most important concerns in David's later life. He does the "right" thing for every occasion. As a cloak shop worker, he becomes a member of the union just because those who are not members are seen as "worse than an apostate" (173). As a businessman, the first thing he does is to buy a prestigious check book (204). When he discovers the "psychological significance of smoking 'the cigar of peace and good will," he begins to study the American way of smoking "as though there were a special American manner of smoking" (326).

Russian linguist and Marxist thinker Vallentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov believes that, "any consumer good can likewise be made into an ideological sign" (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*). He gives the example of bread and wine which are "religious symbols in the Christian sacrament of communion" that gain sacred meanings in the church ceremonies (*Marxism*). Yet for him, consumer goods also work as signs. They, "just as tools, may be combined with ideological signs, but the distinct conceptual dividing line between them is not erased by combination" (*Marxism*). The exchange value of smoking, according to what Voloshinov says, can be interpreted as the ideological sign for power in Levinsky's case. Similarly, his attempt to get rid of his un-American behaviors is an act performed to be accepted with his American identity. He tries to avoid his Talmudic gesticulations because it is "so distressingly un-American" (327), or in other words is not "right," but he cannot help gesticulating and swinging over as he talks. He tries to write all business phrases, slang usages and popular idioms to pass as an Americanized Jew. For him, having not been born in America, is "a physical defect" (291). Trying to be anonymous among Americans as a Jew, he loses his original values, such as culture, language and sincere emotions and becomes a "res," a "thing," lacking personality. In short, he tries to *fit in* the "American pattern" which is socially problematic because it leads to reification of identity, which will be treated extensively in the following section.

Physical reification of the individual cannot be observed only in capitalist business relationships, but also in relationships between people or in the transformation of their social values, namely, in cases of "hypostatization" in psychology. According to

psychologist James Woodard, hypostatization, reification of abstract concepts, refers to the attempt of "mentally converting an abstract concept into something concrete, tangible or as the dictionary says—'materializing it'" (qtd. in Pitkin 278). Examples of this situation can be found in *The Rise of David Levinsky*; in the past of the main character, in the institution of marriage, in social relationships between individuals and in American dream. All these cases, exemplify how abstract concepts are considered only in terms of their exchange values, which results in the loss of their true meanings. In other words, abstract concepts are reified physically and made use of as commodities; recalling Marx's definition of commodity as "any thing necessary, useful or pleasant in life" ("Commodities"). For James Woodard, on the other hand, this situation is nothing but "conferring an overgreat concreteness or tangibility on what is only conceptual, relational, or functional . . . taking as factual, concrete, or perpetual that which is only conceptual . . . taking as absolute that which is only relative" (qtd. in Pitkin 278). He names this kind of reification as "negative reification" since reality is not extended, but improperly constricted. Therefore, he views the concept rather as a misapprehension (278).

In the beginning of the novel, one can see how David uses his mother's violent death by telling it to people to arouse their pity (100). He does not hesitate to use the painful story for his benefit, turning the distressful situation into a "commodity," for the sake of its exchange value. In return, he earns the sympathy of the people around him and receives a helping hand from them. His scheme works so perfectly that he cannot help thinking: "It seems as if she [her mother] were taking care of [him] from her grave" (103). According to Lois Tyson, a professor of literature at Grand Valley State University, such "commodification of history" is the most "frightening" examples of the commodity psychology. She exemplifies the idea with the Gulf War case, in which the war was made almost into a TV series to keep the viewers' attention on certain TV channels for financial interest (*Psychological Politics of the American Dream* 147). The war was presented under the title "Operation Desert Storm," a title not much different from David's repetition of "my mother's violent death" in various situations.

Another example of physical reification of abstract concepts in the novel is related to the institution of marriage. David thinks about getting married several times throughout

the novel, yet, none of these plans are made out of love or sincere attachments. In all his emotional involvements, Levinsky is interested in financial matters or social status. When he is still a cloak shop worker, Levinsky thinks about a "college match," a girl to get married to who would earn good wages and is "willing to support [him] through college" (177). Later when he becomes a rich businessman, his marriage dreams are marked by other motives:

> . . . matrimonial aspirations of this kind lay in my new ideas of respectability as a necessary accompaniment to success. Marrying into a well-to-do orthodox family meant respectability and solidity. It implied law and order, the antithesis of anarchism, socialism, trade-unionism, strikes. (379)

As David defines his motives, it becomes clear that his ideal marriage would be a "capitalist" marriage, the "antithesis of anarchism, socialism, trade-unionism, strikes" (379). His capitalistic mentality causes him to view marriage as a commodity to show off, to contribute to his respectability and to bond with a respectable family from which profit is expected. Levinsky fails to experience one of the basic social relationship which marriage offers despite his material possessions. He cannot make any real friends, either. People around him value relationships only in terms of their exchange values, too, either for the sake of improving their dignity in the eyes of other people, or gaining material profit out of the relationships in business circles.

The reduction of Levinsky's American dream to physical objects (commodities) under the veil of rationalization is also another example for the reification of abstract concepts. Levinsky views the ideals of the dream with a misapprehension, taking it as a dream of commodity. With this mistake, he falls into the trap of "commodity fetishism," the first step in the actualization of reification in Lukacs's understanding of the term. Similarly, many immigrants' dreams have turned into an illusion because their dreams have encompassed all their longings. In David's case, he hopes to become an educated man with a dignified job. He expects the American dream to offer "a land of milk and honey but also . . . one of mystery, of fantastic experiences, of marvelous transformations (61). However, when he arrives in America, he sees that the immigrant officer is "no better than a Cossack," and the whole environment seems to him as "the

most cruel place on earth" (90, 97). Eventually, he learns to be cruel too, at least to function without feelings and to adopt a totally rationalized mentality; focusing on commodity. According to Tyson, two factors have contributed to the promotion of the commodity psychology: "the decline of religion," and "the increasing media promotion of readily available consumer goods:"

> Once religion ceased to be a central factor in American life, we needed another source of those psychologist balms religion had supplied: the promise of a better life to come, a purpose to orient the directions of our lives from day to day, a source of distraction from the painfulness of life in the here and now and as I have explained a site for magical thinking and the "guarantees" it brings with it. Commodity psychology may not provide happiness, but like religion it can distract us from our unhappiness. Perhaps this is why . . . the American dream has sold so well across gender, class and time period and why commodity psychology has become such a common phenomenon in our culture. (Tyson 141-142)

Tyson's description of the American dream as a "commodified dream" in which commodification is tied to a "psychological stance" of the individual (6), befits the case of David Levinsky. Tyson expands on her point by quoting from Louis Althusser, for whom "in order for any social system to survive, its conditions of production must be reproduced in the individual psyche" ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"). For Althusser, ideology has the function of "constituting *concrete* individuals as [social] subjects" ("Ideology"). Tyson continues to expand on Althusser's approach with an addition of the American dream;

> Ideology . . . isn't present only when we perceive it. In fact the less we are aware of it, the freer it is to operate. This is why the members of both major political parties in the country can get elected to office by promising us a return to something that never existed: the American Dream in its pristine form. (6)

Indeed, the irony of the American dream is its "seductive and corrupting motivations" people associate with the dream inherent in the ideological structure of its "equation of material and spiritual fulfillment" (6). Hence, the commodified dream makes individuals adopt commodification as a psychological stance, which would result in having a reified consciousness that is unconsciously preserved. The relationships between individuals are transformed into relationships between "things" without any

sincere feelings since all kinds of interactions are based on financial interests. A commodified dream has a potential of turning the individual into a commodity by obliterating his feelings or any particular characteristics. David finally realizes this aspect of the dream. He embraces the changes required by the system to become "the fittest" in his own words, but he has to give up his religion, his traditions and beliefs and ends up without any emotional attachments. When he first arrives in America, he has his side-locks cut and shaved with the encouragement of his countryman Mr. Evans, David's fellow countryman, which is considered among the worst sins in his faith (100). He also begins to dress in an "American" way. His commitment to religion is replaced by a wish for university education; later, by his faith in the theories of Darwin and Spencer and finally by his wish for having a family. Neither of these attachments brings him happiness though. He often longs "for a heart-to heart talk to some of the people of [his] birthplace" (529). He feels lonely "amid the pandemonium of [his] six hundred sewing machines and the jingle of gold which they pour into [his] lap" (526). And he confesses that "the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher's Synagogue seems to have more in common with [his] *inner identity* than David Levinsky, the well known cloak-manufacturer" (530). The most important reason behind David's failure to enjoy what he has is the reduction of pleasure into mere sign exchange value as Tyson suggests (124). According to Baudrillard, whom Tyson quotes from, the individual cannot "enjoy the object or the activity" because "he does not really interact with or participate in it: his eye is always on the status, on the abstraction" (124). For Baudrillard:

> It is not the passion (whether of objects or subjects) for substances that speaks in fetishism [the cathexis of pleasure in an object or activity], it is the *passion for the code* which, by governing both objects and subjects and by subordinationg them to itself, delivers them up to abstract manipulation" (Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy 92*)

The physically reified American dream harms the immigrant because individuals posit endless attributes to it which eliminates the abstract quality of the dream. As Alexis de Tocqueville suggests people who rely upon the dream cannot be happy because they always long for the possessions and relationships which have not actualized:

> Every American is eaten up with longing to rise. . . . In America I have seen the freest and best educated of men in circumstances the happiest in the world; yet it seemed to me that a cloud habitually hung on their brow and they seemed serious and almost sad even in their pleasures. The chief reason for this is that . . . [they] never stop thinking of the good things they have not got. . . . They clutch everything but hold nothing fast and so lose grip as they hurry after some delight. (Tocqueville 627)

David Levinsky suffers from exactly what Tocqueville describes. He finds his rewards inadequate and thinks that he deserves more than that:

> I did not seem to be successful enough. I felt as though my rewards were inadequate. I was now worth more than a hundred thousand dollars and the sum did not seem to stamp my foot and snarlingly urge it on. Only one hundred thousand! Why, there were so many illiterate dunces who had not even heard of Darwin and Spencer and who were worth more. (348-49)

However, the need for more rewards is due to his spiritual emptiness and mainly as a result of his loneliness. He depicts his feelings through a Yiddish poem:

> All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Ah! The rivers are flowing and flowing, yet they are full as ever. And my lips are speaking and speaking, yet my heart is full as ever. Behold! The brook is murmuring and murmuring, but I know not of what. My heart is yearning and yearning and I know not of what. I cherish the murmur of the brook. I cherish the pang of my lonely heart. (452)

He is aware of the reasons of his unhappiness. Formerly, the only thing he believed in was "the old, drab theory of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest" (380). As time passes, he comes to realize that such a belief is not enough to "satisfy a heart that was hungry for enthusiasm and affection" (380). Similar to the Weberian criticism of civilization, David complains about the falsehood of the "civilized" world which deceives people with appearances:

> I saw that civilization was honeycombed with what Max Nordall called conventional lies, with sham ecstasy, sham sympathy, sham smiles, sham laughter. . . . The riot of prosperity introduced the fashion of respectable women covering their faces with powder and paint in a way that hitherto been peculiar to women of the streets, so I picture civilization as a harlot with cheeks, lips and eyelashes of artificial beauty. I imagined mountains of

> powder and paint, deafening chorus of affected laughter, a huge heart, as large as a city, full of falsehood and mischief. (380)

The world with its false appearances contributes to turning the individual into a passive "thing." The unnatural atmosphere is caused by mechanization which Weber points out in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Weber draws a similarity between the modern social life and an "iron cage":

> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or rather at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self importance. For the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved' (Schroeder 114)

Mechanization is tied to routinization. According to Schroeder, routinization makes people's "adjustment to material interests and to the demands of a mundane, everyday existence" easier (114). Eventually, "the lives of human beings would come to be dominated by their material needs and they would adapt themselves to the most routine ways of securing these needs" (114), as passive beings who replace their emotions with pure rationality. Spirits are enslaved as if they are in an iron cage. In the novel, Mr. Tevkin, whose daughter David wants to marry but is rejected, gives an explanation to David about the situation they are in America that is reminiscent of Shroeder's point of view:

> It is of my soul I speak. . . . "Russia did not imprison it, did it? Russia is a better country than America, anyhow, even if she is oppressed by a czar. It's a freer country too—for the spirit, at least. There is more poetry there, more music, more feeling, even if our people do suffer appalling persecution. The Russian people are really a warm-hearted people. Besides, one enjoys life in Russia better than here. Oh, a thousand times better. There is too much materialism here, too much hurry and too much prose and—yes, too much machinery, but alas! The things of the spirit, to seem to be machine—made in America. (459)

As it is clear, materialism due to the progress made in industrialization atrophied the spirits of the immigrants and canalized them to endless commodity acquisition in

America. Immigrants were considered as objects, especially between 1880s and 1920s due to the effect of the capitalistic working process, Taylorism, which showed itself in America with the boom of industrialization. The working process, together with the reified American dream, turned laborers into machine-like organisms, ready to do whatever the system requires from them. Under the capitalist ideology, the worker is a part of the system with no assigned value apart from his labor. The physical reification does not discriminate between the rich and the poor. Bourgeoisie, as well as the working class, suffers from similar problems. Even the relationships between individuals are based on personal gain and commodities in a world where the sole concern is to gain more money and thus more possessions. This materialistic point of view drags people into alienation, annihilating their chances for happiness for once and all. In addition, the American dream, which also promotes materialism, as a dream of commodity physically reified, contributes to such a transformation. "The more deeply the reification penetrates into the soul of the man . . . the more deceptive appearances become" (Lukàcs 172). As a consequence of these conditions, David Levinsky fails to be content either as a worker or as a wealthy businessman.

CHAPTER 2

"REIFICATION OF IDENTITY" IN ANZIA YEZIERSKA'S *SALOME OF THE TENEMENTS* (1923)

Idealize the people all you can. We need ideals. . . . Study our activities and concentrate on those where you can fit in the best.

Identify yourself with your work. Work is the only thing real. The only thing that counts. The only thing that lasts.

Do not be so over-emotional. . . . To accomplish anything, you have to work on the plane of reason.

John Manning in *Salome of the Tenements*

According to a common definition in sociology, "reification of identity" is an "excessive identification of a person with a typical role or a stereotypical category" (Pitkin 272). This definition includes every kind of stereotypification and every condition in which the individual denies his options and responsibility and simply adopts socially-accepted categorizations (Pitkin 272). Reification of identity begins with identity fetishism, just as physical reification begins with commodity fetishism. First the individuals and later all the members of the group, which the individual belongs to, are objectified by the members of the dominant group. Positive or negative individual qualities of one member of the group are assigned to each member, or even worse, imaginary qualities are attributed to a group. Such a tendency is caused by political, ideological, social or economical reasons. The result, however, for each case, is the same: synthetic perceptions are formed by an anonymous authority. There are no rules or logic behind the pre-established cognition forms, yet, no one dares or cares to question the patterns of identity people are believed to or expected to fit in. Eventually, identity categorizations and the attributed characteristics are taken for granted by the

members of the dominant group and are also internalized by the less powerful or smaller group. One of the major tools for the practice of this type of reification is language, which is going to be examined under the title of "semantic reification" in the following chapter.

Anzia Yezierska's 1923 novel *Salome of the Tenements* takes the subject of assimilation as its main concern and exemplifies reification of identity in the case of an East European Jewish immigrant, Sonya Vrunsky. Yezierska's semi-fictional autobiography traces Sonya's life. Sonya is a beautiful immigrant girl from the Russian-Poland who works in a newspaper office but her circumstances change after having an interview with the millionaire John Manning. As a poor immigrant girl, Sonya's American dream is to experience democracy by becoming the wife of a millionaire like John Manning and thus being able to have access not mainly to the material things but also to the beauties in the world. Manning has devoted his life to making the East Side a "better place," however his understanding of "betterness" is different from that of the immigrants. Sonya falls in love with this rich and powerful "saint" and strives to possess him. Manning, on the other hand, tries to fit Sonya to the patterns in his mind, causing her to lose her individual qualities as a result of Americanization. Manning, in the novel, is the perfect embodiment of American values. Sonya eventually manages to win Manning's heart even if with false appearances, however, once she begins to see the reality behind the veils of his character and his charity, she leaves her prosperous life as Manning's wife and returns to be among her own people. She has achieved her American dream though she does not want it anymore. At the end of the novel, she marries an old acquaintance, tailor Jack Hollins (Jaky Solomon), who has suffered from similar problems. The couple unite their powers to give their community what they deserve: affordable goods which are beautiful, fashionable and elegant.

Anzia Yezierska, had a short-term affair with John Dewey who, as Gay Wilentz suggests, is another version of the Manning figure (xiv). Yezierska's success in a "class-and-race-based America" was a result of her education (Wilentz xi). She arrived in America with her family from Russian-Poland at the age of ten and worked as a servant, a scrub-woman and a factory worker (Stubbs vii). She graduated from Columbia Teachers College and worked as a teacher and a settlement house worker, which gave

her the opportunity to observe the life in the tenements (Wilentz xi). She remained poor until the film rights for her *Hungry Hearts* was bought by Samuel Goldwyn (Stubbs vii). In her short stories and novels, Yezierska preferred to show the dark sides of the Jewish American experience in America (Stubbs xxi). She has four collections of short stories; *Hungry Hearts* (1920), *Children of Loneliness* (1923), *The Open Cage* (1979) and *How I Found America* (2003). Apart from *Salome*, she has four more novels. Her 1925 *Bread Givers* is concerned with the "struggle between a father of the Old World and a daughter of the New" as the subtitle of the book suggests. Her novel *Arrogant Beggar* (1927) is about the hypocrisy of charity organizations in the settlements. *All I Could Never Be* (1932) is an autobiographical novel, which lost its importance when Yezierska published another autobiographical novel entitled *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* in 1950. Main themes in Anzia Yezierska's immigrant stories are the insincerity of philanthropic organizations, the loss of the immigrant souls to materialism, the clash between sentimentality and rationality in American immigrant experience, the loyalty to one's own community and culture as opposed to choosing an American way of life. Her characters, like those of Cahan, look for spiritual fulfillment in a world where materialism reigns. Yezierska is, most of the time, criticized for the sentimentality in her works and for her stereotypical characters, although she is against the stereotypical portrayal of her people. Despite criticism, she is among the successful American Jewish writers, who have introduced many Americans to the reality of the experiences of Jewish people.

"Reification of identity" in Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* can be examined in two stages; the dominant group's misrecognition and the oppressed immigrants' internalization of the imposed characteristics. From an essentialist perspective, immigrants are sometimes seen as individuals who have to melt into the general definition of being an "American," which is sometimes tragically a "must" for the immigrant who wants success or expects respect from the dominant group. Therefore, immigrants sometimes accept to fit in the given categories of definitions presented by the dominant group and internalize their requirements. Misrecognition, together with the internalization, lead to reification of identity in the novel.

Reification of identity can widely be observed in the experiences of the East European Jewish immigrants in the sense that most of them have had to embrace Americanization in order to avoid anti-Semitism or similar prejudices. The causes behind the reification attempts on Jewish identity are various. Those who are in favor of a pure WASP race in America, those who are uncomfortable with the strong cultural and religious traditions of the Jews or those who feel threatened by the rapid economic success of the Jews contributed to the reification of the Jewish identity with the espousal of an anti-Semitist approach. By the end of the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism in America resulted in "social exclusions, educational quotas, immigration allotments and public expressions of aversion to Jews" (Seltzer 9). The anti-Semitic approach became even stronger in the twenties and thirties. After World War II, there was an eclipse of anti-Jewish prejudices due to the social mobility of the immigrants and a tendency of respect for religion (Seltzer 9). Yet, anti-Semitism has never ended completely. The image of the stereotypical Jew in American minds has always been a complex one. The Jew has, most of the time, been caricaturized and stereotyped for his religious beliefs and economic success. However, in all such stereotypifications, positive characteristics are mingled with negative ones:

> Seen in religious terms the Jew was a portentous figure, at once the glorious agent of divine purpose and the deserving victim of His vengeance. In this Orthodox Christian view, the Jews were God's Chosen People, miraculously preserved and sustained; yet they were also an unfaithful people who suffered justly for their betrayal. . . . A similar duality complicated the economic stereotype of Jews: they represented both the capitalist virtues and the capitalist vices (Higham 99-100).

The verb "to Jew" has been used to cheat someone, which shows the lack of trust toward the Jewish man in business. In order to get rid of the negative stereotypifications as this one, Jews felt obliged to be successful. They tried, like many other groups, to become assimilated, since they were aware of the fact that only through Americanization could they gain success in such a hostile environment. Although, as Michael Novak maintains, they were seen as the "unmeltable ethnics" as PIGS (=Poles, Italians, Greeks and Slavs); they were reluctant to be part of the "melting pot" of America unless their success was at stake (Freese 145). Assimilation is synonymous with "Americanization." Although Americanization required a blindfold acceptation of

the equation A+B+C=A ("A" for Americanization; "B," "C" and many possible others for the cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic heritage of the immigrants), instead of a "D" (Freese 190). Most Jews, as Marcus suggests, Americanized themselves in order to survive and to be materially successful (513). Americanization was the prize of success, in other words, which most of the immigrants felt obliged to pay. Families were torn apart, Jews changed radically in dress, speech and mannerisms, although they were free to practice their religion (Marcus 510). The way to success for many of them, however, could only be opened through secularization. "Be a Jew at home and a human being abroad" became the motto of the Jewish enlightenment to promote acceptance and success through secularization (Ritterband 379). Jews embraced the idea more than any other immigrants did, but, in consequence they became "less American as well as Jewish" (Ritterband 379). They accepted and respected to be an American "somebody" instead of a Jewish "nobody." In order to be accepted by the society, some embraced the idea of fitting in socially accepted categories, by giving up their individual values they once had, in an attempt to be anonymous Americans.

Settlement houses in the early twentieth century in the Lower East Side of New York served the purpose of orienting Jewish immigrants to the new environment and educating them. They were like schools, which were similar to today's "continuing education centers" (Wilentz xiv). The settlement houses were founded and run by liberal reformers, like John Manning in *Salome of the Tenements*, who developed the method which was later adopted by the public school systems (xiv). The method, however, bore unpleasant results. It indoctrinated immigrants and the poor with the values and traditions of the dominant group. The foundation of the idea for such an "education" was Social Darwinism which was very popular at the time and its aim was "to provide a social order" (xiv). Educators such as John Dewey and Jane Adams operated the movement (xiv). As Clarence Karier, in his book on American education in the twentieth century; *Roots of Crises* (1973) suggests, such an educational movement sees ethnic and religious differences as a threat to "the American way," therefore, Americanization or in other words "assimilation" of the immigrants should be protected for the sustainability of the system (Wilentz xiv). Assimilation accelerated the reification of Jewish identity.

Sonya, in *Salome of the Tenements*, like all other immigrants, welcomes reification of identity for the sake of materializing her dreams. Her American dream is related to her democratic ideals. She wants to see if a millionaire like Manning can disregard the social classes and fall in love with a poor immigrant girl like her (Wilentz xiv). Her lust is not for wealth though; what she dreams about is love and the beauties of the world, yet, she is aware that achieving her dreams without money, is not possible (6). According to Guy Wilentz, the America in immigrants' dreams, is "a place where the high-born and the immigrant could work and love together, where they could make a new America that would not break its promise to the poor and powerless" (Yezierska xii-xiii). Sonya thinks that Manning "has everything [she] need[s] to save [her] soul." She feels "[h]e can give [her] the high things of heaven and the beauty and abundance of the earth" (7), since he is, for her, "the breath of all that is beautiful" (5). Up to then, she has not been content with her life in America, but after she meets Manning, she feels she has a chance to coerce him into marriage. She literally begs Jacques Hollins, a famous Jewish tailor, to sew a beautiful dress for her to attract Manning's attention (22). With his new French name Jacques Hollins, which he adopts for the sake of its exchange value, Jaky Solomon is just another character who has gone through reification of identity to a certain extent. He, a successful designer, has had to give up his original Jewish name for the sake of being accepted in "higher" business. The previous name, which clearly indicates his Jewish origins, would not provide access into business circles, since no one would want to work with a Jew, even if he has received education in Paris:

> I'm a Jew—yes—but I'm more than a Jew. I'm an artist. An artist transcends his race. When I returned from Paris, I saw that my living must come from the millionaires. And a Jaky Solomon, though he were a wizard of style, could not command the prices of a Hollins. Heine, the poet, let himself be sprinkled with Christian convert drops and went through the hocus-pocus of changing his religion, not because he was ashamed of his race, but because it left him free to give his art to the world unhindered by racial prejudice. (28).

In Hollins' case, one can see that he gives up struggling for his identity and disguises as a French tailor for the sake of success in business. From the perspective of society quality does not matter, image is privileged. However, different from Sonya, Hollins is

aware of what he is doing from the beginning of his scheme. His case involves reactions to anti-Semitism and results in the reification of identity. He never forgets his real identity and when he becomes powerful enough to do whatever he wants, he uses his power to make his own people happy. Sonya, on the other hand, fails to see the process of reification she goes through till the very end of the book, though it is obvious that she feels something is wrong throughout the whole process. Moreover, Hollins thinks that all this alienation from the real self has been good for him in the sense that it has drawn him "to [his] own with a force that is stronger than [him]" (28). Hollins does not start his business as a coincidence. He feels sure that he is "ready for New York" when his employer in France offers him fifty thousand francs a year, which suggests that he determines his own value in terms of the prize people think he is worth (20). This very case is an example both for the reification of identity and that of the individual as a body. Since, Hollins knows what is awaiting Sonya—reification once he himself has experienced—he brokenheartedly listens to Sonya's story of discontentment due to physical reification she experienced and due to the unfulfilled promises of her dream of America Sonya relates:

> From a far off I see the free air of where I'd like to be, but no sooner I get there than unseen walls rise up to shut me in. Even as a little girl, holding on to my aunt's skirts, on the ship to America, the sea, the sky called to me 'Fly, fly, free, like the sea-gulls!' But I was roped off, herded, like cattle, in the steerage, choked with bundles and rags and sea-sick humanity. Then later, in the factory, tied to a machine, windows barred and iron doors—and yet my heart was still on wings. I saw myself a stenographer in a beautiful office with space and light and time to think and to dream between work. But when I came, it was nothing but hammering, hammering at a typewriter till I thought I'd go meshugah from the very sight of it. Then the newspaper office! That would be the chance of America for me, I thought. But it's only another kind of drudgery dragging me down. (34)

Sonya's discontentment with her life, her admiration of the rich and "noble" Mannings, suggest that she internalizes her lower social status which is imposed on immigrants and she desperately wishes move up to a higher class. In her article "Rethinking Recognition," sociologist Nancy Fraser explains Sonya's problematic internalization of her given identity. For Fraser, cultural injustices are mostly a result of the economic ones, hence, class oppression is also a result of "the devaluation of proletarian identity" (111). Burning with the need to be accepted by the society, undervalued or overlooked

individuals feel obliged to conform to the general standards of identity, disregarding their personal characteristics. Fraser explains the problem in these words:

> Stressing the need to elaborate and display an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective identity, it puts moral pressure on individual members to a given group culture. Cultural dissidence and experimentation are accordingly discouraged, when they are not simply equated with disloyalty. So, too, is cultural criticism including efforts to explore intragroup divisions, such as those of gender, sexuality and class. Thus far from welcoming scrutiny of, for example, the patriarchal strands within a subordinated culture, the tendency of the identity model is to brand such critique as "inauthentic." The overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations. (112)

Hand-in-hand with the reification of identity, physical reification is also existent in Sonya's life. Sonya's physical reification is obvious in her sentences quoted above—she feels like the extension of the typewriter. Sonya's life as a worker reminds the Weberian idea of modern capitalist world as an "iron cage" (Weber 182). She describes her current workplace in comparison with her previous one. In her previous workplace, space and light were scarce. The physical limitations characterized by the barred windows and iron doors, also indicate the mental limits drawn by the physical reification which the capitalist production system employs. Yet, the reification of identity, awaiting her with the introduction of Manning into her life, would be no better than the experience of physical reification. Her dreams for artificial beauty show that she actually longs for the change Manning would bring into her life. Hollins, having witnessed her outbreak, is stunned and accepts to make her a dress, but Sonya is not satisfied with a single dress. She wears her new dress and visits her landlord and asks him to improve her tenement house in order to impress Manning. Seeing a beautiful and elegantly dressed "someone" the landlord accepts her wishes without hesitating (49). However, when he discovers that she is a poor immigrant, he gets mad. Sonya threatens to tell everyone what a philanderer he is and he yields to her wishes reluctantly. She has her house fixed and cleaned and waits for Manning to come. Her house becomes a "jewel box" as Lipkin, her boss, states and she, in this case, turns into a "jewel" rather than an individual, a condition which indicates physical reification together with

reification of identity (69). Sonya wants to impress Manning with false appearances, plus her landlord is impressed by Sonya's looks. Sonya is well aware of the fact that her dress is her weapon (43). When status is the main concern, the exchange value collapses and "becomes a form of sign-exchange value instead" (Tyson 7). Sonya realizes the role of sign-exchange value even as a young child going to school, she knows that she has to wear a red silk ribbon to look like the American children and eventually convinces her parents to buy her one (83).

When Sonya begins to work as Manning's secretary, Manning begins to dictate her the accepted forms of American behavior both literally and metaphorically. Sonya, bewildered by his refinement and power, willingly yields. She comes to believe that Americans are superior people in that they can control their feelings compared to the "crazy" Russians:

> Anglo-Saxons are a superior race to the crazy Russians. The higher life is built inch by inch on self-control. And they have it. They're ages ahead of us. Compared to them we're naked savages. That's why I never could love a Jew or a Russian, because they let loose their feelings too much. (68-69)

As the quotation reveals Sonya feels an "emotional identification" with her adopted culture and values. This is, for Axel Honneth, a precondition for reification of identity (115). For Sonya and for most of the immigrants in America, this precondition exists under the title of the "American dream." Immigrants form an emotional attachment to the abstract concepts of equality, democracy and the so-called power and superiority, which are promoted as American qualities. They yearn for the promises of the American dream because of their prior experience with poverty and oppression. Since America seems to be offering them all the opportunities, the immigrants end up believing that they can achieve American ideals only through American culture and values.

Sonya is impressed by the calmness of the Anglo-Saxon race which is ilustrated in her feelings towards the Mona Lisa painting in Manning's office. She is obsessed with the painting and views the portrait as "the eternal ancestress of Manning and his kind" (84). "In her eyes," she senses nobility and "the generations of self-control from which

Manning sprang up" (84). She, like Salome[5] of the tenements, wishing "the heads of men" for her well-being (170), wants to be like Mona Lisa but she dislikes some of the Anglo-Saxon behaviours. For example, she hates "the mechanical kindness" of the woman who is the social worker (43) or the fake smiles; similar to those David Levinsky complains about (380). She realizes that wealth is an "armor" which prevents her from reaching the real man in Manning (46). She knows about the lives under the veil of nobility and self-control. She is sure that "this superior being [Mona Lisa] had never loved, had never known passion" (89). Her feelings of admiration for Mona Lisa swing from one end to another and she begins to have a love-hate relationship with Manning, because she can see that her life is in their hands and that they can make of her what they want, "a black witch or a white angel" (90). She knows that the repression of the feelings can make people unhappy, but she is hungry for "civilization:"

> To have him is to possess all—the deepest, the finest of all America. He is my bridge to civilization!!!!. . . . Ach! What's civilization that I'm hungering for? Nothing but walls and barriers that hold back heart from heart. If he were flesh and blood, would he have stuffed my ears with model tenements—reconstruction plans? (99)

As the quotation reveals, Sonya's knowledge about the emptiness of civilization is not enough to make her struggle for it. Turner's explication, in this sense, affirms Sonya's assignation to civilization. He embraces the idea that the process of civilization results in the transformation of "violent bodies" into "retained bodies," in addition, civilization causes individuals to lose their emotions to courtly behaviors (124-125). This process in reification of identity is the outcome of the rationalization process, as it is the case for physical reification. According to Turner, due to the function of the "individualistic culture [of America]," strong emotions are regarded as "indicative of an absence of culture and education":

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[5] Salome is a biblical figure of the New Testament. In the birthday festivities held by Herod Antipas who married her mother, Salome dances and pleases Herod. Upon Herod's promise to reward her, she asks for the head of John the Baptist, who has been preaching about Herod's sin for having married the wife of his brother Philip, Salome's mother (Easton). Yezierska draws a parallelism between Salome and Sonya Vrunsky through this Biblical tale, in order to display Sonya's ability to enchant men to reach her aim, what Salome does by means of her dance.

> Rationalization involves a channeling of emotion into acceptable public expression, the ritualization of meeting in public places, the diminution of strong passion as insignia of moral worth and the emergence of a culture of detailed movement and individualized behavior. The expression of strong passions and the collective experience of emotion were degraded in favor of a restrained urban culture that took its lead from the aristocratic manners of the centralized absolutist courts. In short, the rationalization of culture involved the control of Dionysus by Apollo, through the mechanism of the etiquette of the table and the ceremony of the court. (125)

Throughout the novel, "the perfect American" Manning goes on "preaching," in Sonya's words, in every opportunity, on how to be more successful in life and why success is so important. During such instructions, Manning promotes the idea that success could only be gained through rationality. In a letter of "fatherly advice" Manning writes: "Identify yourself with your work. Work is the only thing real. The only thing that counts. The only thing that lasts" (91). Sonya is shocked to see how he could be so "cold," "calm," "collected" and "deadly sane," and how he could be "[a]s if he had never been young—never been alive" (91-92). Manning tells her to idealize people to be successful: "Idealize the people all you can. We need ideals. . . . In this settlement you'll find every phase of social service, take a stroll through the building. Study our activities and concentrate on those where you can fit in the best" (134). As it is clear, Manning explicitly tells Sonya to fit in the socially determined patterns, which would mean that she has to give up her original identity and adopt another one.

Axel Honneth maintains that the core of the problem in reification of identity is attempts to fit people into socially determined roles. Therefore, from his point of view, Manning can be said to have developed a "tendency to perceive other persons as mere insensate objects," and has "[lost] the ability to understand immediately the behavioral expressions of other persons" because he has "taken up an antecedent recognitional stance," or in other words, he has adopted socially determined points of views, which probably leads to misinterpretation (Honneth 129). Manning is unable to evaluate and value Sonya's individual characteristics, thus he ignores them, and tries to fit her in the patterns in his mind. As a result, he does not establish a bond or does not feel empathy to her or others. In consequence, he sees these people not as individuals but as distant "things," who are further removed from his sphere (113). Sonya, on the other hand, adopts the Anglo-Saxon "recognitional stance" with Mannings misguidance and her

internalization of the dominant values. She takes Mannings' perceptions for granted and forgets her individual qualities. What Sonya adopts—the recognitional stance— is actually adopted by infants, but it bears dangerous results in the case of adults. Referring to the findings of experts like Piaget, Mead, Davidson and Freud, Honneth mentions that infants also gain their abilities to think and interact as a result of "the act of taking over another person's perspective," that of a "figure of attachment," "its psychological parent" (113). Although it could be useful in the case of the infants and even of the children to adopt others' recognitional stance, it would doubtlessly be dangerous when the subject matters turns out to be the identity of people with different ethnic backgrounds than the majority.

Nancy Fraser underlines the fact the "identity model" comes from the Hegelian idea that identity is constructed "dialogically, through a process of mutual recognition" (109). In this mutual recognition, "each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it," which is necessary for subjectivity; because "one becomes an individual subject only by virtue of recognizing and being recognized by, another subject" (Fraser 109). Thus, "recognition from others" is "essential to the development of a sense of self" (109). To be "misrecognized," "devalued by the dominant culture" or "suffer a distortion" is thus an "injury" to one's "identity" and one's "relationship to one's self" (109). Fraser believes that the imposition of the dominant group identity causes the identity model to work as a "vehicle for misrecognition." It promotes "repressive forms of communitarianism," promotes "conformism" and "intolerance" (112). This situation is totally inapt to the Hegelian idea of a dialogically constructed identity:

> . . . [T]he identity model tends to deny its own Hegelian premises, having begun by assuming that identity is dialogical, constructed via interaction with another subject. It ends by valorizing monologism—supposing that misrecognized people can and should recognize their identity on their own. (Fraser 112)

Although Sonya is already aware of what Manning is trying to do, she does not want to face it and wants to be accepted as an American. Sonya who has once told Manning that "too much ashes from book learning" has choked his natural feelings (35), allows her natural feelings to be controlled by the dominant culture, after Manning teaches her that

being so "over-emotional" is not acceptable and that "[t]o accomplish anything, [one] ha[s] to work on the plane of reason" (133). She even begins to reject her origin, saying: "I'm an American—not a crazy Russian. I want the vulgar sordidness of success. . . . Ach! Success—success! Everything else hides in the shade for it!" (94). She ends up preaching the foolishness of yielding to emotions, as a creature of pure rationality: "If I had the law in my hand . . . I'd confine love-sick fools the same as lunatics and dangerous criminals, for you never can tell what harm love-sick madmen can do to themselves or the people they love if let loose" (93).

Sonya's feelings toward Manning are contradictory due to the emotionless and rationalized life he offers. Until the end of the novel, she oscillates between the feelings of love and hate towards him and the life he offers her. Manning's "religion" is "the elimination of all artificial class barriers" (120), whereas hers is "love" (109). Eventually, they get married, but this marriage does not bring a happy-ending to the story. In the wedding ceremony, one of the guests remarks that this marriage has been Manning's "ultimate achievement of living the ideal he professes" (127), a statement proving his intentions for marrying Sonya. Marriage to an immigrant would establish him as a philanthropist who does not care about the division of social classes. Manning's ideas present a clear case of physical reification as Sonya turns into a token to prove Manning's philanthropy. Another guest, in the celebration, thinks aloud by saying that Sonya resembles a "monkey" not knowing how to behave (122). A different guest places Sonya within the framework of one of the worst forms of reification of identity, reducing her to a "mere creature of sex" only because she is a Russian Jewess:

> They say . . . Russian Jewesses are always fascinating to men. The reason, my dear, is because they have neither breeding, nor culture, nor tradition . . . With all to gain and nothing to lose . . . They are *mere creatures of sex* . . . And much as we may dislike to admit it, men uptown and downtown are the same. (128)

Upon hearing this, Sonya retreats to her room in full rage, only to receive another blow from Manning. He goes after her and tries to convince her to come to the ceremony but she says she hates them all and refuses to return. Manning's attitude changes. He thinks her actions do not fit the "*form* of hospitality" and Sonya's response comes without

delay: "Is it the *form* to force me to go down and tell your people I love them when I hate them?" (129-130). Upon facing Sonya's revolt, Manning makes a crucial statement which makes Sonya see what she has become: "Your likes and dislikes are scarcely of importance. . . . You are my wife and as such the hostess of this house. I insist that you go down at once," he says (130). This incident is another example of reification of Sonya's identity. Being the wife of a rich and famous man like Manning requires adopting the role of an obeying wife. Since she has become his wife, she has to keep her ideas to herself which are part of her identity and embrace the socially determined proper identity and behave as Manning wishes her to behave. At this point, she realizes that she has lost the control over her identity, which is not very different from the case of the laborers in the example of physical reification:

> Sonya looked at herself in the mirror, hardly able to realize that the face staring back at her was hers. She felt crushed beaten by something vague and intangible. A terrible loneliness cried in the dumbness of her heart. She went slowly downstairs, feeling for each stair as if it symbolized a step in the unfamiliar road of her husband's world, which she must travel. . . . She had obeyed him. She was his—doubly his! (129-130)

Sonya turns into a possession, an "object" and she no longer has a unique identity. Instead, she surrenders to the socially determined ideology of how a wife of a millionaire should be. However, she does not simply try to get used to such a life, like that of an educated monkey:

> No more can I make myself over another person's pattern. I'm different. I got to be what's inside of me. I got to think the thought of my own head. I got to act from the feelings in my own heart. If I tried to make myself for a monkey, I'd go crazy in a day. (131)

The scenes in which guests comment about Sonya and in which Manning forces Sonya to come down with him back to the celebration can be explained through Berger and Luckmann's claims. For them, two processes, "habitualization" and "institutionalization," accelerates reification. The subject internalizes his/her new imposed identity due to these two tendencies. For Berger and Luckmann, "habitualization"

> . . . carries with it the important psychological gain that choices are narrowed. While in theory there may be a hundred ways to about projects of building a canoe out of matchsticks, habitualization narrows these to one. This frees the individual from the burden of "all those decisions" providing a psychological relief that has its basis in man's undirected instinctual structure. . . . habitualization makes it unnecessary for each situation to be defined anew, step by step. (53)

Habitualization comes out of internalization. The danger of internalization due to the devaluations and misrecognitions of minority identities by the dominant groups is always immanent. In the case of the minorities such internalization indicates a certain threat. Such internalization is very common in the social life as Berger and Luckmann briefly underline:

> . . . [E]verybody knows who everybody else is and who he is himself. A knight *is* knight and a peasant is a peasant to others as well as to themselves. There is therefore no *problem* of identity. The question, "Who am I?" is unlikely to arise in consciousness, since the socially predefined answer is massively real subjectively and consistently confirmed in all significant social interaction. (Berger and Luckmann 164)

Hannah Fenitchel Pitkin, a political theorist from the University of California, believes that the mentality of the individual, in this case, would embrace the idea which says: "I have no choice in that matter, I have to act this way because of my position"—as husband, father, general, archbishop, chairman of the board, gangster or hangman, as the case may be (272). Similarly, at the beginning of *Salome of the Tenements*, Sonya, as an immigrant, feels like a "nobody" because of the way she is treated and she takes her position for granted without questioning (1). Moreover in the bedroom scene after Sonya hears what the guests think about her, she obeys her husband who tells her to go down to the party room with him. While he tries to convince her, he reminds her that she is his wife and she has to do whatever this role requires. Obediently, she goes down to the party with him befitting her "role" as the wife of a rich and "noble" man. Therefore, she yields to reification of identity. According to Tyson, on the other hand, such internalization of roles is normal because ideology and psychology are inseparable:

> I operate, instead, from the assumption that there is no such thing as purely psychological or purely ideological phenomena: all psychological phenomena are ideological as well; just as all Ideological phenomena are

> also psychological, because both domains issue from the merger of individual and institutionalized desire. This does not mean that there is no such thing as an individual victim of institutionalized oppression. It means, instead, that sustained "successful" institutionalized oppression bespeaks a cultural psychology that (consciously or unconsciously) supports it even among those who are (knowingly or unknowingly) victimized. (Tyson 9)

As a result of habitualization, the new meanings are taken for granted by individuals. The second behavior, "institutionalization," on the other hand, refers to a "typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (54). For Berger and Luckmann, such institutional typifications have a reciprocal quality and both actors and actions are typified:

> [t]he typifications in habitualized actions that constitute institutions are always shared ones. They are available to all the members of the particular social group in question and the institution itself typifies individual actors as well as individual actions. The institution posits that actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X. (54)

Institutionalization in the novel could be seen in the scene where one of the guests generalize all Russian Jewesses to be "mere creatures of sex," which comes to mean that they are good for nothing else (128). Such a statement perfectly exemplifies the reification of identity in the novel. Berger and Luckmann highlight the idea of institutionalization with a parallel example. An Englishman, Henry, is very punctual. Since "everybody knows that punctuality is an English trait," now, one can integrate Henry, the Englishman and punctuality into a typification, saying all Englishman are punctual (43).

Berger and Luckmann's explanation of the birth of institutionalization helps to understand the mentality behind Manning's treatment towards Sonya. The sociologists talk about two characters, A and B, who see each other for the first time. They have to live in a place together as its only inhabitants. They claim that, in such a case, typifications will be produced and turned into institutions very quickly. Each character watches the other perform and attribute motives to each other's actions as the actions repeat. Then A will be able to say "Aha, there he goes again," being sure that B has done a certain action with the same motive he has previously observed in a previous action of B. Therefore A typifies B's actions. Moreover, each comes to predict each

other's actions and "there he goes again" turns into a "there we go again." They begin to classify each other's actions without paying much attention and they take each other's behaviors for granted (57). A gesture becomes no longer "a specific expression of the other's or one's own life," and is taken as a quality that "serves to characterize the other or oneself in a typical and anonymous manner" (Berger and Pullberg 204) The world is divided into people who respond to an event with behavior X and people who respond to the same event with behavior Y, "the same way as tables are brown or grey" (204). The result is that;

> . . . no longer is the gesture an expression of the person, but the person is defined as the embodiment of an abstract quality of which the gesture is the symbol. Following this reification. . . . there may develop a general psychology that defines persons as embodiments of abstract qualities or states. . . . For instance, one reifies action by saying that it is performed *because* (or, one may say—*because of course*) the actor is an X-type person. (205)

In this way not only a new set of rules is made up, but also mistaken generalizations which would lead one to racist attitudes such as anti-Semitism or gender discrimination is encouraged. Since A and B alone have constructed this social world they can only change or abolish it together. In time, the "there we go again," transforms into a "this is how things are done," and the next generation has to conform to the pre-established "objective" realities of the institution established by A and B, which are known to be the rules of social life (Berger and Luckmann 59). Institutions control and monopolize people's actions and they set up "predefined patterns of conduct" (55). In an institutional world in which human action is monopolized, every action becomes objective because each action should be the product of a common reality accepted by each member of the society. Individuals have to obey the patterns even if they do not want to, which means that such a world has an oppressive quality (60) and the individual in such a world has a reified identity.

Towards the end of the novel, after all her ups and downs, Sonya finally decides to live up to her real identity. She sees that Manning is her "chains," "her prison," and that love is nothing but "bondage" (91). "Where is my brains? My self respect?" (92), she asks herself and realizes that she should be the master of herself. Under the effect of the new

culture she has become "colder in the heart and clearer in the head than the American-born, *all-rightniks* of the educated world," (95) but she knows she has to "get away to save [her] soul" (100).

She also begins to see through the hypocrisy of the settlement houses. She criticizes the charity of the social experts in the settlement under "friendly" visits. Her people are called the "worthy poor" as if there are unworthy poor (135). The experts teach the settlement dwellers how to make milkless, butterless and eggless cakes (134) and condemn those who have chicken to eat but are still asking for charity (136). She criticizes the way Manning's social experts make her people content with living a poor way of life, instead of helping them out for a better life. She says, "this settlement is no orphan asylum to hold us like dogs on a chain!" (136). She witnesses how a teacher convinces dwellers to attend her course by giving them nutted candies and silk handkerchiefs, a pretension to hide behind so that Manning does not realize her incompetence (137). All her observations make her detest the way the charity works:

> So this is their plain of reason—'reason' forced down the throats of people. Hireling telling lies to hireling! All of them lying to him! But they can't lie to the people.". . . . Before her marriage, she had willfully blinded herself to what was going on in the settlement. It had been enough for her just to be Manning's secretary, thrilling and intoxicating herself with his delusions. She had told herself that his personality must humanize the most inhuman activities of philanthropy. Now she was seeing his settlement, as she had refused to let herself see it before her marriage. (137)

She remembers Hollins' sardonic words: "Playing with poverty is more exciting than knocking golf balls" (139) and feels that "[at] last the curtain was down," and behind the curtain is "only the winter coldness of a sterile race" (146). She faces Manning and confesses that she has borrowed money from a pawnbroker named Honest Abe to look desirable for Manning and that she is a liar. Yet, she adds:

> I'm a liar but you are a cheat. You go around preaching democracy and the brotherhood of man. But you do not want my people. You never loved me for me, myself. You only love dead traditions. Your only religion is your family pride. (149)

After Manning learns that Sonya has borrowed money from Honest Abe, he becomes furious and asks how she could put his name in the hands of *that Jew* (151). Sonya discovers his "hidden hate of the Jew" with his outburst (156) and realizes that Hollins, the Jewish designer, is "infinitely a superior man," "an artist with a born understanding of crazy people like [her]" (155), whereas Manning is a "cold mummy," not "a living breathing human" (153). She leaves Manning and searches for a job without hiding behind false appearances, yet, nobody takes her seriously since her appearance does not look showy enough. She realizes that "for the truth they burn [people]" (161). However she is decisive. She would fight "the whole world against [her] . . . alone, without a roof over her head" (162). She works as a waitress and eventually meets a pirate designer and begs for a job. She becomes a sample hand, working day and night and finally she designs a dress which harbors both simplicity and elegance at the same time. The "Sonya Model" dress becomes an instant success and causes Hollins, the Jewish designer, to offer her a job, which she willingly accepts. In the meantime, Manning comes and begs Sonya to return home but she refuses. She prefers to stay with Hollins and they decide to work in the garment industry together.

Once her marriage with Manning is over, she realizes that "the only thing real in her unreal experience [was] the gnawing sense of nothingness" (155). Manning comes to see her for the last time and repeats his request to have her back. She declines but realizes the "hungry savage East Sider" in Manning (183). She understands that no one is superior to the others; therefore there is no need for or logic in adopting a false identity in order to be accepted by the members of a certain group. The novel ends with a triumphant Sonya, unlike the suffering David in *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Sonya's triumph is over the reification of identity. She realizes what reification is doing to her and avoids it by leaving Manning, though she relinquishes her American dream for the sake of avoiding reification, which compromises her triumph to a certain extent.

CHAPTER 3

"SEMANTIC REIFICATION" IN EVA HOFFMAN'S *LOST IN TRANSLATION: A LIFE IN A NEW LANGUAGE* (1989)

Sometimes an expression has to be withdrawn from language and sent for cleaning—then it can be put back to circulation.

Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

As all other immigrant groups, Jews had to communicate in English, a language different from their own native tongue. Using a new language requires more than the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar since the boundaries of language extend to learning cultural and socially accepted usages of words. Adopting certain limited socially determined meanings of words which are ossified often results in reified semantic forms. The "dominant language," which the immigrants have to adopt, contains such reified semantic forms in it. According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu the dominant language "discredits and destroys" the political discourse of the dominated (462). The borrowed language becomes a "deranged language," which is "unable to express anything true, real, or felt" (462). Such a language "dispossesses the speaker of the very experience it is supposed to express" and the "fine words" are there just to show "the dignity of the expressive intention" (462). The employment of such a language is a kind of act on a "stage," a "theatre" where there are despair, lack of feelings, lack of trust to the words uttered and anonymous rules to be followed (462). East European Jews who first arrived in America found themselves exactly on such a stage trying to speak English, a "borrowed language" to use Bourdieu's term. Jewish immigrants, like all other immigrants had two choices, as Eva Hoffman suggests in her *Lost in Translation*: either "to give in completely, to play the game for all its word," or

"to renounce desire [American dream] completely" (138). Their choice, like that of most other immigrants, was the former.

Eva Hoffman's autobiographical work *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989) focuses on the difficulties of using English-as-a-borrowed-language in the case of a Jewish immigrant from Russian-Poland in America. Hoffman was born in 1945 in Cracow, Poland, to a Jewish family who survived the Holocaust by hiding in the Ukrainian forest and in a barn with the help of a mute-peasant. When she was thirteen, she immigrated to Vancouver, Canada, with her parents. Later, she moved to Texas, this time alone, for her university education. After having given up on her ambition to become a concert pianist, which was her passion in her youth, she studied literature at Rice University and received her doctorate degree in English at Harvard. Her marriage to a fellow student did not last long. She moved to New York to be included in the intellectual circles of the city after her divorce. She has worked for *The New York Times* and thought literature and creative writing at many universities (Brown).

Lost in Translation (1989) is Eva Hoffman's first literary publication. After this memoir, she wrote a book of history titled *Exit into History: A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe* (1993) and another book titled *Shetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (1997). In 2001, she published *The Secret*, a science fiction novel, the main character of which discovers that she literally has no father and that she might have been cloned from her mother. The novel deals with the discussions around the ethics of cloning, with the problematic meanings of identity, selfhood, consciousness, family and ancestry. *The Secret* is followed by a critical inquiry into the reception of Holocaust: *After Such Knowledge: Where Memory of the Holocaust Ends and History Begins* (2004). Her latest fictional work, *Illuminations* (2008), is about the changes in the life of Isabel Merton, a concert pianist, after she meets a political exile from war-torn Chechnya, Anzor Islikhanov, who rebels against the injustices made to his people and wants to help them. One of the common characteristics of all her works whether it is a memoir, a book of history or a novel is the incorporating of autobiographical elements with personal experiences.

Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* is based on the experience of an exile with intense emphasis on language. Her memoir highlights the relationship between language, culture and perceptions focusing on how meanings in language affect ulture and perceptions. The book, different from the previous two literary works analyzed, does not give a detailed account of Hoffman's life before she comes to America, nor does it go into much detail about her life there. Rather, it displays Hoffman's thoughts about the life in the new land, especially with reference to the language used and her problem with the meanings of its words together with her efforts to understand and get used to it. Her education of literature helps her question the semantic reification in language, though she does not use the term reification in her work. She talks about New Criticism, which was the academically acclaimed critical literary theory in the meantime and how this approach contributes to the "detachment" and "objectivity" in language with the premise of "critical rather than . . . sympathetic faculties" (182). Her criticism of language's "loss of living connection" (107) and the transformation of the living into a "thing" (106), can be explained through semantic reification. Throughout the book, Hoffman's two selves—the Polish-speaking and the English-speaking—contradict each other due to the different nature of the two languages. Young Eva is confused because of the difficulty of translating one language into another. The reified quality of the meanings of the words in English language complicates her mastery of this language, but at the end of the book, she is able to have a full command of the new language both verbally and culturally in spite of having experienced reification of identity to a certain extent, which is the outcome of semantic reification.

Other scholars, besides Hoffman, have focused on the role of the language in one's life. According to the two American sociologists, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, language brings meaning to one's life and helps one to understand the reality of his/her existence (21, 37). For them, it is the everyday-language that provides objectifications and creates an order to make life meaningful. Berger and Luckmann underline the fact that people live in a "geographically designated place," using simple or more complicated tools that are "designated in the technical vocabulary of [their] society, that live within a "web of human relationships" from activity groups to the nation they are part of. Relationships are ordered by language, therefore, it would be proper to say that language "marks the coordinates of [people's lives] in society and fills [them] with

meaningful objects" (21). Language is "the most important sign system of society" (36-37). Bryan D. Palmer, a history scholar, also believes that language "orders the relations of classes and genders, ever attentive to specific hierarchies" (3). His approach, in this sense, is close to that of Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who maintains that language is not a passive entity but has a potential to shape human life. Moreover, according to Palmer, language is a system of signification beyond words as it also includes symbols and structures (3) which people try to fit objects and concepts in. Therefore, language "constructs being" with words whose meanings refer to one point of view only, which may end up with reification.

"Semantic reification," according to José Medina, a Spanish professor of philosophy, is born out of "the assumption that meaning is a *thing* (whether physical or mental) something *determinate* and *fixed*" (3). Medina divides semantic reification into two categories: one that comes out of the objectivist approach and one that comes out of the subjectivist view. The first category, which he calls "objective reification," is "the most natural form of reification" which refers to "think[ing] of meaning as a *thing out there* in an *objective* realm, whether this is the physical domain of natural entities or the notional domain of ideal entities (7). The function of this type of reification is "locat[ing] meanings in a *mind-independent* realm" (8). The second category, "subjective reification," on the other hand, is contrary to objective reification. In this type, "meanings are not *things* out there but *things in here*, mental things." In order to make his point, Medina refers to Wittgenstein's "regress argument" in his *Investigations* which suggests that every proposition requires justification. According to his perspective of language, Medina argues that subjective reification is not acceptable, since "there are no privileged mental representations (such as pictures, schemas, rule formulations, or interpretations) which *by themselves* can univocally determine the meaning of a word and its correct use" (11). "Mental representations," thus, "can always be interpreted and applied in different ways; and therefore, we're led from one representation to another indefinitely when we attempt to fix the correct use of a word or the correct application of a rule by means of mental representations" (11). From this point of view, using meanings that are derived from prejudices, ideological assumptions or simply out of accepting wrong definitions inherited from the past is not proper.

Bryan D. Palmer, on the other hand, relates reification in language with the process of "descent into discourse." For him, discourse is *not* a process "to be avoided because of some taint or contamination. . . . as [the existence of various discourses are] all to the good" (5). The problem, he maintains, is "all that is lost in the tendency to reify language, objectifying it as unmediated discourse, placing it beyond social, economic and political relations and in the process displacing essential structures and formations to the historical sidelines" (5). For Palmer, like it is for Medina, reification in language is the result of "fixation" of the meanings in language due to its "partial" and "selective" nature; "excavating and hence materializing the relations of economy and culture, necessity and agency, structure and process that language mediates incessantly" (5).

Since physical reification is based on commodity fetishism and reification of identity is based on identity fetishism, semantic reification, is due to *semantical fetishism,* as the use of a reified language "insists on patterns and schemas of perception" (Demmerling). According to a Wittgensteinian perspective of language, semantic reification can be explained with the potential of language to;

> . . . disguise the thought—so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized. (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.002)

Jews in America, coming from a totally different cultural and linguistic background have had great difficulty in both adopting and understanding the semantically reified language in America. Wittgenstein thinks that the Jew "is always measured on scales which do not fit him" (*Culture and Value* 16e), which is partly due to semantic reification. He emphasizes the unfair approach toward the Jew and explains this mistake with the wrong use of language:

> Many people can see clearly enough that the Greek thinkers were neither philosophers in the western sense, nor scientists in the western sense, that the participants in the Olympian Games were not sportsmen and did not fit into any western occupation. But it is the same with Jews. And by taking the words of our < language > as the only possible standards we constantly fail to do them justice. So at one time they are overestimated, at another underestimated. (16e)

As Wittgenstein points out, the limits of language to express meanings contributes to the "overestimation" or "underestimation" of Jews. The problem arises from the employment of socially accepted "words," in the form of either adjectives or definitive nouns. Reification is sometimes related with the use of metaphors and models which denies everything apart from the essential, the general, the accepted. Language itself is convicted for this denial, with the justification that it is inadequate to express "everything" (72). Eva Hoffman, in her memoir, similarly complains about the inadequateness of language, even as a small child in Poland. She believes that only the language of music is capable of telling *everything* (72). Adorno explains the reason of such a potential in music with the lack of intentions. He thinks that music, "bereft of all intentionality" is "an acoustic parallel to a kaleidoscope," as it gives the listener nothing more than what s/he hears (*Music and Language* 3). With the intentional and thus insufficient language at hand, Hofmann cannot express *everything* without skipping *anything*. Therefore, she makes up her own language in an attempt to express herself:

> Bramaramaszerymery, rotumotu pulimeli,"I say in a storytelling voice, as if I were starting out a long tale, even though I know perfectly well that what I'm making up are nonsense syllables. "What are you talking about?" my mother asks. "Everything," I say and then start again: "Bramarama szerymery. . ." I want to tell A Story, Every Story, everything all at once, not anything in particular that might make a Möbius strip of language, in which everything, everything is contained. There is a hidden rule even in this game, though - that the sounds have to resemble real syllables, that they can't disintegrate into brute noise, for then I wouldn't be talking at all. I want articulation - but articulation that says the whole world at once. (11)

Eva constantly complains about the problem of "wordlessness." What she means by "wordlessness" is not the limited number of words in language. What she suggests is rather that language is incapable as a medium of expression since words are semantically reified. Although the quotation given, which refers to the Polish language back at home, proves that reification of language can be observed in all languages, Hoffman comes to see the existence of it more easily in America due to the fact that she is learning the language and the meanings of the words in it from the very beginning. She defines America as an "unworded world" (184). Hoffman thinks this lack of words is "a sufficient motive for violence" since the outcome of "linguistic dispossession" is close to "the dispossession of one's self" (124). In the words she hears on the street;

"Do not do this to me, man, you fucking bastard, I'll fucking kill you," she hears "not the pleasures of macho toughness but an infuriated beating against wordlessness, against the incapacity to make oneself understood, seen" (124). She goes even further to claim that "all neurosis is speech disease" (124). Hoffman explains the hidden unhappiness of the newly-rich Jewish American women with the same wordlessness. She thinks they are not content at all with what they have although they act as if they really were happy:

> I often find myself with them in the stuffy big bubbles of their cars, crisscrossing Vancouver's relentlessly symmetrical roads, from home to shopping center to an endless round for liquorless parties—women who have gotten everything they have wanted and who have so little to stave off boredom or private grief, so little to sustain them. They have attained within a few years what it took their Jewish predecessors on the Lower East Side at least two generations to achieve and on the whole they consider themselves contented, satisfied. (142)

She is obsessed with how these women behave, because the possibility of becoming one of these women terrifies her. These women have accomplished the material comforts of a desired life yet, they are unhappy. Eva is one of the people who can see the lack of satisfaction behind their "I'm fine" refrain (143). They act as if they are content just because they are supposed to be happy, befitting the social roles, having everything they have dreamed of. The situation of these women is reminiscent of Betty Freidan's description of "a problem with no name" in *The Feminine Mystique*. Freidan writes about post World War II middle class women who suffer from a false belief system in which they try to find the meaning in their lives through their position as a wife and a mother (15). The women Hoffman talks about belong to a similar group Freidan refers to. Hoffman explains the very tragedy of unhappiness with the wordlessness of the lives of these women:

> But perhaps, if they had the words to say, just what they feel, something different might pour out, an elusive complaint of an elusive ailment. For in so far as meaning is interhuman and comes from the thickness of human connections and how richly you are known, these successful immigrants have lost some of their meaning. In their separateness, silence, their wisdom—what they used to know in an intimate way, on their skin—is stifled and it dries up a little. . . . they say to each other, "I'm fine, everything is fine," and they almost believe that they are. (143)

Eva's ideas on the inadequateness of the words in language are similar to Wittgenstein's ideas on language. Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, says that "[a] proposition can only say *how* a thing is, not *what* it is" (3.221). For the two psychologists, Philip Brian Bell and Phillip James Staines, such a case—when the proposition says *what* "the thing" is, in other words, when one uses "a metaphor or "model" with the reality to which it is hypothetically analogous"—would result in reification (110). Yet, the inadequacy of words cannot be seen as an excuse for wrong practices such as reification, because language is the only medium of communication between individuals and groups. Wittgenstein clarifies his premise, by saying that if a person asks him; "How am I to know what [one] means, I see nothing but the signs he gives?" then he would say: "how is he to know what he means, when he has nothing but the signs either?" (*Philosophical Investigations* 504). His answer to the problem is to try, as much as possible, to use the existent language and avoid semantic reification at the same time.

For Hoffman, an ideal language is "the shape that language takes when it's not held down by codes of class, of rules of mannerliness, or a common repertory of inherited phrases" (219), in short, one that is not semantically reified. The closest language to her definition is that of her husband's. The language Hoffman's Texan husband, Tom, uses is depicted to be a "solo" (218), with a terminology from *music*; which, she thinks, has the potential of "telling everything" (72). Hoffman feels "this bebop speech" has the potential to "carry [her] right into the heart of America" (219). She also calls it a "riff," an "all-American form" of language. She defines the word "riff" as "a story that spins itself out of itself, propelled by nothing but the imagination—a story that can go any place and take off into the stratosphere without anyone minding" (219). It is a "pure performance" which makes her "dizzy." She thinks his "slip-and-slide speech" is not different from jazz or action-painting both in the sense that it is purely American and that it is a matter of improvisation (219). She admires his "American" way of speaking and thinks that it is a sign of class (123). With such attractiveness, the new language is internalized by Hoffman step by step. Eventually, "the language [enters her] body, has incorporated itself in . . . [her] being (245). In fact, her memoir is concerned mainly with the story of this adaptation. She is aware that she has to adopt the new language, whereas "there's no returning to the point of origin, no regaining of childhood unity"

and that "[e]xperience creates style and style, in turn, creates a new woman" (273). She knows, however, that her experience is a dangerous one, too, for "pattern[s]" are among "the hazards of emigration and exile and extreme mobility" (278).

If *res* means "thing" and *reification* is taken as "thingification," the acquisition of language itself can be accepted to be a process of reification, too, since through language, concrete objects or abstract concepts are reduced into words, in other words, into "things" that can be said, heard, thought and written. Semantic reification in language, on the other hand, results in the employment of fixed expressions such as symbols and structures for varied and variable people, concepts or qualities and thus limitation and/or reduction of meaning, in short, in deformation of language. For Wittgenstein, living with such a "deformed" language is not much different from wearing shoes that are too tight (*Culture and Value* 41e), as it puts the individual in a similar situation, being unable to move freely and comfortably. Some of the natural qualities of language, if not its weaknesses, contribute to semantic reification. Among these qualities are the collective-making of meanings in language; the potential of language to "typify," "categorize," "anonymize" the signified and language's power of legitimatization of definitions, even if false assignations are attributed to the words to be defined. Collective-making of language contributes to reification in the sense that it suggests the idea that personal definitions do not have credibility until they are collectively-confirmed. The tendency of language to typify, categorize and thus anonymize the signified contributes not only to reification of concepts but also reification of identities. Finally, the power of language to legitimize definitions might end up in embracing a false reality, since illegitimate definitions might be legitimized by means of language. In all such cases, meanings are fixed and limited and thus all end up with semantic reification.

Berger and Luckmann claim that a language can be born only when people detach themselves from the "here and now of the subjective states" (36-37). This is what Eva Hoffman does when she has to make a vital decision that might change the flow of the rest of her life. After she has acquired a second consciousness—like that Lukàcs coined for physical reification—"behind [her] back, while [she] wasn't looking," she becomes a "hybrid creature," "a partial American," "sort of a resident alien" (221) and definitions

cease to have positive connotations. Naturally, her two selves speak different languages and they totally contradict each other due to the semantic reification available in both. When she tries to decide whether she really wants to marry "[her] Texan" (189), her subjectivity seems to lose the game:

> Should you marry him? the question comes in English.
> Yes.
> Should you marry him? the question echoes in Polish.
> No.
> But I love him; I'm in love with him.
> Really? Really? Do you love him as you understand love?
> . . . .
> Why should I listen to you? You do not necessarily know the truth about me just because you speak in that language [Polish]. Just because you seem to come from deeper within. . . . I do not need you anymore. I want you to be silent. Shuddup. (199)

Hoffman sees that "the free play of subjectivity" is not possible in a world that takes only the common meanings seriously (203). Berger and Luckmann maintain that everyday reality presents itself as "an intersubjective world" and the only way to share a common sense about reality is to make a correspondence between individual meanings and the meanings of the society (23). Hoffman is aware of the fact when she says, "I know that I cannot sustain my sense of separate reality forever, for after all the only reality is a shared reality, situated within a common ground" (195). Wittgenstein has a similar approach towards the idea of a shared language accepted by each member of the society, but he investigates further to make a striking point: "If language is to be a means of communication," he says, "there must be an agreement not only in definitions [or *meanings*] but also (queer it may sound) in judgments" and goes on:

> To communicate judgments, it is necessary to have agreement about the [meanings of the] concepts used. Agreement about concepts however, requires agreement among judgments made using an exemplifying of those concepts that in turn requires a harmony in the practice of judging. This is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (*Philosophical Investigations* 241)

Hoffman observes this in her own experiences: "My American Friends are so many," she says with an interesting capitalization of the initials of the words and complains about the fact that "they share so many assumptions that are quite invisible to them,

precisely because they are shared" (210). All these assumptions are fixed by means of language, and translating her self—expressing herself to her American friends—by using the semantically reified language is not easy. Adopting the language would mean being assimilated to a certain extent, which she tries to avoid:

> These are assumptions about the most fundamental human transactions, subcutaneous beliefs, which lie just below the stratum of political opinion or overt ideology: about how much "space," physical or psychological, we need to give each other, about how much "control" is desirable, about what is private and what public, about how much interest in another person's affairs is sympathy and how much interference, about what's a pretty face or a handsome body, about what we're allowed to poke fun at and what we have to revere, about how much we need to hide in order to reveal ourselves. To remain outside such common agreements [of meaning] is to remain outside reality itself—and if I'm not to risk a mild cultural schizophrenia, I have to make a shift in the innermost ways. I have to translate myself. . . . without being assimilated. . . . (210)

Evidently, the contours of meanings and judgments are drawn "mutually," and new experiences seem to have no possible role in making one's personal judgments. The "semantic objectivism . . . locates meanings in a mind-independent realm" (Medina 8). Social judgments can determine what an American is supposed to be like. In this sense, it is clear that semantic reification is very closely related with reification of identity, since the identification of a person or a minority group is possible only through formally or informally naming that person or group whether or not in a judgmental manner.

In semantic reification, individuals do not go through a decision-making process independently; instead they take the symbol, model or the socially-accepted meanings for granted. For the sake of providing a harmony in judging and thus naming people, concepts and events, limitations are put in the free usage of language, which is not very different from censorship. In Hoffman's case, censorship also shows itself when one "mouth[s] foreign terms without incorporating their meanings," as the person, then, "risk[s] becoming bowdlerized" (211). Wittgenstein also finds such an implication of censorship in language inappropriate as he says "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 5.6). Berger and Luckmann, on the other hand, underline the fact that such attempts to explain reality with the common

language, meanings of which are determinate, might also result in a "distortion" of the reality:

> The common language available to me for the objectification of my experiences is grounded in everyday life and keeps pointing back to it even as I employ it to interpret experiences in finite provinces of meaning. Typically, therefore, I "distort" the reality of the latter as soon as I begin to use the common language in interpreting them that is I "translate" the non-everyday experiences back into the paramount reality of everyday life. (26)

Such translations of individual experiences lead the society to have one form of "correct" identity, action, image or behavior and finally cause the society to live on "binary oppositions." Hoffman has a similar problem, as the title of her book suggests. She is "lost in translation" both literally in translating from Polish to English and vice versa and also in translating her experiences into social reality patterns drawn by fixation of meanings that take her individual qualities away. The language she dreams of is one "that will express what [the real self] knows, a calm and simple language that will subsume the clangor of specialized jargons of partial visions, a language old enough to plow under the superficial differences between signs, to the deeper strata of significance" (212). In a social world where such a language does not exist, assimilation cannot be avoided. Two American psychologists, Philip Brian Bell and Phillip James Staines, touch upon the problem in their *Reasoning and Argument in Psychology* and "bad" and explain reification from the perspective of psychology:

> Reification is so prevalent in ordinary speech as to go unnoticed. For, instance, the evaluative adjectives "good" and "bad" are often used to indicate that the objects and situations to which they are applied either satisfy or fail to meet certain criteria. Although there is often disagreement about such criteria in meaningfulness of evaluative adjectives in general, it is clear that when these adjectives are converted into nouns, reification frequently results. People often speak as though "goodness" and "evil" ("badness") were psychological qualities which a person possesses in the same way as he possesses, say, red hair or blue eyes. . . . This arises out of a failure to distinguish clearly between *evaluation* and *interpretation* on the one hand and *description* on the other. (77)

If semantic reification is prevalent in daily language, it will be prevalent in literary language as well. Certain critical outlooks possess ideas that contribute to such reification. Hoffman, in her memoir, talks about the critical literary theory, New

Criticism, and defines it as an approach that "prizes detachment," for she is "asked to parse pieces of text as if they were grammatical constructions" that have nothing to do with *life* (182). Since the approach supports the idea that "form is content," which comes to mean that "there is no such thing as content;" characters in literary works are no more than "formal entities" or "symbolic constructions" (182). In such an approach towards literature, fixation of meanings through symbols and determinate definitions of certain characteristics and situations befit semantic reification. In 1964, when Hoffman began studying literature at Rice University, New Criticism was about to fade away. Having been developed from the roots of Russian Formalism of 1910s and followed by the American Formalist movement which came up in the forties, New Criticism had some qualities in common with both approaches. New Criticism had its golden age in America between the twenties and sixties and valued only the language properties in the text. Any other information extrinsic to the text, such as the life and ideas of the author, his/her intentions or the reader's interaction with the text, named "intentional fallacy" and "affective fallacy" respectively, did not matter and was not acceptable (Tyson 136-137). These qualities of New Criticism made Hoffman see it as a "laboratory method" (182), as it totally ignores the contribution of meanings of *living* people to the text with its anti-humanist approach. New Criticism formed a suitable ground for reification in the sense that it ignored the existence of individual meanings and embraced rather fixed ones in the critical process. New Critical approach evaluates characters as symbolic constructions, thereby anonymizes them without paying attention to whether or not they are actually symbolic. Similar linguistic applications can also be observed in Formalism. A Russian Formalist, Boris Tomashevsky, talks about the employment of a suitable name, costume, word choice and speech in relation to the character in a literary work. He calls this attempt the "masking technique," which helps stereotypification ("Tema Örgüsü"). Another critic, Viktor Shklovsky, talks about adopting a word economy, which requires using as few words as possible to refer to a certain object or idea ("Art as Technique"). Such an idea would cause ignoring hybrid forms through the use of two poles of *meaning*—binary oppositions—with the purpose of saying what should be said as shortly as possible.

French philosopher Jacques Derrida's deconstructive approach offers a way out of semantic reification. He criticizes the way meanings are reduced to determinate ones

and how such meanings become supplements for the actual meanings of the words. He views deconstruction as a political practice; an action against the use of binary oppositions which would lead to "essentialism." For Derrida, the "sign" as it is used in Saussurean terminology, is "always a supplement for the thing itself" (*Of Grammatology* 145). Yet, the "scandal" for him is that the sign as an "image," a "representer" turns out to "make the world move" (147). In this sense, he finds it proper to use the adjective "dangerous" to qualify the sign as a "supplement" as French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau does in his *Confessions* (155). Talking about the supplementary quality of masturbation over sexual intercourse, Rousseau underlines the reason why supplement could be so dangerous, which Derrida explains in his *Of Grammatology*:

> The supplement has not only the power of procuring an absent presence through its image; procuring it for us through the proxy [procuration] of the sign, it holds it at a distance and masters it. . . . Thus, the supplement is dangerous in that it threatens us with death. . . . (155)

Derrida, thus, mentions that the sign is "metaphoric" because it is "false with regard to the object" (277). In *Lost in Translation*, Hoffman complains about the same problem. She states that "the signifier has become severed from the signified" (106), so the meaning signifier carries serves to "typify," "categorize," "anonymize" the signified, as a supplement, which brings about the second linguistic tendency that contributes to the semantic reification in language.

Language has a power "to make everything look the same" (*Culture and Value* 22e). According to the idea of Wittgenstein, *dictionaries* are the most precise example for this (22e). For Berger and Luckmann too, language has a potential of "typifying," "categorizing," and "anonymizing" experiences. In order to explain this quality of language they present the reader a common example from daily life; a quarrel with one's mother-in-law. Before one explains about his "concrete and subjectively unique" experience with his mother-in-law, people would have already typified it under the title "mother-in-law trouble," which would suggest an "anonymous" quality in the unique experience. In such a tendency, individual, "biographical" experiences are "subsumed under general orders of meaning that are both subjectively and objectively real" (Berger

and Luckmann 38-39) and such naming is clearly nothing other than a form of semantic reification.

Hoffman is faced with a similar tendency as soon as she arrives in America. She is called "Eva" other than her real name "Ewa," and her sister "Alina" is called "Elaine" (105). Such distortion of their names could be taken as semantic reification, too, as their Russian-Polish identities are fixed to American ones through language. This "careless baptism," in Hoffman's words (105), is the outcome of the social attempt to anonymize people. The result of this attempt results with "the signifier . . . severed from the signified" (106) and thus their names become "identification tags" people assign to them:

> The twist in our names takes them a tiny distance from us but it's a gap into which the infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can't yet pronounce, are not us. They are *identification tags*, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself. We walk to our seats, into a roomful of unknown faces, with names that make us strangers to ourselves. (105)

Hoffman does not only become a stranger to her "self," she becomes a stranger to her surroundings, too, due to reification of meanings in daily language. "The words [she] learn[s]" she says "do not stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in [her] native tongue" (106). The word "river" in the example she gives is "a vital, sound, energized" in Polish, whereas the same word in English is "cold," "without an aura." For her, "[i]t does not give off the radiating haze of connotation" (106). Therefore the process of making meaning works in reverse:

> When I see a river now, it is not shaped, assimilated by the word that accommodates it to the psyche—a word that makes a body of water a river rather than an uncontained element. The river before me remains a "thing," absolutely other, absolutely unbending to the grasp of my mind. . . . Now this picture-and-word-show is gone; the thread has been snapped. I have no interior language and without it, interior images—those images through which we assimilate the external world, through which we take it in, love it, make it our own—become blurred too. (106-107)

For Hoffman, there is a distance between the image and the word, which results in a detachment from reality and all this is based on the fact that beings are reduced into "things." She says that "things threaten to crush [her] with their thinghood . . . with their inorganic proliferation, with their meaningless" (136). Such "thinghood" is also valid for abstract concepts like emotions. A general tendency to "prototype" feelings is also among what she observes in her daily life. She explains this situation as a "disjoining between the word and thing":

> When my friend Penny tells me that she is envious or happy, or disappointed, I try laboriously to translate not from English to Polish but from the word back to its source, to the feeling from which it springs. Already, in that moment of strain, spontaneity of response is lost. And anyway, the translation does not work. I do not know how Penny feels when she talks about envy. The world hangs in a Platonic stratosphere, a vague prototype of all envy, so large, so all-encompassing that it might crush me—as might disappointment or happiness. . . . words are just themselves. . . . No, this radical disjoining between word and thing is a desiccating alchemy, draining the world not only of significance but of its colors, striations, nuances—its very existence. It is the loss of a living connection. (107)

As a result of such loss of connection with "reality," her problems begin to arise, since her existence is being threatened. She complains that she cannot see what she used to see and cannot comprehend it. She realizes that she is not "filled with language anymore and [she has] only a memory of fullness to anguish [her] with the knowledge that, in this dark and empty state, [she does not] really exist" (108), which is due to the semantic reification in language. In order to get rid of her "dark and empty state" she feels she has to choose between the two languages. In the fight of Polish and English, English emerges as the dominant language since it is the language everybody around her speaks, yet she still fails to internalize it:

> Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words do not apply to my new experiences; they are not coeval with any of the objects, or faces or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English words are not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private conversation could proceed. (107)

At another time, she decides to keep a journal and wonders which language she should use. After a long evaluation, she decides that writing in Polish would be like "resorting

to Latin or Ancient Greek—an eccentric thing to do in a diary, in which you are supposed to set down your most immediate experiences and unpremeditated thoughts in the most unmediated language" as Polish is for her "a dead language, the language of the untranslatable past" (120). However, picking English is not totally satisfactory, either. She cannot write about "sentimental effusions of a rejected love" or "eruptions of familial anger" or "consoling broodings about death," because English, for her, is not "a language of such emotions" (121). Therefore, she writes about "Thoughts," that are "oddly objective." She writes about "the ugliness of wrestling," "the elegance of Mozart," and "Dostoyevsky" (121), as a result of semantic reification. She does exactly what New Criticism does. Her logic leads her to come to the conclusion that "there is no such thing as content," since "form [itself] is [taken as] content" (182). So, she gives up content for the sake of the form and adopts a "written self" (121), in her own words, which comes to mean that her real self is somehow reified in the act of writing. She comes across another problem too: being unable to use the word "I" in her writing, because she does not feel that what she writes is what she really thinks or feels; as she writes in the frame of collective meanings and judgments of the society:

> This language is beginning to invent another me. However I discover something odd. It seems that when I write (or, for that matter think) in English, I am unable to use the word "I." I don't go as far as the "schizophrenic she"—but I am driven, as by a compulsion to the double, the Siamese-twin "you." (107)

As it is clear from the quotation above, she feels "so very out of" reality as a consequence of semantic reification, which makes her think that her role in life is to be a mere "observer" (131). She begins to ponder about the meaning of her existence. She decides that there are four parts to a human being, "physical, intellectual, spiritual and creative" (137). She decides again that if she devotes two hours for each part everyday she can attain "a fully realized being" (137). Here, one can see that Hoffman has already internalized the tendency of categorization. She takes each different part of a human being as homogeneous, which is an example for anonymization. She goes even further and tries to put herself in the collectively accepted cultural categories, but it is not very easy for her to "define" herself, especially when the definition would be under the

effects of historical circumstances and sociological categories. Since a human being is not stable like a geometrical shape, it is very difficult to define one's nature:

> I wish I could define myself. . . . I wish I could live in a world of prismatic reflections, carefully distinguished colors of sunsets and English scarves, synthetic repetitions and reiterative surprise—a world in which even a reddened nostril can be rendered as a delicious hue rather than a symptom of a discomforting common cold. I wish I could attain such a world because in part that is our most real and most loved world—the world of utterly individual sensibility, untrampled by history, or horrid intrusions of social circumstance. . . . How trite and tedious, in contrast, to see oneself as a creature formed by historic events and defined by sociological categories. I am a Jew, an immigrant, half Pole, half American. . . . I suffer from certain syndromes because I was fed on stories of war. . . . I haven't escaped my past or my circumstances, they constrain me like a corset, making me stiffer, smaller. I have not bloomed to that fullness of human condition in which only my particular traits—the good mold of my neck, say, or the crispiness of my ironies—matter. (197)

The categorization of the self, which is accepted in difficulty turns out to be possible. She ponders on her multiple selves for a long time and finally decides that she belongs to more than one category due to the limitations of words in a semantically reified language. Since the categories she is supposed to fit are fixed, self-definition requires employing more than one category. She is "a professional New York woman," "a member of a postwar international new class," "someone who feels at ease in the world and is getting on with her career relatively well and who is as fey and brave and capable and unsettled as many of the women here," "one of a new breed, born of the jet age and the counterculture and middle-class ambitions and American grit" (170). She begins to feel as if she is "being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit" (119), into categories alien to her. She is enraged at her friends for they fail to "see through the guise," to "recognize the light-footed dancer [she] really [is]" (119). Although, her categorized identity is not the result of a totally external process, the contribution of social attempts to rationalize such categories is undeniable. People do not accept and internalize the categorizations and roles autogenously; legitimization promotes them. A full process lies behind the legitimation of certain patterns and ideas. Legitimation, provided by the use of language, can be considered as the third quality of language which contributes to reification.

Berger and Luckmann find language as a power superimposing logic on the "objectivated social world." They think this is done through the "legitimations . . . built upon language" (64). The answer for the question "how can such legitimations work to make people internalize imposed ideas and definitions?" is explained by Hoffman. She underlines the fact that people are not introduced to the *real* before they are given the *unreal* and this makes them unable to see the fake quality of the unreal:

> If you've never eaten a real tomato, you'll think that the plastic tomato is the real thing and moreover you'll be perfectly satisfied with it," I tell my friends. "It's only when you've tasted them both that you know there's a difference, even though it's almost possible to describe. (204)

Legitimation is also achieved by pure free will. People may accept the imposed ideas even if they are aware of their artificiality. Hoffman refers to the very idea with the words of a Frenchman she once comes across: "We French lie to others" he says, whereas "Americans lie to themselves" (208).

One way of legitimizing thoughts through language is employing repetition. Repetition has a very important role in reinforcing legitimations. Wittgenstein emphasizes the effect of repetition in language through the example of the refrain in a song. "Well, sing it and you will see that only the repeat gives it its tremendous power," he says. (*Culture and Value* 52e)." According to Berger and Luckmann, on the other hand, even affirming what one thinks by voicing one's "own subjective meanings" and hearing them, makes the concept or idea "more real." In other words, language has a potential of "crystallizing" and "stabilizing" one's own subjectivity (38). If hearing alone causes thoughts to be more real, self-repetition or repetition by others would make them even more real. This may lead to prejudiced views if one is not aware of the subjective remarks and takes the repetition as a so-called "objectivity" that is often ideological. Anti-Semitism could be a good example for the crystallization of thoughts through repetition, in which the meaning of the word "Jew" is determined and fixed befitting semantic reification. As an ideology that has no justifiable grounds, the Anti-Semitist movement has spread through defamation campaigns based on specific political or economical gains and resulted in shaping a negative point of view towards the Jewish people. Repetition in language has also caused slavery to be internalized, even by the

victims of it; a situation that suggests how dangerous legitimation through language could be.

Meanings in language can also be shaped by "expressions of subjectivity" that are not necessarily "here and now." One can talk about people that do not exist anymore, situations that happened long ago (Berger and Luckmann 37). Such usage of language produces meanings semantically reified. For instance, language might be used to define people, concepts or situations different from the reality, or by employing definitions from a distant past, either by mistake or because of ideological, political or economical reasons. Calling Jews "Christ-killers," on the grounds that once certain Jewish people caused Christ to be crucified, would be a proper example to show the abuse of language. As it is obvious in the example, the abuse of language could be presented in different ways and bear different results, due to the fact that ". . . language is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether." Meanings are "'located' in one reality," but can be used to "'refer' to another," which might result in reification (Berger and Luckmann 40). Taking the conservatism of Jewish people in religion or in traditions, for instance, and applying it to the context of business would be wrong, because there are many Jewish American businessmen who are known for their open-mindedness.

Thoughts, which do not fit in the patterns of the socially-shaped meanings of language due to man-made legitimations and structures, are found ridiculous by their owners. People do not voice such thoughts because they know others would not take them into consideration. They "shrug [their] shoulders" and forget about their individual ways of thinking. Berger and Luckmann call this "a procedure of autotherapy" (155). Due to the existence of such an autotherapy, individuals do not interfere with the operation of the system of language; therefore, they go on being passive participants, having complied with a semantically reified language.

For Hoffman, denying forced patterns of meaning, which is the only way to "peace," is possible by means of the "ego" (213). She thinks it would be very easy for a computer species to survive in the world she lives due to their lack of ego and implies that by yielding to the social patterns, human beings lose their dignity. For her, if people were a

"computer species" it would be possible for them to give up their subjectivity easily, but since they are not, "subjectivity" would exist at all times. Her suggestion is to adopt an "objective subjectivity," which would help people survive in a foreign land, speaking a foreign language while protecting their individual identity:

> The drama of intercultural clash, repeated often enough, becomes a farce. Perhaps a computer species would be more appropriate to our overpopulated world. Computer people wouldn't have so much ego, which might have been suitable to a midsized country but loses all persuasiveness in a global village. In our new situation, they would comfort themselves with less fuss and more innate dignity. . . . So long as we are not computer species, we cannot give upon our subjectivity, our ability to experience. Sometimes I see what I need: an objective subjectivity, a latter beam that concentrates my energy and uses the collected light to illuminate and reflect the world. (213)

Hoffman's suggestion, similar to that of American poet Robert Creeley in his "A Note on the Objective" (1951), where he mentions the need for finding a balance between objectivity and subjectivity and offers a midway. Creeley's explanation highlights the issue in a similar manner to Hoffman's. He sees the "fight" between the objective and subjective "useless" and explains his premises which can also be applied to daily life:

> However right it might be to damn the use of the subjective method as an excuse for emotional claptrap, it's apt to push us away from any understanding of the subjective in a more basic character, i.e., "belonging to, or of, or due to, the consciousness . . ." Impossible to write anything, lacking this relation of its content to oneself. Put another way: things have to come in before they can go out.
>
> Perhaps best to junk both terms [subjectivity and objectivity], or at least to understand this necessary balance, one with the other. We can't stand outside our content and at the same time we can't eat it like an apple. . . . (463)

Hoffman prefers to have a subjective-objectivity to survive within the fixed patterns of meaning, as she is aware of the fact that reification governs the society. At the end of the book, the reader is left with a mature woman who has embraced objective meanings to a certain extent, seeing the self as a "mechanism" (279). Her vision of the self as a mechanism proves the close relationship between different types of reification. Semantic reification causes one to internalize reification of identity and in turn, one

turns into a mechanism with the loss of connection to real feelings and adopts reified norms, befitting physical reification. Nevertheless, having adopted the subjective objectivity, she succeeds in fulfilling the American dream. She receives a doctorate in literature, writes in the *New York Times*, which proves that she has achieved her ideal of becoming a "New York intellectual." At the end of her book, she visits her parents in Poland, as the "back-to-the-origin" motif after achieving her ideals, although through this journey she realizes that the problems of translation from Polish to English and vice versa still exists. Upon her return to America, she realizes that she has managed to establish a life in "peace;" with her tactics of both welcoming the objective and renouncing the subjective to a certain extent to provide a balance between them. At the very end of the book, she expresses her peacefulness with the sentence "Time pulses through my blood like a *river*" (280). She seems to have used the word "river" on purpose in this sentence, with reference to the beginning of the book, where she has problems with the definition of the word "river," the meaning of which is different in the two languages. Here, however, she seems to have solved the problem of translation through her partial adoption of collective meanings as a result of her subjective objectivity. She eventually feels that "the language of this is sufficient!" (280). Everything might not be perfect for her—subjectivity might not have been protected to the fullest—yet she says "[she is] here now" implying that the result is worth her suffering in the past (280).

CONCLUSION

Reification is a neutral concept, although it is often considered with its negative effects on individuals. Reification can be universally observed, but the effects of reification on the first generation immigrants in America are remarkable. Even when the term "American dream" had not yet been coined, immigrants from different parts of the world, who came to America under the spell of the promises of this new country, could not enjoy a complete fulfillment of the dream due to the effects of reification. With no relatives, no place to stay, no education, no money, no job profitable in American standards, these immigrants were most of the time perplexed to see that the "real" America had nothing to do with what the so-called dream offered. Disappointed, they had to start from the very beginning if they wanted to be successful, which was not as easy as they wished. American industry supplied its much needed labor power from the incoming immigrants and often these people had to work long hours in unsanitary conditions.

The American dream had a vital role in the reification of the lives of the immigrants. The dream itself, first of all, was reified both by immigrants who wishfully attributed unrealistic qualities to it and by dominant figures who made use of the labor power and others who supported the immigrants. Attaining success without giving up ethnic values and complying with the values of the dominant majority was not easy. Therefore reification was inevitable. In this sense, reification can be considered to be actualizing immigrant dreams. Even those ethnic groups which were materially the most successful among others were negatively affected from reification in their attempts to gain spiritual fulfillment. Not all immigrants are equally affected from reification. The British, the German or the French have been luckier in the sense that they have similar ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds with the dominant White Anglo Saxon Protestants in America. Africans, Jews or Asians, however, have not been as lucky since they have different ethnic, cultural, religious and lingual backgrounds. This difference caused the attempts of assimilation and racial discriminations like that of Anti-Semitism. East European Jewish community in America, members of which are proved to be materially well off compared to immigrants from other ethnic backgrounds is a proper example to

show the role of reification in immigrant lives since reification both contributed to the material success and prevented spiritual fulfillment. In the autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works, *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan, *Salome of the Tenements* by Anzia Yezierska, *Lost in Translation* by Eva Hoffman analyzed in this thesis, the main characters attain their dreams, but none of them are perfectly content in the end due to reification.

David Levinsky, in Abraham Cahan's partly autobiographical novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, rises from a street-peddler to a millionaire and he fails to realize the reification he has gone through in the process. Reification is defined by Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukàcs, which is dealt under the title of "physical reification" throughout this thesis. According to Lukàcs' understanding, which is shaped by Karl Marx's idea of commodity fetishism and Max Weber's approach on "rationalism," there are two types of reification; "subjective" and "objective." In subjective reification, capitalist system transforms the "individual" (laborer) into an object, a "res," who has no control over his/her actions and who is nothing more than a tool of the capitalist system. According to objective reification, on the other hand, abstract concepts are "concretized" or "hypostatized" and are eventually transformed from "passive" ideologies to "active" and "concrete" determiners in the lives of individuals. American dream is materialized into such an "object" for Levinsky, which he interprets solely as earning money and acquiring commodities for their exchange values.

David's dream in his youth is to have a college education and become a doctor or a lawyer, but he needs to work to support himself financially. He begins as a peddler, later works at a garment workshop. After being humiliated by his employer, when he spills milk on a few silk shirts, his life changes and his dream transforms into one of commodity. After this incident, he decides to build his own business. As a result, his status changes from a mere victim of reification to both a victim and a victimizer of it. In short, "the destruction of [his] *American Temple* [is] caused by a bottle of milk" (215). He gives up his ideals and sets to prove himself that he can be *someone* "respectable" only because he is mistreated as a laborer. Respectability, in his world, shows itself through his calculation of the "exchange values" of the objects and calculated social relationships. His consciousness becomes reified because he falls into

the trap of "commodity fetishism." He treats his factory "hands," the way he has once been treated by his employers. He is proud of getting jobs done in the shortest time for the lowest prices without caring for his laborers. He hates labor unions which protect the rights of laborers and sees them as "weaklings" and himself as "the fittest" as a big admirer of Darwin and Spencer and the theory of the "survival of the fittest." He even values his emotional attachments in terms of the respectability they would provide to him. Eventually, he ends up as a lonely millionaire; a "money bag" as he calls himself, in spite of achieving his material ideals to the fullest. He realizes the reification he has gone through and finally understands that "[t]here are cases when success is a tragedy" (529). Yet, he fails to discard the effects of physical reification on himself since he becomes aware of them only at the very end of the novel. However, the success of the job of the unions in the novel shows how effective Lukàcs' proposal can be for eliminating the effects of reification. Unions can provide self-awareness and thus stimulate action. As Lukàcs says, "[a]ny transformation can only come about as the product of the-action of the proletariat himself" (208-209).

In the semi-fictional autobiography of Anzia Yezierska, *Salome of the Tenements*, the main character Sonya Vrunsky goes through "reification of identity," but she is lucky enough to realize what is happening to her and manages to put an end to it. The reification she experiences is mainly that of identity, although, her internalizing it brings physical reification as well. Reification of identity, as sociologists such as Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Stanley Pullberg, Axel Honneth, Hannah Fenitchel Pitkin and Nancy Fraser view it, is the problem that occurs when individuals identify themselves with typical roles or stereotypical categories, which causes them to lose their individual qualities. Being anonymized as a typical "person," individuals have only partial control over their lives, acting within the limits of the roles they adopt and behaving according to certain social patterns. Jewish immigrants in America have been one of the immigrant groups who suffered the most from the negative effects of reification of identity as a result of Anti-Semitism. As a Jew from Russian Poland, Sonya's experiences also prove these prejudices. She is a beautiful immigrant girl living in the settlements of Lower East Side, who first works at a factory and then as a stenographer in a newspaper office. Her American dream is to experience the democracy which she interprets as a poor immigrant girl marrying a wealthy and noble American man and

thus all the "beauties" of the world. Different from Levinsky, she does not yearn for material possessions but love and beauty. Her life changes when she sets up a newspaper interview with the rich and famous John Manning who has devoted his life to educate the immigrants of the settlement.

Similar to that of educator John Dewey, with whom Yezierska had an affair, Manning's understanding of education is achieved through "Americanization" of the immigrants. Ethnic and religious differences of the immigrants are viewed as a threat to the American identity (*Roots of Crises* in Wilentz xiv). After great efforts to "buy" beauty she could hardly afford in order to attract Manning's attention, she is able to reach her American dream by marrying Manning. However, Manning "dictates" Sonya what to do as the embodiment of the perfect American even before he marries her. After their marriage, he continues to mold her into the identity pattern in his mind. At the beginning Sonya is more than willing to become an "American woman" whose major qualities, for her, are being hardworking and thinking only on the plane of reason. Upon witnessing an occasion in the settlement, she begins to realize, what Manning is trying to do to her and her people. She sees how educators of the settlement bribe immigrants to attend the courses in which they teach how to be humble and content with what they have. She also realizes that the educators work only to earn money without really caring about the immigrants. As a result of her experiences and her husband's treatment, Sonya leaves Manning and starts a new life. She does not hesitate to work as a waitress and later in a garment factory. There, she rises to be a designer of a model called the "Sonya Model" and meets Hollins, the tailor who has helped her by making her a dress to impress Manning in the beginning of the novel. Sonya and Hollins have had similar experiences of reification in their lives and, thus, they understand each other perfectly. Sonya marries Hollins, despite all Manning's efforts to win her back. The couple unites their powers to bring beauty in the lives of their own people via the dresses they make for them. As it is clear in the novel, Sonya manages to fulfill her dream, yet she realizes that what she has dreamed for requires her to give up her identity in exchange. She experiences reification but manages to get rid of it. Moreover, she, a woman who once has sought beauty at any price, comes to bring beauty to the lives of her people. Sonya manages to avoid reification of identity after she witnesses the reality behind the

appearances of both charity people and institutions. This process is named as "catastrophic disenchantment" by Peter Berger and Stanley Pullberg (209).

The third literary work analyzed, Eva Hoffman's memoir titled *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, presents an example to semantic reification in language. The Russian Poland born author's intention is to "translate herself without being assimilated" (210), so as not to be "lost in translation" between Polish and English anymore due to the semantic reification in both languages. Semantic reification, Hoffman observes, generally indicates the condition in which words harbor meanings that they do not originally refer to. José Medina grounds this kind of reification on the assumption that meaning is a "determinate" and "fixed" *thing* (3). For Palmer, semantic reification is due to what is lost through "the descent into discourse" (5), whereas, a Wittgensteinian understanding of language comes to the conclusion that language can sometimes disguise the truth (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.002). Most of the time, this kind of reification is directly related to the practice of certain ideologies. One of such practices has been Anti-Semitism in the American Jewish experience. According to Derrida, the supplement (the socially accepted meaning in this case) takes the place of "the real" and "make[s] the world move" (*Of Grammatology* 147). Some inherent qualities of language contribute to the semantic reification. Among such qualities, there is the collective making of meanings (Berger and Luckmann 23 and Wittgenstein, *Investigations* 241). Hoffman knows that "she cannot sustain her sense of separate reality forever" (195), therefore, she yields to the "general assumptions;" to the agreements in meanings of the words and also in judgments, which she thinks establishes "a tyranny" over the individual, "colonizing" him/her (205). Another potential of language that contributes to reification is its ability to typify, categorize and to anonymize its subject. Language has a power to homogenize, which denies the existence of any personal meanings and thoughts that are not confirmed by the society (Berger and Luckmann 38-39 and Wittgenstein, *Culture* 22e). Hoffman, therefore, complains that the language in America begins "to invent another [her]" (107). She cannot use the word "I" in her diary because her writing does not carry her personal meanings but rather the general assumptions which require her to adopt" (203). The final potential of language that makes reification possible lies in its power of superimposing logic and of legitimizing thoughts (Berger and Luckmann 64). Such a

power causes reification of identity to become a common experience for Jews who have different cultural and religious values than the dominant group. The negative qualities attributed to these people—in other words to the meaning of the word "Jew"—can also be legitimized by language.

As a result of all these inherent qualities of language, words lose their real meanings and transform into "things" which ends up in semantic reification. Even emotional expressions such as "jealousy" end up indicating a positive feeling like appreciation (Hoffman 136). The distance between the image or feeling and the word is reduced and "things threaten to crush [people] with their *thinghood*" (Hoffman 136). In consequence, Hoffman has difficulty in defining herself without placing herself into existing categories and thus she becomes anonymized. However, Hoffman manages to alter her situation. Eva, who in the beginning of the memoir is bothered with the "wordlessness" in American society, develops her own "subjective objectivity" to deal with the negative effects of semantic reification. She acquires a "sufficient language" adopted through her partial assimilation, and transforms from an immigrant woman "lost in translation" to an independent New York intellectual who writes for *The New York Times*. She is able to fulfill her dream, but she has to yield to the shared reality of the society to a certain extent in order not to be "bowdlerized" (211), which means that she sometimes has to deny her own point of view to be accepted by the society and to protect the social harmony.

In the analyses of *The Rise of David Levinsky*, *Salome of the Tenements* and *Lost in Translation* in the light of the mentioned theoretical knowledge, the negative effects of reification in the experience of the East European Jewish immigrants in America are obvious. Although reification has positive effects on the characters in materially achieving the American dream, it has also problematized spiritual fulfillment.

In all the examined literary works, all types of reification—physical reification, reification of identity and semantic reification—can be analyzed. Physical, identity related and semantic reification are also connected with each other as pre-requisite conditions or results. In *The Rise of David Levinsky*, the focus is on Levinsky's physical reification. However, the way he perceives himself as an inferior laborer and his

decision to become a respected capitalist employer indicate how semantic reification works in the internalization of the identities. Levinsky has already internalized his identity as a worker and as a result he has a plan to change his social status.

In the second literary work, *Salome of the Tenements*, the main character Sonya Vrunsky mainly experiences reification of identity. Yet, she also suffers from physical reification towards the end of the novel when she finds herself in the situation of a commodity owned by her rich husband Manning. Moreover, Sonya's internalization of her inferiority as an emotional Russian without rational reasoning can be explained through semantic reification. This type of reification is introduced by the dominant ideology which is embodied in the character of Manning who instructs Sonya on proper behaviour with his fixed definitions.

In the final literary work, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, the focus of analysis is on semantic reification. Yet, the attempt to categorize and thus anonymize objects, thoughts and individuals via semantic reification results in reification of identity, which might lead to the physical reification of individuals. As it is obvious in all three cases, those of David Levinsky, Sonya Vrunsky and Eva Hoffman, all three types of reification work hand in hand and each type of reification is either the result or the precondition of the others.

Studying East European Jewish American experiences in the literary works presents that reification is generally related to the dominant ideology. It is possible to overcome reification but it might be difficult to avoid all its negative effects. David Levinsky, in *The Rise of David Levinsky*, realizes his mistake in being both a victim of and the victimizer of reification when he evaluates his life. He fails to overcome reification but reaches an understanding. Sonya Vrunsky, on the other hand, experiences reification but realizes its destructive force sooner than Levinsky and as a result, she gives up trying to reach her American dream. Eva Hoffman, too, is exposed to reification and creates her own formula to avoid it. Though she seems to be the most successful among all three characters, even she cannot totally free herself from the effects of reification.

Each character who manages to avoid the effects of reification has to give up something in exchange: Sonya Vrunsky gives up her American dream which is to experience democracy by being married to a millionaire and thus possess all the beauties in life. Eva Hoffman feels like a tourist among her own people in her home-country and she feels like a stranger towards her native tongue Polish. On the other hand, David Levinsky completely fails to comprehend what he has missed for the sake of material success until the very end of the novel which is to have a family and friends and all kinds of sincere relationships with people.

Among the three characters, Hoffman seems to be the most successful one. Her success, however, does not only result from her attempts. Personal success works to a certain extent in eliminating the negative effects of reification. The social, economic and cultural conditions of the time period are also among the main determiners in experiences. As a semi-autobiographical novel written in 1917, the life-story of Levinsky reflects the lives of the East European Jews of the period between 1880s and 1917 and Levinsky cannot avoid the negative effects of reification. In the 1923 semi-fictional novel, Sonya's life reflects the period between 1890s and 1923 and she manages to avoid reification with a big sacrifice. On the other hand, Hoffman's memoir is written in 1989 which is about her experience in America, starting from 1964. The time span between Hoffman's experiences and that of Levinsky's story is approximately a fifty years. The time difference between stories contributes to Hoffman's success in eliminating the negative effects of reification to a great extent. Other factors include the increase in the education level of the immigrants, the modernization of social and cultural environment, and a more democratic outlook on immigrants; partially as a result of non-governmental organizations established by the immigrants themselves.

In conclusion, the East European Jewish immigrants and the characters in the analyzed literary works, experience reification either consciously or unconsciously and they have to deal with its negative effects. Immigrants tried to comply with expectations by working harder than they would normally do as the capitalist system expects from them, by complying with the expectations of the majority through the process of Americanization, and by internalizing the socially accepted meanings in the society which caused physical reification, reification of identity, and semantic reification

respectively. However, the prize of reification turns out to be a problematic satisfaction which is materially or idealistically accomplished, yet, spiritually disappointing. The core of the problem has to do with the interpretation of the American dream. Having attributed fantastic qualities to the dream, characters' expectations were unrealistic at times and, thus, the ambition to achieve the high standards of their vision culminated in a kind of success which fails to provide a full satisfaction.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Kişisel Bilgiler

Adı Soyadı	: Merve Özman
Doğum Yeri ve Tarihi	: Samsun, 1985

Eğitim Durumu

Lisans Öğrenimi	: Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Bölümü
Yüksek Lisans Öğrenimi	:
Bildiği Yabancı Diller	: İngilizce, Almanca
Bilimsel Faaliyetleri	:

İş Deneyimi

Stajlar	: Abidinpaşa İlköğretim Okulu
Projeler	:
Çalıştığı Kurumlar	: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Bölümü Araştırma Görevlisi

İletişim

E-Posta Adresi	: ozman@hacettepe.edu.tr

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