

NEW DIRECTIONS IN ANGLO- JEWISH HISTORY



edited with an introduction
by **Geoffrey Alderman**

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Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable renaissance in the academic study of the history of the Jews in Great Britain and of their impact upon British history. The essays presented in this volume reflect and offer some of the finest fruits of that regeneration, which could scarcely have been imagined a generation ago.

The historiography of the Jews in Britain can be briefly told.¹ Until well into the second half of the twentieth century that historiography consisted largely of sanitised narrative focussed on the reinforcement of the image of a small, homogenous community dwelling in a land that was — it was alleged — remarkably welcoming of its immigrants of the Hebrew persuasion. The history itself was for the most part written by the children of the generation of the emancipation — men like Albert Hyamson and Cecil Roth — and by those (like Vivian Lipman, a pupil of Roth) who unashamedly regarded themselves as the spiritual heirs to this legacy.

The publication of Professor Lloyd Gartner's monograph *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914*, in 1960, seemed to herald the end of this era, but proved to be a false dawn.² Why was this? In the first place we must remember that this seminal work — which dispelled so many

¹ It is told at greater length in my essay 'Academic Duty and Communal Obligation: Some Thoughts on the Writing of Anglo-Jewish History,' in G. Alderman (ed.) *Controversy & Crisis* (Academic Studies Press, Boston, Massachusetts, USA), 37-51.

² Geoffrey Alderman, 'The Canon,' *Times Higher Education*, 28 May 2009, 49.

romanticised myths about that period and those immigrants — came from the pen of an American scholar, thoroughly at home with the Hebrew and Yiddish sources as well as the English, and free from the subtle inhibitions and somewhat less subtle communal constraints that obtained in the United Kingdom. In the second, whereas the American university world was glad to offer homes to young scholars who had served their academic apprenticeships within the world of Jewish history (and, more generally, of Jewish studies), no such opportunities existed in the UK. Outside of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London, Jewish history was hardly taught; where it was taught, it was likely to be only within departments of theology, classics and ancient (and perhaps medieval) history. Those intent on pursuing academic careers in the UK were well advised to steer clear of the modern history of the Jewish people.

Happily, this is no longer the case. Modern Anglo-Jewish history has benefited from the increasing interest in ‘ethnic’ studies, and in the experience and impact of immigrant minorities in British — and more generally in European — urban communities. The Anglo-Jewish community itself has matured: it is no longer reluctant to confront its recent past. Scarcely less important has been the willingness of communal philanthropists to fund university posts in and university-level research into this recent past. The history of the Jews has been recognised as a subject in its own right within the scope of the quinquennial government-mandated Research Assessment Exercises involving the taxpayer-funded higher-education sector in the UK. In the early 1990s the University of London approved the history of the Jews in Britain as a discrete optional subject within its Bachelor’s programme in modern history. Today there is scarcely a university in the UK where it is not possible to study modern Anglo-Jewish history in some form. Of particular note — but this list is far from exhaustive — are the Oxford Centre for Hebrew & Jewish Studies, the Department for Hebrew & Jewish Studies at University College London, the Centres for Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester and at the School of Oriental & African Studies, and the Parkes Institute and Library at the University of Southampton, which houses the largest single collection of private archives bearing upon the history of the Jews in the UK. We might also note that a number of leading communal bodies have been persuaded to transfer their own archives (often inadequately housed hitherto) to the expert care of London Metropolitan Archives (formerly the Greater London Record Office).

At the same time, the academic study of Anglo-Jewish history has flourished in the United States of America, where some of its most brilliant contemporary expositors are to be found. It is a particular tribute to these expositors that they, and their students, have managed to maintain and expand this scholarship in spite of the ocean that separates them from their subject-matter.

The essays presented in this volume reflect and are to a large extent the product of this Anglo-American renaissance. I do not propose to repeat or even to summarise the arguments they deploy: the essays must speak for themselves. But I believe it may be helpful to indicate some over-arching themes that link them to each other, and to wider scholastic currents.

To my mind the most important is that Anglo-Jewish history, far from being the story of a ghetto, is in fact that of a collection of small communities that were, perforce, heavily influenced (whether they approved or not) by what was going on in the wider world. Lawrence Cohen's analysis of the changing names of the Norwood Jewish Orphanage bears this out in striking fashion. But it is also reflected in the life and writings of Israel Zangwill, and in his attempts — described and traced by Arie Dubnov — to 'normalize' the Jew in *fin-de-siècle* Britain.

The Jewish immigrants of that period — no less than the 'native' Anglo-Jews — were obsessed with considerations of image, and with the management of that image. As James Appell demonstrates in the case of Leeds, this image was itself the product of a mix of social, cultural and economic circumstances, but as he also reminds us, what was true of Zangwill's London was not necessarily true of the provinces. The 'native' Jews saw in the provision of schools for their impoverished brethren a means of influencing that image, and of shaping its major characteristics. But Sara Abosch is right to warn us that that was not their preferred option: at bottom the Anglo-Jewish gentry neither wished for a separate educational system nor were they prepared to finance it a moment longer than was absolutely necessary for the fulfilment of their socio-political goals.

Eventually, of course, the immigrant generation gave way to a new generation of British-born, English-speaking Jews. But, however well-managed the transition from migrant to citizen, from alien to Englishman (or woman), the immigrant remains an immigrant, an outsider, even an invader. Hannah Ewence's exploration of these themes emphasizes

their capacity for longevity and self-renewal. In a challenge to accepted judgments upon the Anglo-Jewish response to the menace of home-grown fascism in the 1930s, Daniel Tilles argues that this response was neither as half-hearted nor as craven as some have argued, while Edward Marshall's exploration of Jews and the British film industry at this time provides a window into one of the less well-explored dimensions to anti-Jewish prejudice at this time.

"In my opinion," one of my Oxford teachers said famously, "we learn nothing from history except the infinite variety of men's behaviour."³ Like A. J. P. Taylor, I am a narrative historian, and like him I believe this to be profoundly true. History has no lessons. But it may contain signposts. In this case, in the case of the essays presented in the following pages, I believe there is one signpost that we would all do well to ponder: in multicultural Britain, hard-working immigrants may be welcome, or they may be feared — or both. They are destined to remain not quite British, and, for better or worse, they are destined to bequeath this otherness to the generations that follow them.

Geoffrey Alderman

³ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers* (London, 1985), 23.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN ANGLO- JEWISH HISTORY



BETWEEN DAYDREAM AND NIGHTMARE

Fin de Siècle Jewish Journeys and the British Imagination

Hannah Ewence

In July 2009, a play entitled *The Container* by innovative British playwright Clare Bayley was shown in London for the first time. It was, according to the *Guardian*, “a daring play about human trafficking,” relating the story of five migrants journeying surreptitiously to Britain, mile by harrowing mile.¹ Performed in complete darkness inside a 40ft freight container, the director devised the provocative staging to make the unimaginable imaginable. Without such heady stimuli, the *Guardian* review suggests, the migrant journey would remain illusive, unknowable, inconceivable, to the average Briton. Certainly, whilst the play won awards during its brief run at the Edinburgh festival in 2007, it faced a considerable battle to source both financial backing and sustained support for its politically-charged humanitarian message required to make a more mainstream debut. Even with its experiential approach, together with the pressing relevance and topicality of its subject matter, the play ran for just two weeks in London before its dismissal from the West End stage.² Seemingly, the clandestine migrant journey is not a journey which either the British public or its cultural leaders wish to experience or contemplate, even if only from the safe spectatorial distance facilitated by theatre and the limits of one's own imagination.

This essay will argue that, far from being a recent or singular phenomenon, the marginalisation and fantastical fictionalisation of migrant journeys within the British cultural imagination can be traced back beyond the modern, multicultural age of high-speed travel and communication, to a period when the mass movement of people across the globe was no less

a feature of national life. Colin Matthew has estimated that between 1815 and 1914, 22 million people emigrated from the British Isles to begin new lives in Britain's colonies and in other lands of 'white' settlement.³ The flow of people travelling to and through Britain throughout the long nineteenth century was no less significant, although an accurate estimate as to the magnitude of immigration is far harder to gauge. One group alone — Jews fleeing Eastern Europe for the refuge of the West in the final decades of the nineteenth century and beyond — are thought to have been, at its peak, at least half a million strong.⁴

It was an epoch in which mankind's endeavour to tame the earth's vast seas and lands through exploration, colonisation and commercialisation, was beginning to be realised. The engineers of the railways and modern shipping were as much the heroes of the nineteenth century as were the imperial adventurers who thrilled British society with accounts of their exotic expeditions. Yet despite the constant ebb and flow of human traffic, treatment of the journey — and more especially the journey of the alien Jew — through the rationale of realism, or as an experience distinct from the processes of departure and arrival were, across the *fin de siècle* period as now, few and far between. For the vast majority, the migrant journey was, as Clare Bayley observes of today, an "invisible" human narrative.⁵

Yet whilst the marginalisation of that narrative in the twenty-first century may, as Bayley suggests, be attributable to the exculpatory position the vast majority of society adopts towards the lives and plights of others, the same may not be said of the earlier period.⁶ The ethos of the Victorian age encouraged philanthropic ventures and was yet to be immune to tales of human experience and human suffering. As the news of pogroms and sustained persecution against Jews in Russia reached British ears in 1882, thousands gathered at London's Mansion House in protest.⁷ For many, however, protest quickly turned to alarm as the association between the persecution of Eastern European Jewry and their mass migration to the new world was forged in the press and in parliamentary debates.⁸ The arrival of those who were perceived by many as 'dark,' 'shabby,' and incomprehensible foreigners at Britain's ports captured the headlines and by-lines of the national and metropolitan press and flavoured the rhetoric of anti-alien campaigners with an urgency which had previously been lacking. Jewish migrants were condemned as "alien invaders" and "undesirable imports" — hyperbole that reacted to the *entrance* of aliens into Britain and which rapidly incited calls for legislation to restrict further migration.⁹

However, in an era of fascination with, and the growing availability of commercial travel, the gritty realities of *how* the Jewish migrant journeyed to Britain were seemingly of little interest. Instead, when the migrant journey *was* subject to treatment within literature or the press — albeit infrequently — that treatment persistently mined the darkest, yet most chimerical recesses of the cultural imagination. *Fin de siècle* representations of the migrant journey drew upon a cache of fantastical narrative devices, creating an imaginative geography of dark, menacing landscapes, vacillating and mutating borders, places and people, and characters and narratives conjured from legends and folklore. Indeed, narratives of the Jewish migrant journey were so deeply entrenched in the fictitious and fantastical, that they drew upon their own myths as they created them.

THE FALLACY OF ARRIVAL AS DELIVERANCE

Certainly a propensity for myth and (dis)illusion coursed throughout Jewish treatment of the migrant journey as frequently as they were indulged or entertained by others. One convention featured with particular regularity in narratives of nineteenth century journeys: to diminish the practical difficulties of the journey by foregrounding a beguiling vision of the destination. Prolific Anglo-Jewish novelist Israel Zangwill, ever the realist, seized upon and ridiculed as fallacy this emphasis within migrant narratives on arrival at the expense of the journey, in a short story published in 1899. In “The Land of Promise,” Zangwill sketched the tragic, clichéd tale of a young Jewish couple betrothed to each other, yet separated by the Atlantic. Srul, a young weaver from the Pale, emigrates to America — a land he declares to be “overflowing with milk and honey” — to build a new life for himself, his mother, his fiancée Biela and her two sisters, whom he intends to send for once the passage money for their voyage has been earned.¹⁰ Although “nearly three years oozed by before Srul began to lift his eyes towards [buying] a store,” the drudgery of the lives of the women left behind are relieved by the vision Srul’s letters depict of the new world.¹¹ As the time to depart finally arrives the women set before them the conjured “image of Srul waiting on the Transatlantic wharf in hymeneal attire.”¹² Essentially, it is this image, a fantasy fashioned for the sake of self-preservation, rather than an honest confrontation with the hardships the journey will require them to overcome, which dictates how the women

anticipate the experience of migration. They are seduced by Srul's easy assurances and fleeting mention of his own voyage into assuming that the journey to the "land of promise" will be a mildly unpleasant, transitory phase to be quickly compensated by the joy of arrival. However Zangwill promptly dashed such delusions, unleashing the full horror of the migrant journey upon the four women:

Days and nights of travelling, packed like 'freight' in hard, dirty wooden carriages, the endless worry of passports, tickets, questions, hygienic inspections and processes, the illegal extractions of petty officials, the strange phantasmagoria of places and faces—all this [...] left them dazed.¹³

For the Jewish women, the overland journey quickly mutates from dream into nightmare: an unreal ordeal which pertains to the fantastical. The voyage itself is little better. The migrant party are once again treated as "freight," "accommodated in hammocks swung over the very dining-tables, so that they must needs rise at dawn and be cleared away before breakfast."¹⁴

Yet it is as their journey ends that the illusion of arrival as deliverance is exposed. Biela and her elder sister Leah are rejected by the medical inspectors at Ellis Island, charged with having "granular lids — contagious."¹⁵ The two sisters are "driven back among the damned," forced to return to Hamburg.¹⁶ The joyous arrival becomes an agonising departure, the emblems of hope for a new life, now seen in reverse, become the symbols of despair. "[W]hen the dock receded and the cheers and good-byes faded, and the waving handkerchiefs became a blur, and the Statue of Liberty dwindled, and the lone waste of waters faced them once more," the narrator disclosed, "Leah's optimism gave way [...], some ominous intuition traversed her like a shudder, and she turned away lest Biela should see her tears."¹⁷

Leah's "ominous intuition" is tragically verified. The two sisters finally gain covert entry to America by way of Canada only to find that Srul has made a quick marriage to their younger sister Tsirrele. "In all that long quest of the canopy, Leah had never come so near fainting as now," the narrator observes. "The horror of Ellis Island was nothing to this. That scene resurged, and Tsirrele's fresh beauty, unflecked by the voyage, came up luridly before [Leah]."¹⁸ It is, according to Zangwill, the journey rather than the arrival which has the potential both to create and

destroys opportunities. Indeed, by exposing the inherent ambiguities and contradictions of the migrant journey—as marking both a beginning and an end—Zangwill rightly problematises an experience which had all too frequently been conceptualised as linear and wholly uplifting.¹⁹ For Biela and Leah, the migrant journey is from its outset an all-consuming nightmare from which they can find no escape. Instead, now estranged from their sister and turned away by Srul, they are forced to travel on further in search of lodgings and a living—their own point of arrival—a place and a purpose which will deliver them from their relentless journeying.

Certainly Zangwill's conceptualisation of the migrant journey as shifting between dream and nightmare closely mirrors the 'typical' narrative of the Eastern European migrant experience—a narrative which, even by the close of the nineteenth century, had become firmly entrenched and wholly mythologized in the collective memory of the Jewish immigrant community. Countless novels and memoirs recount the excitement of the departure, often long-anticipated, when the lucky emigrants were lauded by the community as "the heroes of the hour," those feelings quickly quashed as the familiar landscape of home was transposed by the alien geography of foreign lands.²⁰ Yet, within such narratives it was human agency rather than environment which most frequently ruptured the dream scenario of departure, transforming it into the living nightmare of the journey. The exploitation of Jewish migrants attempting to leave Eastern and Central Europe, whether in possession of valid exit documents or otherwise, was depicted as endemic. Unscrupulous border guards, train guards, medical inspectors and inhabitants of border towns and port cities, it seems, regularly made a good living from extracting bribes from 'helpless' migrants desperate to leave the continent. It was not uncommon, so the story goes, for migrants to reach their final destination without money or possessions, despite their painstaking efforts before departure to save a sum in excess of the anticipated costs of the journey.²¹

Mary Antin, a Jewish American authoress and memoirist who achieved considerable fame in the early twentieth century, emigrated as a young girl from Plotsk, in Poland, to Boston in 1894, with her mother and siblings. In her letters to her family written after her arrival, which would later form the principal part of her memoir, Antin poignantly captured the harrowing essence of the journey, relating a climactic moment when, despite their careful and diligent preparations, a doctor forbade their passage through Germany. "We were homeless, houseless and friendless in a strange place,"

Antin lamented. “We had hardly money enough to last us through the voyage for which we had hoped and waited for three long years. We [...] had parted with those we loved, with places that were dear to us in spite of what we passed through in them, never again to see them, as we were convinced—all for the same dear end. With strong hopes and high spirits that hid the sad parting, we had started on our long journey. And now we were checked so unexpectedly.”²² The disruption of Antin’s expectations of the journey is indicative of migrant narratives. Indeed, whilst a myth of the journey certainly developed after arrival in the “new world,” expectations of the journey were also subject to mythologisation by migrants before their departure. As with Zangwill’s female protagonists, Antin had similarly invested in a myth which romanticized and marginalized the journey largely because no counter-narrative had been disseminated in the shtetl to contradict it. Instead, the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe were nourished on “glowing tales [of] America” by those who had reached her shores.²³ Thus it is only ‘in transit’ that Antin’s own investment in a myth formulated before departure is disrupted and replaced by a narrative of the journey held in common by those who had undertaken it. In this way, her account both anticipates and echoes the anguish which resonates throughout Jewish travel narratives. As the family’s ordeal continues and the migrants find themselves trapped in between departure and arrival, location and dislocation, joy and despair, Antin lets her “mind lose itself in a queer sort of mist,” escaping the horrors of reality in the calming depths of her imagination.²⁴

IMPERIAL FANTASIES AND INVASION FANTASIES

Yet fantasy as escapism—a very clear strategy in Antin’s narrative—was, I will show, often the vehicle that transported the interested British observer *into* the experience of the journey rather than out of it. The popularity of the accounts of imperial adventurers, such as Henry Stanley, who repeatedly penetrated and conquered “the dark continent,” thrilled British society with their vicarious quality.²⁵ Stanley, a Welsh orphan who had been brought up in a workhouse, shot to international fame in the summer of 1872, after discovering the whereabouts of explorer Dr David Livingstone. After news of the success of his mission broke, newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic featured Stanley and Livingstone incessantly,

feeding the reading public's insatiable appetite for adventure and triumph in far-off lands.²⁶ In Britain, the *Graphic* ran a double page spread, complete with illustrations, celebrating "Stanley's narrative of his search [...] as full of romance and strange and perilous adventure as any fairy tale or Arthurian legend."²⁷ Stanley was lauded as a modern-day hero, yet his image and the setting for his 'adventure' were firmly cast in the realm of myth and folklore. For the nineteenth century observer, Africa was conceptualised as both a far-off land and a far-off time. Travels across its inhospitable landscape signified a temporal expedition as much as it represented a geographical journey.

Stanley revelled in such iconographic, evocative discourse, exaggerating his own conduct towards "the natives" to indulge Briton's imperial fantasies of the "dark continent."²⁸ He nurtured the image that his journeying brought the light of civilisation to the darkest recesses of the African landscape. For the most part, the reading public endorsed that image, enthralled with Stanley's vivid chronicles of his imperial journeying, making his 1890 account of his final African expedition to rescue the Governor of Equatoria, Emin Pasha, an immediate bestseller.²⁹

Significantly, the popularity of Stanley's lucid and redolent expedition narrative inspired others to similarly utilise the fantasy genre as a strategy to infuse their own writing with more 'spice.' General William Booth, the Christian philanthropist and founder of the Salvation Army, alluded directly to Henry Stanley and his African adventures in his own work — *In Darkest England and the Way Out* also published in 1890.³⁰ As Booth explained, "while brooding over the awful presentation of life as it exists in the vast African forest, it seemed to me only too vivid a picture of many parts of our own land. As there is a darkest Africa, is there not also a darkest England?"³¹ The allusion did not end there. Booth wrote at length of the impressions Stanley's narrative had left upon his imagination, emulating Stanley's vision of dark, barbaric spaces illuminated and thus redeemed by the light of western civilisation, in his depiction of, and agenda for the English urban milieu. In this sense, Booth's account was no less a fantasy narrative than Stanley's had been. Indeed Booth's representation of the English city as African jungle — certainly a neat metaphor — required an even greater capacity for imagination than had Stanley's many literary efforts of rendering Africa's likeness for the curious masses. In truth it required a virtual suspension of belief. Yet the Christian philanthropist utilised the troupe of 'the expedition' to its fullest, implicitly styling his

tract as a travel narrative. In the book's first part, for example, Booth acted as gallant guide to the nervous reader, chaperoning them on a journey through subterranean England, eventually facilitating their "deliverance" in the book's second part into the light of Christian salvation.³²

Certainly, then, by the *fin de siècle*, a discourse had been established within the British cultural imagination that heavily indulged the fantasy genre when treating 'the journey.' Moreover, as the success of Stanley's and Booth's publications makes clear, a popular conceptualisation of the imperial mission characterised the journey inherent within it in ambivalent terms, as shifting between dark and light, dream and nightmare. Indeed, in this sense, the vacillating nature of 'the journey' — essentially its potential to deceive, to transform, and to seemingly assume dual, conflicting forms — echoed the dominant and highly ambivalent representation of 'the Jew.' However, despite this clear parallel between treatment of 'the journey' and treatment of 'the Jew' at the turn of the century, the two were infrequently imagined together. Although the prominence of the aliens question at that time occasionally assisted in placing the image of journeying Jews at the forefront of the public consciousness, Jews on journeys — as opposed to the closely monitored departure and arrival of aliens — received little attention within cultural discourse.³³ Unlike the firmly grounded setting in which the episodes of departure and arrival took place, 'the journey' was enacted within a de-territorialised 'no-man's-land' — a space which was both the prologue and the epilogue to territorialism but was, by no means, the arena in which the *main* action was played out. Perhaps because of this comparatively subordinate spatial conceptualisation, the migrant journey garnered, for the most part, little interest.

Nevertheless, some literary approaches to the two themes of Jews and journeys, when periodically treated, propelled representations of travelling aliens beyond the objective or even the rational, exploiting the realm of fantasy to create images of journeying Jews which stretched the *fin de siècle* imagination to its very limits. Bram Stoker's gothic horror masterpiece of 1897, *Dracula*, which can be read as a figurative commentary on Eastern European immigrant Jews arriving in Britain, makes for an important case study.³⁴ Whilst some recent treatments of the novel have stressed the universality of the fears which *Dracula* encodes, I wish to suggest that it is the Victorian context which provides the narrative with such a heady potency.³⁵ The reviewer for the *Pall Mall Gazette* delighted in the novel's contemporary setting: "That is the way to make a horror

convincing. The medieval is well enough in its way, but you don't care what sort of bogeys troubled your ancestors all that way back."³⁶ Certainly many 'bogeys' of all shapes and sizes were troubling British society by the close of the nineteenth century. Capitalising upon the resurgence of popularity in the gothic horror genre in the late nineteenth century, Stoker manipulated the ambitions of a crudely grotesque anti-hero, Count Dracula, to exploit those anxieties to their fullest. They were anxieties — of imperial and racial decline, social unrest at home and in the colonies, alien immigration, and the growing commercial threat of the United States and Germany — which were only too real.

Indeed Stoker's novel, which encapsulated these fears, was characteristic of a growing fascination within literary circles with the fantasy of invasion.³⁷ The spectre of territorial infiltration by a powerful, degenerate 'other,' both thrilled and repulsed the British readership. Dracula was a monster for the modern age. Herein lay his power and allure. Count Dracula, the consummate foreigner, was simultaneously beguiling and detestable. Stoker successfully personified the powerfully sexualised allure of the exoticised and dangerous unknown in the figure of the Count, echoing the prevalent representation at the *fin de siècle* of the darkly sexualised and subversive Jew.³⁸ Captivated, the *Daily News* implored its readers to "surrender their imaginations into the novelist's hands."³⁹

Yet, whilst *Dracula* is a key example of the gothic sub-genre of invasion fantasy, academic treatment has tended to conceptualise the Count's breach of Britain and Britishness as beginning with his chilling, covert arrival at Whitby. Certainly, this absence once again appears to mirror the neglect of the migrant journey within contemporary sources. However, Dracula's journey to Britain marks a vital process which transposes Jonathan Harker's experiences in Transylvania from a medieval-esque framing into a clear, contemporary focus. Dracula travels not only from east to west but from barbarism to civilisation, from the Middle Ages to the modern age. He is a literary anti-hero in transit across time as well as space. Indeed, it is the journey — by transposing the setting from archaic Transylvanian castle to modern metropolis by way of Whitby — which seemingly authenticates the surreal episodes of the novel's opening chapters.

Yet initially even the novel's narrative circumvents the journey, instead drawing the reader in to anticipate the climatic crescendo of Dracula's arrival. "The sea is tumbling in over the shallows, and the sandy flats with a roar, muffled in the sea-mists drifting in-land," Mina Murray confides uneasily

to her journal. “The horizon is lost in a grey mist. All is vastness; the clouds are piled up like giant rocks, and there is a brool over the sea which sounds like a presage of doom.”⁴⁰ The ship on which Dracula is secretly stowed away is sighted shortly after “with all sails set” rushing with full speed towards the harbour.⁴¹ “The searchlight followed her, and a shudder ran through all who saw her,” reports a correspondent from the *Dailygraph*, “for lashed to the helm was a corpse, with drooping head, which swung horribly to and fro at each motion of the ship.”⁴² The coastguard allows the journalist to board the ship but, with each observation, the mystery of the “strange schooner” deepens, luring the reader in to imagine, with increasing ghouliness, the journey which had preceded this frightful arrival.

The journalist is allowed access to the log of the *Demeter*, and thus, through the records kept by the ship’s captain, the narrative of the journey is told in retrospect. For seven days, the ship follows her usual course and all is well onboard, but on the eighth day the captain reports that “the crew [are] dissatisfied about something. Seemed scared, but would not speak out.”⁴³ Finally, on the twelfth day, one of the crew confides in the captain that, during his night watch, he had seen “a strange man aboard the ship [...] who was not like any of the crew.”⁴⁴ Stoker’s play here upon *fin de siècle* fears of the unknown ‘other,’ completely unlike the collective ‘self,’ is obvious. Yet, as the narrative continues, and one crew member after another mysteriously disappears, the captain’s rationale gives way to an ominous foreboding which is fed not by the manifestation of the ‘other’ but by the threatening menace of anticipation. The narrative of the journey becomes fractured by changes in the weather, which fluctuates erratically between raging storms and peaceful calm, rather than by the advent of a new day. Indeed, the captain’s mood and the ship’s fortunes become increasing tethered to the primitive and uncontrollable forces of nature. Rationale gives way to hysteria — an implicit suggestion of the gradual feminisation of the maritime space. The voyage is transformed from its initial representation as a steady dream to a fragmented nightmare, a phantasmagoria of shifting scenes swiftly transposed by the next. As the ship’s store of visceral and able men is rapidly weakened and feminised by their superstitions, and then stealthily dispatched by Dracula, the captain’s authority over the ship — previously his unequivocal territory — diminishes. In a final bid to wrest back control, the captain lashes his hands to the wheel but still the threat advances and overcomes him, simultaneously taking ownership of the ship and yet condemning it to wander listlessly upon the seas.

The wandering ship, the prose implicitly suggests, has become judaised; condemned to eternal journeying, in search of, but denied its deliverance through arrival. The sea is the crew's, and by extension, Britain's final line of defence. The first mate throws himself into the water, crying out, "The sea will save me from Him, and it is all that is left!"⁴⁵

MARITIME NIGHTMARES

Indeed, although only a transitory setting for the action in *Dracula*, the sea often featured ubiquitously in both invasion fantasy literature and in press treatment of the alien migrant journey. The futuristic novel *The Lord of the Sea* by fecund British science fiction writer M. P. Shiel, published in 1901, for example, imagined a Britain which has been overwhelmed by Jews after their widespread expulsion from continental Europe:

And streaming they came, from the Leopoldstadt, from Bukowina, from the sixteen Provinces, from all Galicia, from the Nicolas Colonies, from Lisbon, with wandering foot and weary breast—the Heines, Cohens, Oppenheimers—Sephardim, Aschkenasim. And Dover was the new Elim. With alarm Britain saw them come! But before she could do anything, the wave had overflowed it.⁴⁶

Shiel's use of the maritime metaphor that likened Jewish migrants to an untameable force of nature is both evocative and powerfully descriptive. Moreover, that metaphor drew upon the commonplace rhetoric of anti-alien campaigners at the turn of the century who frequently sensationalised the "alien invasion" as an incursion of biblical proportions. "The alien is invading London and the country generally, not in single spies, but in battalions," insisted the *Daily Express* in January 1903. That apocalyptic warning was accompanied by an illustration of the seas of northern Europe filled with ships all heading to the British Isles.⁴⁷ The sea, once Britain's bulwark against attack, implied the newspaper, was now the means of its infiltration. What is more, the attack was conceptualised as an invasion of military precision, force and nature—an offensive reminiscent of imperialist aggression.

In *The Lord of the Sea* Shiel crudely articulated the transformation of the sea from friend into foe. After the alien invasion of Britain has taken place, and partially in response to it, the novel's protagonist,

Richard Hogarth — an Englishman who does not know he is of Jewish decent — establishes vast, armoured island fortress ships which are anchored in strategic positions on the world's main waterways. Initially, few properly gauge the threat. "Is she a whim, a threat or a tool?" statesmen ask at the launch of the fleet's flagship, the *Boodah*.⁴⁸ At first it seems that Hogarth's intentions are entirely benevolent. His fleet merely provide a meeting place for the wealthy and well to do; it is a home away from home. "[T]o have been invited to those revels of taste and elegance became a superiority," the narrator confirms.⁴⁹ The ships assume the form of cultured and cultivated "islands" in the middle of the untameable seas. Yet

[h]ardly anything in her interior suggested *the ship*: no hammocks for mariners, rolling-racks, sick-bay, lockers, steam-tables, wash-rooms, she being just a palace planted in the Atlantic, her bottom going down to a layer of comparative calm, so that hardly ever, in a storm, when the ocean robed her sides in white, washed abroad her slippery plateau, and drenched with spray her lighthouse tops, did the ballroom below know shock or motion.⁵⁰

All signs of utilitarian function and appearance are shed, the pelagic landscape bent to the will of the seemingly altruistic imperialist. Hogarth's ship becomes a maritime space in disguise, Shiel posing it as a metaphor for 'the Jew' — a figure conceptualised within Semitic discourse as capable of similarly chameleon qualities, underscored by the motive to deceive.⁵¹

Indeed, it quickly transpires that both Hogarth — the veiled Jew — and his camouflaged ships, are of sinister intent. Hogarth eventually uses his wealth and influence to expel the Jews from Britain, thus repelling the invading force, yet his island fortress ships also enable him to successfully colonise the world's seas and oceans. "Like the despair of Samson awaking manacled and shaven," dramatically observes the narrator, "an occasional shriek would go up from some lone thinker, who perceived that the kingdoms of the world had lapsed into a single hand."⁵² After an initial period of grace, Hogarth ruthlessly exploits the strategic positions of his floating islands to levy tolls on the shipping of all nations, including Britain, transforming himself into the omnipotent Lord of the Sea. Hogarth proves himself to be the consummate imperialist and the consummate Jew, remorselessly carrying out his project of territorialism and thus enacting a transformation from the beleaguered colonised subject to supreme, all-powerful colonist.⁵³

For Britons, this act of Semitic territorialisation of the seas would have conjured an especially frightening fantasy drawn from a very tangible reality. Since the Elizabethan era, Britain's maritime dominance had been assured. Moreover, as the nation's imperial strength and reach grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, largely uncontested, an awareness as well as a culture which nurtured Britain's identity as an "Island Nation" began to materialise. As Robert Colls has noted, "New stories about 'an island race' emerged — half-maritime, half-rural. Although the vast majority of the population was neither, the blue-green Island-fortress idea came to order their every other modern location."⁵⁴ Thus Britain's maritime character became a crucial thread of national identity which both linked the nation to a heroic past as well as projecting an image of Britain's successful, imperial future. Yet the protracted and bloody resistance Britain faced in some of her colonies by the *fin de siècle* as well as the steady trickle of non-white or non-European immigrants to her shores dented this image in the public consciousness of Britain as an impenetrable "island-fortress." Shiel's invasion fantasy, which prophesised the colonisation of the seas by a clandestine Jewish 'other' who had constructed his very own island-fortresses was both the greatest insult and the greatest fear.

JOURNEYING JEWS AND WANDERING JEWS

However, not all narratives concerned with the alien interloper unequivocally demonised the Jewish migrant, or viewed the migrant journey as a threatening one. An age-old allegory for the Jewish 'other,' the legend of the Wandering Jew—an allegory which laid emphasis upon the Semitic proclivity for motion, for perpetual restlessness and rootlessness—presented itself as an obvious, yet multifaceted metaphor for migrating Jews at the *fin de siècle*. Prompted by a revival of interest in the legend, largely as a consequence of Eugene Sue's best-selling mid-century novel *The Wandering Jew*, the legend provided a cultural narrative, albeit infrequently utilised, for the influx of dangerously alien Jews into Britain.⁵⁵

Depicted in Christian discourse as a cursed biblical figure, doomed to relentlessly roam the earth until the Second Coming for refusing Jesus a moment's rest on his way to the cross, the legend of the Wandering Jew was a ubiquitous feature of medieval Christian anti-Semitic discourse.⁵⁶

Negative imagery which delineated the Wandering Jew as a sinister and disruptive force, existing on the peripheries of Christian society — indeed as its potential saboteur — characterised such rhetoric. The Wandering Jew was the alien ‘other’ *par excellence*. Yet the influence of romanticism as well as greater fidelity to secularist thought by the mid-eighteenth century prompted responses to the legend to become tinged with ambiguities. European intellectuals and writers began to re-engage with the legend, grappling with moral judgements which had previously appeared to be clear cut.⁵⁷ Was the Wandering Jew a villain, as Christological anti-Semitism would have it, or was he a victim of history, religion, and the ‘curse’ of immortality? As Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes have rightly observed, even into present times “[t]he Wandering Jew evokes both sympathy and scorn.”⁵⁸

Certainly such conflicted duality characterised *fin de siècle* depictions of the Wandering Jew on the rare occasions that the legend was evoked as an analogy or cultural ‘reference point’ for migrating Eastern European Jews. The evocation of the Wandering Jew legend simultaneously lent an air of mysticism and romance to accounts of migrant journeys, whilst facilitating a ready narrative for exploitation by anti-alien campaigners and anti-Semites alike. Indeed, the very ambivalence of nineteenth century Semitic discourse was expressed through the figure of the Wandering Jew — a legend constructed and wholly dependent upon the certain yet “indispensable” nature of Jewish ‘guilt’ within Christian tradition.⁵⁹

In a rare piece of empiricist travel journalism, written aboard “The Immigrant Ship” in May 1905, for example, a correspondent for the outspoken anti-alien organ the *Daily Mail* seized upon the legend, inverting its pathos as a vehicle for ridicule. The journalist recounts his meeting with “an elderly Hebrew with a patriarchal beard,” whom he mockingly dubbed “The Wanderer.” The Jew’s life story, which he relates to the journalist, is framed as a tale of continual migration from one land to the next in search of a living. “About the age of seventy, which he regarded as early manhood,” the correspondent snidely remarked, “he had betaken himself from Russia to the Klondike, where he peddled needles at a shilling apiece and amassed several hundred dollars. Thence he went to St Louis, opened a fruit store, failed, and now, eager as a young man to see the world, was bound for the goldfields, where he hoped to peddle fruit.”⁶⁰ It is a remarkable account of tenacity and endurance, of movement — a life in flux. Moreover, through that ceaseless movement — signification of the perpetual punishment of

the Jewish people — the very foundation of the Christian faith is ratified. In this way, the legend of the Wandering Jew serves as a neat allegory for the contemporary migrant Jew, traversing the lands and seas from east to west, provoked to restlessness and condemned to rootlessness, yet nevertheless gifted with the enthusiasm of many lives as yet unlived. It is, at its core, a wholly ambivalent representation.

However, it is this absence of attachment to place — a spatial manifestation and signifier of the person — which, I would suggest, unsettled the journalist. Within the article the journeying Jew was encountered as a being in transit, an individual observed outside of the ‘context’ of place. Thus the article’s recourse to casual anti-Semitism by way of the legend both obscured and inadvertently exposed the insecurities that such a sense of uncertainty provoked. Certainly, for the journalist, migrating Jews in the modern era existed outside of time and place, and were instead the manifestation of the past in the present. “For them geography is non-existent, time has no value, persons, not laws, control events, and steam and electricity are so many mysterious agencies which transport them from one inhospitable country to another over a strange world.”⁶¹ Here, the newspaper’s lazy contempt for the “pre-modern” Jews, or “pithecanthropoi” as it names them — a term given by scientists in 1891 to the discovery of fossilised human remains — is crudely obvious. The journalist disdainfully relegates the journeying Jews he encounters to a deeply fabled and fantastical folklore narrative.

The evocation of the Wandering Jew in another of Israel Zangwill’s short stories, “The Model of Sorrows,” published in 1907, surprisingly reinforces the *Daily Mail*’s rather scathing abhorrence for the migrant Jew. In a striking departure from the tone of his earlier treatment of the journeying alien in “The Land of Promise,” Zangwill exposed the narrative of the typically traumatic migrant journey as deeply mythologized. The story’s protagonist and narrator, a young, unnamed artist and the son of a Vicar, longs to find a model to assist him to paint “a realistic Christ, the Christ who sat in the synagogue of Jerusalem.”⁶² Eventually, during a weekend trip to Brighton, the artist spots in a crowd “a frowsy, gaberlined Jew” which evokes for him the image of Christ.⁶³ The Jew, Israel Quarriar — an impoverished, recent migrant from Russia — readily agrees to model for the artist who quickly takes a personal interest in the Jew. Soon, the artist invites Quarriar to relate the story of his journey from Russia. It is a tale of misery and exploitation. The Jew tells how he was forced to sell all of his

worldly possessions to take himself and his family to England, but, during his desperate attempts to smuggle across the Russian border, he fell into the unscrupulous grasp of a Jewish border agent. The agent cons Quarriar out of virtually of his money as well as all of his luggage, and, when the migrant becomes suspicious, the agent has the whole family arrested. After many days, and after the payment of hefty bribes, Quarriar and his family gain their release and finally arrive in England, penniless and destitute. The Gentile artist is both horrified and deeply moved by Quarriar's story:

Such was my model's simple narrative, the homely realism of which appealed to me on my most imaginative side, for through all its sordid details stood revealed to me the tragedy of the Wandering Jew. Was it Heine or another who said, "The people of the Christ is the Christ of peoples"? At any rate, such was the idea that began to take possession of me as I painted away at the sorrow-haunted face of my much tried model — to paint, not the Christ that I had started out to paint, but the Christ incarnated in a race, suffering [...] ⁶⁴

Quarriar's tale of inexorable suffering conjures, for the artist, the legend of the Wandering Jew. Yet here, there is little of either the sinister or ridiculous in the characterisation of the legend's protagonist. Instead, the legend is re-cast by the artist as a tragedy with the journeying Jew its wretched and pitiable hero. Zangwill's re-conceptualisation of the Wandering Jew at this stage of the narrative, and indeed the functionality of that figure as a strategy to evoke sympathy, appears to mark a clear departure from the tone of the *Daily Mail* article.

Yet as the story continues, the sympathetic framing of the Wandering Jew is exposed as fallacy. The artist vows to help the Jew and his family from their poverty, and finances Quarriar in his venture to become a sorter of cloth cuttings. However, despite the artist's generous efforts and investments, the scheme fails and Quarriar is once again destitute. The artist continues to finance the Jew, but still Quarriar pleads poverty. Finally, after much intrigue and still further investment, Quarriar is revealed as a conman. The Jew's tale of suffering and victimisation during his journey to England are proved to be false, and his endeavours to start himself up in business as fabricated. The artist is stunned by Quarriar's deception, reluctantly refashioning his perception of the migrant, and, indeed, of the Wandering Jew. "And so the new Man of Sorrows shaped himself to my vision," admits the artist. "And, taking my brush, I added a touch here and

a touch there till there came into that face of sorrows a look of craft and guile. And as I stood back from my work, I was startled to see how nearly I had come to a photographic representation of my model; for those lines of guile had indeed been there, though I had eliminated them in my confident misrepresentation.”⁶⁵ The short story climaxes with the journeying Jew’s transformation from victim to villain. The façade of the Wandering Jew, romanticised by the artist as a non-threatening, redemptive emblem of the Jewish race, crumbles before the protagonist’s eyes and is exposed as a romantic illusion.

What is more, however, by ultimately disparaging the figure of the Wandering Jew, Zangwill also casts ridicule upon the quintessential narrative of the Jewish journey. The tragedy of departure, the perpetual exploitation and corruption, the misery of the voyage, the uncertainties of arrival—all familiar episodes in a ceaseless Jewish saga—are thrown into sharp relief by Zangwill’s cynical perspective. According to the British Jewish novelist, the migratory journey had itself become exposed to mythologisation and exploitation. Certainly, as Irving Howe observed in his seminal study of Jewish *fin de siècle* migration, *World of Our Fathers*, “the imagery of the journey as ordeal was deeply imprinted in the Jewish folk mind—admittedly, a mind with a rich training in the imagery of ordeal.”⁶⁶ Thus, on some level, even by the first decade of the twentieth century, a narrative of ‘the journey’ had been constructed and disseminated widely enough to become common currency across and beyond the Jewish diaspora. Indeed, as Howe implies, that narrative crucially drew upon a rich heritage of Jewish travel narratives which were ingrained within the very Jewish psyche. As contemporary British Jewish writer Howard Jacobson has wittily and perceptively observed, “wherever there is a Jew, there is a journey.”⁶⁷

However, the Anglo-Jewish press, and indeed, a less cynical Zangwill of earlier times, remained eager throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century to counter cynicism regarding the ‘authenticity’ of the plight of journeying Jews. It was to further this venture that the legend of the Wandering Jew—as a discreet metaphor for journeying migrant Jews—initially found its way into the aliens debate at the turn of the century. The *Jewish Chronicle* published a letter from a correspondent in July 1887 who was distressed at news of the perpetual exploitation of Jewish migrants arriving at German ports. “From the experience of immigrants which I have obtained, and it is no small one, I learn that

a large number are robbed of almost everything they possess. [...] Is it not possible,” mused the correspondent, “for some Jewish body in Hamburg to take steps for the protection of these wanderers, to give them information, and prevent their being imposed upon?”⁶⁸ For the correspondent, the Jewish ‘wanderers’ are both passive and wholly un-threatening, assuming the form of the victim rather than villain. It was a view which the *Jewish Chronicle*, by printing the letter, readily endorsed. Indeed, in a bid to ‘drive home’ that image of the harmless journeying migrant, the correspondent concluded his indignant tirade by citing the example of “a poor Jewish woman and her child” who, as a consequence of their ill treatment in Hamburg, were forced to spend consecutive nights sleeping “in the open streets.”⁶⁹ Hence the construction of ‘the Jew’ as victimised traveller rather than a threatening or sinister presence was further augmented through the feminisation of the alien. By making explicit the plight and victimisation of female Jews, the figure of the Jewish wanderer was rendered pathetic. The sinister undertones typically imbibed in the legend of the Wandering Jew were inverted to suggest, instead, an effeminate protagonist.⁷⁰

Israel Zangwill also subtly invoked the figure of the feminised Wandering Jew in “The Land of Promise.” Indeed, the eventual fate of the two sisters, Leah and Biela, who are divested of home, family and purpose by a series of powerful and purposeful men, has many parallels with the plight of the poor woman and child in Hamburg. All set out on their journey with clear purpose and agency but fall victim to the greed and ambition of a preying masculine ‘other.’ All implore a sympathetic response, and all not only invoke the Wandering Jew legend but invest it with an endearing vulnerability which fully negates any negative connotations which the image of the journeying Jew may have evoked elsewhere. This sympathetic framing of the Wandering Jew is thus also explicitly gendered. Zangwill and the correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle* clearly, if implicitly, engage female versions of the Wandering Jew in a bid to recast Jewish difference in sympathetic rather than repugnant terms. Indeed, as Regine Rosenthal has suggested, the Wandering Jewess—in the form of the beautiful and alluring Jewish woman—was frequently employed as a foil to “the accursed Wandering Jew” in nineteenth century literature. Stemming from Sir Walter Scott’s depiction of Rebecca in his 1819 romance *Ivanhoe* as “a model of female beauty, maidenly innocence, and daughterly affection” yet nevertheless precluded from a ‘happy ending’ due to her inescapable racial ‘otherness,’ Scott’s Rebecca established a tradition which typecast

the Jewish woman as “a curious adaptation of the Wandering Jew type.”⁷¹ Whilst the examples cited in this chapter only hint at the perpetuation of this tradition in turn-of-the-century British cultural discourse, they crucially demonstrate the malleable and polymorphic character of the Wandering Jew(ess) as an analogy for Jews on journeys.

“Wherever there is a Jew, there is a journey,” but where there is a journey it seems, at first glance, that there is rarely a narrative. A combination of apathy, lack of empathy and a failure of imagination might account for this neglect. Yet the perception of a *complete* absence of the migrant journey from the British discursive arena of the *fin de siècle* obscures a small, yet rich body of material which explored and articulated the journey as a transformative, surreal and fantastical drama. Gothic horror novelists and the daily press alike conceptualised journeying Jews as “invading aliens,” and the seas around Britain as the tempestuous battleground. Within this imaginative sub-genre, the process of arrival transmogrified into the advent of Armageddon. These exceptional texts both borrowed from established and topical cultural discourses of the era as well as crafting their own to insist that the story of journeying Jews was newsworthy. That such endeavours seemed to intensify in the press especially as the aliens debate escalated attests to the political agendas which underlay journalistic treatment. Whilst the occasional account attempted to construct a more balanced and sympathetic image of migrant Jews and the experiences of travel, they too were drawn into the realm of fantasy, appropriating and feminising the legend of the Wandering Jew to counter perceptions of the sinister, territorializing alien. Thus the tendency for fantasy, myth and legend as key politicised representational devices within narratives of the journey, transcended both pro-Jewish and anti-alien sentiment.

What is more, however, those seemingly conflicting perspectives shared a vision of the migrant journey, if not of ‘the Jew,’ as a volatile, threatening ‘other world,’ existing outside of place and time. The utilisation of fantasy facilitated and augmented the ‘unreal’ quality of such visions, drawing upon very real anxieties of crisis and a fast approaching ‘end’ to tug at the outer edges of the *fin de siècle* imagination. Narratives of the journey thus thrilled the British public with a dreadful delight, daring to imagine what was, for the majority of the population, unimaginable.

NOTES

- ¹ Stephen Moss, "The Container's Captive Audience," *Guardian*, 8 July 2009.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ Colin Matthew, *Short Oxford History of the British Isles. The Nineteenth Century: The British Isles, 1815-1901*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139.
- ⁴ This figure is based on Lloyd Gartner's estimate that there were "400,000 to 500,000 Jews who crossed the Atlantic as English natives or as East Europeans having passed two or more years in the British Isles." See "North Atlantic Jewry," published in *Migration and Settlement: Papers on Anglo-American Jewish History*, (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1971), 118-127, whilst Nancy Green, "The Modern Jewish Diaspora: East European Jews in New York, London, and Paris," in Todd Endelman (ed.) *Comparing Jewish Societies* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 113-134 has concluded that by 1925 the Jewish immigrant population of Britain was 210,000.
- ⁵ Clare Bayley interviewed in the *Guardian*, 8 July 2009.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ See Mansion House Fund, *Outrages upon the Jews in Russia: Report of the Public Meeting at the Mansion House*, (Council of the Anglo-Jewish Association, 1882).
- ⁸ Greg Smart has traced this growing correlation forged in the British press in his PhD thesis 'From Persecution to Mass Migration: The Alien in Popular Print and Society, 1881-1906,' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Southampton, 2008.
- ⁹ The tendency to conceptualise the arrival of Jewish migrants in Britain as an 'alien invasion' was made popular with the publication of William Henry Wilkins' monograph *The Alien Invasion*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1892). The rhetoric was taken up by *The Daily Chronicle*, 'Alien Invaders,' 28 April 1892, 3, by the Earl of Dunraven, "The Invasion of Destitute Aliens," *The Nineteenth Century*, (June 1892), 987, and, a little later resurfaced in a full-page sketch entitled "Undesirable Imports," *The Daily Express*, 20 November 1901, 4.
- ¹⁰ Israel Zangwill, "The Land of Promise," *Ghetto Tragedies*, [Originally published in 1899], (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), 127- 155.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 141.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 141.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.
- ¹⁹ The nineteenth century collection George Poulett Scrope (ed.), *Extracts of Letters from Poor Persons who Emigrated Last Year to Canada and the United States*, (London:

James Ridgway, 1831) provides multiple examples of this tendency by migrants to marginalize or idealise the journey. Most of the extracts barely mention the journey at all, instead waxing lyrical about the virtues and advantages of their lives in the new world, thereby inadvertently indicting the editorial agenda to encourage emigration amongst the British working classes.

²⁰ This is a phrase which the young Jewish emigrant Mashke Antin — later and better known as Mary Antin — used to describe the mood of the community towards her family's departure. See *From Plotzk to Boston*, (New York: Philip Cowen Press, 1899), 5. Besides Mary Antin see also Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917); Simon Blumenfeld, *Phineas Khan* (1937) and Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer's edited collection *My Future is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants*, (New York: New York University Press, 2005) as an introduction to published literature in this area.

²¹ Although I am suggesting that Jewish memoirists were complicit in the act of constructing and perpetuating myths of the Jewish migrant journey across the *fin de siècle*, I do not mean to suggest that hardship, disorientation and exploitation were not very real grievances which many migrants experienced to a lesser or greater degree throughout their journey to the west.

²² Antin, *From Plotzk to Boston*, 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ Antin, *From Plotzk to Boston*, 11.

²⁵ Henry Stanley was a prolific chronicler of his expeditions in Africa and elsewhere, publishing ten works in total between 1872 and 1898. The most notable of these were *How I Found Livingstone in Central Africa*, (1872); *Through the Dark Continent*, 2 vols, (1878) and *In Darkest Africa, or the Quest, Rescue and Retreat of Emin Governor of Equatoria*, 2 vols, (1890) which was an immediate bestseller.

²⁶ Tim Jeal has produced a stimulating biography of Henry Stanley which thoroughly documents the media response to Stanley upon his return from Africa in 1872, which, although plentiful was also mixed. See Tim Jeal, *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 133-148.

²⁷ "How I Found Livingstone," the *Graphic*, 9 November 1872, 448-450.

²⁸ This is a claim made by Jeal in *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer*, 1-16, (11).

²⁹ Stanley entitled that publication *In Darkest Africa, or the Quest, Rescue and Retreat of Emin Governor of Equatoria*, drawing upon the popular representation of Africa as the "dark continent." The same reference had also been made in a previous publication *Through the Dark Continent* (1878).

³⁰ William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, (London: International Headquarters of the Salvation Army, 1890).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

³² Booth appropriately entitled the first part of *In Darkest England* "The Darkness" whilst the second part, which details Booth's proposals for the "rescue" of the urban population, was entitled "Deliverance."

- ³³ Newspaper articles devoted entirely to the topic of Jews on journeys, although reasonably rare, were the medium which most frequently provided a platform for such images. See, for example, "So-Called Refugees," *Daily Mail*, 3 February 1900, 3 which detailed "disgraceful scenes on the Cheshire." The article received two indignant and lengthy replies from the *Jewish Chronicle*, "Jewish Refugees from South Africa"; "Sober Facts versus Sensational Exaggerations," 9 February 1900, 9-10; 10-11. As the aliens debate intensified two articles appeared which sought to fully comprehend the experience of the migrant journey by undertaking it: "'Out of the House of Bondage': A Day with Alien Immigrants," *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 February 1904, 22-23; Albert Kinross, "At Sea with the Alien Immigrant," *Pall Mall Gazette*, September — December 1904, 126-132.
- ³⁴ This reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has been offered by Howard L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 148-66; Judith Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," in *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, eds. S. Ledger and S. McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 248-66; and Carol Margaret Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), chap. 5.
- ³⁵ See, for example, John Allen Stevenson, "A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*," *PMLA*, 103, (1988): 139-149. Stephen Arata also discusses this in the introduction to his essay, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation," *Victorian Studies*, 33, 4, (Summer 1990): 621-45, (621-3).
- ³⁶ "For Midnight Reading," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 June 1897, 11.
- ³⁷ Popular or notable titles in this literary sub-genre which explicitly identified Jews as the invading force include Matthew Phipps Shiel *The Lord of the Sea* (1901); Violet Guttenberg *A Modern Exodus* (1904); James Blyth *The Tyranny* (1907) and *Ichabod* (1910). Texts which discuss the sub-genre more broadly include Cecil D. Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature*, (Durham: Duke University, 1988) and Arata in "The Occidental Tourist," 621-7.
- ³⁸ Across the *fin de siècle* the figure of the dangerously sexualised male Jew featured in the works of popular and influential novelists, including Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), as well as being a common theme in the work of Anglo-Jewish writer Julia Frankau, who wrote under the pseudonym Frank Danby. See, in particular, *Dr Philips: A Maida Vale Idyll* (1887) and *Pigs in Clover* (1903).
- ³⁹ "Mr Bram Stoker's New Story," *Daily News*, 27 May 1897, 6.
- ⁴⁰ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, [first published 1897], (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1993), 62.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 65.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 66-7.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

- ⁴⁶ Shiel, *The Lord of the Sea*, (London: Souvenir Press, 1981), [originally published 1901], 9.
- ⁴⁷ "Alien Undesirables," *Daily Express*, 21 January 1903, 6.
- ⁴⁸ Shiel, *The Lord of the Sea*, 170.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ The notion of the deceitful Jew came to particular prominence during the Second Boer War (1899-1902) when politicians, journalists and academics alike accused the Conservative government of fighting a "Jewish war" for the interest of Jewish capitalists in South Africa. For more on this see Eitan Bar-Josef and Nadia Valman, "Between the East End and East Africa: Re-thinking Images of 'the Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture," in Bar-Josef and Valman (eds.), *'The Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-27.
- ⁵² Shiel, *The Lord of the Sea*, 177.
- ⁵³ Bryan Cheyette has highlighted the frequently conflicted dual images of 'the Jew' within imperialist discourse in his important study *Constructions of 'the Jew': Racial Representations, 1875-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9.
- ⁵⁴ Robert Colls, *Identity of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 239. On this topic see also Ken Lunn and Ann Day, "Britain as Island: National Identity and the Sea," in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (eds.) *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 124-136.
- ⁵⁵ Eugene Sue, *Le Juif Errant* was published as a magazine serial in France in 1844, and translated into English that same year as *The Wandering Jew*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1844).
- ⁵⁶ The pre-eminent scholar of the legend, G. K. Anderson, concluded in an early essay "Popular Survivals of the Wandering Jew in England," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 46, (1947): 367-82 that the legend was "based on a combination of older legends which were current in many regions of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East" and "took definite shape in the later Middle Ages," 367. One of the earliest recorded references to the legend appears in the *Flores Historiarum* by Roger of Wendover in 1228.
- ⁵⁷ For a useful survey of literature which featured the Wandering Jew in one form or another through the ages consult Joseph Gaer, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*, (New York: New American Library, 1961).
- ⁵⁸ Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, eds., *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), viii.
- ⁵⁹ Regine Rosenthal discusses the "ambivalent" nature of Jewish guilt within the legend, arguing that "the Wandering Jew as symbol of the Jewish people is performing a task that the Christian faith depends upon. [...] Thus for centuries, the religious discourse of the dominant Christian culture has constructed the Wandering Jew as its necessary, if detestable Other." See Regine Rosenthal, "Inventing the Other: Ambivalent Constructions of the Wandering Jew/ess in Nineteenth Century

Literature," in L. J. Greenspoon and B. F. Le Beau (eds.), *Representations of Jews Through the Ages* (Omaha, Nebraska: Creighton University Press, 1996), 171-188, (173).

⁶⁰ "The Immigrant Ship: Human Flotsam and Jetsam," *Daily Mail*, 29 May 1905, 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Israel Zangwill, "The Model of Sorrows," *Ghetto Comedies*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), [originally published in 1907], 3-55, (4).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁶⁶ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, (New York: Galahad Books, 1976), 39.

⁶⁷ Howard Jacobson, *Roots Schmoots: Journeys Among Jews*, (London: Penguin, 1993).

⁶⁸ "Jewish Immigrants at Hamburg," *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 July 1887.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ A female version of the Wandering Jew had made an appearance just a few years prior to the publication of this letter, in Richard Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* (1882). In the second act, the audience is introduced to Kundry, a beautiful and spirited woman, who has been cursed for all eternity for laughing at Christ on his way to the cross. Although she repents of her crime and is remorseful, she remains bound and outcast by a force beyond her power. It is only through her baptism in the opera's final scene that Kundry is finally released from the curse, transforming into a white dove. *Parsifal* was performed to great acclaim in Bayreuth, Germany in 1882, and in London in 1884. See Lucy Beckett, *Richard Wagner: Parsifal*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) for a comprehensive introduction to the opera.

⁷¹ This final quotation refers to a comment made by Alide Cagidemetro in "A Plea for Fictional Histories and Old-Time Jewesses," in Werner Sollors (ed.), *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 21, and is cited by Rosenthal in "Inventing the Other: Ambivalent Constructions of the Wandering Jew/ess in Nineteenth Century Literature," 171; 173.

THE JEWS OF LEEDS

Immigrant Identity in the Provinces 1880-1920

James Appell

Since the arrival of professionalism in the field of Anglo-Jewish history there has been a sea-change in how the subject of Jewish immigration into Britain has been viewed, a change which has greatly improved historical understanding of the period as a whole.¹ However, one area in which both traditional and more recent accounts fall down concerns regional studies of Jews who settled in the provinces of Britain. Whether for reasons of personal preference, availability or accessibility of evidence, or because it simply represented the largest and most diverse community, London has been the focus of the vast majority of studies of Jews. Contemporary historiographical trends have somewhat reversed this with a few very notable — and, precisely because of their rarity, extremely valuable — examples.² But the field continues to be dominated by the metropolis.

This essay seeks to contribute to the correcting of this bias towards the capital. It asserts that provincial Jewish communities developed practices and identities which distinguished them from London. The over-emphasis on the experience of immigrant Jews in the East End has detracted from the variations upon this which can be found once one analyses the towns and cities, such as Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow and Newcastle, which also received substantial numbers of immigrant Jews from the 1850s onwards. The story of Britain's Jewish communities must not revolve entirely around the metropolis, because, as we shall see, provincial Jewry often acted autonomously from and in contrast to London, and, most importantly, Jewish identity formation in the provinces varied as a result.

The example to be used is that of Leeds. The bulk of the Leeds Jewish community settled in the period 1880-1920, moving from Eastern Europe to seek their fortune and escape the parochial and pogrom-afflicted *shtetl*. They found housing and employment in and around the Leylands district of the city, a downtrodden slum characteristic of the unsavoury, 'Dickensian,' late-Victorian industrial town. They crammed into dilapidated housing, whole families occupying single rooms, and worked around the clock in filthy and unhygienic workshops to provide for themselves and their kin. They entered a society itself undergoing radical change, coming to terms with wider democratisation, industrial development and social depravation among the lower classes. With them they brought Yiddish, which remained the lingua franca of the Leylands Ghetto at least until the 1920s, their cuisine and their customs, above all maintaining their religious commitment to Judaism. They also set up synagogues and societies to cater for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the community.

The British Government attempted to limit the numbers of immigrants from Eastern Europe pouring into the country through the Aliens' Act of 1905, giving the Home Office greater powers to repatriate new arrivals who were deemed economic migrants, rather than those fleeing from persecution in their homeland. However, the Act was enforced only half-heartedly by the new Liberal government elected in 1906, and immigrants continued to enter the country.³ By the end of the period there were 20,000 Jews living in Leeds, many of them still in the Leylands but others in more affluent areas such as Chapeltown, the beneficiaries of the textile trade or of successful entrepreneurial ventures. They now spoke English, their children were attending the local board schools, and a significant number served (often voluntarily) in the British Armed Forces during World War I, a sign of their commitment to their adopted homeland. This post-war generation had evidently come a long way from their forebears in the forty years since mass settlement began.

Leeds makes something of a compelling case for study. Firstly, the city's Jewish population remains to this day the third largest in Britain after London and Manchester. But more important, perhaps, is the relative paucity of historical material which has been written about the city's Jews. In the professional field, only the controversial work of Buckman stands out among publications particular to Leeds.⁴ It must be said that the tireless work of a number of local historians, such as Saïpe and Freedman, has provided a rich variety of material and ideas for this piece, but as

yet nobody has addressed the difficult task of bringing the Leeds Jewish community within a wider historical field.⁵ It is intended that this present essay will go some way to integrating Leeds into the bigger picture of British Jewry, whilst also providing a framework by which provincial Jews as a whole can assert their influence over the previously London-centric literature on the subject.

The evidence from Leeds suggests that the city's Jewish population possessed certain unique characteristics which contribute to an enlightening provincial study. While in London there had existed a Jewish community essentially since the mid-seventeenth century after the Resettlement under the aegis of Oliver Cromwell, Leeds had a very minor Jewish presence even in the 1850s and only attracted large numbers of Jews during the textile boom in the late-nineteenth century. Once Jews began to settle in Leeds, however, their numbers swelled in an unprecedented manner, so that by the end of the period in question as many as 20,000 Jews lived there.⁶ The effects of this later, more rapid settlement in a period and region undergoing enormous economic and social development contributed to the formation of a Jewish identity distinct from, and in many ways at odds with, that documented in the histories of London communities.

Feldman, in what is probably the foremost work on the subject of Jewish identity-formation, sees the East London Jewish community forming 'within a contested field.'⁷ There were variables in the way individual Jews expressed their identity, the roots of which lay in the different ideas about religion, politics, employment relations and religious observance (among many other factors). These produced a pluralistic, and very often antagonistic, community. Jews were a part of a whole, subject to a variety of influences which presented them with choices as to how to define themselves. Alderman echoes this, with particular emphasis on the impact of political thought on the immigrant communities. The competition for support among socialists, communists and trade unions aimed at mobilising the immigrant workers, and the influence of the Jewish secular and religious elites to instil their own sense of identity on the poorer strata of their community illustrate the myriad of pressures on immigrant Jews to embrace a particular sense of self.⁸

This is not, however, the kind of image portrayed by the Jews of Leeds. For reasons explained below, the Leeds community was more homogeneous than London, and these various influences on the character of the community as a whole simply did not exist in such a great number.

The Leeds community was overwhelmingly a working class community with common cultural roots — thus they were linked both by their race, their area of geographical provenance and their mode of employment. This phenomenon greatly inhibited the extent to which their identity was the result of competing influences; rather, they were formed in a far more closed society with a limited set of cultural and political parameters. Especially in political circles, as will be developed below, the choices presented to the Leeds Jewish immigrant rather paled into insignificance, given the daily struggle for employment and survival for most of the community. This is not to say that the Leeds Jewish community — and by extension those of other provincial towns — represented a closed society, but rather that there were infinitely more variables available to Jews living in the sprawling city of London, the centre of the British Empire and already by 1900 a hotchpotch of different ethnic, cultural and economic constituents. Thus the late-nineteenth century Jewish settlement in Leeds represents an excellent counterpart to that in London, and allows a vivid comparison of the discourses of provincial communal life and that of the capital.

The strong cultural bonds between the members of the Leeds community distinguished them from the capital and provide an interesting contrast with the pluralistic nature of London's Jews. This cultural distinction is not, however, the only way in which studies of Britain's Jewish communities have failed to separate the metropolis from the provinces. There was also a strong economic imperative to the formation of a distinct provincial Jewish identity, a factor especially relevant to Leeds Jewry. There were multiple aspects to this phenomenon: the employment patterns of provincial Jews, the living conditions in Leeds, and the associated day-to-day experiences of Jews in the provincial city. Together, they highlight the importance of the consideration of economic experience in historical assessments of Jewish identity in the provinces. Finally one has to consider the external influence of anti-Semitism in Leeds. This serves to explain how immigrant Jews in Leeds retained their ethnic particularism, given the potential which existed in the city for class-based co-operation between Jew and non-Jew, and the implications this had for provincial identity.

At the heart of the distinctiveness of provincial Jewry from its metropolitan counterpart was the manner of settlement itself. For a variety of reasons, a sustained period of Jewish emigration from the Russian

Empire began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued until World War I.⁹ Although 60-70% of the new arrivals settled in London, a substantial number went to Leeds. A Jewish presence in Leeds is in evidence well before the start of the period in question, with most authors citing Gabriel Davis as the most prominent member of a community numbering around 150 by 1851. However, from a base of some 200 families recorded under the 1871 census, the Jewish population of Leeds grew at an extraordinary rate in the following half-century. By 1881 there were 2,937 Jews living in Leeds, and by 1920 this figure had reached 20,000.¹⁰ By comparison the London Jewish community, which had started at a very prominent 47,000 in 1881, had risen to around 150,000 in the same period of time.¹¹

The growth in population of both communities is clear evidence of the enormous impact of Jewish immigration in the period 1880-1920 on a national scale, but circumstances in Leeds created local peculiarities. London, the sprawling capital of the British Empire, became home to Jews from an enormous variety of towns and *shtetls* across Eastern Europe. But as neither a famed capital nor a port city, Jews from the Pale of Settlement did not come to Leeds, as they did to London, because of its reputation, or even simply because it was their immediate debarkation point. Immigrants often arrived there through the invitation of a friend or family member from the same locality who had themselves moved on. Local connections were thus vital in the building of the Leeds Jewish community, and created a sustained communal atmosphere among the immigrants and a homogeneity which was lacking in London.

Admittedly there were established separate *chevroth* similar to those in London — the Marienpoler, Lokever and Vilna synagogues established in Leeds, for example, indicate the existence of locality-based religious congregations much as in the capital. However, this fact does not detract from the relative homogeneity of Leeds vis-à-vis London. For instance, although there did exist *chevroth*, there was little sign of the bitterness in relations between them that is evident in, say, the capital's divisions of the Federation of Synagogues, the Machzike Hadath and the United Synagogue. In a commemorative book presented to Rabbi Moses Abrahams in 1912 on his Silver Jubilee as the Rabbi of the Great Synagogue at Belgrave Street in Leeds (the so-called 'Englischer shool' because of its strong connections to the established families of Leeds who had settled as early as the 1840s), signatories included representatives from the New Briggate Synagogue, the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol, Byron Street Synagogue and

St. Alban Street Synagogue, as well as a number of community organisations formed from the *chevroth* and friendly societies.¹² This indicates a degree of co-operation between the varied congregations of the Leeds community, and hints at a substantial degree of unity and intracommunal dialogue among the provincial community.

This unity stemmed, at least in part, from the Leeds immigrants' common cultural background. Leeds was almost entirely a "Litvak" community, hailing from the Baltic and Belarussian areas of the Northern Pale. Moreover, the community was largely drawn from a very exact geographical region. The House of Commons' Select Committee on Immigration noted in 1888 that of the settlers in Leeds 'the greater part come from the province of Kovno.' Kershen suggests that the majority of settlers in Leeds originally came from an area of 75 miles in radius around the city of Kovno.¹³ Jewish immigrants to London were much more a mix of "Litvak" and "Polak," those from central and Southern areas of the Pale of Settlement. Both groups' pronunciation of Yiddish, cuisine and (it has been argued) certain socio-cultural characteristics differed, and indeed such distinctions could result in hostility.¹⁴ This is exemplified in the report on London's Jewish immigrants from 1899:

There exists a strong jealousy between Polish and Russian Jews much like the traditionally bad feeling between a Yorkshireman and the cockney... The Polak imagines himself superior to the Litvock, and their antipathy is so great that a Polish swain will never be found paying court to a Litvotchshki (sister or daughter to a Litvock).¹⁵

Given the almost exclusively "Litvak" character of the Leeds community such tensions did not exist and the community was far more united, while London was divided into at least two immigrant factions.

A further aspect of the process of settlement distinguished London from Leeds, and again highlights the degree of homogeneity and co-operation in provincial communities as compared to the capital. Specifically, the existence of an established Jewish community in London contrasted greatly with the circumstances of settlement in Leeds. Provincial Jewish communities rarely had a strong "native" (i.e. pre-1870) Jewish population, the notable exception being Manchester.¹⁶ London, meanwhile, could boast a thriving Jewish community made up of Spanish, Portuguese and Central European Jews who had been immigrating since the 17th century, as well as early pioneering settlers from the Pale. This created an ethnic mix within

London Jewry, similar to that between Polak and Litvak noted above, which inhibited the formation of bonds across the community. There were practical reasons for this — for one, these natives tended to live in the West End or North London, outside what became the Jewish “Ghetto” in East London; and hardly any of them spoke the Yiddish which was the lingua franca among the new arrivals. Equally, there were cultural grounds for differentiation. The distinction between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews existing within the London Jewry represents one aspect of this phenomenon.

But above all, the natives’ political and economic self-interest largely inhibited the interaction between themselves and their immigrant co-religionist. The natives constituted, in the main, an elite, anglicised Jewish community, boasting such illustrious leading lights as the Rothschilds and Montefiores. For them, the mass influx of immigrants from the East represented a threat — firstly in the sense that their recently-achieved status in British society (both economic and, through the gradual emancipation of the Victorian era, political) would be brought under scrutiny with the influx of their coreligionists; and secondly in the sense that the anglicised native Jews keenly felt that British society as a whole might be burdened by the weight of the poor, foreign masses. ‘They will drag down, submerge and disgrace our community if we leave them in their present state of neglect,’ commented one well-placed observer.¹⁷ In effect, the attitude of natives to the new arrivals was mostly one of disdain. As one source put it,

anything short of savages can hardly be more demoralised than many of the Polish Jews on their first arrival in this country. Dirt, stupidity and obstinacy, with scant sentiments of integrity, seem to be the principal features in their characters.¹⁸

In the most extreme example of the culmination of these assumptions, London-based Jewish Board of Guardians and the Russo-Jewish Committee sent 31,000 immigrant Jews back to Eastern Europe in the period 1881-1906. A number even went so far as to back legislation restricting immigration, such as Benjamin Cohen, Conservative MP for Islington and president of the Board of Guardians from 1887 to 1900.¹⁹ Rather unsurprisingly, the immigrants into the capital resented an attitude towards them from their co-religionists which placed low value on the character of the immigrant. Maurice Samuel, in comments about the Board of Guardians in London, noted that they ‘made us feel that they regarded our mores as inessentials — and worse: as outlandish impedimenta that

were unnecessary to Judaism and a deterrent to good English citizenship.’²⁰ The divisions between native and immigrant created cleavages within the London Jewry which indicates a lack of cross-communal unity.

In the provinces, where these Jewish elites had not taken root, the immigrants did not experience such direct influences from an anglicised, elite class of fellow Jews. Certainly, within their community, the Leeds Jews did not experience the kind of native Jewish snobbery or paternalism evident in London. On the other hand, influences outside the community of this sort were in evidence, as the Board of Guardians and, most notably, the reports of the *Jewish Chronicle*, expressed communal displeasure at the alien character of the Leeds Jewish community. Rather than create disunity among the Jews of Leeds, this served to unite them against the native elites of London, exhibiting the kind of feistiness evident in the following editorial from the Leeds-based *Anglo-Jewry* magazine:

It [the *Jewish Chronicle*] lives in a little conceited superstructure of its own. It imagines, that as far as English-speaking Jews are concerned, all the wisdom, all the brilliance, all the genius has been drawn from all over the world over into the one great vortex, London; and thence, the remaining quintessence, within the four walls of the *Jewish Chronicle* offices. But the *Chronicle* had better disillusion itself. For Jews exist, and in large numbers too, outside London, who are not altogether dumb asses, nor aping mules, and who possess at least a spark of the sense of honour and fair play. What is more, these Jews are going to prove it to the *Jewish Chronicle* whether it likes it or not. For the age of tyranny is dead. And the age of monopoly and self-centred sufficiency is fast dying.²¹

Hyperbolic though this editorial is, it is symptomatic of the kind of attitude which provincial communities exhibited towards the native Jews who so scorned their immigrant mores. Indeed, this attitude was further echoed by Edward Elman Burgess, a political organiser on behalf of the Liberals in Leeds and also an astute social commentator, writing in the Leeds local press in 1925.

It was the custom of the Metropolitan Jewry to give the signal, and the provinces would follow. The immigrant would argue, who were they but mere poor mortals to cross swords with such wise and great men as their Metropolitan brothers... [W]ith the democratic tendencies of an advanced era, together with the influx of a more intelligent type

of immigrant, the local Ghettoites threw off their mental shackles and refused to take their political dish as served up for them from London.²²

The fact that the conflict between native and foreign Jews was focused inwards in London (i.e. within their own community), and outwards in the provinces (i.e. towards the natives of London), both demonstrates the unity of provincial communities, and suggests that it is plausible to speak of anti-London feeling as a facet of provincial Jewish identity.

In short, the cultural factors which linked Jews in Leeds were much stronger than those linking together the community in the capital. The specific region from which a notable proportion of the immigrants to Leeds were drawn, the lack of an elite class of native Jews and the unprecedented rapidity of settlement in Leeds created a kind of sub-society of Jews in Leeds who were relatively untouched by native influences and were self-sufficient enough to support themselves inside a cultural space which they created entirely for themselves. When the elites from London attempted to instil an amount of discipline and conformity, as they had been able to do to an extent in the East End, they came up against a staunch sense of independent identity which fought back and which the authorities in the capital could not easily overcome. Conditions in other provincial towns, though perhaps not as marked as in Leeds, nevertheless were likely to have exhibited similar tendencies, given the similar conditions and time-span in which their communities grew up. In this way they differed markedly from immigrants in the capital, who were far more exposed to the competing influence of natives and other cultural strains within Judaism.

Many of the works on Jews within traditional historiography are content to restrict definitions of Jewish identity to the cultural sphere. However, this approach ignores the enormous influence of economic factors in the defining of Jewish experience. As will be demonstrated, the pattern of employment and working conditions further emphasised the unity among Jews in the provinces, to a far greater extent than in London. Cultural commonalities certainly played a role in defining the nature of the Leeds Jewish community, but the economic basis for identity formation in the period 1880-1920 further highlights the distinction between metropolis and provinces.

Within this a huge role was played by the tailoring industry, and the Jews' prominent position within it. Whilst this assessment is applicable

to the metropolis, the particular conditions of Leeds and its famed textile industry had important ramifications for provincial Jewish identity. As the capital city and the centre of Britain's trade, the Jews of London ostensibly had a variety of options for employment. As well as the trade in ready-made clothing, Londoners could engage in shoe- and boot-making, cabinet-making, slipper-making, cap-making, fur work, cigarette-making and artificial flower work, all of which were relatively large employers of Jewish labour in the capital. Two thirds of male workers in London in 1901 worked in the three trades of clothing, footwear and furniture making. Although the immigrants were thus limited to these 'sweated' industries, there was some kind of diversification within the employment market which variegated the working practices of London's Jews. These workers had much in common through employment, but equally they were divided up among industries whose skills and requirements varied.²³

In Leeds, on the other hand, there was a huge bias towards one industry, that of tailoring. In 1891 72% of Leeds' Jewish population were employed in the trade, and the link between the industry and the Leeds community remained so close that as late as the 1920s 62% of men who married in local synagogues were tailors or connected in some other way to the clothing trade.²⁴ This extraordinary concentration of Jewish workers in a single industry again highlights the extent to which the Leeds community represented one in which its members shared in common a great deal of their daily experiences.

This contrast between Leeds and London was further underlined by the great prevalence in the former of larger workshops and factory organisation of the tailoring industry.²⁵ Although Buckman has, in many ways correctly, called into question the generality of Leeds' larger scale clothing production, it certainly was the case that the largest of London clothing factories paled into insignificance with those of Leeds.²⁶ Sixteen major factories in Leeds investigated by the Lancet Special Sanitary Commission employed an average of 52 hands (the largest employing 80), while in London Charles Booth's survey of 1888 found 571 workshops, of which 70 per cent employed fewer than ten workers and less than 3 per cent employed more than twenty-five.²⁷

The prevalence of larger factories in the city had important ramifications for the Leeds Jewish immigrants. Working in collective shops rather than atomised into the individual homeworkers of the capital, the Leeds Jewry developed a strong sense of unity and shared working

experience. Thus, for example, young Leeds Jewish tailors served their apprenticeships in workshops along with their contemporaries, and this contributed to a co-operative atmosphere among the workers and a sense of collectiveness centred upon the workplace. Raisman describes the interaction between workmates on very relaxed and friendly terms, even during work hours — ‘the only subject of conversation was gambling, either what bad luck they’d had at cards the night before or what horses they were going to back.’ A copy of the *Racing Post* appeared daily at the factory, and large numbers of the working men huddled around it to study form, discuss their tips and place their bets.²⁸

It would be wrong, however, to trivialise the collective experience of these workers. The sheer unpleasantness of conditions in Leeds was also a prime unifying force, one which created bonds of poverty and discomfort between the Leeds Jews in the workplace. The work in the tailoring factories could be unbearably difficult and unpleasant, not to mention dangerous:

The cloth, said a cutter to me, is made of anything and everything except cast iron. It is sized with manure, so that when we put the iron to it we get choked with stinking gas. The cutter added that string, cork, feathers, wire and stones are found in quantities in this kind of cloth... and when the knives come into contact with a hard stone or wire there is a danger of breaking. And when one of those endless band knives does break, as happens very often, you never know where it’s going to fly to.²⁹

For as many as 14 hours a day workers toiled in the clothing factories of Leeds, sharing the dangers and stresses of the working environment with their workmates. In fact, the amount of work taken home by some immigrants to finish overnight makes it even more difficult to put an upper limit on working hours.³⁰ Unsanitary conditions undoubtedly made the working environment even more unpleasant. In almost every workshop and factory inspected by the Lancet Commission there appeared to be low levels of hygiene, ranging from appalling provision and condition of lavatories (far too few, often unplumbed or leaking) to poor ventilation, to general dirtiness of the factory floor.³¹ Working in the factories and workshops had a considerable detrimental effect on the health of the Jewish immigrants in Leeds. One out of five Jewish military recruits from the city was rejected in World War I, three times the rate of non-Jews, the main reasons being lung disease and myopia.³² It was these kinds of experiences,

the daily toil and its consequences for health and well-being, which united the Leeds Jewish workers.

Moreover, such shared economic conditions were not just limited to those working in the tailoring industry. The general standard of living in the Leylands district also paints a picture of abject poverty, which engulfed the Jewish community whether tailor or shoemaker or butcher, and whether man or woman or child. The uncared for housing, the unhygienic lavatories, the 'middens' into which toilet effluent was poured, were all a fact of life in the Jewish quarter of Leeds experienced by all in the Leylands. As one writer put it, 'bread, finding work, clothing the children, keeping alive, the day to day struggle, these were the problems they went to bed with and which each morning light greeted them.'³³

This is not to say that such conditions were restricted to Leeds and the provinces. London certainly had its fair share of poverty-stricken Jewish districts.³⁴ However, the distinction between provinces and metropolis exists in the extent to which poverty was common to a majority of the Jewish community, and as such constitutes a defining factor in identity. A number of examples illustrate how the poverty of the Leeds community as a whole contributed to a particular sense of self among the Jewish immigrants.

The lack of an established and moneyed community elite in Leeds, in contrast to London, meant that, at least for the first-generation settlers of the period, hardly any charitable institutions had been set up for the relief of the Jewish poor. Whereas in London the Jewish Board of Guardians, set up in 1859 by native Jews, took responsibility in the main for the support of poverty-stricken Jewish immigrants, both the geographical remoteness from the capital and the lack of a similarly wealthy elite group meant that in the provinces money from official institutions was less forthcoming. As a result, the Jews in Leeds had to take a far greater responsibility for the upkeep of the needy within the immigrant community. Such examples typically resembled that noted by Teeman,

the big earthenware vessel, the 'top' my mother called it, that stood in the corner of an unfurnished 'best' room. It was nearly always filled with 'rossall,' a beetroot soup we called Borscht, cheap to make and very nutritious, especially when potatoes were added . . . any neighbour could come and dip a jug in and thrice welcome, that's what it was there for, and wordlessly some came, dipped, and just as wordlessly left, not willing to dwell on the harshness of their condition.³⁵

Equally, the prevalence in memoirs of the period of debt collection and visits by bailiffs indicate the perilous existence of the Jewish immigrant in Leeds; while the way in which money was raised by neighbours to buy back repossessed belongings highlight the extent to which they helped one another out.³⁶ The sense of community co-operation, in the absence of help from wealthier Jews, meant that the provinces had a peculiarly self-contained support network, emphasising the members' working class poor identity.

A further demonstration of the common working class links between provincial Jews lies in the community's approach to politics. Unlike in London, where groups of radical intellectuals constituted part of the formation of a uniquely Jewish political identity ('a conduit through which Jewish immigrant workers found their way into the mainstream British labour movement'³⁷), Leeds' homogeneous worker population was not subject to such politicisation, and politics failed to make such an impact on the nature of the Leeds Jewry. London was the home of radical newspapers such as *Arbeter Fraynd* and *Der Poylisher Yidl* which played an instrumental role in the political education of the Jewish East End; it also attracted leading figures in the socialist movement such as Morris Winchevsky and Elijah Wolf Rabbinoiwitz, whose leadership helped to organise a healthy working class political movement among the capital's Jewish workers.³⁸ In Leeds, the struggle to survive depicted above meant there was little time for the kind of political education which would forge strong ideological identities.

Ironically, in a sense, this lack of overt politicisation and relative homogeneity within the community engendered a highly successful trade unionist movement among Leeds Jewry. While in London political radicalism was strong and trade unionism was weak, in Leeds the situation was vice versa. By 1915 Leeds boasted a single union, the Amalgamated Jewish Tailors, Machiners' and Pressers' Trade Union (AJTMP), with a membership of 1,500 representing around 23% of the Jewish tailoring workforce. London, meanwhile, did not have such coherent unions or such a high membership, with around 50 unions in an atomised structure in the capital with around 5,634 Jewish members between them out of a total working population of 65,000, or 8.6%.³⁹

Kershen argues that this distinction comes as a result of the divisiveness of radical politics. In London the socialist and anarchist groups demanded of the Jewish immigrant ideological adherence which proved

problematic, especially given their scepticism of religious practice. Religious Jews could not abide the young radicals who provocatively lit cigarettes outside synagogue on the Sabbath, or who brazenly carted sandwiches around the streets on the Day of Atonement. The kind of worker unity needed for successful trade unionism was absent in London because of the political makeup of the community; on the other hand Leeds' relatively ambivalent political identity and the concomitant worker unity meant trade unionism was a much more realistic prospect.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the difference between London's political activism and Leeds' trade unionism extended to the type of solution put forward by the Jewish immigrants organisation to their economic plight. The London radicals' more ideologically-driven approach led them to use marches, rallies and educational addresses as methods of inculcating a politicised worldview on the immigrant. The Leeds workers, on the other hand, were less receptive to such methods, and instead looked to activism which would alleviate their immediate financial difficulties. Their organisation on industrial lines often aimed to solve short-term economic problems, rather than dealing with their long-term social condition. Rather than mobilising them for a sustained political struggle, the unions pressed merely for improved working conditions or better pay, rather than a radical overhaul of working practices or ideological demands.

This was exemplified in the Jewish tailors' strikes of 1885 and 1888 in Leeds, which constituted possibly the earliest and largest cases of Jewish trade union action in Great Britain. In early summer 1885 Jewish workers won a reduction of one hour from their working day through a week-long strike involving as many as 600 strikers. The strike three years later similarly campaigned 'that hours should be 58 per week, and that any overtime should be paid at the rate of time and a half,' this time attracting 3,000 Jewish workers to the pickets.⁴¹ Whilst only the 1885 strike was successful, the two strikes together demonstrate that at an early stage in the development of the Leeds Jewish community there was sufficient co-operation between the immigrant workers to organise themselves for industrial action; while their demands demonstrate a concentration on the material needs and the standard of living of the strikers, rather than any ideological commitment to anarchism, socialism or any other political position.

In a sense one can see a mutually-reinforcing cultural and economic identity common to many in the Leeds Jewish community. Because of the rapidity of growth and homogeneity of membership in Leeds,

workers simply found they had more in common; while this was further emphasised by the extraordinary reliance in Leeds on one trade, that of tailoring. Hence one onlooker could comment that 'there wasn't any distance between masters and men in those days... they all knew each other, came over from Der Hame [The Pale of Settlement], sat next to each other in synagogue.'⁴²

But provincial Jewish identity was much more nuanced than this, for it also contained precepts of egalitarianism, or to put it more brutally the 'homogeneity of poverty.' Terrible conditions abounded in this tight-knit community, and the lack of an institutional framework, at least in the early years of settlement, led the workers to take upon themselves the task of providing for the neediest immigrant Jews. The strength of trade unionism in the city merely underlined this equality, with members of the community fighting a united front to attain better working and living conditions, rather than pursuing a divisive fight for 'revolution' or such like within a totalising ideological framework. Londoners, without the all-pervasive unifying effect of such economic conditions, could not argue, as did one witness to the Leylands, that 'nobody could claim superior social lineage or status... the community lived as a democracy of equals.'⁴³ Provincial identity was thus tied up explicitly in working class identity.

If provincial Jewry can be defined in strong economic terms, is it possible, as Buckman suggests, that they were no more than a part of the British working class as a whole? Certainly one could infer that there was a common experience of Jewish and Gentile tailors in the trade in Leeds which points to evidence of class formation which crossed cultural boundaries. Moreover, the kind of anti-London attitude exhibited by Leeds Jewry in the period, to a certain extent tallies with the kind of attitudes prevalent among the working classes of Yorkshire in the period. Such a pattern led the Lancet Report to comment that 'some of the older immigrants boast that they are Yorkshire men, but they rarely qualify themselves as Englishmen.'⁴⁴ And, as we have seen, trade union activity in Leeds uniquely united Jews and Gentiles to campaign for improved working conditions.

Such an approach is clearly problematic in that it reduces the Jews to merely an undifferentiated component of a single working class of Britain. This, however, would be a hasty conclusion, for there is strong evidence of Jewish particularism in Leeds which separated the immigrants from their Gentile counterparts. Despite the commonalities engendered

by poverty in Leeds during the period, the Jews of Leeds did set themselves apart from their Gentile neighbours. Culturally Jews were distinct, as the witnesses to life in the Leylands area clearly demonstrate — the posters and shop frontages all displaying a language they didn't understand, the sights, sounds and (especially) smells of a foreign community.⁴⁵

Though it is important to see relations between Jews and Gentiles as being determined by both parties, one can't help but note an especially important and unfortunate truth about the nature of relations between Jew and Gentile. Anti-Semitism emanating from the non-Jewish neighbours of the Leylands Jews to a great extent drew a boundary between both parties, one which was defined by the actions of the Gentiles. Although this risks reducing the Jews to passive actors in their own identity formation, as a number of recent historians have suggested, the importance of anti-Semitism as a factor in the shaping of Jewish identity should not be understated.⁴⁶ The role of anti-Semitism in ultimately keeping separate the Jews and Gentiles of Leeds, despite their strong working class bonds and experiences, is a vital factor in the defining of Jewish identity — one which also had implications for a distinction of identity between London and the provinces.

Holmes' work on anti-Semitism in the period has underlined how pervasive the phenomenon was in all areas of British society, both in terms of geography and of social status. Political developments such as the Aliens Act of 1905, organisations such as the British Brothers' League or the Londoners League, and notably individuals such as Arnold White all combined to fan the flames of popular discontent, both in London and in the provinces.⁴⁷ Hence common to most areas in which immigrant Jews settled in Britain is the kind of tale told below from Leeds, of the unfortunate coincidence between the Jewish Sabbath and pay-day for the Gentile working class:

Then was it that the poor aged immigrant, garbed in his Sabbath best — in those days usually a frock-coat and tall silk hat — became the gibe and sport of the mob. As he wended his way to the Synagogue, he would be jostled, spat and jeered at; delirious and drink-sodden women would hiccough foul suggestions, and sober but perverted Amazons think it a huge joke to tug at his flowing beard and earlocks. The boys and girls, encouraged by their demoralised parents, would contribute their quota to the 'carnival' by making the helpless poor immigrant a target for mud and stone-flinging.⁴⁸

However, while Leeds remains part of this general experience of Jewish immigrants in Britain, the city provided exceptional circumstances in the fact that its inhabitants noted an especially sharply anti-Semitic feeling. As E. E. Burgess put it, 'Leeds had the notorious distinction of being the most anti-Semitic city in the kingdom.'⁴⁹ Memoirs from a host of contemporaries demonstrate the fullest extent of anti-Semitism in Leeds. Louis Teeman and E. E. Burgess recalled the fear among the Jews of marauding gangs of Irish youths who would cross the Lady Beck armed with rocks and sticks. As late as 1915 Louis Wigoder recalled being refused a job at the Leeds Dental Hospital because of his Judaism, and 'they appointed a student in spite of the fact he was not qualified.'⁵⁰ Even in 1920, forty years after the beginning of the influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, Leeds was often an unwelcoming place for them, as Selig Brodetsky testified:

We stopped at a restaurant for coffee. No waitress came to our table. I spoke to one of the waitresses about it. She looked embarrassed and said I should speak to the manager. The manager asked me: 'Are you of the Jewish persuasion?' 'Yes,' I said, 'but what has that got to do with coffee?' 'We don't serve Jews here,' he replied.⁵¹

It seems from these testimonies, along with countless others, that Leeds Jews struggled daily against the hostility of others.

What really differentiates Leeds from London in respect of anti-Semitic activity in the period are the events of June 1917, in which there took place the largest and most prominent British anti-Semitic riot since the return of the Jews in the seventeenth century. 1917 had seen disturbances in Tredegar and the East End aimed at Jews, but of nothing like the magnitude witnessed in Leeds over three days beginning Sunday 3rd June, in the middle of World War I. Police reports suggest that rumours surfaced in the non-Jewish quarters of Leeds that a gang of Jews had attacked a wounded soldier returned from the front in Northern France. Soon a large mob, estimated at around one thousand mainly comprised of young men not yet old enough for conscription, had assembled and began breaking windows in the Leylands and looting from the shop fronts. It was clear that only Jewish shops were targeted. There were additionally around three thousand onlookers who failed to step in. The police were called, and by all accounts failed to deal adequately with the situation. The morning after the unrest continued, as mobs marauded around the Jewish district armed with sticks and stones. It was only by the Tuesday that the police

had begun to restore order, as a motorcade arrived and dispersed the crowd. Although no Jews were killed a number were beaten up and, probably more importantly, the memories of pogroms from the Pale, which had lain dormant for nearly four decades among some of the Leeds Jews, were resurrected.⁵²

Placed within the context of wartime conditions these riots can be explained as symptomatic of a general malaise within British society at the progress of the fighting in France. Certainly, one of the major arguments put forward as to why the events of 3rd-5th June 1917 occurred was the problem of non-conscripted Jewish males. As early as the summer of 1915 there had been unease at the presence of Jews who were of fighting age on the streets of Leeds, and local newspapers fanned the flames by reporting that only around 350 Jews of a population of nearly 20,000 had enlisted in the army since the start of the war. As the local chief constable conveyed to the Home Office on the 18th June, 'the large number of alien Russian Jews of military age that we have in this city... can be constantly seen promenading about our principal streets and the various, pleasure resorts... and members of the Christian population have been heard to ask why these men are not serving in the Army.'⁵³

However, there were extenuating circumstances as to why these men remained. For one, as many of them were not yet naturalised British citizens, they were classed as friendly aliens and so would not serve in the British Army until the Anglo-Russian Military Service Agreement was concluded in July 1917. The health problems of the young men of Leeds as a result of the tailoring trade also proved an impediment to their conscription. Moreover, the importance of Leeds as a tailoring centre again became apparent, this time in the production of khaki for the troops serving abroad. Jews who were deemed important skilled workers in the trade were provided with war badges exempting them from conscription on the basis that they remained in the textile trade for the duration of the war. And the *British Jewry Book of Honour*, a commemorative register of Jews serving in World War I, records that two Leeds Jews won the Distinguished Conduct Medal and eight the Military Medal.⁵⁴ The suggestion that Leeds Jewry was not pulling its weight as far as the fighting of the war was concerned, in this light, seems rather unfair.

Instead, the Jewish Chronicle in the period offered what appears to be a more nuanced approach to the issue of anti-Semitism in the provinces.

There has been a very large and sudden increase in the Jewish population of Leeds during the last few years, and that there has in consequence been considerable inconvenience in many directions to the indigenous inhabitants... Towns, like countries, can assimilate only a certain Jewish element in a certain time, and the Jewish addition to the population of Leeds has been too much and too fast.⁵⁵

Again it seems that the special conditions of Leeds Jewish settlement proved a contributory factor in the rise of anti-Semitism in the city. The rapid entry of nearly 20,000 Jews into Leeds within the space of two generations had exerted pressures on the local population which manifested themselves in the riots of 1917. In this respect Leeds and the provinces differed from London, where Jewish settlement was of a far more long-term character and the growth in immigration from Eastern Europe less marked than in Leeds. Being in the fast-growing provincial communities clearly had different implications for both settlers and natives, which produced a far more virulent brand of anti-Semitism in the capital.

The implications of this phenomenon lie in the fracturing of what potentially could have been a strong bond of identity between Jews and Gentiles in Leeds, as a result of their common working class status. Poverty and mode of employment may have united the two groups, but ultimately religious difference divided them. Whilst accepting that Jews did to an extent contribute to this differentiation through their retention of traditional practices from the Pale of Settlement (especially divisive in this regard must be the problem of language), anti-Semitism represents a far more overt and violent demonstration of the void between Jew and non-Jew which ultimately gave the Jews of Leeds a particular identity, mixing their working class outlook with a Jewish particularism to an extent self-made and to an extent forced upon them by prejudice.

This study has attempted to resolve the problem of a London-centric attitude towards Anglo-Jewry—that current analyses of immigrant Jewish identity in Britain have not satisfactorily dealt with the differences between provincial and metropolitan Jewry. Using Leeds as the counter-weight in this contrast, there appear to be three important factors in the definition of a provincial Jewish identity.

First, the cultural makeup of provincial Jewish communities differed very much from that of the capital. It was not simply that London was

much larger in size, but that it was infinitely more varied in the cultural background of its members. We can see contrasts between native and immigrant Jew, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, or Polak and Litvak, formed as the capital city, the largest of the British Empire, and one of the major ports of debarkation for travellers from Eastern and Central Europe, became home to a wide variety of Jews. Such distinctions were not found in Leeds, where a combination of family ties and word of mouth meant that the people who settled there generally did so through links to residents centred on the areas of provenance in the Pale of Settlement. In this sense we should not regard provincial communities as merely a microcosm of the larger metropolis, but communities of a different type, and as such worthy of attention on their own terms.

Second, the economic continuities between provincial Jews contrast with the greater variety of experience in London. Not only was an extraordinary proportion of Leeds workers involved in the tailoring trade, but the greater levels of collective employment in larger workshops and factories, compared with the rather atomised existence of the London homemaker or small workshop hand, encouraged a greater communal solidarity and a sense of shared experience. Living conditions further underlined this trend, as families lived and worked within the confines of the Leylands and all encountered similarly difficult circumstances in their daily lives. In the struggle to survive there remains evident a heightened sense of communal solidarity in the provinces, exemplified by the large amount of charitable activity in Leeds on an informal and individual level, and by the strong elements of trade unionism in evidence. Clearly provincial Jews' shared poverty contributed to a shared identity.

However, to overlay the economic aspects of provincial Jewish identity risks putting into question the very peculiarity of the Jewish community itself, and threatens to overwhelm the important cultural cleavages between Jew and Gentile. In restoring the particularity of Jewish identity within the provincial working class milieu as a whole, anti-Semitism played an important though regrettable role in keeping Jews on the fringes of British society in the period. In Leeds in particular, this manifested itself in 1917 in the largest anti-Semitic incident on British soil since the South Wales anti-Jewish riots in 1911. This example further underlines the distinction between provinces and capital — although anti-Semitism clearly had its role to play in the formation of Jewish identity in the East End, the rapid growth of provincial communities like Leeds,

starting from a numerical basis of barely a handful of families, contributed to a particularly sharp anti-Semitic mood in provincial areas which further shaped Jewish experience.

Provincial Jewish identity in the period 1880-1920 was thus formed by the provinces' own distinct combination of social, cultural and economic circumstances. Rather than the 'contested field' which Feldman finds in the capital, the circumstances of provincial Jewry led to a far more limited set of parameters by which their identity was formed. The overwhelming sense is of homogeneity — homogeneity of cultural practice, of working conditions, of standards of living, of collective action, of anti-Semitic experience — a homogeneity which is far less applicable to the sprawling, variegated and socially-differentiated Jewish community of the capital. Leeds and London took in between them 120,000 Jewish immigrants in the period; and as each of these individuals sought to forge for themselves an identity in a foreign land, a key variable in this process lay in where they chose to settle, a variable which now needs to be recognised and analysed by historians of the phenomenon of Jewish immigration.

NOTES

- ¹ Historians such as Feldman, Alderman and Cesarani have challenged the assumptions of the older generation of historians of Anglo-Jewry. They addressed themes such as communal poverty and strife which had been relatively absent from previous accounts, and generally told a bleaker, more sober, yet more convincing tale. D. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: social relations and political culture 1840-1914* (Yale, 1994); G. Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, 1992); D. Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990).
- ² See esp. J. Buckman, *Immigrants and the class struggle: the Jewish immigrant in Leeds 1880-1914* (Manchester, 1983), B. Williams, *The making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875* (Manchester, 1985), and T. Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066* (Manchester 2009).
- ³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 159-61
- ⁴ Buckman's study is somewhat of a Marxist polemic, underplaying the Leeds Jewish community's intramural activities and instead depicting the 'struggles... undertaken by serious class battalions forming intracommunally rather than by the familial groups engaged in quaint, peculiarly Jewish squabbles common to so many pages of Jewish historical writing': Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle*, pp. xi-xii.
- ⁵ L. Saïpe, *History of the Jews of Leeds* (Leeds, 1956); M. Freedman, *Leeds Jewry: the first hundred years* (York, 1992).

- ⁶ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 129-30; Freedman, *Leeds Jewry*, pp. 22-3.
- ⁷ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 382.
- ⁸ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*.
- ⁹ Traditional historiography has cited the growth of anti-Semitism and restrictions on Jews within the Pale of Settlement as the primary reason for such a mass migration, but the start of westward movement of Jews at least twenty years before the passing of the May Laws indicates that there was an economic impulse to settlement in Britain. Moreover, as Gartner has pointed out, many Jewish immigrants to England in this period came from Galicia, which was under Austrian control and not a 'pogrom' area at all: See T. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000* (California, 2002) pp.128-130; A Weiner, 'Jewish Industrial Life in Russia,' in *The Economic Journal* XV (1905), pp. 581-84; and L. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrants in England 1870-1914* (London, 2001).
- ¹⁰ On the early Jewish community in Leeds, especially demographic analysis, see M. Freedman, *Leeds Jewry*, pp. 3-6, 22-3; M. Freedman, 'Gabriel Davis,' in his *25 Characters in Leeds Jewish History* (Leeds, 2004) pp. 5-7; E. Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 1-5.
- ¹¹ Lipman, *Social History of the Jews*, pp. 87-90.
- ¹² The presentation in fact listed an incredible number of community organisations as contributors. As well as the aforementioned synagogues there was the Herzl Moser Hospital, the Hebrew School, Talmud Torah, Jewish Institute, Board of Shechita, Chevra Kadisha [burial society], Jewish Shelter and even the Leylands Board School. There were also 250 private individual signatories.
- ¹³ Committee on Immigration; A. J. Kershen, 'Trade Unionism in London and Leeds, 1872-1915' in D. Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p. 51.
- ¹⁴ M. Freedman notes that David Shiffer, a Polak who moved to Leeds in around 1913, had to alter his Yiddish accent to fit in with the Litvak Leeds community, indicative of residual tensions between both groups. Although differences between Polaks and Litvaks figure largely in Jewish folklore and oral histories, no academic study on the subject exists to my knowledge. Such a study would prove hugely of value in determining aspects of Jewish identity among immigrants to Britain.
- ¹⁵ J. Smith, 'The Jewish Immigrant,' in *Contemporary Review* LXXVI (1899), p. 433.
- ¹⁶ On Manchester's native Jewry see Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*.
- ¹⁷ N.S. Joseph, who was a member of the Board of Guardians and brother-in-law to the Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler, *Jewish Chronicle* 3rd February 1893, p. 16.
- ¹⁸ W. Gilbert, 'The London Jews,' in *Good Words* V (1864), quoted in D. Englander, *A Documentary History of the Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920* (Leicester, 1994) pp. 8-9.
- ¹⁹ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 303; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 173.
- ²⁰ M. Samuel, *The Gentleman and the Jew*, quoted in Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 176.

- ²¹ *Anglo-Jewry* vol. 1, no. 2, 15th April 1910, pp. 8-9.
- ²² E. E. Burgess, 'The Soul of the Leeds Ghetto,' pp. 55-6.
- ²³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 131-34; Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp. 93-4.
- ²⁴ Freedman, *Leeds Jewry*, pp. 28-9; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 132
- ²⁵ *Lancet*, 16th June 1888, p. 1210 makes explicit this distinction.
- ²⁶ Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle*, pp. 17-20.
- ²⁷ *Lancet* Special Sanitary Commission 9th-16th June 1888; Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p. 87.
- ²⁸ Raisman, *The Undark Sky*, pp. 102-4.
- ²⁹ R. H. Sherard, 'The slipper-makers and tailors of Leeds,' part of his series 'The White Slaves of England,' in *Pearsons Magazine* (1896) p. 265.
- ³⁰ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p. 118 mentions 'the usual 13-14 hour day.' However, the Lords' Select Committee uncovered evidence of work being carried out from 8am 'up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning,' *Select Committee of House of Lords on Sweating System, Fourth Report*, [1890] q. 30026.
- ³¹ One of many references to terrible working conditions is from *Lancet*, 9th June 1888, pp. 1146-48.
- ³² Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 136.
- ³³ L. Teeman, *Footprints in the Sand* (Leeds, 1995), p. 171.
- ³⁴ *Lancet*, 3rd May 1884, pp. 817-19 best exemplifies this.
- ³⁵ Teeman, *Footprints in the Sand*, p. 33.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 24-6; Raisman, *The Undark Sky*, pp. 87-8.
- ³⁷ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 179.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 167-79; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 137-42.
- ³⁹ A. Kershen, 'Trade Unionism Amongst the Tailoring Workers of London and Leeds,' in Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, pp. 35-6,
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 34-54.
- ⁴¹ C. Holmes, 'Leeds Jewish Tailors' Strikes of 1885 and 1888,' in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol. 45 (1973), pp. 160-64.
- ⁴² Raisman, *The Undark Sky*, p. 104.
- ⁴³ J. S. Walsh, *Mrs. Sheinblum's Kitchen* (Leeds, 1982), p. 1.
- ⁴⁴ *Lancet*, 9th June 1888, p. 1146.
- ⁴⁵ For an especially evocative depiction of daily life in the Leeds ghetto see Teeman, *Footprints in the Sand*, pp. 10-12.
- ⁴⁶ C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939* (London, 1979); T. Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989).
- ⁴⁷ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, see especially pp. 89-140.
- ⁴⁸ E. E. Burgess, 'Soul of the Leeds Ghetto,' p. 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 7-8; Teeman, *Footprints in the Sand*, pp. 8-9; L. Wigoder & P. Ruby, *Ruby and Louis: Memoirs*, p. 40.

⁵¹ S. Brodetsky, *Memoirs: From Ghetto to Israel* (London, 1960), p. 93. Brodetsky, a child prodigy born in the Pale, became professor of mathematics at the University of Leeds and (1940) president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

⁵² For primary reports on the riot see *Leeds Mercury*, 4th June 1917; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4th June 1917; *Yorkshire Post* 4th and 5th June; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8th, 15th and 22nd June. Analysis of the events is offered in Holmes, *Anti-semitism*, pp. 130-34; A. Gilam, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of 1917' in *Jewish Quarterly* 29, pp. 34-38; N. Grizzard, *Leeds Jewry and the Great War* (London, 1981) pp. 8-9.

⁵³ Home Office record 45 10810/311932/40, cited in Holmes, *Anti-semitism*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ M. Adler (ed.), *British Jewry Book of Honour* (London, 1922).

⁵⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22nd June 1917, p. 8.

“GOOD JEWS AND CIVILIZED, SELF-RELIANT ENGLISHMEN”

Crafting Anglo-Jewish Education in the 19th Century

Sara Abosch

Throughout much of the 19th century, the Anglo-Jewish establishment believed that education was vital to instructing young Jews of all classes to their places in society and within the Jewish community. In the case of the Jewish poor, this meant training them in class-appropriate skills/trades and educating them in their duty to country and religion. For the Jewish middle and upper classes, with more funds at their disposal, privately run Jewish schools, or tutors, followed late in the century by an Oxbridge education, was the route generally taken. Additionally, Jewish education served as a major component in the process of Anglicization of ‘foreign’ Jews and in so doing sought to preserve the societal position of established Anglo-Jewry.

The ways in which religious and secular education were melded speaks to the nature of the Anglo-Jewish community as it developed over the 19th century. Anglo-Jewish education absorbed elements from the surrounding society and yet maintained a core Jewish identity. It was class-based and mildly religious in its focus and very conscious of its somewhat precarious position in a Christian country. As such, communal leaders were careful to claim a connection to England’s Dissenting tradition. Ultimately, their goal was to give a very basic Jewish education coupled with a large dose of guided Anglicization and a sense of communal membership, particularly for the children of the poor. In this endeavour, 19th century Anglo-Jewish education was reasonably successful.

By the 19th century English society was generally more accepting of religious differences than were continental societies. Anglicans, Dissenters,

Jews, and Catholics all became, more or less, part of an emerging religious pluralism in England.¹ Thus Anglo-Jewry was not directly pressured to make the adjustments many European Jewish communal modernizers felt compelled to make. Yet, even without external compulsion the Jewish community in England, to continue as a community, had to make choices regarding the form and purpose of various communal institutions. Adopting some form of communal education, or at least arriving at a tacit agreement on educational content for the children of communal adherents, was vital to maintaining the community as well as to shaping its future direction and form.

Generally, there was not much interest expressed in establishing traditional religious educational institutions, with their exclusive focus on the study of *Torah* and *Talmud*.² Between 1817 and 1900 Anglo-Jewry, for the most part, adopted a pragmatic approach to education similar to the one taken by their English countrymen, along with some of their anti-intellectualism, as well. English Jews picked and chose elements of traditional Jewish religious education to include in their curricula, including Hebrew language instruction, and basic Torah knowledge. The schools they founded and attended also made a point of observing the Jewish holidays.

In general form, nineteenth century Anglo-Jewish education mirrored English educational forms. Similar to their British counterparts, Jewish schools were largely class-based, voluntary, and religious in orientation, although unlike their gentile counterparts, Jewish schools had to carefully make decisions regarding the level of religiosity they wished to include in the curriculum.³ The Jewish schools that emerged mostly had English equivalents. Jewish infant and free schools could be loosely compared to certain of the schools operated by the Church of England, or the Dissenters,⁴ while Jewish middle class day and boarding schools had direct gentile equivalents. There were also Jewish Sabbath schools, roughly equivalent to gentile Sunday schools.⁵ Jewish access to the public schools was effectively denied before the 1870s, as no religious accommodations were made, but Anglo-Jewry did establish a small number of select private schools to which the Jewish upper and upper middle classes could send their sons and daughters. Those with money, whether Jewish or gentile, of course also had the option of employing private tutors, or sending their children to continental schools.

EDUCATING THE CHILDREN OF THE JEWISH POOR: VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS

Until the final decades of the century, quite a number of the children of the Jewish poor received little formal education. This was attributable, in large part, to the fact that the Jewish poor, ignoring religious imperatives (and traditional precedent) to provide their (male) children with basic religious instruction, saw education as a hindrance to their primary goal of supporting their families. A child in school was a child not making a contribution to the family's meagre earnings, something many could not afford. Those poor children who did attend school, in London, were educated at the *Gates of Hope School for Boys* (founded c.1664), the *Villareal School for Girls* (1731),⁶ the *National and Infant Schools* (1839), the *Jews' Infant Schools* (1841), the *Stepney Jewish Schools* (1867), and the various free schools including the *Jews' Free School* (1817), the *Westminster Jews' Free School* (1820), and the *West Metropolitan Jewish Schools* (1845).⁷ Instruction was also offered to the inmates of the *Jews' Hospital* (1807), and the *Jews' Orphan Asylum* (1831).

Although the focus here is on the schools created and attended by London's Jewish community, which represented the vast majority of the country's Jewish population, it should be noted that Jewish free schools were also operated in provincial areas with sufficiently large Jewish populations. While London's Jewish poor would not have attended these schools, it is clear that the London Jewish community empathized with their activities and was viewed by them as a potential source of funds and personnel. For example, London's *Voice of Jacob* noted:

We have received a very interesting letter...describing the Jewish National School recently established in [Birmingham]...under the superintendence of Mr. M. J. Raphall; Mr. D. Asher acting as second master. Our space does not, at present, permit any lengthy notice of this important undertaking, which is highly honourable to the right spirit and enterprise of our Birmingham Brethren.⁸

The following year an advertisement appeared in the paper seeking a “competent Teacher of the Hebrew and English languages” for the Free School run by the Manchester Hebrew Association.⁹

Of the London schools listed here, the *Jews' Free School* was by far the largest, educating thousands of poor Jewish children over the years.¹⁰ The school's enrolment grew steadily from its founding in 1817. By 1840,

900 children were enrolled, in 1858 more than 1,800 (1,000 boys and 800 girls), in 1868, 1,440 boys and 1,028 girls were in attendance, and by 1870, the school had 2,643 students (1,600 boys and 1,043 girls).¹¹ The *JFS* was quite successful and elicited positive notice in the English press. It became a favourite charitable cause for many in the London Jewish establishment. As the *Times* noted in 1840:

The examination of the children (600 boys and 300 girls) educated at the Jews' Free School, Spitalfields, took place on the 12th inst. It is gratifying to witness the daily progress made by our Hebrew brethren in the education of their poor. The children rendered Hebrew into English with unaccountable [sic] facility. The neat appearance of the children called forth the admiration of all present; and it appears that they are indebted for this chiefly to their liberal benefactress, Mrs. Rothschild, who annually clothes all the children of the establishment.¹²

In 1853 the *JFS* began receiving government funds and undergoing an annual review by an inspector from the government's Committee of Council on Education.¹³ As the *Times* noted in its coverage of the school's 1862 annual dinner and fundraiser: "1,000 boys and 800 girls... receive a moral and practical education within... the institution, to the complete satisfaction of the Government inspector... the school [is] probably the largest in England."¹⁴ The paper later noted that the founders of the *Jews' Free School* believed:

Many children [of the Jewish poor]... who would have wandered idly about the streets, devoid alike of religion and knowledge, and who might easily have been ensnared into courses of vice and infamy, have by means of the institution been instructed in their religious duties and the elementary branches of knowledge, and been thus trained to become respectable and useful members of society.¹⁵

The school's curriculum fused the rudiments of a Jewish religious education, including knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and a rote ability to recite prayers, with Victorian notions of educating the poor to their proper station in life, emphasizing character and respectable behaviour.¹⁶ Anglicization of the student body was also a primary goal and the school actively sought to "inculcate at the earliest age in the minds of the children a pride in their English nationality."¹⁷ Instruction, initially conducted by the monitorial system and later by instructors and pupil-teachers, combined secular

and religious subjects, to the apparent satisfaction of the Government inspectors and the Jewish establishment. The question of whether it satisfied the Jewish poor did not seem to matter, and certainly was never publicly raised. In keeping with English (and Jewish) practice of the time, boys and girls were taught in separate classes, and the subjects taught were based on the gender of the students. The following excerpt from an article in the *Times* nicely summarizes the curriculum:

In the boys' school Hebrew grammar, composition, &c., were studied.... In English, besides reading, writing, and arithmetic, Euclid, mensuration, algebra, natural science, history, geography, and grammar entered into the curriculum.... In the girls' school less attention was...devoted to the higher branches of intellectual cultivation...to afford time for instruction in duties more especially useful to females. Needlework..., washing, ironing, and other household economies were sedulously inculcated, while the greatest attention was paid to religious instruction. The assistant and pupil teachers in both schools were conducted through a course of study to fit them for annual inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors...¹⁸

There is no way to assess accurately how effective the religious education was, but it should be noted that the general course of study met with government approval throughout the period. At the *JFS* annual dinner in 1868, 82% of the boys and 72% of the girls "were pronounced by Her Majesty's inspector to have been taught successfully." It was further noted that this is "a result which is the more satisfactory because...two languages—English and Hebrew—are taught..." The Chair of the evening, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, commented that "several of the pupil-teachers lately employed in the school had entered the London University and highly distinguished themselves. Several had obtained Scholarships, while others had taken the degrees of B.A. and M.A."¹⁹ Continuing in this vein, the following year the paper noted that "[t]he institution, in its two-fold character of an elementary and a normal school, has continued its career of usefulness with increasing success."²⁰

Most of the other Jewish free schools in London were conducted along lines similar to those of the *JFS*. The exception was the *West Metropolitan Jewish Schools*, connected to the *West London Synagogue of British Jews*, and thus to Reform Judaism. The schools opened their boys' school in 1845, their girls' school in 1847, and an infant school in 1858-9. The *West*

Metropolitan Schools were also open to non-Jewish students, something that would not have been countenanced by the *JFS* (or, at this time, by the Chief Rabbinate). At a dinner for the *West Metropolitan Schools* it was noted proudly that:

Besides the usual course of secular education, the children were taught to read and understand the Sacred volume and the Daily Prayers, and were instructed in the grammatical rules of the Hebrew language. In consequence of the high character of the instruction given[,] the children of Christian parents were admitted to the secular classes with highly beneficial results.²¹

As previously noted, instruction was also provided to the young inmates of the *Jews' Orphan Asylum*, and the *Jews' Hospital*. Shortly after assuming his duties as Chief Rabbi, Nathan Marcus Adler visited the *Jews' Orphan Asylum* where he:

...examined the children...as to the progress of their religious studies and scholastic studies, [and] was pleased to express the great satisfaction which their attainments, as well as their appearance, had afforded him. The [Chief Rabbi]...exhort[ed] them to acts of obedience to their teachers, and attention to their duties, as a grateful return for the benefits conferred on them...²²

Instruction at the *Jews' Orphan Asylum*, as at the *JFS*, combined encouragement of the cardinal Victorian virtues of character, usefulness, and knowing one's station in life, with a basic Jewish education. Describing the course of instruction at the asylum the *Times* noted that:

The inmates...are admitted between the ages of two and 11. They are maintained, and receive a sound elementary Hebrew and English education, until they arrive at an age for being put out in the world, when they are apprenticed and provided with an outfit at the cost of the asylum. Even then they are not lost sight of, but are considered as in some sort under the guardianship of the asylum until the termination of their apprenticeship. In this way very many children have been trained into useful and valuable members of society.²³

Unlike the instruction provided at the other educational institutions for the Jewish poor, training at the *Jews' Hospital* principally involved the

mastering of a skill or trade, thus providing the Jewish poor with the skills they would need to successfully compete with the respectable English poor. As F. H. Goldsmid noted at the hospital’s annual dinner in 1849:

...[there were] disadvantages to which the humbler classes of his people were exposed by the observance of their Sabbath... [He] showed the beneficial operation of the Hospital in teaching them trades from which they were thereby excluded. As a strong practical illustration of his observations, the children and young men of the institution were paraded around the room, many of them bearing samples of their skill as shoemakers, cabinetmakers, &c., and all exhibiting by their appearance the benefits which the charity provided.²⁴

The hospital’s strategy was apparently an effective one, as the *Times* noted nearly twenty years later that “[d]uring the past year the hospital... has supported, educated, and clothed 90 children... and 25 having attained the age prescribed by the laws have been apprenticed or placed in domestic situations.”²⁵

COMMUNAL EDUCATION FOR THE ADULT JEWISH POOR

London’s Jewish community also concerned itself with the adult Jewish poor, although no comparable educational infrastructure was established to assist them. Instead, the Jewish community generally adapted the institutions and practices increasingly popular within the greater English society, such as Mechanics’ Institutes, and lecture series for the poor. The instruction or ‘improvement’ of the adult Jewish poor served to do more than just ‘improve’ them. There was a perception among some members of the Jewish community (such as David Salomons, F. D. Mocatta, Francis Goldsmid, Sir Benjamin Phillips, and Isaac Lyon Goldsmid) that education of the Jewish poor, whether children or adults, was integrally connected to proving the community worthy of political emancipation. However, this belief was not universally held within the Jewish community. As but one example, Chief Rabbi N. M. Adler strongly supported Jewish education (under his supervision and control, of course) for religious reasons but did not view it as a step toward winning emancipation.²⁶

Those who did believe that instructing and improving the adult Jewish poor was the road to emancipation trod a fine line, seeking both to educate and anglicize the Jewish poor, while not depriving them of their Judaism but at the same time not making it too great a part of their identities.

These proponents of Jewish emancipation were not alone in their hopes. A reporter for the *Times*, writing about a public ball for the *Western Jews' Free School for Boys* held at *Willis's Rooms* in 1848, criticised the government and praised Anglo-Jewry's spirit of generosity noting that "[f]ortunately no act of Parliament is required to enable our Jewish fellow-citizens to exercise those charitable feelings by which they are so honourably distinguished..."²⁷ Returning to the topic several years later, a reporter writing on the dinner in honour of the 50th Anniversary of the *Jews' Hospital*, chaired by the Lord Mayor, David Salomons, noted that the toast to:

The 'corporation of London' was responded to by Mr. B.S. Phillips, the first Jew admitted to that court from which the intolerant spirit, except in a few wretched instances, has been since completely banished. He took the opportunity to state that the corporation were desirous by every means in their power to promote the moral, social, and political interests of their fellow-citizens, irrespective of creed or colour.²⁸

The tension in the community between those who hoped education of the Jewish poor would further the cause of emancipation, and those who believed it should simply serve to mould anglicized Jews, was also reflected in the creation of the *Jews' and General Literary and Scientific Institution* which opened January 19, 1845. *Sussex Hall*, as it was more generally known, was modelled after the Mechanics' Institutes popularized by George Birkbeck and founded to raise the cultural calibre of the Anglo-Jewish working classes.²⁹ It provided a library, lectures, classes, concerts, and other enrichment activities, for an annual subscription of 30 shillings, with a possible reduction to 12 shillings for the poorer classes.³⁰ The Mechanics' Institutes, like *Sussex Hall*, were open to all creeds. Yet poor Jews tended to stay away from the gentile Mechanics' Institutes. It was felt that they would be more likely to take advantage of *Sussex Hall's* offerings as it was founded by their brethren.

Chief Rabbi Adler visited in August 1845, became a subscriber and donated a "complete set of the works of Moses Mendelssohn..."³¹

By 1848, 118 lectures had been given and 40,000 book borrowings made. As Chief Rabbi Adler "pointed out... [Sussex Hall] was a living refutation of the popular reproach that the Jew had no interest in general culture."³² The programming was quite varied, but always geared to raising the cultural level of the Jewish poor, including concerts, talks, book discussions and the like as part of the general 'improving' instructional programmes offered.

Unfortunately, the undertaking soon found itself in financial difficulty. At no point were workers' subscriptions sufficient to maintain the institution. Thus funds had to be supplemented by contributions from wealthier Jewish patrons. Additionally, attendance at its functions, once the initial novelty wore off, was somewhat lacklustre. Workers were frequently too tired to attend evening lectures, or performances, or unwilling to use their meagre disposable income for these programmes. Additionally, the growing availability of cheaper newspapers made their use of the hall's reading room, one of the attractions of membership, less necessary. Also of concern was the general (i.e., largely secular) content of most of the programmes on offer. Some, such as the Chief Rabbi, felt a more Jewish element should be injected, while others were insistent on allowing only offerings of general interest. This latter insistence was in response to the fact that some proponents of emancipation, such as Isaac Lyon Goldsmid and David Salomons, had been initially reluctant to support a supplementary educational institution such as *Sussex Hall*, fearing it would emphasize Jewish separatism among the lower classes rather than lead to greater understanding (read 'anglicization') and integration with the general English population.³³

Sussex Hall was forced to close its doors at the end of 1859, fairly soon after the enactment of political emancipation. Efforts were made to the end to keep it financially viable but they were ultimately unsuccessful.

Arthur Barnett argues that the institute lost the wealthy patrons it needed to survive principally because the attainment of emancipation convinced them that their support was no longer essential. They believed the need to raise the Jewish poor in the esteem of the gentile world was now of less immediacy. As Barnett succinctly phrases it: "Emancipation was born, so *Sussex Hall* was dead."³⁴ This seems a plausible explanation.³⁵ The demise of *Sussex Hall* marked the end of large-scale organized cultural enrichment activities geared to the adult Jewish poor during this period.

PRIVATE EDUCATION:
CHILDREN OF THE ANGLO-JEWISH MIDDLE
AND UPPER CLASSES

Thus far the focus has been on educational arrangements made for (not by) the Jewish poor. Consideration is now given to the educational needs and arrangements of the Jewish middle classes.

For social and curricular reasons, wealthy and middle class Jews could not bring themselves to send their children to the Jewish free schools. They sought to avoid the social stigma connected with enrolling their children in schools principally attended by the poor. Additionally, the secular and religious curricula of the free schools were clearly not up to the standards they deemed necessary for the education of their children. Unlike the Jewish poor, who frequently required direct communal assistance and thus fell under the rubric of Anglo-Jewish (i.e., emerging Victorian-Jewish) paternalism, the other classes, were capable of providing for themselves. Before 1855 and the opening of the *Jews' College School* under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi, their options were largely limited to private Jewish boarding or day schools, home tutoring, continental education, or the *University College* (1833), and *City of London* (1837) *Schools*, both of which were non-denominational day academies.³⁶ The country's established private schools, as well as the public schools, were denominationally Christian and, therefore, not an option.

Extensive information about many of the private schools attended by the Jewish middle and upper classes between 1841 and 1900, as well as information on other available educational arrangements, can be gleaned from the advertising sections of the Anglo-Jewish press.³⁷ Many of these schools regularly advertised in the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the *Voice of Jacob* and the *Jewish World*, and provided addresses, descriptions of their curricula, fees, and other information.

The first advertisement for a Jewish private school appeared in May 1842. The school, billed as a 'Hebrew and English Seminary' was located at Fore Hamlet, Saint Clements, Ipswich and run by a Mr. Harris Isaacs who promised "that his best... efforts will be urged to forward [his charges'] Improvement; direct[ing] their minds to Religion and Morality..." The terms were:

Board, Hebrew & English Tuition from 6 to 8 years old, Working included, £20 0s. from 8 to 10 years of age, £24 0s. Each Pupil to bring

six towels... Vacation only during Passover holidays. Accounts to be settled quarterly.³⁸

Although the seminary was located outside London, Mr. Isaacs clearly expected students from the capital. Several of the Jewish private schools were based in the provinces and most advertised in the London Jewish press, as this was where their principal potential clientele resided.

The first listing for private tutorials also appeared in May 1842 noting that:

Mr. D. Asher...begs to inform his Friends and the Jewish Public in general, that he intends giving Instruction in the Hebrew and German languages to private Pupils, either at their, or, at his own residence...³⁹

This was fairly typical of the advertisements offering tutorial services. Most established the tutor's credentials, offered a variety of instruction in secular and religious subjects, and frequently highlighted linguistic abilities, as facility with continental tongues was considered the mark of an educated individual. Although these advertisements were always directed at the Jewish middle (or upper) classes with school-age children, not all those offering their services were of the 'Hebrew persuasion.'⁴⁰ Advertisements were also run by families seeking private tutors for their children.⁴¹

Of the many private schools that advertised in the Jewish press over the years the most famous was Gloucester House Academy. Founded c.1799 by Hyman Hurwitz, it was originally located in Highgate.⁴² When Hurwitz retired in 1822 he sold the school to Leopold Neumegen who operated it in Highgate until 1842, retired briefly, and then, following a series of ill-advised investments, returned to operating the school. He reopened at Gloucester House in Kew in 1842 at which time he placed the following advertisement:

Gloucester House Academy. Mr Neumegen, having removed his Establishment from Highgate to Gloucester House, Kew; where he has taken spacious premises, delightfully situated, surrounded by four acres of ground...solicits the patronage of his friends...
...[P]upils are instructed in the Hebrew Language...and...acquainted with its sublime Literature...

... [H]e has established a separate class for instruction in ... Talmud ... for such pupils whose parents ... desire them to be acquainted with the knowledge ...

Terms.—Including English ... Hebrew, French, Writing, Book keeping, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, & c. Geography, and the Use of the Globes: —Thirty-six Guineas per Annum; Washing included. Latin and Greek, One Guinea per Quarter each. Music, Dancing, Drawing, & c., on the usual terms. Each Pupil to bring six towels and a dessert spoon and fork ...⁴³

Gloucester House's offerings were extensive. At 36 guineas per year, plus extra for dancing lessons, etc., it clearly catered exclusively to the Jewish upper-middle and upper classes. Obviously, not all private schools were as expensive or as exclusive nor were their instructional offerings as extensive.⁴⁴

Gloucester House Academy remained open under Neumegen's personal supervision until his death in 1875 at which time an obituary in the *Jewish Chronicle* noted that:

Leopold Neumegen has been for half a century a household word. There is scarcely a family of any position whose members have not received a portion of their education at the school which he conducted many years successfully ...⁴⁵

Beginning in 1856, Gloucester House also offered a programme for young ladies under the supervision of Mrs. Neumegen. After Neumegen's death his wife continued to operate the young ladies' component of the school, adding physical training and university preparation to her offerings.⁴⁶ As these items indicate, expectations regarding young Jewish women's education had clearly changed since 1856.⁴⁷ Gloucester House remained open until 1928 under the supervision of Mrs. Neumegen and later her daughter.

While Neumegen's Gloucester House was the longest running establishment of its type to appear in the Jewish press there were many other private Jewish schools that advertised. Of particular note were the various schools run by the Moss sisters under their maiden name, and later under their married names of Hartog, Leo, and Levetus.⁴⁸ Marion Hartog operated several successful incarnations of a school for Jewish young ladies, first with her sister Celia (Mrs. Levetus) and later with her sister Mrs. Leo. *Mrs. Hartog and Miss Moss's Select School for*

Young Ladies first inserted an advertisement in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1846, although the advertisement made clear that the school had been in operation for some time. The school, located at 58 Mansell Street, Goodman's Fields, charged tuition of 5 guineas per annum.⁴⁹ In 1851 Hartog opened a new school with her husband Alphonse Hartog, "a native of Paris and Professor of Languages." This school greatly expanded the scale of her operation.⁵⁰

By 1858, the school had moved to Camden Road and become a *Preparatory Boarding School for Young Gentlemen*. The school was now under the direction of Mrs. Hartog and her sister Mrs. Leo, although "Mons. Alphonse Hartog, Professor of Music, [would continue to] attend schools and private families as usual."⁵¹ In 1866 the school was again revamped, moving to Hampstead and once again becoming a school for young ladies (Laurel House).⁵²

In 1869, the sisters went their separate ways. Mrs. Hartog maintained the Laurel House School, while Mrs. Leo opened her own school, Merton House, in South Hampstead. Unfortunately (albeit, obviously), the advertisements are silent about the reasons for the breakup and Mrs. Leo fades from the advertising pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*.

By 1875, Mrs. Hartog had again moved her school to a different location (or possibly closed Laurel House and opened a new school). The final advertisement in this series noted that the school was now located in the wealthy Maida Vale district and known as the *Lorne House Collegiate Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies*. *Lorne House* was "conducted by Madame Alphonse Hartog, assisted by resident English and German governesses and...highly qualified professors. Special classes [were now offered] for young ladies wishing to pass University examinations."⁵³ Thus, like Gloucester House, the Hartog-run schools had undergone substantial curricular change since the 1840s when "plain and ornamental needlework" for young ladies was offered in addition to other subjects.⁵⁴

There were also long-running provincial Jewish private schools. The most prominent of these was Tivoli House Academy, Gravesend, run by Mr. Henry Berkowitz, which opened sometime in the late 1840s. One of its earliest advertisements noted that an *Establishment for Young Gentlemen* located at Oak Villas, Windmill Hill, Gravesend was accepting new students. Tuition was 25 guineas per year and instruction included "a complete English Commercial Education" as well as "Hebrew, French, German, and other accomplishments."⁵⁵

In 1857 Mr. Berkowitz greatly expanded the scope of his operations after he acquired:

...extensive premises formerly known as the Tivoli, containing no less than forty-three rooms, among which there are spacious bedrooms, diningrooms [sic], &c.; situated [of course!] in a most salubrious part of the town...all calculated to promote the good health...of the children entrusted to his care.⁵⁶

That same year he informed the public that the Tivoli's premises "are eminently calculated to answer the purpose of a BOARDING ACADEMY, combining the advantages of a most salubrious air, and the easy access from London throughout the day." Berkowitz also opened a girls' school noting that "[t]here will also be a *Distinct Establishment* for Young Ladies, under the superintendence of Mrs. Berkowitz and efficient resident governesses" established at Tivoli House.⁵⁷

By 1880 *Tivoli House Academy* had lived up to the promise of its extensive premises. The boarding school offered instruction for Jewish students of both sexes on a wide array of subjects both intellectual and physical. A new dormitory had been added along with a high school for young ladies. Religious instruction was given and access to a synagogue was provided as well. Also of interest is the addition of drilling and swimming to the boys' curriculum. This is clearly a variant of the English public school fitness and games programmes propounded earlier in the century by Thomas Arnold and others.⁵⁸

In addition to Anglo-Jewish private schools there were a number of continental Jewish schools (not *yeshivot*) that regularly advertised in the hope of attracting upper-middle and upper class London Jews. These schools invariably offered secular and religious subjects in a home environment in which the young charges (it was promised) would receive the affection and care they were accustomed to receiving from their own parents. Continental schools generally cited a European rabbi, the British Chief Rabbi, or a well-known Anglo-Jewish personage as reference. Their curricula were virtually identical to those offered by Anglo-Jewish private schools, so the attraction, presumably, was the cachet attached to a continental education. The earliest of the advertisements for this type of establishment appeared in March 1845 for *Madame Marix' Establishment for Young Ladies*, at Paris.⁵⁹ A fairly similar advertisement, for an establishment for young men, appeared a couple of months later under

the heading Continental Education and noted a *Hebrew Finishing Academy* in Brussels, located, yet again, "in the most salubrious part of town, surrounded by the most picturesque views..."⁶⁰

As the profusion of Jewish private schools indicates, there were no communally sponsored Jewish schools for the children of middle and upper class Jews.⁶¹ Efforts, headed by Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler, were made to remedy this situation with the opening of the *Jews' College School* in 1855. The school, affiliated with *Jews' College*, was a day school to which the Jewish middle classes (particularly the traditionalists among them) could send their children for a class-appropriate religious and secular education.

The school operated from 1855 until 1879, at which time declining enrolment forced its closure. The drop in enrolment was caused by a gradual decrease in middle class Jewish religiosity, residential changes as London's middle class Jewish population shifted westward from the City, and the opening of a Jewish house at *Clifton College* in 1878, enabling Jews, as Jews, to board at a high-class 'public' school.

The more progressive elements within Anglo-Jewry opposed the establishment of communal Jewish schools for the middle classes, including the *Jews' College School*, believing these schools would hinder Anglicization, and emancipation, by fostering Jewish separatism. While they admitted that most English schools had a "Christian religious character, the growth of secular institutions, such as the University College School, provided an [adequate] alternative for Jewish parents" and negated the need for opening specifically Jewish schools. Also, as English Jews did not have to cope with the overt anti-Semitism present on the Continent, the progressives simply did not believe a separate Jewish school system was necessary.⁶² Interestingly, they did not oppose *Jews' College* (1855) as they viewed this institution as a mechanism for creating an anglicized Jewish clergy, something they ardently desired.

Both *University College School* (1833) and the *City of London School* (1837) had accepted Jewish students from the outset, but provided no Jewish instruction. Thus parents who sought to add a religious component to their children's education were compelled to look for ways to supplement the schools' offerings. Before 1860 they were able to do so through private boarding and tutorial arrangements.⁶³ After 1860 it became somewhat easier to provide supplemental Jewish education with the establishment of the *Jewish Association for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge*. The Association

provided religious instructional material, although it was not until 1876 that it directed itself to the extracurricular instruction of those students enrolled in English schools who desired it.⁶⁴

JEWISH EDUCATION AFTER 1870

School arrangements for middle and upper class Jews did not change dramatically between 1840 and 1900 although private Jewish middle class schools began a slow decline after the opening of *Polack's House* at *Clifton College*.

School arrangements for the Jewish poor underwent a fairly dramatic change in the decades after the enactment of the *Education Act of 1870* which created a dual system of religious (i.e., voluntary) and public elementary schools, and ultimately "laid the foundations of a system that would provide free and compulsory education for all children funded...by the state."⁶⁵ The response of the *National Schools* of the Anglican Church and the Dissenters' *British and Foreign School System* was immediate, as they embarked on ambitious school building programmes to compete with the new so-called 'Board' schools.⁶⁶

The Jewish community responded differently. After 1870, it never built another voluntary Jewish school.⁶⁷ The religiously neutral schooling, at rate-payers' expense, offered by the new Board schools suited many in the Jewish community, particularly the anglicizing components among the middle and upper classes. They were happy to pass along the financial burden for educating the majority of the Jewish poor, and comfortable supplementing the poor's religious education through the auspices of the *Jewish Association for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge*. Many among the Jewish poor, however, were reluctant to commit their children to the new Board schools, and refused to enrol them. It is reasonable to assume they feared that the non-sectarian promise of the schools was a sham. In an effort to overcome this reluctance Abraham Levy, formerly of the *Jews' Free School*, was appointed headmaster of the *Old Castle Street Board School* in 1874.⁶⁸ He, in turn, hired a significant number of Jewish teachers. The effort was a resounding success, and Castle Street became the first 'Jewish' Board school. The school's Jewish pupils regularly stayed after the end of the school day to receive religious instruction.⁶⁹ In fact, this initial effort at assuaging the concerns of the Jewish poor was so successful that by the

early twentieth century more than a dozen so-called 'Jewish Board Schools' existed in London.

The inception of the Board school programme did not mark the end of the *JFS*, but it did bring much welcomed assistance to the community at a time when it was really needed. The post-1880 influx of poor Jewish immigrants overwhelmed the resources of the established Anglo-Jewish community. The Jewish Board schools enabled the communal elite to ensure that the children of the new immigrants were quickly anglicized, while still receiving at least a modicum of Jewish religious instruction. Or, as Suzanne Kirsch Greenberg, quoting the *Jewish Chronicle* of February 3, 1893, so nicely phrases it: "To produce 'good Jews and civilized, self-reliant Englishmen'—this was the definition of Anglicization, the ambition of Anglo-Jewry and the task of English[-Jewish] public [and private] education."⁷⁰

NOTES

- ¹ This qualification is used as it was clear, well into the 19th century, that Catholicism continued to be viewed as something of a threat to 'Englishness,' and, despite increased political, social, and cultural rights for non-Anglicans, the Church of England remained the country's established church.
- ² During this period, barring the occasional small privately held study group, the London *Beit HaMidrash* (Talmudic school) was the only place where the traditional study of Jewish religious subjects was undertaken several evenings a week. Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler was a regular participant in these sessions which were for adult students only.
- ³ See Steven Singer, "Jewish Education in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Early Victorian London Community," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 nos. 2-3 (October 1986-January 1987): 163-178.
- ⁴ There do not appear to have been any Jewish 'Dame Schools' or 'ragged' schools. The Anglican schools, known as the National Schools, were founded in 1811, and the Dissenting Schools, under the British and Foreign School Society (initially known as the Royal Lancastrian Society), were established in 1808. See generally: W. B. Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914*, Social History in Perspective, general editor Jeremy Black. (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 1-20.
- ⁵ The Sunday School movement in England began in the 1780s, while Jewish Sabbath schools were not instituted until the 1860s. Jewish Sabbath schools included the Sabbath and Sunday Evening schools run in conjunction with the *Jewish Association for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge* (1860), and the *West End Sabbath School* (1867).

- ⁶ The school, also known as the Bevis Marks' School, "was founded in the year 1731, by Isaac da Costa Villa Real, a Portuguese Jew, who also endowed it with the sum of £80 a year for clothing and educating 20 Jewish girls of his nation." James Elmes, *A Topographical Dictionary of London and its Environs* (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Arnot, 1831), 59.
- ⁷ The Gates of Hope School, the National and Infant Schools, and the Villareal School were affiliated with Bevis Marks, the others listed here were Ashkenazi. By 1870 the West Metropolitan Jewish School, run by London's Reform congregation, no longer served the Jewish poor and was renamed the Jewish Middle Class School.
- ⁸ *Voice of Jacob*, September, 16, 1841. The school was actually called the Hebrew National School. Several lengthy articles on the festivities surrounding laying the cornerstone for the school's permanent quarters (August 1843) also appeared in the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* which noted the attendance of Sir Moses Montefiore, local Jewish notables, Christian dignitaries, and "a great many more of the most respectable gentlemen of the town." In his remarks Montefiore observed that the school was "to be dedicated to the instruction of our youth in the principles of our most holy religion, and in all the sciences and arts fitted to render them useful members of society, good citizens, and loyal subjects." *Occident*, Vol. 1, No. 7, October, 1843; Vol. I, No. 8, November, 1843; Vol. I, No. 9, December, 1843.
- ⁹ *Voice of Jacob*, January 7, 1842.
- ¹⁰ For a general history of the school see Gerry Black, *JFS: A history of the Jews' Free School, London since 1732* (London: Tymesder Publishing, 1998).
- ¹¹ These numbers are extracted from articles in the *Times*, July 16, 1840, 5; May 27, 1858, 7; June 24, 1868, 5; June 14, 1870, 12, respectively. By the turn of the century the school had a combined enrollment of more than 4,000 students.
- ¹² *Times*, July 16, 1840, 5.
- ¹³ The government also solicited the Chief Rabbi's assistance to aid in the collection of information on the education of the Jewish poor. On September 13, 1858 Chief Rabbi Adler sent a request to Jewish schools throughout England to fill out the "enclosed Circular... with full information reflecting the State of Education of the Jewish Poor in this Kingdom, together with statistics and other facts which bear upon that subject." The circular was provided by "[t]he Commissioners appointed by Her Majesty to inquire into the state of popular Education in England..." Office of the Chief Rabbi, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/2805/1/1/5: *Copy Letter Book*, begins May 1858.
- ¹⁴ *Times*, July 12, 1862, 5.
- ¹⁵ *Times*, June 3, 1864, 11.
- ¹⁶ Steven Singer, "Jewish Education in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Early Victorian London Community," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 nos. 2-3 (October 1986-January 1987): 168.
- ¹⁷ Statement of Miss Miriam Harris, Superintendent of the *Jews' Infant School*, a subsidiary of *JFS*, in W. Gilbert, "The London Jews," *Good Words* V (1864), 923-4,

reprinted in David Englander, ed. and compiler, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain, 1840-1920* (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1994), 216.

¹⁸ *Times*, June 20, 1867, 7.

¹⁹ *Times*, June 24, 1868, 5.

²⁰ *Times*, June 14, 1870, 12.

²¹ *Times*, April 2, 1859, 9. The total enrollment was 140 (80 boys, 60 girls). The evening was chaired by F. D. Goldsmid.

²² *Times*, September 9, 1845, 5.

²³ *Times*, March 7, 1867, 12. The number of inmates was 48 (23 boys, 25 girls).

²⁴ *Times*, June 5, 1849, 5. The number of inmates as of the previous year had been 87 (12 elderly, 55 boys, 20 girls).

²⁵ *Times*, April 22, 1869, 11.

²⁶ The Chief Rabbi was not a strong advocate of emancipation. In this he was joined by Sir Moses Montefiore and others. It is quite possible that they feared Jewish entry into Parliament would create a Jewish voice in political matters beyond the reach of the *Board of Deputies* and the other institutions controlled by the communal elite. See Geoffrey Alderman, “English Jew or Jews of the English Persuasion? Reflections on the Emancipation of Anglo-Jewry,” in Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds) *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²⁷ *Times*, January 6, 1848, 4. The school now had an enrolment of 60 boys. Curiously, the reporter viewed the company as quite exotic, noting the “brilliant eyes of the Hebrew maidens furnish the nearest approach to our ideas of Eastern houris [sic] which, perhaps, our northern clime can present . . .” As the majority of the attendees would have been Ashkenazi Jews, this observation is somewhat odd. Obviously, the reporter’s preconceptions of ‘Hebrew maidens’ coloured his views.

²⁸ *Times*, February 18, 1856, 7. Phillips went on to serve as Lord Mayor of London in 1865.

²⁹ Much of the discussion that follows is drawn from the article by Barnett. See: Rev. Arthur Barnett, “Sussex Hall—The First Anglo-Jewish Venture in Popular Education,” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* [hereafter *TJHSE*], Vol. 19 (1960): 65-79. Sussex Hall was the name given to the premises formerly known as Bricklayer’s Hall.

³⁰ Barnett, *loc. cit.*, Vol. 19 (1960): 69.

³¹ *Ibid.* This was a somewhat odd donation, both from a religious standpoint, and in light of the expected users of the Institute’s library.

³² *TJHSE*, Vol. 19 (1960): 72.

³³ This again is indicative of the disagreement between the emancipationists and the traditionalists within the communal elite over the public face they wished to present to the larger society. When the idea for the institution was initially raised Isaac Lyon Goldsmid objected to the use of the word “Jew” in its title. Obviously, he was unsuccessful in having the objectionable word removed.

- ³⁴ Barnett, "Sussex Hall," 79.
- ³⁵ It should be noted that while many of the upper class (and upper middle class) supporters of *Sussex Hall* believed that raising the general cultural level of working class Jews was a necessary step toward meriting emancipation, there is nothing in the many and varied parliamentary debates over Jewish disabilities to indicate this was ever a consideration.
- ³⁶ For a discussion of differing middle and upper class Anglo-Jewish attitudes toward middle class Jewish day schools see Israel Finestein, "Anglo-Jewish Attitudes to Jewish Day-School Education 1850-1950," in his collection of essays, *Scenes and Personalities in Anglo-Jewry 1800-2000* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), 52-95.
- ³⁷ 1841 is given as the starting date because it marks the first time Anglo-Jewish newspapers appeared with any regularity. Both the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Voice of Jacob* began publication this year. Obviously private Jewish schooling arrangements for middle and upper class students existed before 1841, but records are unavailable. For more on the *Jewish Chronicle* see: David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); William Frankel (ed). *Friday Nights: A Jewish Chronicle Anthology, 1841-1971* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1973); [Cecil Roth], *The Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941: A Century of Newspaper History* (London: The Jewish Chronicle, 1949).
- ³⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, May 6, 1842. The advertisement appears again in the May 13 issue but now states "washing [not "working"] included."
- ³⁹ He further noted: "Testimonials may be seen and further particulars obtained, at 15 Leicester Place, from 8 'till 12 every Morning." *Jewish Chronicle*, May 13, 1842.
- ⁴⁰ "I. I. O'Grady, A.B. M.D., Professor of the Latin and French languages, Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, in the 'New Jewish Seminary,' begs leave to apprise his friends and the public, that he intends opening... PRIVATE CLASSES, for a select and limited number of young gentlemen, whom he proposes to instruct in the Latin and French languages, composition and polite literature. He has also been induced...to devote Three Hours each week to...a course of Italian Literature and Science. Dr. O'G. trusts, that from his long residence in Italy, and an intimate acquaintance with the principles of languages and science, he will be enabled to accelerate the progress of his pupils, beyond even their most sanguine expectations...Terms, Hours of Attendance, & c. can be known by personal application at his chambers, 1, Hanover Place, Hanover Square, Minories. March 14, 1843." *Voice of Jacob*, March 17, 1843.
- ⁴¹ "Wanted, in a small Family, a Jewish Tutor competent to conduct young Gentlemen through all the branches of a general classical education. His time will be occupied from 10 A.M., until 8 P.M., during which hours he will take meals with his Pupils. Apply, post-paid, stating full particulars, addressed E., at the Printers of the *Voice of Jacob*." *Voice of Jacob*, October 15, 1841.
- ⁴² See Leonard Hyman, "Hyman Hurwitz: the First Anglo-Jewish Professor," *TJHSE* 21 (1968): 232-242. Hurwitz went on to become Professor of Hebrew at University College London in 1828.

- ⁴³ Most students were expected to be 8 years of age and older, although younger boys were accepted at the reduced rate of £30/year inclusive. The original advertisement is considerably longer than that excerpted here. *Voice of Jacob*, April 1, 1842.
- ⁴⁴ As but one example, the Aspen Boarding House Academy for Young Ladies and Young Gentlemen in Milton, Next Gravesend, only charged £19 per year including dancing (music lessons extra). Run by Miss D. N. Martin from 1835, the school instructed students in "English Reading, Writing, Arithmetic; Portuguese and German. Hebrew [was] taught Grammatically, with the Interpretations... [Also taught were] Domestic and Ornamental Needle Work, Embroidery, etc." *Jewish Chronicle*, February 5, 1847.
- ⁴⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, April 16, 1875.
- ⁴⁶ Her advertisement from 1880 read: "Gloucester House, Kew. High-class Establishment for Young Ladies, conducted by Mrs. Neumegen. Certified English, French, and German Resident Governesses and visiting Professors. Piano and Harmony, Singing, Drawing and Painting, Hebrew, Dancing and Calisthenics by efficient Masters. Pupils [are] prepared for the University Examinations." *Jewish Chronicle*, January 2, 1880.
- ⁴⁷ This change is in keeping with W. B. Stephens' observation that before the late 19th century middle and upper class English girls' education "tended to concentrate on decorative 'accomplishments' rather than academic instruction..." Stephens, *Education in Britain*, 45. Women were first admitted to the University of London in 1869, Girton College, Cambridge in 1869, and Oxford in 1878. However, they could not take degrees at Oxford until 1920 or at Cambridge until 1921.
- ⁴⁸ Mrs. Hartog and Mrs. Levetus were also authors of several Jewish romantic novels, and Hartog was the 'editress' of the *Jewish Sabbath Journal*, published weekly from February-April, 1855. The journal contained poems, stories, biblical parables, historical anecdotes and religious readings for children. Mrs. Hartog was the mother of Numa Hartog (1846-1871), the first Jewish senior wrangler (1869) at Trinity College, Cambridge, who, tragically, died of small-pox in 1871. For more on the Moss sisters' novels see Linda Gertner Zatlín, *The Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel*, Twayne's English Authors Series, no. 295, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 30-33.
- ⁴⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, April 16, 1846.
- ⁵⁰ The advertisement stated: "Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies, and a Preparatory School for Little Boys. The Course of Instruction will comprise English, in all its branches; Hebrew, according to the German and Portuguese pronunciation; French and German, Music, and Plain and Ornamental Needlework. Drawing and Dancing, if required... As the number of Boarders will be strictly limited to Twelve, Mrs. Hartog will receive them into her family circle, where they will enjoy the same advantages as if educated in Paris, French being constantly spoken in the Establishment. Writing and Languages taught by Masters. Holidays, three weeks at Passover, and the week of Tabernacles. 6, Finsbury Place South. For Terms, apply at 8, Magdalen Row, Great Prescott Street." *Jewish Chronicle*, December 12, 1851.

⁵¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, January 8, 1858.

⁵² The advertisement read: “Mesdames Hartog and Leo beg to announce their intention of Removing to a larger and more commodious residence situate [sic] at Belsize Park, Hampstead, where, assisted by an efficient staff of Masters and a resident German Governess, they will . . . open a first-class Boarding and Day School for young Ladies, in which all the advantages of a Continental education will be combined with the comforts and moral training of an English home. Terms on application—300 Camden-road, W.” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 21, 1866. Another advertisement that ran on November 2, 1866 indicated that the school was now called ‘Laurel House Collegiate Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies’ and was located at 15, Belsize-square, Hampstead.

⁵³ *Jewish Chronicle*, January 1, 1875. The advertisement also noted that “Mons. Alphonse Hartog continues to give private lessons in French and German.”

⁵⁴ Mrs. Hartog died in 1907. Her obituary noted, among other things, that she began her school at the age of 16 and came from a prominent Jewish family in Portsea. *Jewish Chronicle*, November 1, 1907.

⁵⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, April 2, 1852.

⁵⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, January 2, 1857.

⁵⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, April 24, 1857.

⁵⁸ The 1880 advertisement reads: “*Tivoli House Academy, Gravesend*. Established over 30 Years. Principal.—Mr. H. Berkowitz. Assisted by a staff of qualified Masters.

The situation of the above establishment is acknowledged as the most salubrious in the country, standing in its own grounds of three acres, overlooking Windmill Hill, Swanscombe Woods, and miles of the finest scenery in Kent.

The course of Education is one which has been attended with most successful results in preparing pupils for their Confirmation and the Local Examination.

Subjects taught: Hebrew . . . , Preliminaries, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Spelling, Composition, Elocution, English Grammar, English History and Geography, French and German . . . , Latin, Mathematics, Painting, Drawing, Music, Singing, Drilling, and Swimming.

The course of Education is divided into three classes, viz.: 1st. Preparatory (boys under nine, taught by ladies); 2nd. Commercial; 3rd. Classical . . .

The Principal (in order to accommodate an increased number of pupils) has, in addition to the 42 rooms belonging to the establishment, built a spacious and well ventilated dormitory, new school-rooms, bath-room, lavatories, &c . . .

In connection with the above there is a High School for Young Ladies, conducted on the most approved principles and methods . . .

A Synagogue is attached to the establishment.” *JC*, January 2, 1880. At the time of his death in 1891, Alderman Henry Berkowitz was serving as mayor of Gravesend. His obituary and related information are in MS 116/32 (old AJ 102) at the Anglo Jewish Archives, University of Southampton.

⁵⁹ The advertisement stated: “[i]n consequence of the increase of Boarders, Madame Marix has removed her Establishment to a new situation, which offers every desirable advantage . . .

It has been Madame Marix' study for the last fourteen years . . . to provide also for the comfort of the young ladies entrusted to her care like a mother. Every branch of knowledge requisite for a sound education, reading, writing, grammar, literature, mythology, arithmetic, ancient and modern history, geography, German and Hebrew. A course of religious instructions under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi.

Plain and Ornamental needlework is also taught. Extra charges only for English, Drawing, Music, and Dancing.

Application to be made to Madame Bernard, 24, Bury Street, St. Mary Axe, where further particulars may be obtained." *Jewish Chronicle*, March 21, 1845. Clearly, the reader is to assume that London Jews have been in attendance at the school for some time.

⁶⁰ The advertisement reads in part: "The education comprehends the study of the Holy Scriptures, combined with a Grammatical knowledge of the Hebrew, Latin, German, French, and English Languages, History, Geography, and Mathematics; these branches are taught by the first professors, and under the immediate surveillance of the Rev. Dr. H. Loeb, Chief Rabbi of the Kingdom of Belgium . . ." *Jewish Chronicle*, May 2, 1845.

⁶¹ The number of advertisements for Jewish private schools increased steadily from 1841. By 1880 the *Chronicle* generally contained more than 25 private school advertisements per issue. While neither of these advertisements listed tuition and board prices, many others did. Fees generally began around £40 per year and climbed from there.

⁶² For a discussion of the traditionalist and progressive positions see Steven Singer, "Jewish Education," 172-5.

⁶³ See for example: "*Establishment for Resident Pupils*, At No. 2, Southampton Street, Fitzroy Square. The Rev. A. Loewy receives into his Family a small number of Young Gentlemen, who attend at the UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL, and have at the same time every advantage of a careful superintendence, and a suitable instruction in subjects connected with the Religion and the History of the Jews. Several Modern Languages are taught at Mr. Loewy's Establishment, and German is the medium of conversation in his Family.

For Prospectuses and further particulars, apply to Mr. Lindenthal, New Synagogue, Great St. Helen's, Crosby Square, or to Mr. Loewy, at his residence." *Jewish Chronicle*, December 29, 1854.

Also see: "*Superior Establishment for Young Jewish Gentlemen*, In Connection with the University College School, London, Dr. Heimann, Professor of German in University College, receives a limited number of Boarders at his residence, 57, Gordon-square, which lies a very short distance from the School.

Dr. Heimann superintends the scholastic studies of the young gentlemen, who are specially instructed in the Hebrew language, and in matters connected with religion . . ." *Jewish Chronicle*, November 28, 1856. These types of arrangements were still being advertised in the *Chronicle* in the 1880s.

⁶⁴ V. D. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858* (Leicester, UK: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 29.

- ⁶⁵ Dinah Birch, *Our Victorian Education*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 2-3. For general information on the Education Act of 1870 see: W. B. Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914* (NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998) 77-93; Keith Evans, *The Development of the English School System* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985) 8-20, 37-51; Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children and Society in Nineteenth Century England*, (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1981) 19-21.
- ⁶⁶ So-called because they were managed by local School Boards, to which women as well as men, and even Jews, could be elected, and which were empowered to levy a local rate, or tax, to support the building of new elementary schools.
- ⁶⁷ For a detailed discussion of the education of the London Jewish poor in the last two decades of the 19th century see: Suzanne Kirsch Greenberg, "Anglicization and the Education of Jewish Immigrant Children in the East End of London," in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds), *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London: Peter Halban Publishers, Ltd., 1988).
- ⁶⁸ Greenberg, "Anglicization and the Education of Jewish Immigrant Children in the East End of London," 115.
- ⁶⁹ The Jewish board schools did not go unchallenged. In the 1890s there were Christian members of the London School Board who sought to bring Trinitarian teachings into the board schools. They were responding to the de-facto creation of Jewish board schools, which observed Jewish holidays, hired only Jewish teachers, used board school facilities for after-hours Jewish religious instruction, etc. all at rate-payers' expense. The matter was resolved when the London Jewish community began to pay rent for after-hours building use. See Greenberg, "Anglicization and the Education of Jewish Immigrant Children in the East End of London," 116-121.
- ⁷⁰ Greenberg, "Anglicization and the Education of Jewish Immigrant Children in the East End of London," 124.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Changing Titles of Norwood,
the Jewish Children's Orphanage*Lawrence Cohen*

The name of the institution by which Norwood — the Jewish children's orphanage in south London — was known changed three times in its eight-five year history. In 1876 the new institution was called the Jews' Hospital and Orphan Asylum (JHOA) and the title was based on the names of the two foundation charities, the Jews' Hospital and the Jews' Orphan Asylum (JOA). In 1928 the name was changed to the Jewish Orphanage and in 1956 the institution was renamed for a third time becoming the Norwood Home for Jewish Children. The evolution in the changing institutional content of the titles designated by the last word — Hospital, Asylum, Orphanage and Home — provides a basis for examining the manner in which the meaning attached to each of these words supports a sociological framework for understanding the chronological development.

"The old Institutions cling doggedly to their original names" was the wry comment of one writer on the entrenched conservatism of some Jewish institutions, Norwood was no exception.¹ Their sociolinguistic importance is that "names are not words attached only to the skin" of a body, personal or institutional but are in themselves an accumulation of "internal forces" that define the bearer and deprivation of which might damage their "personality."² Contestation over name changes and the longevity of their acceptance are (in other words) symptomatic of internal forces at work.

THE JEWS' HOSPITAL

The title Jews' Hospital incorporated both the denominational character of the charity in the word "Jews" as it was a place for Jewish children only and the institutional character in the word "hospital." The latter was an old term used to denote a charitable institution that cared for the old and destitute and housed and educated the needy young.³ It was the first of the founding charities of Norwood and was established in 1807. Emblazoned on the front of the building in Mile End Road, East London, where it was located, was the title in English and below it was written "for the Aged Poor and for Education and Improvement of Youth." This was a social message which the founding mission of the Hospital elaborated as being "to uplift the morals and occupations of the young poor" by providing for "the education and industrial employment of youth of both sexes."⁴ The Hospital restricted its admission to the "deserving cases of children from respectable families and did not cater for the homeless or destitute children."⁵ It was the deserving poor and not orphans that were admitted based on criteria of good background, good character and with the potential to benefit from the education provided.⁶ The title of "Jews' Hospital" signified to the wider society that the Jewish community was willing to fund a charitable institution that housed and educated the needy Jewish young, and emphasised its educational character.

"Hospital" was an omnibus term which in the original scheme for the Jews' Hospital proposed in 1801 was applied "to educate the young, to restore health to the sick and to establish an asylum for old age and infirmity."⁷ The scheme was pared down to the more modest one of 1807 by excluding it as a hospital for the sick. During the course of the century a process of institutional differentiation emerged that identified different categories of the needy by specific institutional terms. It was matched by a terminological classification that mirrored "the meticulousness of regulations, fussiness of inspections and attention to the smallest detail" that defined the rationality of the school, the barracks, the hospital, the workhouse and the asylum.⁸ However, at the time the term "hospital" had an honourable history in English institutional terminology and linking it with Jews was a joining of Jews to the heart of English society.⁹ Half a century earlier the Jewish community has established the *Beth Holim*, a charity that "combined the offices of hospital, lying-in hospital and home for the aged poor."¹⁰ Though translated as "the house of the sick" it had no

English name and entirely subscribed to a Jewish naming tradition. By the early nineteenth century a transition was in evidence as English titles were adopted and a dual terminology of both English and Hebrew became part of a naming ritual — one in which Hebrew took precedence.

Boldly displayed on the top parapet of the building was another message in Hebrew. The letters spelt out in the Hebrew words for the Hospital, *Nvei Tzedek*, the “Abode of Righteousness.”¹¹ The name is biblical in origin: in Job 8.6 God declares “if thou were pure and upright, surely he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.”¹² The declaration of its religious character had a moral message that from the abode would emerge Jewish children with uplifted morals and indeed was “the home of all that was good and pure.”¹³ The name *Nvei Tzedek* with its religious and moral message was in the style of using Hebrew names in earlier Jewish charities such as the *Mahasim Tovim* or the Society of Good Deeds which was set up in 1749 for the purpose of apprenticing poor boys.¹⁴ By the early nineteenth century English names were being used but on the facade above the English words it was the Hebrew name that took precedence.

The Jews’ Hospital sent out a message to the community at large both in name and in deed. It manifested the desire of Anglo-Jewry for a separate institutional identity for destitute Jewish children. Child welfare was important but Jewish child welfare helped to create and perpetuate Jewish identity. The name of the institution — “The Jews’ Hospital” — was a mark of that identity but one that was Jewish in a moral and socially responsible way.

JEWS’ ORPHAN ASYLUM

The second of the Norwood founding charities was the JOA established in 1831. Its denominational and social purpose was “the maintaining, clothing, educating and apprenticing of Jewish children born in lawful wedlock, deprived of both parents, and for a limited number of one parent only.”¹⁵ The term applied at the time to institutions caring for the children who were destitute and orphaned was orphan asylum, and in asylum terminology its occupants were called inmates. Whereas the use of the term “hospital” was a legacy of an earlier period, the use of the name “Orphan Asylum” was a product of the early nineteenth century, a period

in institutional history called the “age of the asylum.”¹⁶ The asylum was a place of residence and work where a large number of like-minded individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together led an enclosed, formally administered life.¹⁷

The generality of the meaning of asylum at the time belied the specialism of institutions that catered for particular categories of people—i.e. the destitute, the blind, the orphan, the sick, the criminal adolescent and the mentally ill—that were established in the age of the asylum. The asylum embodied the optimistic institutionalism of the times that believed in the rehabilitation it provided. The philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham in 1778 in *Pauper System Compared* argued that a system of institutional care in large establishments was “controllable and perfectable.”¹⁸ It was a combination of concepts influential in the social thinking in the first half of the nineteenth century. The workhouse and the asylum embodied the “total institution” rationalised by the utilitarianism of its social benefits. The asylum, traditionally “a sacred refuge from the sordid persecutions of life,” had become a place of reform for the outcasts of society and fuelled the growth of the institutional idea.¹⁹ The JOA amalgamated with two smaller charities in 1850, the Infant Orphan Charity and the Charity for the Support of Fatherless Children.²⁰ The amalgamation, a forerunner of the creation of Norwood, was part of the Jewish approach to child welfare institutionalism with the demand for “orderly philanthropy” to reduce the proliferation of overlapping charities.²¹ The new name, the JOA was in tune with the times in incorporating “asylum” and dropping the title “charity.”

Both the JOA and the Jews’ Hospital catered for the education and welfare of deprived children. The asylum catered for the orphaned child and the hospital for the “deserving” child. Within the overarching criterion of Jewishness they sought similar aims but were differentiated by the organisational separation of Hospital and Asylum. They were selective custodial institutions that embodied Jewish charity in the era of the asylum.

JEWISH BOARD OF GUARDIANS

The Jews’ Hospital and the JOA were denominational and institutional English titles and not translations of Hebrew names that had been an earlier tradition (although the former was consecrated with the separate

religious title of “the Abode of Righteousness” whereas the JOA had no religious name). The title of the Jewish Board of Guardians followed the naming tradition of incorporating the usual “Jewish” title but the “Board of Guardians” was a radical departure. It represented “the breaking of barriers that had separated Jews from non-Jews” with the copying of Poor Law nomenclature. “The passage from tradition to modernity” meant that tradition — and this included traditional titles — “were no longer sufficient to live in the modern world.”²² The model adopted was that of the British statutory and voluntary philanthropies and the JBG copied its name from the Poor Law. The other major Jewish communities followed London and established their own Boards of Guardians. The English title of Guardians was adopted by the community and the Hebrew titles for charity officials were superseded. The name of the Overseer of the Poor was English and replaced the Hebrew charity terms of *gabai tzedakah* (collector of charity who combined assessor of community’s members and distributor of charity) and the poor were no longer *orchim* (guests for recipients of charity).²³

Anglo-Jewry responded to the impact of the Poor Law system and set up a coordinating body within London, the JBG, in 1859 as a new agency to deal with the excluded destitute in the nation’s capital. The JBG also acted as a central body in dealing with custodial charities like the Jews’ Hospital and the JOA. The separation of the two charities for children left a gap in institutional provision. Though secular in the function of child welfare they “began with the assumption that Jews were members of a synagogue.”²⁴ “The Jewish stranger and foreign poor” — recent immigrants who were not members of the synagogues — were excluded from the charities. Jewish philanthropy was faced with the deficiency of its religious exclusiveness as it became increasingly aware of the need to cater for a different kind of needy child — the destitute and the deserted who had no social standing and were being cared for in the Parish Institutes and Schools.

There was no specific Jewish institution to cater for the abandoned child who ended up in the workhouse.²⁵ Jews were involved in the Poor Law arrangements and this involvement influenced the JBG being set up after the fashion of a Parochial Relief Board. The JBG “brought together in terms of social thinking early nineteenth century ideas on social control.” It relied on the Jewish community for finance and superseded the synagogue-based Conjoint Board of Relief set up in 1834 to deal with the “strange poor.”²⁶ However, it was not the traditional Jewish ideas

on charity that it followed but the current thinking on the treatment of poverty.

The assimilation of Jewish charity—and with it the replacement of its religious bias—into the mainstream national welfare movement took place in the face of nineteenth century social evils. Traditional outdoor Jewish relief, *tzedakah*, was gradually converted into ‘a carefully planned and impersonal system of institutions “designed to solve the ills.”’ The move underpinned the acceptance of an institutional solution in the age of the asylum but it was also an ideological change signified in the new terminology.²⁷ The nomenclature of guardianship exposed a “latent reservoir of energies” that was released in a specifically Jewish setting of the charity organisation movement and the Norwood amalgamation.²⁸

JEWS’ HOSPITAL AND ORPHAN ASYLUM

In 1876 the Jews’ Hospital and Jews’ Orphan Asylum were joined together and the name adopted for the amalgamated charity was a combination of the previous titles of the Jews’ Hospital and JOA. The reason for the conjoint name was explained in the report presented to the two bodies in June 1874:

We recommend that the combined Institution should be known by some suitable name, which may tend to perpetuate the memory of the Foundation and History of each and so that each distinctive title may still be preserved.²⁹

The suitable name chosen and written into the Scheme of Amalgamation was “the Jews’ Hospital and Orphan Asylum.”³⁰ The retention of the old names instead of devising a new one, though presented in terms of memory and history, was a political compromise between two charities that feared losing their identities.

The Jewish Chronicle (JC) criticised the charities on the grounds that “time has also had its influence on those who would fight unflinchingly for a mere name, more than the honour and renown it bears” but the newspaper failed to realise the tremendous hold the original names had on the charities and that this applied also to the order of precedence in the title as well. The JC took the lofty view that precedence

should yield to the consideration that the truly great always conclude a procession, and the gist of a sentence far more frequently lies in its last words than in its first words.³¹

The outcome was a victory for the Jews' Hospital and the JOA lost its fight for the prized position when it had declared that it should have first place.³² JOA supporters in fact "did not welcome the ideas of merging their name and experience in that of the Jews' Hospital." Eventually a "personal fusion" between the two charities paved the way for a "corporate fusion" and "it was arranged that the title of that institution should be preserved as part of the fused charities" albeit in second place.³³ What was lost on both charities was the chance for a simple fresh name and the conjoint name of the new charity now bore (unwittingly) the double stamp of institutionalism in the names of both Hospital and Asylum.

Preservation of outdated names was not peculiar to the Jewish community. The Foundling Hospital in London was established in 1741 for a purpose similar to Norwood — it was for "the maintenance and education of deserted and exposed young children."³⁴ At the time of the foundation the use of the term Hospital was considered appropriate as it was in 1807 when the Jews' Hospital was established. By 1849 the name Foundling Hospital was "no longer considered accurate." The word "hospital" had undergone a process of "meaning narrowing" where a word's sense becomes restricted. Until the eighteenth century "hospital" had the omnibus meaning of being "an asylum for needy individuals — the old, the rich, the poor and where medical treatment was given." The development of institutional differentiation for different categories of the needy in the nineteenth century restricted the meaning of hospital to its modern sense.³⁵ The proposed change of name was defeated and the governors opted to preserve the old title which remained unchanged for another century.³⁶ In 1876 historical distinctiveness became a matter of preservation for Norwood yet that conservatism was not matched by the amalgamation itself which was widely seen in the community as the triumph of the "path of progress" over "ultra-conservatism."³⁷

The example of Norwood combining "the unification and scientific organisation of charity" with name conservatism was not unique. In 1876 Frederick Mocatta, who was on the committee for the Norwood amalgamation, advocated the joining of the Hand-in-Hand Asylum and the Widows' Home to have one institution for the aged Jewish poor.

“The JHOA scheme having been so successful, there was no hesitation in adopting that scheme as a basis.” The new institution was called “the Hand-in-Hand and Widows’ Home Institution,” a clumsy combination of the two old names. In 1897 a further amalgamation took place with a third charity, The Jewish Home and the enlarged institution was given the shorter title, The Home for Aged Jews. The new title aptly mirrored the objective of “having all the [aged] people in one Jewish institution with one efficient administration” and clearly was to be preferred to a triplet of three old names.³⁸

The title “hospital” in its modern meaning as a medical institution was still applied to an asylum for poor children. In 1873 at a time just prior to the amalgamation the philanthropist Baron de Worms suggested that the name of the Jews’ Hospital was hardly appropriate “as it had nothing whatever to do with the care of the sick.”³⁹ At times the medical designation of the Jewish charity was a cause of confusion and conflict. In 1890 Norwood expressed its concern to another Jewish charity that the proposed title of Jewish Home and Hospital for Incurables might cause difficulties because of the similarity of names. The latter promptly responded a week later that it did not consider that there will be difficulties “as by no means can the names be considered similar and incidentally mentioning that their Institution was a real Hospital.”⁴⁰ Norwood doggedly stuck to its name.

In 1903 an appeal was made to the Jewish community for funds in aid of the poor and orphan children. On this occasion the appeal caused a misunderstanding for one potential donor who was told why the term “hospital” was still used. The secretary explained:

our Institution is not a hospital in the accepted sense of the term but is an orphan asylum for children. The term hospital is still retained as pensions are granted to aged persons.⁴¹

The value of calling Norwood a Hospital was based not on medical grounds but referred to its historic association as a charitable institution for the old. Norwood cared for a small number of aged Jews by funding their pensions.⁴² The use of the title Hospital was tenuous whereas the use of Orphan Asylum was more appropriate as Norwood had the characteristics of the “total institution” where a large number of children were physically isolated during the formative period of their development.

Confusingly, when talking about Norwood, people were accustomed to slip between the various designations. In the tributes given at the funeral of Norwood governor David Henriques in 1912 the institution for Rev Harris was Norwood Orphanage whereas for Rev Morris it was the Jews' Hospital and Dr Hyamson spoke of the Norwood Home.⁴³ The Headmaster in 1916 wrote that "the Jews' Orphanage has been almost engulfed in the wake of war."⁴⁴ The medley of different terms and the more frequent reference to orphanage betokened the "personality" change at Norwood and presaged the name change in 1928. In official documents Norwood was usually simply the "Institution" and recognition of this was specifically mentioned with the amalgamated Home for Aged Jews which was "to be referred to for brevity as The Institution."⁴⁵

The character of the JHOA laid down in the founding mission was three fold: to house, educate and apprentice poor Jewish children. Boarding and maintaining the children was signified in the terms Hospital and Asylum. The educational function was not obviously included in the title though the institution was primarily regarded as a school. The Jewish lawyer George Jessel at a Jews' Hospital festival dinner in 1873 said "the school is the keystone of the palace" and the central role it held was taken on by the conjoint institution.⁴⁶ The new title was a symbol of inherited institutional ideologies that carried with it the keystone of education. Apprenticing functioned after the children left and returned to their families. Those children who had no home to return to such as double orphans or where the home situation was too deplorable to allow a return were housed in a number of hostels.

The residence of boys in hostels was treated as "a continuance of institution life" as the apprentices were still under Norwood's control.⁴⁷ The separation provided the opportunity for benefactors to memorialise their names in the titles of the hostels. The first hostel opened in 1891 and was the gift of the chairman of the Apprenticing Committee who named the house after his wife "Florence House." A second hostel opened in Stoke-on-Trent in 1898 which was also named after the benefactor's wife and called the Kate Schlesinger Home. Though there were no Norwood hostels for girls, a "Kate Schlesinger" room was opened at the Emily Harris Home for Girls to provide accommodation, like the hostels for boys, for double orphans or girls who could not be allowed home.⁴⁸

A third hostel was opened in 1904 in North London and named after another benefactor, the Alexander Joseph Memorial Home.⁴⁹ The

eponymous title advertised the benefactor's generosity and the terms of the bequest could be uncompromising as to the necessity for public status and appreciation. Under the terms of the gift of the Stoke house the name was not to be changed at any time and a memorial tablet was to be placed in the Institution recording the gift.⁵⁰ The name of the hostels included the title "home" and its use was institutionalised and dissociated from the family "home" when designating specialist accommodation that included in the Jewish community the apprentice hostels, the Emily Harris Home and the Home for Aged Jews.⁵¹

The conjoint name of the JHOA like the foundation charities included the word "Jews" and its religious character was recognised by the London County Council (LCC) which classified Norwood as a voluntary aided "denominational Boarding School."⁵² The Jews' Hospital's Hebrew name *Nvei Tzedek* was extended to include the joint institution on amalgamation.⁵³ The mantle of the Hebrew name was further extended to cover the new junior asylum with the eponymous title of the Arnold and Jane Gabriel Home named after its benefactors on its opening in 1910. The consecration ceremony declared the new Home would also "be the habitation of righteousness" and "the abode of loving kindness and virtue."⁵⁴ The moral message the *Nvei Tzedek* conveyed was timeless and its name was changeless remaining unaltered throughout Norwood's history. From the title emanated a moral ideal that was to be instilled in the children and the hope was that they would leave Norwood as *Nvei Tzedek* people. Such an achievement was reached by Daniel Marks who was a child at the Jews' Hospital in the 1850s. In later life he was a generous benefactor and Treasurer of Norwood. On his death in 1904 the Rev. Simeon Singer described him as

the *Nvei Tzedek* boy who grew up to be the *Nvei Tzedek* man in a place where truthful, honest, upright, self-respecting, industrious men and women are trained to take their place in the world.⁵⁵

The religious name conveyed an image that transcended the institutional association. It was useful when making public appeals for money. The 1891 Appeal asserted the moral authority of Norwood that "from every Jewish pulpit in Great Britain the claims of the *Nvei Tzedek* will be set forth."⁵⁶ Its 1912 Appeal advertisement described the moral ideal of the *Nvei Tzedek* as "the abode of righteousness, the home of all that was pure and good."⁵⁷ The

1930 Appeal uplifted the institution as “the Orphanage was really the *Nvei Tzedek* under another name.”⁵⁸ The sentiments behind the Hebrew name were a powerful enticement for donations. The name connoted high moral principles and elevated Norwood in the public eye and contrasted it with the worldly associations of the institutional titles.

JEWISH ORPHANAGE

The two founding institutions coming together under the one umbrella of a conjoint name was the starting point for an evolution in the history of Norwood to form a body with a unified purpose. In time, it called for a unitary name. The ideology of amalgamation that dominated charity organisation at the time was cushioned by a veneer of title preservation. In time that veneer wore too thin and necessitated a further title change.

In America, by the turn of the century, institutional self-doubt had set in as the utopianism of institutionalisation gave way to a more child-centred approach. Many institutions stopped calling themselves asylums for children.⁵⁹ Major Jewish orphanages transformed themselves between 1900 and 1920 from an institutional to a more home-like environment and in some cases were renamed. Thus the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum established in 1868 was reconstructed and renamed the Jewish Orphan Home in 1920.⁶⁰ Asylum as a term fell out of favour. In an Appeal by the Lord Mayor of London in 1918 to raise money for seven London orphanages the word “asylum” appeared in only two of the titles whereas “orphan” and “orphanage” were included in the titles of all the institutions.⁶¹

Recognition of the out-of-date use was accepted by Norwood. In 1924 it took legal advice on renaming the institution and announced “that the present name of the Institution was too long and out of date and they were making application to change it.”⁶² The chairman, Anthony de Rothschild, told the 1928 annual meeting of the JHOA that:

from time to time it had been urged that the designation Jews' Hospital and Orphan Asylum was not a happy one for the Orphanage. In the interests of the children they had, therefore, decided that a change in title of the Charity was desirable, and with the sanction of the Charity Commissioners and the approval of the Governors and Subscribers propose that the new name be simply The Jewish Orphanage.⁶³

The application was made to the Charity Commissioners who approved the splitting up of the JHOA into two charities.⁶⁴ Its two objects — the support of the aged and the maintenance, education and employment of youth — were separated. Support for the aged through payment of pensions was to be called the Jewish Hospital Pension Charity and the support of children the Jewish Orphanage.⁶⁵ The use of Hospital in the old title because of the connection with aged pensioners was now redundant and abandoned in the new one.

At the same time the Board of Education were given the three reasons for renaming the school: first, “the inappropriateness of the term asylum;” second, “the fact that our institution is no longer a Hospital;” third, “its old name caused it to be confused with the Jewish Hospital, Stepney.” So it was that the Board agreed to the change and renamed the school the “London Lambeth Jewish Orphanage School.”⁶⁶ The new name was simply an updated version of the old asylum school name with its replacement by “orphanage” and retention of “Jewish.” In 1930 the LCC took over responsibility for the six Children’s Homes from the Poor Law Guardians and adopted a policy of renaming them all. The term ‘residential school’ was applied to the cottage homes, groups of cottages housing children set in a village setting on the outskirts of London. It combined in one title the residential and educational roles. The Homes included the Lamorbey Residential School from which Jewish children housed there by the LCC were transferred to Norwood.⁶⁷ Norwood was a residential school but not on the cottage home model and retained the separation of the orphanage and orphanage school.

In America, the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home which had already changed its name in 1920 to eliminate the term asylum took a more radical step nine years later when the institution relocated to a cottage home facility. It was agreed the name of the new Home should not be a continuation of the original title because of the “out-and-out flourish of its eleemosynary character.” Throughout the country there was a desire to break away from a designation of the institution that was “an illuminated acknowledgement of charity” and Bellefaire was thus born out of “its hybrid French combination to signify and do the beautiful.”⁶⁸ Michael Sharlitt, its superintendant, saw the designation as born out of the “agitation for a new name” that defined the new formula for living. He wanted to bury the word “institution” as it could not be resurrected into “campus,” the word used to describe the new institution. “To me dropping the word ‘institution’ was getting started properly for the journey into the new life.”⁶⁹

The *Jewish World* asked at the time Norwood became the Jewish Orphanage, “What is in a Name?”⁷⁰ The answer it gave — referring to Jewish personal names — was that the Jewish tradition of using pious names went back to a time when ancient Israel was a theocratic state. The use of the name *Nvei Tzedek* in this tradition signified the pretensions of maintaining a theocratic institution, an “abode of righteousness” and the mantle of that name had now fallen on the Jewish Orphanage. The research presented in this essay has answered the question posed in a wider context than that of the Hebrew title. The institutionalised names are used as the section headings but within them other forms of naming are examined. This has permitted the inclusion of eponymous naming by benefactors of hostels, the Gabriel Home and the memorialising of parts of the institution such as the beds and dormitories.⁷¹ The residents went under various names based on the institutional titles of inmates and orphans. The title Orphanage denoted the institutional specialisation in looking after children for the term ‘orphan’ was used in child care not only to describe a child with no parents but, in the broader sense used by Dr. Barnardo, to encompass children with both parents dead, one parent dead or both parents unsuitable or unable to care for the child.⁷²

Norwood had never been just a place for parentless children. Under its founding constitution double orphans, children who had no living parents, were described as “fitting objects” and could be admitted without election by subscribers. Non-orphans were, however, admitted though subject to election.⁷³ In the negotiations between the Jews’ Hospital and the JOA in 1874 the latter was concerned that the rights of orphans were protected and the President of the JOA at the time assured his fellow governors that “we have taken care that the orphan children shall always have their share of the prosperity” and an allocation of places was set aside for them.⁷⁴

The special treatment of parentless orphans created resentment among Jews’ Hospital supporters who felt it restricted the entry of “deserving” children. Indeed, one supporter advanced the position that

we are sorry to find the (Amalgamation) report sanctions the absurd expression “single and double orphans” an expression the accuracy of which cannot be supported on any philological grounds.⁷⁵

His line of argument was not without some merit as the Rev. Hermann Adler (“Delegate Chief Rabbi” and son of the Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler)

preached the religious view in his 1884 sermon “The Orphan and Jewish Life” that though there may be a distinction in name, there is none in fact between a child that has been deprived of a father’s support, a mother’s care by death, and one whose father or mother is disabled by mental or physical malady, or by utter destitution from providing its support. The Hebrew word for orphan *yacombe* means literally “one who is deserted, helpless and stands alone” and every such child has a claim upon our sympathy, protection and help and is justified in seeking the hospitality of that institution.⁷⁶

The word orphan was a social category but also a religious one. The deserving child included the *yacombe*, the parentless and poor law child. Norwood named itself as an “Abode of Righteousness” and its religious significance was the obligation that gave the child the right of admission. The saving of the social orphan Norwood restricted to the deserving poor. The saving of the righteous orphan was a pupil’s plea to the Jews’ Hospital:

*Oh may such bounty unremitted flow!
Speed your own works of charity and love!
And ever blessing this dispensed below,
Shall gain a tenfold recompense above.*⁷⁷

It was a Jewish tradition that Hermann Adler urged Norwood to follow. The open door approach to taking in the orphan was practised by the evangelical Christian societies. Barnardo’s policy was that “no destitute child ever refused admission.” Evangelicals believed in repentance and conversion and the need to save the individual soul. To achieve this aim, it was realised that religion could not compete with hunger and despair.⁷⁸ Barnardo’s charitable work was a successful formula that rescued both the social orphan and the soulless orphan. The wider definition of orphan more accurately included both the institutional specialism of the orphanage in dealing with children only and the broader range of children it housed. The adoption of “orphanage” in the title signified in the childcare evolution of Norwood a shift in its purpose to one where any Jewish child was a potential applicant.

The asylum and its residents called inmates had taken on a pejorative meaning, especially in America where de-institutionalisation was taking place. “The meaning of inmate of being ‘in’ or ‘on the inside’ does not

exist apart from meaning ‘getting out’ or ‘getting on the outside.’”⁷⁹ Its application placed the children in the asylum and demarcated them from the normality of family life. The use of asylum for Norwood was associated in the mind of some of the children who went there with the stigma of abnormality. TP who was at Norwood in the 1920s wrote to her sister in America and called Norwood as it was then the Jewish Orphanage Asylum. “Her sister told her not to use that name for Norwood otherwise her boyfriend will think she came from a loony bin.” TP’s reaction when they changed the title a few years later was enthusiastic. “Oh, I was so happy, when they changed it, because when you’re a kid you don’t realise when you’re writing, that you’re writing ‘asylum.’”⁸⁰ Looking back years later the Norwood secretary remarked “at one time, it’s horrifying to note, it was called the Jews’ Orphan Asylum whereas Norwood is a name we intend to keep.”⁸¹

The sociologist Irving Goffman wrote “whenever an occupation carries with it a change in name, one can be sure that an important breach is involved between the person and his old world.”⁸² The same can be said of the change in institutional names from the JHOA to the Jewish Orphanage. The unitary name of the new body was a move forward which removed the institutional double stamp of an archaic use of Hospital and pejorative use of Asylum. Marcus Kaye once boasted (no doubt in jest) that he was “the Lord High Everything Else of Norwood as he was headmaster, superintendent, *chazzan* (the official who conducted the synagogue service) and preacher.”⁸³ The various roles gave him authority over a renamed organisation which in the inter-war period he dominated and represented a break with the institutional structure of the pre-war period.

NORWOOD HOME FOR JEWISH CHILDREN

After the Second World War the government set in motion a “revolutionary” transformation in the treatment of children by encouraging voluntary organisations to adopt a policy of restoring children to the community through non-custodial forms of child care and taking them out of the institutions.⁸⁴ The term Orphanage — like Hospital and Asylum before it — went out of favour, an unsuitability that extended to nineteenth century terms such as “guardians” and “relief.” It was put to the JBG that the

existing name from a psychological point of view, the name Board of Guardians for Relief of Jewish Poor carried with it a stigma which would be as well to eliminate.⁸⁵

Basil Henriques who was both a JBG and Norwood governor proposed that the name be changed to include “welfare” as welfare had replaced relief work and would remove the stigma of pauperism from those it helped. However, the JBG chairman said that they could not afford to part with the words “Board of Guardians” and rejected the view that stigma was attached to “Jewish poor.”⁸⁶

The truth was that the policy of admissions to orphanages had changed and was no longer based on destitution. This prompted the Waifs and Strays Society in 1946 to change its name “in the interests of the children” to the Church of England Children’s Society. The Victorian term “waifs and strays” had the derogatory meaning of children who were “odds and ends, unowned and neglected.” The Society in its reform of names went further and disbanded the use of “home” for “branch” as it was felt “home” was detrimental to the children’s welfare.⁸⁷ The reform at the JBG was delayed until 1963 when it was renamed the Jewish Welfare Board. The change was to create “a new Board as a Social Welfare Organisation in the modern sense” but nevertheless it still met opposition from those who felt “it would be a travesty to change the name.”⁸⁸ The old name had lasted 104 years and its overdue reform came in the wake of the major change in the welfare of children with the creation of the Welfare State.

The changes affected Norwood which moved towards establishing family homes for the children. In 1956 Michael Cohen, vice-president of Norwood stated that

it had been realised by the committee for some time that with the change in economic and social circumstances prevailing generally the title “orphanage” had become something of a misnomer since only few children are orphans in the widest sense of the term having one or two parents living.⁸⁹

In 1928 the title change to “orphanage” was seen as inclusive of children who were not strictly orphans. In the post-war climate the use of “orphan” had become unacceptable irrespective of linguistic flexibility. Norwood now accepted any Jewish child deprived of a normal home life. Edward Conway, who was Principal at the time, gradually abolished the institutional approach

and in place of regimentation the “family system” has been introduced... To indicate the change in complexion of the Home Norwood has changed its title to the Norwood Home for Jewish Children.⁹⁰

At the same time the last vestiges of the asylum went. The old name Jews’ Hospital and Orphan Asylum over the front entrance, which so frightened some of the children, was removed.⁹¹ Also abandoned were other reminders of the “charity school” aspect of Norwood such as memorial bedplates and plaques all over the hall that a previous headmaster had said “gave the appearance of a graveyard.”⁹² Sheila Graham recalled “there were plaques around the walls of the dining room with the names of donors — Montifiore, Henriques, Seligman and Beaconsfield.”⁹³ Another scholar, David Golding, remembered the brass plaques on the walls above the beds given by donors to commemorate someone who had died. There was a plaque at the foot of his bed with “an inscription upon it reminiscent to that on a tombstone over a grave.” One such plaque read “this bed has been consecrated to celebrate the life of Gertrude Salamon, 1851-1923.” Boys would jokingly look at the date of death and say “you died in 1923.”⁹⁴ The vestiges didn’t quite disappear as items of cutlery stamped with JHOA were still in use when the main building was demolished in 1962.⁹⁵

The inclusion of Norwood in the title was a change from tradition. The *JC* in an article “Our Institutions” in 1921 pointed out the difference between a good and bad name. “There was never a place where one felt inclined to use that ugly word ‘institution’ than at Norwood. Norwood! It is a charming name in itself.”⁹⁶ Many scholars recalled what the name Norwood meant for them and it was not under the banner “proud to be a Norwood orphan.”⁹⁷ The Norwood mission was to admit the destitute child, the supplicant orphan who suffered the “poverty, the sorrow, the despair and the temptation” of deprivation.⁹⁸ The Norwood child was “the child of woe, by want and suffering torn, exposed to evil, by our hapless state; deserted- friendless-fatherless-forlorn, left to the worst extremities of fate.”⁹⁹ In the age of the asylum an ideology of childhood developed based on an inferiority that stigmatised the orphan. “The continuance of the asylum” and the orphanage “thrived long after their original rationale” had passed but “an uncompromising reliance on the institution remained” and allowed the perpetuation of an institutional ideology of childhood through the transmission of its values from one generation of children to the next.¹⁰⁰

Orphanage children's reaction to the feeling of being a stigmatised group was to convince outsiders to use "a softer label" to avoid any association with an asylum or orphanage.¹⁰¹ The separation of the institutional name from its association with Norwood allowed for recollections under the banner "proud to be a Norwood scholar." The tradition developed among ex-Norwood children of being called scholars and the Norwood Old Scholars Association (NOSA) which they formed published a newsletter in which they wrote their reminiscences. The scholars were expected to carry the banner of Norwood and uphold the name of the institution when they left. Letters from ex-Norwood children selectively preserved in the Headmaster's scrapbook for the years 1913-15 contain responses in this vein. D. Cate wrote to the Headmaster and promised "to uphold the good name of the school" and Rachel Cohen wrote that "nothing but good shall escape my mouth" about Norwood. Esther Selnick promised she will "be good and bring credit on the institution" to repay Norwood's kindness.¹⁰²

Not everyone felt inclined to write a letter of thanks. Maurice Levinson was asked by Kaye to send him one on leaving but "somehow I couldn't bring myself to write it."¹⁰³ The letters were a display of inmate belief that conveyed the impression that they were fortunate to have been in one of the best institutions of its kind.¹⁰⁴ The banner of the orphan scholar appealed to a pupil of the Foundling Hospital. She reflected that the name of the institution was a stigma that brought problems for her in her career and thought just another two words — "boarding school" would have created a different reaction.¹⁰⁵ The school banner had universal appeal for the orphan. The American public schools Girard College and Hershey School were established for underprivileged children. Their admissions were dignified as "scholarships" and Girard, titled as a "college" was "part of the pattern of dignifying the total purpose of the enterprise."¹⁰⁶

The protection of Norwood's reputation was a powerful consideration in scholars' recollections. The importance of the institutional name was made by the editor of NOSA in 1969 when he wrote:

most people recapture the happy episodes of life in their early years. The past is looked at through rose-tinted spectacles and the sharp edges of that sombre picture become softened. Past and present merge there and it is no longer necessary to read between the lines. The message of NOSA is paying tribute to the happiness that has been brought into their lives, to the friendship and warmth which compensates for some of the cold blasts of the modern world.¹⁰⁷

NOSA wanted scholars to remember Norwood for the happiness it brought and not for its sombreness. Recollections did not serve a historical purpose but were there rather to provide psychological support for scholars in later life and collectively to validate Norwood.

Norwood took the opportunity to promote its name when the occasion demanded. In the 1925 Appeal “the Institution” was described as being “conducted on the most modern lines; from the educational, from the religious and from every other standpoint.”¹⁰⁸ The Jewish press added its own glowing support of Norwood. At the time of the centenary extension the *JC* claimed the institution “leaves little room for improvement and with organisation and management perfect in detail and completely up to-date.”¹⁰⁹ In 1956 a writer in the *JC* commended that

though Norwood is an ‘institution’ I have never seen an institution less institutional in the pejorative sense of the word. For here are none of the features of institutionalisation that make comparable homes, however admirable their work, so cold, so absolutely divorced from what we understand by the word “home” without its inverted commas.¹¹⁰

The linguistic desperation to transmute “institution” into “home” was forlorn whilst the institution behind the words remained in place. The internal reorganisation to carve out family units in the main building rationalised the 1956 renaming but it was only a renaming with “Home” and not “home.” The transmutation was at best partial. Michael Sharlitt achieved the full change twenty seven years earlier when the linguistic innovation of “campus” was applied to the innovatory Bellefaire project.

The Visitors’ Book registered the brief comments of the many visitors to the institution. The regular visits of Poor Law Guardians to see how their charges were treated elicited much praise. Bethnal Green Guardians wrote in the book “everything possible is being done in the best interests of the children” and Brighton Guardians found Norwood an “excellent Institution” and were “exceedingly satisfied” with the care bestowed on the children.¹¹¹ The Poor Law operated on the principle of the “self-acting test” whereby a claimant confirmed the truth of destitution by entering the workhouse. It was not appropriate to a charity operating under the “merit test” of financial and moral status.¹¹² The Guardians’ comments were not unexpected when Norwood was compared with the workhouse.

Workhouse conditions were based on “less eligibility” when paupers including children were treated in a lesser way than children at home or in voluntary institutions.¹¹³

The superintendent of the Jewish Orphan House, Chicago, as a professional held back from any criticism in being “confronted with a rather difficult task in making an entry in a visitor’s book of a sister institution” but expressed the hope:

I have no doubt that if the right ideals of the Supt. Mr Kaye are materialised the JH&OA will before long become the model child caring institution in this country.¹¹⁴

The fulfilment of the ideal was progressing in America and there was recognition by Norwood that “the American method in children’s institutions is the plan” to follow.¹¹⁵ The Visitors’ Book is not where you would expect to find criticism; comments in it “bore little relationship to some children’s experiences.”¹¹⁶ What was conspicuously absent were visitors from boarding schools, the type of institution Norwood looked up to.

The impression gained from the various sources, the Jewish press, visitors’ comments, annual reports, thank-you letters and scholars’ recollections, was that Norwood was highly regarded. This refrain has been taken up more recently by the historian Eugene Black when he described Norwood an “exemplary enterprise.”¹¹⁷ Though over-stated the point is clearly made of Norwood’s reputation that “with much truth...if one cared to wait long enough every Jew of any note will pass...the portals of the famous Jewish institution on Knight’s Hill.”¹¹⁸ Each source contributed to building up the reputation of Norwood both at the time and retrospectively. The “proud name and the height it had attained” could not but fail to persuade Norwood it was a progressive institution.¹¹⁹ The constant reminders fed the institutional ego that Norwood could claim in 1934 that though it had not yet “attained to the perfect Foundation” the progressive nature of the work was the “endless pursuit of the ideal.”¹²⁰ By the 1930s the governors believed that institutionalism as a model of child care was a success and that the ideology it represented was forward thinking. Sixty years of Norwood history had created a culture of paternalism that knew no different yet, a decade later, the ideology was in full retreat. The fin de siècle confidence of the pre-war decade was

replaced by a new realism that totally rejected the institutional idea and the name that went with it.

In the historical development an ideological repositioning took place. The early nineteenth century phase was dominated by institutional signifiers—hospital, asylum, workhouse and district school (where pauper children were separated from the adults in the workhouse). The later half of the century saw the emergence of a new terminology of residential child care—cottage home, scattered home and boarding out home—that countered the institutional ascendancy. In the terminological contestation the workhouse and asylum were stigmatised by the designation of barrack and Bastille. A “softer label,” the Jewish Orphanage was adopted at Norwood to avoid any association with the former asylum. The new name was part of a continuing legacy of institutionalism but one where its dominance was embattled. The ideological repositioning taking place was advanced by the social, psychological and political considerations in the thirties on the treatment of vulnerable children and accelerated by the impact of the war. The children returning to Norwood from evacuation did not return to the “Orphanage” with its paternal way but to an “orphanage” where the children “would now experience a different religion and culture.”¹²¹

In a radio interview in 1973 the secretary of Norwood Harry Altman was asked “is the emphasis going to be much more on home in the future?” He replied:

Yes, home with a small ‘h’ I hope... The present day generation do know the name by simply Norwood and it is a name we intend to keep, even if it’s in Hackney. Norwood, I suppose has a connotation in the same way as one hears Oxfam we know that they don’t have to feed people in Oxford.¹²²

The linguistic dressing down from upper to lower case signified the ideological change that Norwood now accepted. Generations of children had expressed a strong emotional attachment for a “home” which the JHOA and Jewish Orphanage never provided. Leslie Thomas the novelist was a Barnardo boy and he reflected on the meaning of “Home—a strange word; call it ‘home’ and it is the warmest syllable in the language; deep as a heartstring, satisfying as dinner, assured as love.”¹²³ The transfer of children to family homes was a move to meet the psychological need that an institution could not give.

In 1961, Jack Wagman, the last superintendant of Norwood, saw the importance of the change of title in that the word 'Homes' carried with it an evolution in child care:

Time was when the word would have been orphanage and then the social circumstances and conscience became such that the name was changed to Home. Today, in keeping with latest trends in child care, it became Homes as we no longer herd our children in large groups. No longer do we issue them with numbers, nor do we feed them en masse. Now we have small "family" homes in a normal sized-house with house parents to foster family life with small groups of children.¹²⁴

Wagman stood at a juncture between two eras — the post-orphanage era to be and the institutional era that was. Looking back he could only see children in their plurality. Constitutionally they were children but their singularity needed rediscovering.

The name changes were milestones in the history of Norwood. The permanent feature were the terms "Jewish" and "Jews" which always denoted the importance of the denominational character of Norwood. The *Nvei Tzedek* was retained unchanged for 155 years since the founding of the Jews' Hospital. Though unaffected by the changes in institutional names it was always formed part of the institution. However, the demolition of the orphanage made it obsolete. The various institutional titles — "Hospital," "Orphan Asylum," "Orphanage" and "Home" were crucial markers that signposted the changes from early nineteenth century institutionalism to the Welfare State.

In the post-war period the change in names was linked with a change in locations. In 1945 the children returned to an institution where the orphanage school was replaced by neighbourhood schools and Norwood was just the Jewish Orphanage and *Nvei Tzedek*. In 1956 the change in name to the Norwood Home for Jewish Children signified the 'internal' move within the main building whereby family units replaced the institutional lay out. The title 'Orphanage' became 'Home' and signified the partial de-institutionalisation of Norwood. At the same time the innovation of incorporating the name Norwood into the title was the beginning of a process of detachment of it from its geographical location.

By the time of the closure of the institutional building in 1961 the process of moving children to family homes was completed and the term 'Home' was de-institutionalised with the adjunct of Family in the name

known as Norwood Family Homes.¹²⁵ The term Jewish was dropped from this title but the denominational title was not lost but was now part of the name of Norwood itself. Physically the location of Norwood had relocated to the neighbourhood. The family homes of the 1960s were in turn closed down with the new concept of communal child welfare as “Norwood moved its emphasis from residential to community-based services” in the 1980s and 1990s and the new concept had a new name, Norwood Child Care.¹²⁶ This completed the geographical detachment of Norwood as a location.

The history of Norwood as an institution from its beginnings in 1807 to its demolition in 1962 was a microcosm of the history of the institutionalism of disadvantaged children. The rise of the institutional name as a mark of progress in the first half of the nineteenth century signalled the age of the asylum. That name became tarnished in the second half of the century with the rise of alternative models to the asylum such as the cottage home. The scientific advances of the first half century of the twentieth century strengthened the counter-institutional forces against “custodialism” and the institutional name became increasingly unacceptable. After 1945 it became a *sine qua non* of child welfare policy that the institutional name was damaging to children. The institution Norwood, under all its various titles, mirrored the rise and fall of child institutionalism. The name Norwood, as a sociolinguistic accumulation of “internal forces,” was detached from the institutional body and transformed in its “personality” to become the name for the future.

NOTES

¹ A. Levy, *East End Story* (Vallentine & Mitchell, London, 1948), 17; *J[ewish] C[hronicle]*, 23 March 2007.

² Max Adler, *Naming and Addressing — A Sociolinguistic Study* (Helmuth Buske Verlag, Hamburg, 1978), 93-4.

³ R Burman (ed.), *What About the Children? 200 Years of Norwood Child Care 1795-1995* (London Museum of Jewish Life & Norwood Child Care, London, 1995), 4.

⁴ *Notes on the History of Norwood* (MS201, London Museum of Jewish Life, 1971), 2.

⁵ Edward Conway, “The Institutional Care of Children, A Case History” (Unpublished PhD, University of London, 1957), 14.

⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

- ⁷ Lucien Wolf, *A History of the Jews in England* (Jewish Historical Society of England, Chatto & Windus, London, 1908), 306.
- ⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish — The Birth of the Prison* (Penguin, London, 1991), 140.
- ⁹ The 'Bluecoat school' — Christ's Hospital — was founded in the reign of Edward VI to house and care for the orphans of London's streets. To this day this public school retains the name 'Hospital.'
- ¹⁰ Wolf, *A History of the Jews*, 285. The *Beth Holim* was founded in 1747.
- ¹¹ *What About The Children?*, 4.
- ¹² The quotation is from the King James Version; see also Jeremiah 31.23 and 50.7.
- ¹³ *JC*, 15 March 1912.
- ¹⁴ Conway, *Institutional Care*, 3.
- ¹⁵ *What About The Children?*, 15.
- ¹⁶ David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Little Brown, Boston, 1971), xv.
- ¹⁷ Irving Goffman, *Asylums — Essays on the Social Situation of Mental and Other Inmates* (Penguin, London, 1991), 11.
- ¹⁸ M. Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor: Jewish Philanthropy and Social Control in Nineteenth Century London* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 1999), 52-3.
- ¹⁹ Michael Sharlitt, *As I Remember, The Home in My Heart* (Shaker Heights, USA, 1959), 248.
- ²⁰ Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1920* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1988), 74.
- ²¹ *JC*, 14 Nov. 1876.
- ²² Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England — Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 289-93.
- ²³ Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor*, 119-20; *JC*, 26 March 1897. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was implemented by boards of guardians, whose duty it was to maintain workhouses and collect a local property-based tax for this purpose. The guardian system was copied to deal with Jewish poor relief with the aim of encouraging self sufficiency instead of indiscriminate alms-giving.
- ²⁴ Black, *Social Politics*, 74.
- ²⁵ Conway, *Institutional Care of Children*, 21.
- ²⁶ Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor*, 114-5.
- ²⁷ Michael Meyer (ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times — Vol. 3, Integration in Dispute: 1871-1918*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997), 131-2.
- ²⁸ Adler, *Naming and Addressing*, 93-4.
- ²⁹ University of Southampton Archives (USA), JOA Minute Book B/7, p. 3.
- ³⁰ USA, A1054: Scheme of Amalgamation.

- ³¹ JC, 4 Dec. 1874.
- ³² USA, JOA Minute Book B/4, 8 July 1874.
- ³³ JC, 9 April 1897.
- ³⁴ Gillian Wagman, *Thomas Coram, Gent* (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2004), 136.
- ³⁵ William McGregor, *Linguistics- An Introduction* (Continuum, London, 2009), 95; Henry Hitchins, *The Secret Life of Words — How English Became English* (John Murray, London, 2008), 75-6.
- ³⁶ Gillian Pugh, *London's Forgotten Children — Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital* (Tempus, Stroud, 2007), 93-4. The change was made in 1954 when it became The Thomas Coram Foundation for Children.
- ³⁷ JC, 28 Jan. 1876.
- ³⁸ JC, 23 June 1876; 15 Jan. 1897.
- ³⁹ JC, 13 June 1873.
- ⁴⁰ USA, Letter Book C/18: 29 May, 4 & 27 June 1890.
- ⁴¹ USA, Letter Book C/59, pp2, 28; Letter Book C/75: 24 Sept. 1906: "we do not take probationers ... the home being one for orphans and not a hospital in the medical sense of the term."
- ⁴² "Hospital" as in the Fisherman's Hospital, Great Yarmouth, founded in 1702 for retired aged fishermen.
- ⁴³ JC, 19 & 26 July 1912.
- ⁴⁴ USA, Headmaster's scrapbook C/10, 3 March 1916.
- ⁴⁵ JC, 29 June 1892.
- ⁴⁶ JC, 26 March 1875. "Palace" was a nickname for Norwood because of its size and sumptuous gothic style.
- ⁴⁷ Conway, "The Institutional Care of Children," 128; Norwood Childcare Archives (NCA), *Annual Report (AR)* 1911.
- ⁴⁸ NCA, AR 1891, 1898, 1910; JC, 19 Oct. 1906; 22 Feb. 1907.
- ⁴⁹ NCA, AR 1904.
- ⁵⁰ NCA, House Committee Minute Book, 26 Jan. 1904.
- ⁵¹ NCA, House Committee Minute Book, 14 Dec. 1899; JC, 15 Jan. 1897.
- ⁵² USA, C/1, July 1876; C/65, 19 April 1904.
- ⁵³ USA, Minute Book B/8, 27 March 1877.
- ⁵⁴ JC, 21 Oct. 1910; *J[ewish] W[orld]*, 21 Oct. 1910.
- ⁵⁵ JC, 16 Dec. 1904.
- ⁵⁶ JW, 6 March 1891.
- ⁵⁷ JC, 15 March 1912.
- ⁵⁸ JC, 13 June 1930.

- 59 Matthew Crenson, *Building the Invincible Orphanage- A Prehistory of the American Welfare System* (Harvard University Press, London, 1998), 117.
- 60 Reena Friedman, *These are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880-1925* (Brandeis University Press, New Hampshire, 1994), 67-70, 74.
- 61 JC, 19 April 1918. The institutions were the Royal British Orphan School, Brixton Orphanage, Home for Female Orphans, Royal Female Orphan Asylum, Infant Orphan Asylum, Orphan Working School & Reedham Orphanage.
- 62 NCA, House Committee Minute book 29 May 1924; JC, 8 Oct. 1926.
- 63 USA, Executive minutes A3075/2/1, 4 Feb. 1926; JC, 20 April 1928.
- 64 NCA, General Court Minutes, 19 Dec. 1927.
- 65 JC, 20 April 1928.
- 66 National Archives, ED21/34942, 27 Aug. 1928; USA, School Log Book C/12, 20 Aug. 1928.
- 67 J. Adams & G Coll, *The History of Shirley Oaks Children's Home* (Deptford Forum Publishing, London, 1999), App.111.
- 68 Sharlitt, *As I Remember*, 170-1.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 181-2.
- 70 JW, 6 Dec. 1928.
- 71 USA, Executive minutes A3075/2//1, 16 Nov. 1926. A dormitory naming was that of a benefactor who left £500 to Norwood in his will and in his memory it was named the "B Kostorus Dormitory."
- 72 *What About the Children?*, 28.
- 73 USA, C/1, July 1976.
- 74 JC, 21 Jan. 1876; USA, Amalgamation Scheme A1054, "the aggregate number of double and single orphans shall not be less than 120 and shall not be less than one half of the entire number of children."
- 75 JC, 19 March 1875.
- 76 JC, 21 March 1884.
- 77 Part of a recital by a girl pupil in 1867: *What About the Children?*, 9.
- 78 Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1979), 38-9, 72.
- 79 Goffman, *Asylums*, 23-4.
- 80 London Jewish Museum, tape 40, 1981. TP was at Norwood 1921-8.
- 81 Norwood Old Scholars Association (NOSA) *Newsletter*, no. 30, 1973.
- 82 Irving Goffman, *Stigma* (Penguin, London, 1990), 76.
- 83 JC, 1 March 1912.
- 84 Jean Heywood, *Children in Care — the Development of the Service for the Deprived Child* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970), 147-9.
- 85 JC, 26 May 1944.

⁸⁶ JC, 20 Dec. 1946.

⁸⁷ Mildred de Rudolf, *Everybody's Children* (Oxford University Press, London, 1950), 193-4.

⁸⁸ JC, 20 Dec. 1946; 8 April 1955; 26 July 1963.

⁸⁹ JC, 27 April 1956.

⁹⁰ JC, 18 May 1956.

⁹¹ *What About the Children?*, 50.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Sheila Graham, *The Late Lily Shiel* (W H Allen, London, 1979), 26. The authoress was at Norwood 1910-17.

⁹⁴ David Golding, *Reminiscences of a Norwood Boy* (L Stewart, London, 2005), 57. He was at Norwood 1935-43.

⁹⁵ NOSA, *Newsletter* no. 98, 2009.

⁹⁶ JC, 2 Dec. 1921.

⁹⁷ *Guardian*, 17 Nov. 2004: Ruth Lister in *No More of the 'poor'* addresses the issue of collective identity of the poor and the banner under which they want to march.

⁹⁸ JC, 26 April 1895; NCA, AR 1925

⁹⁹ *What About the Children?*, 9. The extract is from the opening lines of an ode recited by a girl pupil at the Jews' Hospital at its anniversary fund raising dinner in 1867.

¹⁰⁰ Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, 245-6.

¹⁰¹ Goffman, *Stigma*, 37.

¹⁰² USA, Norwood Headmaster's Scrapbook C/10: 10 April 1913; 10 April 1914; 28 March 1915; 8 Aug. 1915.

¹⁰³ Maurice Levinson, *A Woman from Bessarabia* (Secker & Warburg, London, 1964), 62-3.

¹⁰⁴ Goffman, *Asylums*, 97-8.

¹⁰⁵ Pugh, *London's Forgotten Children*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ Sharlitt, *As I Remember*, 276-8.

¹⁰⁷ NOSA, no15, 1969.

¹⁰⁸ NCA, AR 1925.

¹⁰⁹ JC, 29 March 1895.

¹¹⁰ JC, 27 Jan. 1956.

¹¹¹ USA, B/10: Norwood Visitors' Book, 20 June 1898; 5 July 1915.

¹¹² Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion — The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (Vintage, New York, 1992), 192-3.

¹¹³ Nigel Middleton, *When Families Failed — The Treatment of Children in the Care of the Community during the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1971), 68.

- ¹¹⁴ USA, B/10: Norwood Visitors' Book, 25 July 1922.
- ¹¹⁵ NCA, House Committee Minute book 1913-27: 13 May 1927.
- ¹¹⁶ Lynn Abrams, 'Lost Childhood: Recovering Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Scotland,' in A. Fletcher & S. Hussey (eds.), *Children in Question* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999), 158.
- ¹¹⁷ Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry*, 187.
- ¹¹⁸ NOSA *Newsletter*, no.89, 2004, 13. The quotation came from "Wide Awake Norwood" in the *Journal* of the West Norwood Chamber of Commerce, vol.1, no4, August 1930.
- ¹¹⁹ JC, 12 Feb. 1892.
- ¹²⁰ NCA, AR 1934.
- ¹²¹ Golding, *Reminiscences of a Norwood Boy* 131-2.
- ¹²² NOSA, *Newsletter* no 30, March 1973.
- ¹²³ Leslie Thomas, *This Time Next Year — Memoir of a Barnardo Boy* (Constable, London, 1964), 25.
- ¹²⁴ Jack Wagman, 'Children are my job,' JC, 19 May 1961
- ¹²⁵ *What About the Children?*, 55. Norwood Family Homes was a name in use though officially the old name Norwood Home for Jewish Children was pluralised as the Norwood Homes for Jewish Children.
- ¹²⁶ *What About the Children?*, 56. Norwood Child Care was the name adopted in 1981.

“TRUE ART MAKES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THE RACE”

Israel Zangwill and the varieties of
the Jewish normalization discourse
in fin de siècle Britain

*Arie M. Dubnov**

“Normality” and “normalization” can mean different things to different people. Thanks to films such as Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall* (1977) or novels such as Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969) a new metaphor and comic imagery of the Jew as an obsessive neurotic person has gained wide credibility. Popular culture, at least of the sort developed in post-Holocaust America, tends to look favourably at the subtle anomaly of the self-loathing and at the same time narcissist “Yid.” It corresponds well with multicultural aesthetics, especially when idiosyncrasy is understood as a form of authenticity, withstanding the mighty forces pushing towards homogeneity and conformity.

There is a great degree of irony, however, in this positive reception of Jewish difference. For Sander Gilman, for instance, this literary emphasis on linguistic and behavioural difference of Jews is best explained as the result of an internalization of anti-Semitic prejudices.¹ The image of the nervous Jew, in that sense, is not entirely different from that of the Jew as a *Luftmensch*, a rootless creature living on air, which began as a form of Jewish self-critical witticism but collapsed into anti-Semitic theory.² We are now able to locate the “code switch,” as Gilman called it, in which Jews began to erect a “counter-image” of themselves, in specific historical conditions.³

This essay wishes to re-examine the early work of the Anglo-Jewish novelist, playwright, and essayist Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), who I consider to be one of the key contributors to this “code switch.” Embarking on his literary career as satirical columnist and writer of short stories, Zangwill came to be considered by many as the most brilliant Anglo-

Jewish writer and orator of his age. An author of great wit, Zangwill found much inspiration in Jerome K. Jerome's "New Humour," which he used in depicting everyday scenes from the life of his East End Jewish protagonists and to criticize the communal politics governed by their West End brethren. He began to win his fame as a novelist from an early stage thanks to *Children of the Ghetto* (1892),⁴ quickly followed by a considerable number of short stories which he published in the period's leading literary periodicals. When later reprinted, these stories composed the collections *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898),⁵ Zangwill's most "historical" book, telling the stories of various Jewish figures of dissent, and "*They that walk in darkness*": *Ghetto Tragedies* (1899), which portrayed, once again, the unique combination of misery and splendour that characterized, he believed, Jewish ghetto life.⁶

Zangwill could therefore be considered as an early Woody Allen-ish writer, whose comical literary and theatrical construction of a "stage Jew" provided a positive lens through which sympathetic Gentiles could view the "real-life" immigrant Jew.⁷ To this humorous "code switch" young Zangwill added an uncompromising anti-assimilationist stance, thus contrasting the Jews' otherness and peculiarity, with earlier attempts to construct a more "integrative" image of the Jew in English society. Art and humour, I shall argue, were inseparable in Zangwill's universe from the quest to define Jews' inassimilable otherness in ethno-racial, theological, and political terms, and were part of a larger Jewish normalization discourse of the turn of the century.

It is difficult to provide an accurate working definition of the term "Jewish normalization discourse" precisely because it was a flexible, multifaceted meeting point at which a number of independent discursive fields came together. In Central Europe in particular much of this discourse was developed when one wished to emphasize the economic peculiarity of the Jews. Here again one finds a reality, as Derek Penslar and Nicholas Berg after him have shown, that becomes value-laden as Jews come to be seen as abnormal *Luftvolk* (a people of/floating in the air) or a "ghost-people" emptied of concreteness or reality.⁸ The post-Darwinist scientific discourse of the turn of the century played a considerable role in this construction and treated the question of Jewish normality and abnormality in a very non-metaphorical way. With the rise of modern social sciences one can find Jewish and non-Jewish sociologists, demographers and ethnographers using what they considered to be objective statistical criteria to define the abnormal condition of modern Jewry. As the I will show in the first section

of this essay, Zangwill was exposed to this discourse in an early, formative stage of his career as a member of the Wanderers of Kilburn, and as a close friend of the Australian-born anthropological folklorist and historian Joseph Jacobs (1854-1916), one of the earliest outspoken defenders of the concept of a single, pure, Jewish race.⁹ Zangwill’s conception of the Jew is first and foremost a product of the interplay between scientific and literary imagination that we find in late-Victorian England.

At the very same time, as I will show in the second part of the essay, Zangwill was also participating in a larger, European discourse of *fin de siècle* literature and art. Crammed with images of decay, decadence and degeneration, modernist art also played a part in contributing to the Jewish normalization discourse. It made perfect sense that if European culture itself was sick, surely so too were the Jews who imitated Europe and absorbed its culture. This was undoubtedly one of the conclusions drawn by Max Nordau (1849-1923), arguably the most vocal critic of *fin de siècle* modernism, who became also a leading Zionist activist and one of Zangwill’s direct interlocutors. As I will show, some aspects of Nordau’s attempt to turn scientific terminology into a tool of literary and cultural criticism, were in fact predated by similar attempts made by Joseph Jacobs. Hence, the reconstruction of the conceptual genealogy which connects Jacobs to Nordau shows not only a connection between Nordau’s belletristic efforts and early Zionist thought, but also a reciprocal connection between the literature and scientific imagination of the period. Here again we find Zangwill, first as a literary critic and publicist and later as a Zionist activist, directly involved in a heated polemic that began as a debate over the sanity or insanity of the world of arts and letters of his time, but quickly transplanted into an ideological-political debate over the aim and desirability of Zionism. Normalization stood, therefore, at a fascinating interdisciplinary and transnational junction, where metaphors were made “concrete” and “scientific.”

FROM DERONDA TO DEGENERATION

A long line of biographers and interpreters of Zangwill have already shown there is a strong autobiographical element that explains much of his attraction towards the Ghetto in general and London’s East End Ghetto in particular.¹⁰ In *Children of the Ghetto* Zangwill immortalized his father,

a native of a small town in Latvia, using his personal story to retell the story of persecution and humiliation of Russian Jewry, and at the same time criticizing West End Jewish aristocracy for looking down on the immigrants, who were considered to be foreigners as long as they did not undergo a process of cultural Anglicization.

Zangwill himself, however, was not a typical son of the East End, as Udelson has shown, and was raised and educated as a “Jewish cockney,” as he once referred to himself. A growing sense of resentment towards the all-too-dignified and lifeless Judaism practiced and advocated by the United Synagogue and the acculturated West Enders provides the background to much of his veiled comical criticism, as may be expected from an author who conceived himself to be a “Marshlik,” that is, a Jewish jester. Zangwill’s contemporaries recognized the criticism of intra-communal politics and social tensions within Zangwill’s stories and plays. Thus, for instance, although the plot of *King of Schnorrers* was placed in the eighteenth century, it was crystal clear that it aimed at describing the intra-communal tension arising when the old, well-to-do Sephardic elite that preserved its separateness was forced to think of new ways besides philanthropy to deal with a rising tide of Ashkenazi — mainly Russian-Jewish and Galician — infiltration of newcomers. The erection of the Ghetto as an epitome of authentic and vibrant Jewish life was thus also a tool in an intra-communal political struggle. And indeed: “Play writing,” Zangwill would come to declare in later years, “is a branch of politics.”¹¹

Zangwill was not the first author to look critically at the liberal norms and Victorian ethos that became hegemonic among Anglo-Jews. Amy Levy’s *Reuben Sachs* (1888), describing the well-to-do acculturated Anglo-Jew as suffering from mental illness and unable to consummate his love for a simple Jewish maiden of lesser pedigree, clearly served as one of the models for such criticism.¹² Paying due credit to Levy, Zangwill named the protagonist of *The Melting Pot* after one of Levy’s figures. Jewish authors, however, were not the only ones interested in exploring these Jewish themes in their novels. Victorian literature, often fusing religious and social tensions, offered Zangwill a highly complex, albeit somewhat paradoxical literary universe, populated by Shylocks, Fagins, and other anti-Semitic caricatures, and at the same time also highly philosemitic and often romantic and exotic characters, such as those one finds in Benjamin Disraeli’s Young England trilogy, some of Trollope’s novels, and above all, in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

Behind this literary universe, as Bryan Cheyette and Michael Ragussis have brilliantly shown in a number of studies, stood a new cultural approach, depicting the desirable England not only as a "new Jerusalem," as Blake famously called it, but also as a paramount example of a Judeo-Christian civilization in which a fine balance between "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" is achieved and maintained.¹³ Matthew Arnold's anti-Puritan writings of the late 1860s and especially his praise of Hebraism and what he depicted as a "Semitico-Saxon mixture," looms large behind much of this pre-Darwinist discourse. As Stefan Collini noted in his studies on Arnold, the Victorian reading public was as enthusiastic about religion and new Biblical exegesis approaches as it was fascinated by science.¹⁴ This may explain to much extent why the Arnoldian "progressive" anti-dogmatism conquered so many hearts during the 1870s. To this we may add the greater tolerance of multiple forms of conformity to ecclesiastical authority initiated by the Broad Church movement, not to mention an assortment of new notions of "chosen role" and "special destiny" which were absorbed into the imperial mindset, especially in the heyday of Disraeli. This way or the other, whatever will be the complete explanation to the phenomena, it becomes clear that philosemitic Hebraism, and not only anti-Semitism, provides the background for Zangwill's literature.

Besides offering the Britons an imaginative affinity with the ancient Israelite, mid-Victorian Hebraism, as Eric Michael Reisenauer argued recently, involved immensely ambivalent feelings, and made the construct of a Hebraic Jew, distinguished from the actual Jewish person, into a necessity.¹⁵ The result was an imaginary bifurcation of the Jew into the Hebraic and the Judaic. Literature was the most powerful tool for such creations. Not only a peculiar mixture of romanticism and realism stood, therefore, behind the new conceptualization of a common Judeo-Christian culture, but also a new "duplex" image of the Jew.¹⁶

The Victorian literary context reconstructed by this long and distinguished list of scholars provides much of the background of Zangwill's work. Nevertheless, Zangwill, like many members of his generation, was not continuing this Hebraic tradition of thought so much as he was revolting against it. What bothered him was not only the political and essentially nationalist use of the notion of "chosen people" as an excuse for imperial expansionism towards which he explicitly expressed dismay,¹⁷ but the very notion of Christian-Jewish intermingling. The need to resist

the temptation to assimilate provides the recurring theme in many of Zangwill's early stories from the 1880s and 1890s, and these offer a clear demonstration of a withdrawal from the Arnoldian demand to generate greater flexibility in theological matters. Take, for instance, Zangwill's short 1890 story "Diary of a *Meshumad*" (apostate). It tells the story of a middle-aged Russian-Jew who converted to Christianity in his youth, and who now finds himself craving to reunite with the people from which he divorced himself. Upon reflection, he comes to realize that his conversion had been all too opportunistic and regrettable. He paid lip-service to Christianity simply because "before me stretched the free, open road of culture and well-being" and a promise—to be no longer "slave of wanton laws." Increasingly alienated from his non-Jewish surroundings, he observes with trepidation the pietism of his own son, Paul; the new Tolstoyan sentimental attitude toward the peasantry; and the general wave of reactionary Slavophile return to Christianity. Behind his son's talk of Russia's true ideals the father recognizes dark anti-Semitic prejudices fuelled by a new fear of the Jews as "feather-brained Nihilists and Democrats" possessing a modern devilish spirit. These thoughts only heighten his regret. "Analyze myself, reproach myself, doubt my own sanity how I may, one thing is clear. From the bottom of my heart I long, I yearn, I burn to return to the religion of my childhood."¹⁸

"Diary of a *Meshumad*" ends with a chilling conclusion when the father is slaughtered during a pogrom fuelled by anti-Semitic tirades, enflamed by his own son. The moral of the story is clear: the Jew who tries to shy away from his origins or leave the ghetto is bound to pay a tremendous personal price. Placing the story in distant Russia rather than in Anglo-Jewry's own backyard, Zangwill perhaps drew much of the critical sting from his story. Nevertheless, the significance of the story lies in the type of bond to Judaism that it commemorates. For what motivates the Russian *converso*'s soul-searching is not nostalgia for traditional religious concepts and rituals of Judaism so much as a striking revelation that there is a "strange and mysterious" blood-bond, a "latent brotherhood which binds our race together through all differences of rank, country, and even faith!" Little by little, the story turns from *Judaism*, the religion that one of the agnostic protagonists of the story describes as a "secretion of morbid minds . . . that will vanish again with the last traces of my influenza," to a far more primordial and ethnic-based view of *Jewishness*, as a certain "indictment of the race," associated with the tragic fate of the "chosen people [that] have

been chosen for the plaything of the fates.” “Blood,” concludes the tragic hero of the story, “was thicker than baptismal water.”¹⁹

A no less bold example of anti-assimilationism can be found in the short story “They that walk in the Darkness,” which Zangwill later chose for the title of his collected volume of short stories. This story, once again, treats assimilationism first and foremost from a theological vantage point and also includes an ambivalent, even embroiled view of traditional Judaism. Located in London’s East-End, it tells the story of a Zillah, a simple-minded East End Jewish woman, who discovers to her horror that Brum, her beloved 13 year-old son, has turned blind exactly at the point he was about to become *Bar-Mitzvah*. Although superstitious and tremendously afraid of the Evil Eye, Zillah is determined to cure her son from the illness that none of the physicians, “not even the most expensive,” considered to be curable. Her husband, who considers the blindness a God-given curse that has befallen them because “we have so many Christian customs nowadays,” offers no real consolation to her. No less frustrating are the reactions of the rabbis and the pious members of her congregation, who insist that her son will not be allowed to undergo his confirmation because a blind man is not allowed to read the Torah. Aggravated to a degree, she is motivated to seek “Reformist” alternatives: She first declares that she will solve the problem by holding a *minyan* (congregation) in her own home; Later she meets with the minister — “one of the new school of Rabbis who preach sermons in English and dress like Christian clergymen . . . [whose] acquaintance with the vast casuistic literature of his race was of the shallowest;” and she is eventually persuaded by an Irish woman she employs as a Sabbath Fire-Woman (i.e. a *Shabbos goy*) to take her son to be blessed by “a sort of Chief Rabbi of the Roman Catholics,” that is, the Pope in the Vatican himself.²⁰

Zillah takes the advice of her servant. Throughout their long journey, however, Zillah conceals the exact purpose as well as the ultimate destination of her trip from her son Brum. Brum, the reader suddenly finds out, is in fact a fairly intelligent and well-educated boy, able to quote spontaneously, as their train passes the Alps, from Coleridge’s poems that he has learned by heart. No doubt, unlike Zillah, who could not really distinguish the modern physician from the medieval exorcist, Brum was crafted by Zangwill as a far more modern, rational Jew. Brum’s health, however, deteriorates rapidly as the story progresses, and he loses more and more of his faculties as he and his mother draw near their destination. Told that he is being taken to be seen by “the great eye-doctor” he feels

something is wrong: “There is a strange smell, mother, — I don’t know what — something religious,” he says as they enter St. Peter’s basilica. The story ends as in grotesque tragedy as the Pope approaches the two:

‘Why must I kneel, mother?’ murmured Brum feebly.
 ‘Hush! hush!’ she whispered. ‘The great doc-’ she hesitated in awe of the venerable figure — ‘the great healer is here.’
 “The great healer!’ breathed Brum. His face was transfigured with ecstatic forevision. ‘Who openeth the eyes of the blind,’ he murmured, as he fell forward in death.²¹

Evidently, a Jew in the Vatican seemed to Zangwill like a fish out of water. But once again the message was clear: the Ghetto, with all its traditional absurd limitations, was a source of life, not death. Zangwill turned it into a code-name, so-to-speak, denoting the site of communal existence governed by traditional authorities, and a sort of pariah segregation. But no less important: the ghetto was not only threatened from outside, by “external” blind Gentile forces, but also from within by its own traditionalist narrowness, from which one yearned to escape, even if it meant plunging into baptismal waters. The problem presented most harshly, even violently, in the story of poor blind Brum and his overprotective mother, was that the impossible traditionalism of the ghetto dwellers themselves allowed one to break away from the ghetto only by religious conversion. Was there a different way out of the ghetto? A way that would not cost one his own life?

The answer to this question remains unclear, at least as far as Zangwill’s early work is concerned. But what seems crystal clear is that the Hebraism praised and promoted by Disraeli and Arnold appeared to Zangwill as a threat more than a blessing, as producing and legitimizing the creation of a modern type of *convertos*. The Ghetto that emerged in these and other stories was a metaphorical umbrella emphasizing Jews’ inassimilable otherness. But this impossibility of assimilation was understood in new, “modern,” ways. Not only because the post-1881 wave of immigrants made it no longer possible to ignore the gap separating the *Ostjuden* from the *Westjuden*, but also because the entire discussion of these differences was being conducted at a time when “race” as well as “abnormality” came to be used less loosely than ever before, largely due to the rise of social Darwinism.

To be sure, the meteoric rise of an unambiguously post-Darwinian and essentially racially-inclined outlook captured not only the imagination of Zangwill but also that of many other members of his generation, who

reached their intellectual maturity during the 1870s and 1880s. They were not fascinated by science alone, but also by thinking in new ways about the very question of “function of fiction,” to borrow a convenient phrase coined by a contemporary scholar, thus generating a new form of criticism that was in itself the product of bi-directional influences of science and literature.²² This criticism was focused less on the features of fiction that are distinctly aesthetic, and instead treated the novel as offering in-depth psychological portraits that should be read using tools offered by the new sciences. Joseph Jacobs, besides being one of Zangwill’s closest friends, was a leading exponent of this sort of scientific literary criticism. “There are,” Jacobs wrote in the introduction to a volume of his essays in literary criticism,

two methods of studying literary productions, which may be roughly described as the aesthetic and psychological. The former goes straight to the literary products themselves, and seeks to determine their aptitude for exerting the specific literary emotions... [while] the other or psychological method looks rather to the literary producer, and endeavors to ascertain those qualities of the author’s mind that would produce such results.²³

As someone who has “some claims to be an expert in psychology,” Jacobs added, he considered himself as belonging to the “psychological school” of literary critics. Most crucially, what triggered Jacobs’ interest in this sort of new literary criticism were George Eliot’s late novels, *Daniel Deronda* and *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*.

George Eliot aimed and claimed to be a teacher. Her works were a conscious criticism of life. They gave the new feeling about life that seemed to be rendered necessary by the triumph of Darwinism in English speculation. During the ‘seventies’ there was a confident feeling, among those of us who came to our intellectual majority in those years, that Darwinism was to solve all the problems. This was doubtless due to the triumphant tone in which certain eminent professors of science [...] spoke of what science was going to do for the spiritual life when the older theological trammels had been removed. [...] She alone, we thought, possessed the message of the New Spirit that Darwinism was to breathe into the inner life of man.²⁴

Jacobs, who became one of the key architects of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Association and a leading figure of the Anthropological Institute of Great

Britain and Ireland, even went as far as to argue that Eliot's *Deronda* sparked much of his interest in Jewish history. Eliot's ability to function as a "scientific observer of the social organism," he asserted, made her novels the best illustration of Jews' "fidelity to the claims of race," which should be further examined using the tools of science and history. The very notion of reading her novels scientifically rested upon Jacobs' working definition of psychology as a set of discoverable and well-defined laws which govern human behavior,²⁵ closely tied eugenics, the new science he considered as another sub-branch of anthropology. In other words, it is not that George Eliot's depiction of Daniel Deronda was no longer considered to be relevant, but, quite the contrary, it continued to capture the imagination of late-Victorian authors who now aimed at providing new scientific typologies of the races that compose the family of mankind.

Zangwill was exposed to this new form of 'psychological' literary criticism at a very early stage, as a young member of the Wanderers of Kilburn, that "exceptional galaxy of talent" as Cecil Roth once called it,²⁶ in which both he and Jacobs took part. Zangwill helped Jacobs translate some of the Hebrew sources he used in his voluminous 1893 study on the Jews of England,²⁷ and as their correspondence proves, the two remained friends even after Jacobs' 1900 emigration to America in order to take up a position as revising editor of the Jewish Encyclopedia. Jacobs' 1880s anthropological studies and literary reviews offer the immediate intellectual background to most of the stories which later constituted *Children of the Ghetto*. The novel's subtitle — *A Study of a Peculiar People* — clearly hints at Zangwill's lofty aspirations: not only to erect the ghetto as an emblematic symbol of Jews' uniqueness vis-à-vis their surrounding environment, but also to move beyond the mimetic and fictional elements of the narrative and offer a "realistic" and "scientific" portrait of a collective Jewish psychology. The very notion of "peculiarity" that provided the novel its rationale owed much to the new racial approach that late-Victorian theoretical anthropology adopted, and especially to Jacobs' work.

The defining feature of Jacobs' work was his attempt to define Jews' essential otherness by combining anthropology and history. As an anthropologist, however, Jacobs was following in the footsteps of his master, the biostatistician Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), Darwin's cousin and the founding father of the new science of eugenics. Much of Galton's effort was directed towards finding ways to distinguish natural inherited traits, including the outstanding intellectual ability called "genius" from

behavior patterns that can be explained as products of the influence of environment. Galton's 1869 *Heredity Genius* predetermined much of the terminology and conceptual framework of the subsequent debates over the meaning and essence of “genius,” and “degeneration,” the latter signifying deterioration in this rare cognitive ability. Focusing on the genealogy of eminent Victorian families, Galton attempted to measure statistically the frequency with which intellectual distinction (expressing itself in achieving prominent positions such as those of judges, statesmen, men of letters or science and so on) was to be found, thus providing an enthralling chronicle of inbreeding and decline in eminence from first to second to third degree relations in Britain's aristocracy. This, Galton believed, demonstrated that mental ability was a hereditary trait, running in families populating the higher echelons of Victorian society. The scientific normalization discourse took off from here.

As one of Galton's keenest disciples, Jacobs also believed that by using statistical tools one could measure hereditary mental ability. By the time Jacobs began to publish his first articles in the early 1880s, Galton had already begun to steadily move towards adding anthropometrics — the measurement of bodily parts — to his scientific tool box. Jacobs did not hesitate to follow. Like his tutor, who collected data at the Anthropometric Laboratory at the International Health Exhibition in London in 1884, Jacobs took the opportunity presented to him in 1887 during Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations to conduct comparative measurements of Jews and gentiles among visitors to the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall. It was also natural for him to utilize the unusual opportunity afforded him by the massive influx of East European Jewish immigrants to construct databases of thousands of head measurements allowing him to compare East End and West End Jews. Those comparative measurements, Jacobs asserted, showed without doubt that as far as anthropometry is concerned, Jews are indeed distinctively abnormal, due to physiological differences which evidently separate them from the average Englishman and Scotsman. No less significant was the fact the differences among the Jews themselves were negligible and that they constituted a race of their own.²⁸

Thus, by employing Galton's techniques Jacobs added a crucial feature to the scientific discourse of normalization, maintaining that is an essential unity in the Jewish race. Differences found among the Jews were explained by Jacobs as products of different adaptations to different

environments, and not as a result of essential difference in terms of biological heredity. Or, or to use Jacobs' and Galton's terminology, the differences among the Jews are simply a result of "nurture, pure and simple" rather than "nature."²⁹

Approaching Jewish history from a Darwinist perspective Jacobs believed it concealed within it the missing link in Galton's theory. Jews, he asserted, had always acquired the role of transmitters of tradition, and clearly modified their behavior in response to the social structure and the age in which they lived. In that sense Jews' peculiar behavior was not different from their physiological otherness. Moreover, tying the enlarged size of the Jewish skull to the myth of the Jewish genius, Jacobs produced a new self-complimentary explanation of Jewish peculiarity, arguing that the physiological peculiarity is a clear indication of the existence of an enlarged brain among Jews.³⁰ Galton himself eventually accepted his student's thesis, and in a 1900 interview to the *Jewish Chronicle* explained that the persecutions suffered by Jews had had a positive effect on their race in eugenic terms, for it had weeded out those who were unfit.³¹ It was a symbolic closure of a circle that opened in Galton's 1869 study which associated outstanding intellectual merit with British aristocracy. Using his master's methods against him Jacobs came to argue that modern ethnography proves that once we take off that "top dressing" we would find out that the average Englishmen "is a statistic exposition of Matthew Arnold's *'l'homme moyen sensuel'*" and not a man of merit, unlike the Jews, who are better equipped biologically with the tools required for extraordinary cultural achievements.³² No doubt, this was the high-point of the Jewish genius myth, now backed by racial Darwinism.

Considered a thorough, rigorous researcher and a leading authority in the field, Jacobs' 1880s studies were quoted time and again by Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), the famous Jewish-Italian sociologist and the founding father of anthropological criminology. Thus, knowingly or unknowingly, Jacobs played a central role not only in creating an essentially Jewish scientific normalization discourse, but also in exporting it to the continent, where it was further developed before it returned, in boomerang style, to the British Isles. And indeed, in his *Man of Genius* (1889) Lombroso drew heavily from Jacobs' anthropological studies, hailing his thesis of comparative distribution of Jewish ability to be the first scientific explanation of abnormal rates of genius as well as lunacy among Jews.³³

Thanks to Jacobs’ dominant intellectual stature, we have strong reason to assume that this robust anthropo-racial delineation of Jewishness entered also into some of the discussions among the Wanderers of Kilburn. The group included, in addition to Zangwill and Jacobs, also Lucien Wolf, Israel Abrahams (1858-1925), Herbert Bentwich (1856-1932), Solomon Schechter (1847-1916) and several other Anglo-Jewish illuminati. It was a spontaneous and unofficial gathering of Jewish cigar-smoking gentlemen, whose alumni later provided the nucleus of the better-known Maccabaeans club.³⁴ Informal as this gathering was, it constituted the most important meeting ground for the main figures of Anglo-Jewish intelligentsia around the turn of the century. Although a shared interest in Anglo-Jewish history provided a clear common denominator gluing the Wanderers together, there was a clear division within its ranks between those, like Schechter, Abrahams and later, of course, Claude J. Montefiore (1858-1938), who sought to re-define *Judaism*, primarily through philological-theology—which required selective borrowing from the teaching of Benjamin Jowett and the German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – and the far more empirical and phenomenological approach of Jacobs, who sought to offer a scientific characterization of the *Jew*. These were, of course, two opposite strategies of defining modern Jewishness. Young Zangwill was clearly caught in between the two.

The most obvious manifestation of Zangwill’s perplexity can be found in his lengthy 1889 essay “English Judaism: A Criticism and a Classification.”³⁵ The essay was written for the first issue of Claude Montefiore’s and Israel Abrahams’ new journal *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. “English Judaism” is an incredibly complex and confused essay, which all major Zangwill scholars feel obliged to mention but prefer not to discuss in detail. It is easy to understand why: this early attempt to embark on a scholarly voyage culminates miserably with Zangwill, aiming to define and classify the “born Jews” in England, producing an impossibly complex, schematic taxonomy based on a mixture of theological, sociological and anthropological criteria. Throughout most of this lengthy essay Zangwill drags his reader through a plethora of such contradictory assertions: lengthy arguments about Jewish religion as a theology of revelation are followed by descriptions of Jews as part of a social organism; and discussions of Jews as sharing a belief are replaced by the notion that even the apostate and the convert are to be placed within the Jewish

collective. In his conclusion, poor Zangwill was unable to offer any answer to the very questions he himself had posed at the beginning of the essay.

No doubt, this confused essay mirrors the puzzled and perplexed mind of its author. But no less clear is the whole gamut of alternative definitions of Jewishness and Judaism that Zangwill finds to be lacking and therefore rejects. This list includes practically all those who attempted to redefine Judaism solely on theological grounds, as a body of beliefs. On this point Zangwill was willing to enter into dispute both with Solomon Schechter, the senior and most distinguished member of the Wanderers, who spoke of Judaism in Moritz Lazarus-ian terms as a dogma-less, ethical religion, as well as Heinrich Graetz, the German-Jewish historian who Zangwill considered as offering an overly rationalistic description of Judaism as Natural Religion. The problem of theology was not distinct from the communal tensions. While expressing his disdain toward the United Synagogues' attempt to create a uniform liturgy, Zangwill also rejected any attempt to define English Judaism as a particular kind of "ecclesiastical organization." Instead, he proclaimed, he much preferred Judaism in plural, arguing that at the end of the day Judaism in England, very much like English Christianity, "is an immense chaos of opinions" that should not be reduced to one single formula.³⁶

Despite his formal defence of religious pluralism, Zangwill expressed little tolerance towards Reform Judaism, in all its minute variations. He mocked David Wolf Marks (1811-1901) and his followers for adhering to an illogical creed, which he found to be a hardly defensible sort of "Anglo-Jewish Protestantism"; while Claude Montefiore, whom he regarded as Matthew Arnold's follower, appeared to him to be adding to the intellectual confusion of the age by asserting that "New Judaism" (which Montefiore later came to call "Liberal Judaism") offered a combination of the best in Judaism and Christianity.³⁷ This "New Judaism," he contended, offered nothing beyond "Robert Elsmerism," a term of criticism coined by Zangwill after the name of Humphrey Ward's protagonist.³⁸ This was a clear example of the way in which the philosemitic atmosphere of the 1870s, culminating in attempts to synthesize a Judeo-Christian society, appeared to him to threaten to erase Jewish singularity and to be theologically impossible. "To my mind," he concluded pessimistically,

the real struggle of the future lies between the essence of Judaism and the essence of Christism (not of Christianity), the scientific morality

of Moses and the emotional morality of Christ; and a compromise between the two religious provisions for moral geniuses, and those for moral dullards, will perhaps form the religion of the future.³⁹

Reform and Liberal Judaism were thus, already in 1889, regarded as flawed, due to the energy they invested in the effort to “normalize” Jews by integrating them into a common culture which was Christian in essence. What rendered this attempt flawed, in Zangwill’s view, was that it overlooked the fact that Jews *were* peculiar and inassimilable, at least in the religious sense. Their peculiarity, Zangwill explained, was partly a result of their sense of being a chosen people that has a “deep sense of intimacy with God” that creates “a unique consciousness of ‘personal identity.’” Placing the word peculiarity in quotation marks, he concluded thus: this consciousness of “special election” explains “the ‘peculiarity’ of the relations with the Almighty.”⁴⁰

But this did not solve the problem. Why? Because “[t]he word ‘Jew,’” he asserted, “is duplex. Formerly, a Jew by birth was a Jew by creed; the two meanings were inseparable. Now we must distinguish; and separate born Jews who profess Judaism, from born Jews who do not.” Since “deserters from Judaism are daily growing more numerous,” he added in a footnote, “and the ‘orthodox’ East-[E]nd itself contains a very nest of Atheistic Socialists,” there is an acute need to define the “born Jew.”⁴¹ With this need for a dual definition in mind, and with Claude Montefiore, Abrahams and Schechter unable to offer him an agreeable or satisfactory theological definition of Judaism, Zangwill had recourse to Jacobs’ Jewish social Darwinism. Without explicitly referring to him, Zangwill asserted that “English Jews (in their upper sections at least) have been subjected lately, in common with the whole civilised world, to a scientific Renaissance, in which the evolution doctrine has been only one of a host of dissolvent influences.” Thanks to this “breath of new knowledge,” he added, “[t]here has been a great shaking up of old bones, much movement in sects and circles.”⁴² Darwinism, in short, would help define the actual Jew, not the theoretical abstraction. A long road had been travelled from George Eliot up to this point, with Deronda no longer serving as a model of Jewish “likeness” to English society but rather the opposite — as a point of departure for investigating the racial distinctiveness of Jews.

Foggy and vague as Zangwill’s 1889 essay’s assertions were, they made it clear that his interest in Jewish difference included a strong

racial component. Throughout the 1890s the once polite debates between Schechter, Montefiore and Abrahams, the key members of the Wanderers who sought to reach a theological definition of Judaism, had become heated disputes and reached a dead-end. This served to underline the racial aspect of the “duplex” nature of the Jew more boldly than ever before. In late November 1895 Theodor Herzl made his famous trip to London and came to meet Zangwill, equipped with a recommendation letter from Max Nordau, his right-hand man and Zangwill’s colleague.⁴³ Feeling distinctly uneasy with Zangwill’s rigidly racial working definition of Jewishness, Herzl reported in his diary:

[Zangwill’s] point of view is a racial one — which I cannot accept if I so much look at him and myself. All I am saying is: We are an historical unit, a nation with anthropological diversities. This also suffices for the Jewish State. No Nation has uniformity of race.⁴⁴

While this was a polite dispute, it induced in Herzl a cautious attitude towards Zangwill. Herzl described Zangwill as “of the long-nose Negroid type, with very woolly deep-black hair, parted in the middle” whose “face displays the steely haughtiness of an honest ambitious man who made his way after bitter struggles.” Zangwill’s appearance and his haughty manner, not to mention the fact that Herzl was slightly offended by the “mildly satirical” way in which Zangwill introduced him to the Maccabaeans, added to Herzl’s suspicion. “The disorder in his room and on his desk leads me to infer that he is an internalized person,” Herzl concluded. “I have not read any of his writings, but I think I know him. He must bestow all the care that is lacking in his outward appearance on his style.”⁴⁵

It is quite surprising to discern the vast gap separating the Viennese playwright and author of the *Das Neue Ghetto* from the British author of *Children of the Ghetto*. Nevertheless, Zangwill turned out to be one of the few passionate supporters of Herzl’s program, and probably amongst his most ardent British followers. Unlike the Chief Rabbi Adler or Colonel Goldsmid, with whom Herzl had also met during his visit to London, Zangwill did not automatically compare Herzl’s political vision to that of Daniel Deronda.⁴⁶ Zangwill brought to Zionism a degree of concern regarding the duplex nature of the Jew and hatred of reform efforts in Judaism, reaching the conclusion that “National Regeneration” — that is Zionism — and reform attempts to yield “Religious Regeneration” were not only entirely different, but even diametrically opposite and incommensurable plans.

We see therefore that for Zangwill Zionism had also the role of debunking the forces of religious assimilation. Zangwill's short but decisive love affair with the Zionist movement ended bitterly in 1906, following the so-called Uganda controversy, which led him to establish the ITO (Jewish Territorial Organization), advocating an establishment of a Jewish homeland in any territory given to the Jews, and not necessarily in the holy land.⁴⁷ In his writings in support of Zionism, written before the Territorialist dispute, Zangwill argued that the objective of the reform regeneration projects, and especially the American version, was to achieve “Final emancipation of Judaism from a soil or a dream of Palestine.” The duplex nature of the modern Jew translated into the dual mission of Zionism: to combat anti-Semitic persecution and at the same time fight the internal evil represented by those who wished to “alleviate what Heine called *Judenschmerz*” using the same tactic he himself had used — baptism and assimilation.⁴⁸ In short, as far as Zangwill was concerned Zionism sprang out of the pages of *Children of the Ghetto*, not *Daniel Deronda*. It did not seek to rejuvenate some sort of romantic and artificial ancient Hebrew nation that could intermingle spiritually with Christianity, nor to offer a universal religion.

Unsurprisingly, Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto*, more than Eliot's or Disraeli's novels, was received warmly by Zionists. Like Herzl, what many Zionists liked about Zangwill's novel was not the anthropo-racial demarcation of Jewishness so much as the depiction of the backwardness and abnormality associated with the very authenticity of ghetto life. Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg, 1856-1927), for instance, was enthusiastic to find in Zangwill's novel what he considered to be a brave, realistic depiction of the depressing irrational impotence of the ghetto dweller. For what was a protagonist like Reb Shmuel designed if not to demonstrate the abnormal passivity of the ghetto? For while “a normal people would react to tragedy... by determining that such a thing should never happen again... a ‘people of the book’ can react only by dumb sorrow [...] To blame the written world, to revolt against the rigor of the Law — that is out of the question.”⁴⁹ One may also suspect that much of Haim Yosef Brenner's (1881-1921) depiction of the wretched misery which afflicts the life of London's poor Jews in his 1908 novella *Min Hametzar (Out of the Depths)* also drew heavily from Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto*.⁵⁰ Even in 1919, long after Zangwill became bitterly disappointed with the Zionist movement, Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936) could still regard Zangwill's early work as rendering the best service to Zionism in England:

Israel Zangwill may be described as one of the most distinguished propagandists of the Zionist idea during the period 1899 until 1906, when he founded the Territorialist Organization. To this brilliant writer and orator belongs the credit of having contributed greatly towards making Zionism popular in England. An English writer of enchanting dexterity, possessed of a keen sense of humour and capacity to appeal to the crowd, he discredited the old idea of Assimilation. Though his views on the future of Palestine have undergone considerable modification, his pamphlets and early speeches are still useful and appreciated in Zionism.⁵¹

While Sokolow, Brenner and Ahad Ha'am were not Zangwill's direct interlocutors, they shared with him a more general outlook about the East-European Jewish *misérables*. Nevertheless, the prominent Zionist thinker who was in direct contact with the young Zangwill during the early and mid 1890s was Max Nordau. And for Nordau, the notorious author of *Degeneration* (*Entartung*; 1892), normality and normalization once again were far from being literary metaphors.

SANITY FAIR

Although in 1923, after Nordau's death, Zangwill wrote some of the most touching eulogies for his friend,⁵² his alliance with the Hungarian-born critic of the *fin de siècle* world of arts and letters began on somewhat shaky grounds. Their first connections predate the Zionist chapter of both their lives, beginning shortly after Nordau's polemical *Entartung* (1892) was published in German. The book, translated three years later into English as *Degeneration*, had stirred a lively and often vicious debate among British and Continental intellectuals who felt compelled to respond to Nordau's rabid accusation, according to which the world of arts and letters of his time offered almost nothing beyond symptoms of sickness, pathology and insanity.⁵³ Like many others, Zangwill was also driven to respond, and wrote some of the most biting review essays of the book.

What Nordau aimed at was to provide an orderly methodological diagnosis of the *fin de siècle* world of arts and letters, which appeared to him to be unduly fascinated by subjective emotions and enervating *maladies*.⁵⁴ What turned *Entartung* into a cornerstone of the debates over European culture's sanity and madness was its author's insistence on employing

pathological terminology in a strictly scientific-positivist and literal manner. The *maladie du siècle* expressed itself, Nordau was certain, in the works of Wagner, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Zola, Wilde, Baudelaire, Tolstoy, and many others. Nordau earnestly believed, like Jacobs before him, that one can apply the tools of the new social sciences to formulate a new type of scientific literary criticism. No doubt, the marking of sanity and insanity had turned into a powerful tool of social control and restraint of order. Nordau's great source of inspiration, as the dedication of his book clearly states, was Lombroso. The Italian scientist used the term “degeneration” to mark criminals and prostitutes. Nordau, however, expanded its meaning arguing that:

Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists and pronounced lunatics. They are often authors and artists. These, however, manifest the same mental characteristics, and for the most part the same somatic features, as the members of the above-mentioned anthropological family, who satisfy their unhealthy impulses with the knife of the assassin or the bomb of the dynamiter, instead of with pen and with pencil.⁵⁵

In Britain in particular, Nordau's powerful *J'accuse* was received with a series of fierce critiques. Among those most infuriated was George Bernard Shaw. One can easily understand why: during the years preceding the publication of *Entartung* Shaw had written some of the most powerful treatises in support of Ibsenism and Wagnerism, commending them as brave, path-breaking forms of art that dared question the conventional patterns that governed the conduct of bourgeois liberal art and society alike.⁵⁶ No wonder, therefore, that he regarded Nordau's book as an almost direct assault on his ideals.⁵⁷ He argued that one of the essential features of modernism was its recognition of the will — a term with clear Nietzschean underpinnings — as separate and distinct from rationalist reasoning. Will, argued Shaw, has the ability to resist what is otherwise seen by middle class puritans as inevitable necessity. In the Savian ideal model aestheticism became a means of refinement and human perfection, transcending conformist demands for normality:

The great artist is he who goes a step beyond the demand, and, by supplying works of higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived, succeeds after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race.

This is the value of art: this is why we feel that the iconoclast and the Philistine are attacking something made holier, by solid usefulness, than their own theories of purity and practicality: this is why art won the privileges of religion.⁵⁸

Zangwill was placed in an interesting position in this debate. The satirical and pro-feminist pamphlet *A Doll's House Repaired* Zangwill wrote in 1891 together with Eleanor Aveling-Marx (1855-1898), Karl Marx's daughter and one of Shaw's associates, scorned those who considered Ibsen's play impossibly scandalous, and thus placed Zangwill in the camp of the "moderns" and "progressives."⁵⁹ Unlike Shaw, however, Zangwill did not harbour much affection towards Oscar Wilde and the dandyish aestheticism that swept England's world of arts and letters at the time. Bohemianism invoked in him a trepidation somewhat similar to the kind one finds in Nordau's work. Rejection of the ideals of the "art for art's sake" movement found their way into Zangwill's novel *The Master* (1895), which tells the story of a young gifted artist who longs to become a slave to art, but is eventually driven to unhappiness and social seclusion.⁶⁰ *We Moderns* (1923), Zangwill's last satirical drama, likewise expresses resentment towards bohemian literary circles, this time identified with the Bloomsbury Circle. "[Nordau's] 'Degeneration' is as brilliant as it is wrong-headed and bull-headed," he wrote in April 1895. "Our infinitely complex and tumultuous century is not to be summed up in a catchword. The book has the vast erudition which only a German can wield, and the copious wit which only a Jew would or could put into a quasi-scientific treatise."⁶¹

In fact, Zangwill did not even wait for the English translation to appear, and published his first critical reviews of the book as early as June 1894: "That Nordau is right in the main I have no manner of doubt," Zangwill stated. But Nordau "achieves his effects by brilliant misunderstandings, sometimes malicious, sometimes merely stupid, by identifying the poet with his creations by an unscientific vagueness of terms, and most of all by his mistaking the canon of science — definiteness — for the canon of art."⁶² A year later, as the book was translated into English, Zangwill re-launched his assault, returning to the same arguments: "A German gradgrind doubled by a Jewish wit is a curious combination," he wrote, but this "fusion of opposite traits" found in Nordau produced nothing but a "pseudo-scientific treatise."⁶³ Nordau's assumption that art should mirror the objective world appeared to Zangwill a poor product of crude, positivist, limited imagination coupled with a "chauvinistic hysteria"

which, he believed, was typical of German modes of thought. Similarly to Shaw, Zangwill regarded Nordau himself as an ultra-conservative, if not reactionary and pietistic bourgeois, who regarded any sensuality as an obscene vice; and as a poor writer of prose, who was “more sledgehammer than syllogism, and as a dogmatist he could give points to a grand inquisitor.”⁶⁴ Nothing but narrow reductionism emerged from the pages of Nordau’s treatise, he concluded. As far as the question of the “function of fiction” was concerned, this was a very hollow answer.

But above all, what Zangwill identified and rejected were the basically naïve presuppositions that “normal” art should, or as a matter of fact even could represent or mirror “objective” physical realities:

As Helmholtz pointed out, we ought to see everything double, except [of] the few objects in the centre of vision; and as a matter of fact we do get double images, but the prejudiced intelligence perceives them as one. The drunken man is thus your only true seer. Genius, which has always been suspected of affinity with drunkenness, is really a faculty for seeing abnormally — that is to say, veraciously.⁶⁵

The attempt to mobilize Hermann von Helmholtz’s (1821-1894) perception theories to debunk Nordau was clearly an attempt to turn Nordau’s own weapons against him. These allowed Zangwill to argue that when speaking of the relation of science to aesthetics Nordau had committed a grave error in assuming that in the “normal,” “natural” and “healthy” processes of perception what we find is a one-to-one mirroring of physical objects.⁶⁶ And here again, Zangwill found himself forced to construct an independent explanation of the relations of abnormality to art, and to offer a theory that was diametrically opposite to that of Nordau. Thus, according to Zangwill’s theory, art is indeed “anomalous” to some extent, but its ability to see things in an unusual, unconventional way is its great merit. Moreover, the imagination of the artist *creates* facts in life, rather than solely mirroring it. It is not that there is no such thing as “bad art,” Zangwill argued. But the alternative distinction that he offered between “true” and “degenerate” art was formulated otherwise:

True art makes for the integration of the race, the family, the individual; decadent art for their disintegration. . . . [Nordau is] forgetting that art is not truth, but a beautiful subjective refraction of truth, and that ideals in particular nowhere exist in the external world, but are pure subjective creations.⁶⁷

Given our previous discussion, there is little doubt who Zangwill was thinking of when speaking of the artist as providing glue for the integration of the race. Fiction, therefore, clearly had a function. Moreover, it could be graded as either bad or good in non-aestheticist or subjective terms: “good literature” balanced and checked the assimilative and disintegrating forces, while “bad literature” had the opposite, anti-deconstructionist effect. If art did nothing beyond mirroring reality, as Nordau suggested, it would have missed its purpose.

Zangwill’s surprising reading of Nordau’s *Degeneration* and his analysis of the role of fiction is perfectly consistent with a dominant recurring theme that runs through many of his speeches and articles from the 1890s — the dangers of Reform currents in Jewish theology. In a November 1892 lecture entitled “Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite,” which Zangwill delivered at the Maccabaeans Club, he touched directly upon the issue. The lecture expressed a most ambivalent view of Hebraism: on the one hand, Zangwill argued, Hebraism was a term signifying a broad banner of noble ideals that “has conquered the civilized world” and allowed the Jew to feel greater affinity with the Gentile. But on the other hand, as a theory Hebraism offered nothing but a superficial outlook that “tend[s] to a Puritan narrowness,” for much of it is based on divorcing Judaism from any real-life sensuality. Hebraism thus turns the Jew into a member of a saintly, sterile, and eventually dumb group. To this description he added bitterly: “I am afraid too many Jewish reformers confound Judaism with Hebraism and think that Judaism is merely Christianity minus Christ.”⁶⁸ Less than a year later, in July 1893, he once again attacked the idea of Hebraism, now even more maliciously, as an excuse for dangerous theological hybridity. Choosing a rather sinister metaphor, he compared it to “the ‘mimicry’ by which insects assimilate in hue to the environment [that] has made backboneless Jews indistinguishable from ‘the heathen.’” Here again, what Zangwill was criticizing was essentially a new sort of theology, and it is quite probable that the lecture contained a veiled critique of the ideas advocated by Claude Montefiore in his famous 1892 Hibbert Lectures.⁶⁹ What is clear, however, is the way in which little by little Zangwill came not only to identify Victorian Hebraism with Reform Judaism, but also to regard both as threatening to dis-integrate Jews.

Insistence on the dual definition of the Jew — as a member of a race as well as an adherent of a religion — did not disappear from these 1890s writings, but “assimilation” gradually came to signify ethnic and racial

intermingling rather than theological syncretism. In his 1893 speech Zangwill went as far as to argue that the historical Maccabaeans, although indeed an odd example of narrow and crude Jewish “tribalism,” were pardonable and admirable because they expressed resistance to Hellenism. Atavistic ethnic separatism, in short, came to be praised not for its own sake, but as an instrument for checking syncretistic tendencies. From here Zangwill continued a step further arguing that the modern Club of the Maccabaeans was not entirely different from its primordial ancestors. For what was the Club if not a bond that was “purely racial” and that had evolved spontaneously, as a “reaction from the centrifugal tendencies which have made the emancipated Jew anxious to sink his individuality in the high-hatted squadrons of civilization.”⁷⁰

In October 1898, already in his Zionist phase, Zangwill delivered a lecture that can be justifiably regarded as his most rigid anti-Reformist speech. It accused Reform Judaism once again of advocating “Christianity minus Christ,” for creating synagogues that are “Homes for the Dumb,” for blending old “Karaite” patterns of exegesis with modern pseudo-rationalism and snobbishness, all resulting in nothing but mere ignorance. He depicted Shakespeare’s Shylock in the lecture as the prototypical “Jewish Reformer, who thought that pounds of flesh could be cut away.” Only a man equipped with an extremely shallow understanding of Judaism, Zangwill argued, would be unable to comprehend that “Israel has always been a nation of aristocrats,” protesting against whatever seemed false and wrong in the world and resisting the temptation to “surrender to contemporary civilization.”⁷¹ Reform Judaism’s main fallacy, he concluded, lay in the very fact that it advocated “spiritual inter-marriage with the ideals and customs of the environments, while keeping up the meaningless tradition of physical intermarriage with one another.” This solution was, he asserted, disgraceful exactly because “mere preservation of a race [...] is nothing to make a boast about.”⁷²

After meeting with Herzl and becoming an active Zionist, the border separating this resentment of Reform Judaism from a more racial anti-assimilationist stance had become impossibly blurred; not because Zangwill neglected the idea of a duplex nature of the Jew, but due to his attempt to glue Jewish nationalism to this formula. Hence, in an 1899 lecture on Zionism he asserted without hesitation that “National Regeneration” is in essence the complete opposite of “Religious Regeneration,” the latter being an attempt to achieve “final emancipation of Judaism from a soil or a dream

of Palestine.”⁷³ Zionism, in short, took the place of fiction in debunking assimilation forces.

Eventually, these uncompromising tracts, aimed at debunking Hebraism and Reform Judaism’s integrative attempts at redefining Jews within a common Judeo-Christian universe, were those that paved the way for Zangwill’s ethno-national anti-assimilationist stance. In that respect, Nordau’s rallying cries for the sake of general normalization had less effect on Zangwill’s Zionism. The belletristic *maladie du siècle* was of minor importance in comparison to what Zangwill considered to be an inner-Jewish malady. “National Regeneration” and literature had thus the same vital mission — to relate to the duplex nature of the “actual” modern Jews, and check the theological pressures which threaten to alter the normal idea of Judaism. According to this formula the quintessential importance of Zionism lay in its ability to turn itself into a spiritual counter-Reformation movement, no less than on its ability to prolong and safeguard the social existence of the Jews as a distinct ethno-racial group. This sort of Zionism sought not to rescue the children of the ghetto, but rather those dizzy and confused from breathing the air of emancipation. What Zionism offers, wrote Zangwill in “Dreamers in Congress,” is “a very modern Moses.”⁷⁴ Herzl — “a majestic Oriental figure,” an “Assyrian King” — filled this role perfectly. And it was Herzl who offered salvation to all those Jewish “types that once sought to slough their Jewish skins, and mimic, on Darwinian principles, the colours of their environment.”⁷⁵

What, then, defines those Jewish types? “One can only say negatively that these faces are not Christian,” Zangwill wrote when describing the various Zionist delegates at the congress. But to this theological definition-by-elimination he immediately added two rhetorical questions: “Is it the stamp of a longer, more complex heredity? It is a brand of suffering?” The two questions, demonstrating close acquaintance with Jacobs’ studies, were intentionally left unanswered. Here again Zangwill returned to the familiar idea of the dual nature of the modern Jew that had bothered him since the 1880s. And since racial taxonomy confused the issue, what was much clearer was the need for re-injecting the proper idea of Judaism in Jews’ minds. The prophetic epilogue to *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, entitled “A Modern Scribe in Jerusalem,” expressed this in so many words:

The time had come for a new religious expression, a new language for the old everlasting emotions, in terms of the modern cosmos; a religion

that should contradict no fact and check no inquiry; so that children should grow up again with no distracting divorce from their parents and their past, with no break in the sweet sanctities of childhood, which carry on to old age something of the freshness of life.⁷⁶

From this vantage point, the sort of Zionist credo Zangwill eventually came up with was not only highly idiosyncratic but also remarkably complex and replete with inner paradoxes. Above all, since it was a position that sought to shape the national movement into an instrument of theological rejuvenation, an impossible inconsistency emerged when Zangwill attempted to justify it time and again merely as a pragmatic solution to a refugee crisis, divorced from the “metaphysical” subtexts which inflame the hearts of the masses. Hence, in the very same essay we find a Zangwill fearful of messianic expectations and at the same time providing a non-minimalist interpretation of Zionism and its aim. “Political Zionism alone,” he asserted, “can transcend and unite: any religious formula would disturb and dis sever.” There is a need for “nursing of the Zionist flame” but nevertheless Zionism was, at the end of the day, part of a “a gradual education and preparation of the race for a great conscious historic rôle in the world’s future.”⁷⁷

The unsure descriptions of Herzl himself follow: “A practised publicist, a trained lawyer, a not unsuccessful comedy writer, [who] converted to racial self-consciousness by the ‘Hep, Hep’ of Vienna,” is how Zangwill describes him. Herzl is a leader who “stands so high and aloof” from his flock that he has little sympathy for or understanding “of the mystic religious hopes of generations of zealots, of the great swirling spiritual current of Ghetto life.”⁷⁸ Given the context of the other stories collected in *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, showing mistrust of all reformist dreamers, this somewhat uncomplimentary description of an alienated aristocrat appears almost as a compliment.

For Herzl is clearly, writes Zangwill, “no second Sabbatai Zevi.” Put otherwise: his alienation would serve as the best guarantee that the national regeneration program would not transform itself into a program of religious reform. “Our dreamer,” he concludes, “will have none of the Medieval, is enamoured of the Modern; has lurking admiration of the ‘overman’ of Nietzsche, even to be overpassed by the coming Jerusalem Jew.”⁷⁹ And above all: the task of Zionism thus conceived was not to save the actual Jerusalem so much as the inner Jerusalem that Jews had created in their minds — and ghettos — after the Temple’s destruction.

The Maccabaeans' famous "pilgrimage" to Palestine in 1897 only strengthened this conviction. Jerusalem appeared to Zangwill as a filthy, pathetic outpost of a corrupted Oriental empire, as "a city where men go to die, but not to live," the "unholiest city under the sun!"⁸⁰ And in the not entirely veiled autobiographical recollection which served as the epilogue for *Dreamers of the Ghetto* he concluded:

He hated Palestine: the Jordan, the Mount of Olives, the holy bazaars, the geographical sanctity of shrines and soils, the long torture of prophetic texts and apocalyptic interpretations, all the devotional maundering of the fool and the Philistine. He would have had the Bible prohibited for a century or two, till mankind should be able to read it with fresh vision and true profit.⁸¹

What becomes clear from this and other excerpts is that Zangwill was not exactly dancing to Nordau's drumbeat. Perhaps it was the other way around: Nordau's play *Doktor Kohn* (1898), fusing the notion of commercial exchange of the Jewish profit-maker with the idea of ethno-racial intermingling, can be read as a Nordauian attempt to follow Zangwill's thesis, according to which the function of art is to further the integration of the race.⁸² It comes as a small surprise that Nordau turned to Zangwill with a request to help him find an English translator for his play.⁸³ Furthermore, if one were to read Nordau's earlier widely quoted address at the first Zionist Congress (1897), he would find Nordau providing a truly Zangwillian analysis of the function of East European ghetto life.

The word 'ghetto' is today associated with feelings of shame and humiliation. But students of national psychology and history know that the ghetto, whatever may have been the intentions of the peoples who created it, was for the Jew of the past not a prison, but a refuge [...] In the moral sense... the Jews of the ghetto lived a full life. [...] They were fully developed human beings, who lacked none of the elements of normal social life.⁸⁴

The identity of those "students of national psychology and history" that Nordau had in mind remains unclear. What is clear, though, is that the Zionist position on the normalization discourse had here made its first mature appearance. Unsurprisingly, it found its early spokesman in Nordau, who brought to the newly founded movement a bundle of ideas and theories to which he had been exposed as a cosmopolitan *fin de siècle* literary/

medical critic. But it also retained and reformulated the thesis of Zangwill, the British child of the Ghetto, who strongly believed that despite being a political anomaly and a site of cultural backwardness and superstition, the Ghetto was the best, if not the only possible barrier capable of staunching the inevitable assimilative flood.

Zangwill's literary output continued to grow after the first Zionist Congress of 1897. Producing a considerable number of plays and novels as well as numerous essays and articles, he enjoyed a wide readership on both sides of the Atlantic. Although he also wrote several novels and plays on non-Jewish themes, these were generally not well received, and Zangwill found himself forced to occupy time and again the niche of the Jewish storyteller.

To anyone comparing his early works, up to *Dreamers of the Ghetto* of 1898 or even up to 1906, the year in which he and the Zionist movement finally parted ways, to his later writing, especially that produced after the Great War, Zangwill will inevitably appear impossibly inconsistent. Ghetto, as a concept and a metaphorical umbrella, had also undergone a transformation. No longer seen as marking pariah segregation and a state of inferiority alone, the Ghetto was redefined as a site of communal existence that, although governed by traditional authorities, did not negate cultural interaction with the Gentiles. This sort of ghetto was, in Zangwill's later formulation, a “form of the biological union known as symbiosis, by which members of different species...render each other mutual service in the struggle for existence.”⁸⁵

Much to the surprise of his colleagues and readers, in 1908 Zangwill had departed from his crude anti-assimilationist path in publishing *The Melting Pot*. The play celebrated America's ability to transcend old prejudices and the ethnic hatred thanks to its ability to function as a great assimilative state or, to use Zangwill's own words, to be “God's Crucible.”⁸⁶ Would it be possible to explain Zangwill's decision to abandon the militant anti-assimilationism of his youth as nothing but some inconsistency produced by a momentary lapse of reason? I believe this is an all-too-easy solution to the Zangwill enigma. In many respects *The Melting Pot* was an inevitable outcome of the crisis of the turn of the century, the main feature of which was the inability to formulate a standard definition of either Jewishness and Judaism. By 1906, when he divorced himself from Zionism, Zangwill became a homeless mind. *The Melting Pot* can thus be

read as Zangwill's attempt to cut the impossible Gordian knot he and other members of the Wanderers of Kilburn, had tied when complicating the definition of Judaism and Jewishness to an impossible degree.

The radical and violent attempt of *The Melting Pot* to break away from the *fin de siècle* dilemmas was, in that sense, a reaction against modernist ambivalence. Ambivalence should not be understood merely as a personal, psychological inability to make up one's mind about one's own identity. Ambivalence also signifies, to use Zygmunt Bauman's words, "*a language-specific disorder*" which extends far beyond the crisis of literary representation and narration. Ambivalence is "a failure of the naming (segregating) function that language is meant to perform," argues Bauman, and "ostensibly, the naming/classifying function of language has the prevention of ambivalence as its purpose." According to this definition, ambivalence is a perplexing situation one confronts when unable to map cognitively the chaotic reality that surrounds one by imposing on it a systematic and coherent structure of meaning. Ambivalence is the state of one who is overwhelmed by plurality and contingency which resist any consistent taxonomy, typology or even naming. The main symptom of this disorder, Bauman adds "is the acute discomfort we feel when we are unable to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions."⁸⁷

The Jewish normalization discourse, very much like Zangwill's literary works, sought to limit hybridity, tame diversity and combat ambivalence. The two efforts, which developed separately, reached their meeting point during the *fin de siècle* but failed miserably in eradicating ambivalence, leaving behind them a coffin filled with hopelessly confused theories and definitions. In that sense, the story of Zangwill's prose is a story of an impressive intellectual failure, reflecting, perhaps, a far greater conflict of order and ambivalence in the world of *fin de siècle* Anglo-Jewry.

NOTES

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¹ Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, Softshell Books ed (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); *idem*, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

- ² Nicolas Berg, *Luftmenschen: Zur Geschichte Einer Metapher* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).
- ³ Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (op. cit), 2, 11 and *passim*. See also Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, tr. Kevin O'Neill & David Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).
- ⁴ Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto: Being Pictures of a Peculiar People* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1892). For the theatrical adaptation see Edna Nahshon (ed.), *From the ghetto to the melting pot: Israel Zangwill's Jewish plays: three playscripts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), which also contains superb introductory essays to each play.
- ⁵ Israel Zangwill, *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1898).
- ⁶ Israel Zangwill, *"They That Walk in Darkness": Ghetto Tragedies* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 [Reprint of the 1889 ed.]).
- ⁷ In many respects this characterizes the reading of Zangwill offered by Nahshon, "Introduction: Israel Zangwill — Child of the Ghetto," in *From the Ghetto to the Melting Pot* (op. cit), 5-57, as well as Danièle Kahn-Paycha, *Popular Jewish Literature and Its Role in the Making of an Identity* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2000). For a similar approach see also Ellen Schiff, *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1982), esp. part II ("The New Jew").
- ⁸ Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Berg, *Luftmenschen* (op. cit) further developed this argument.
- ⁹ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 59.
- ¹⁰ For biographies see (in order of appearance) Joseph Leftwich, *Israel Zangwill* (London: J. Clarke, 1956); Maurice Wohlgelernter, *Israel Zangwill: A Study* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); Jacques Ben Guigui, *Israel Zangwill, Penseur Et Ecrivain: 1864-1926* (Toulouse: R. Lion, 1975); Joseph H. Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990); Meri-Jane Rochelson, *A Jew in the Public Arena : The Career of Israel Zangwill* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2008). Noteworthy in that respect is also the exhibition *The Jewish Dickens: Israel Zangwill and the Wanderers of Kilburn* that was held at the Jewish Museum, London, between November 1999 to March 2000, accompanied by a slim catalogue by the same name (London: Jewish Museum, 1999).
- ¹¹ Israel Zangwill, "Presidential Speech at Playgoers Club" [Notes, unpublished file], n.d., CZA A-120/486 as quoted in Nahshon, "Israel Zangwill — Child of the Ghetto," 29.
- ¹² Amy Levy, *Reuben Sachs: A Sketch*, Ed. Susan David Bernstein, (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2006). For detailed discussion see Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto*, 55-58.
- ¹³ Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" And English National Identity, Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995);

- Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *idem*, "Englishness and Extraterritoriality: British-Jewish Writing and Diaspora Culture," in Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.) *Literary Strategies: Jewish Texts and Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21-39.
- ¹⁴ Stefan Collini, "Arnold," in A. L. Le Quesne, Stefan Collini, George P. Landow & Peter Stansky, *Victorian Thinkers: Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Morris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 193-326; *idem*, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press, 1994).
- ¹⁵ Eric Michael Reisenauer, "Anti-Jewish Philosemitism: British and Hebrew Affinity and Nineteenth Century British Antisemitism," *British Scholar* 1 (2008), 79-104.
- ¹⁶ A fact recognized long ago by Harold Fisch, *The Dual Image: A Study of the Figure of the Jew in English Literature* (London: World Jewish Congress, British Section, 1959).
- ¹⁷ Israel Zangwill, *Chosen Peoples: The Hebraic Ideal Versus the Teutonic* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919); *idem*, *The Principle of Nationalities* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1917).
- ¹⁸ Israel Zangwill, "Diary of a Meshumad," in "*They That Walk in Darkness*" (op. cit), 409, 413, 422.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, 427, 428-9, 435 and 450.
- ²⁰ Israel Zangwill, "They That Walk in Darkness," in "*They That Walk in Darkness*," 1-40 on 7, 8, 13, and 20.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, 35, 38.
- ²² Vanessa L. Ryan, 'Reading the Mind: From George Eliot's Fiction to James Sully's Psychology,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2009), 615-635 on 615.
- ²³ Joseph Jacobs, "Introduction," in *George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Browning, Newman: Essays and Reviews from the 'Athenæum'* (London: David Nutt in the Strand, 1891), xiii-xiv.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, xix-xx.
- ²⁵ Joseph Jacobs, "George Eliot—Necrologe" [Jan. 1881], and "*Theophrastus Such*" [June 1879], in *George Eliot . . . et. al: Essays and Reviews from the 'Athenæum'*, 12-3, 24-5.
- ²⁶ Cecil Roth, "Lucien Wolf (1877-1929): A Memoir," in Lucien Wolf, *Essays in Jewish History*, ed. Cecil Roth (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1934), 8.
- ²⁷ Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records, from Latin and Hebrew Sources, Printed and Manuscripts* (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1893), vi.
- ²⁸ Joseph Jacobs, "On the Racial Characteristics of Modern Jews," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 15 (1886), 23-62; Joseph Jacobs and Isidore Spielman, "On the Comparative Anthropometry of English Jews," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 19 (1890), 75-88; Jacobs, *Studies in Jewish Statistics, Social, Vital and Anthropometric*

- (London: D. Nutt, 1891). Part of Jacobs' effort was also to refute the claims put forward by the Victorian ethnologist John Beddoe (1826-1911) who considered *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* Jewry to be two discriminately distinct and different Jewish racial types. See Beddoe, "On the Physical Characteristics of the Jews," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 1 (1861), 222-237; *idem*, *The Races of Britain: A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Cliveden Press, 1983 [orig. 1885]).
- ²⁹ Jacobs and Spielman, "Comparative Anthropometry of English Jews," 77.
- ³⁰ See Joseph Jacobs, "Are Jews Jews?" *Popular Science Monthly*, 4 (1899), 502-511. See also Hart, Mitchell B., "Racial Science, Social Science, and the Politics of Jewish Assimilation," *Isis* 90 (1999), 268-297, esp. 282.
- ³¹ See Galton's "Eugenics and the Jews" as quoted in Raphael Falk, "Zionism, Race, and Eugenics," in *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism*, eds. Cantor, G. N. and Swetlitz, Marc (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 137-162 on 147-8. For further discussion see also Raphael Falk, *Tsiyonut Veba-Biyologyah Shel Ha-Yehudim* [Hebrew: *Zionism and the Biology of the Jews*] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2006).
- ³² Joseph Jacobs, "The Mean Englishman," *Fortnightly Review* 66 (1899), 53-62 on 54.
- ³³ Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius*, tr. unknown (London: W. Scott, 1891), esp. 133-6.
- ³⁴ See Zangwill's description of the club and its aims, "The Maccabaeans" [July 1893], in *Speeches, Articles and Letters of Israel Zangwill* [hereafter *Speeches*], ed. Maurice Simon (London: Soncino, 1937), 42-46.
- ³⁵ Israel Zangwill, "English Judaism: A Criticism and a Classification," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1889), 376-407.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, 379. Detailed survey of the religious developments Zangwill refers to can be found in Anne J. Kershen & Jonathan A. Romain, *Tradition and Change: A History of Reform Judaism in Britain, 1840-1995* (Portland, Or.: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995).
- ³⁷ Zangwill, "English Judaism," 399, 402-3.
- ³⁸ Humphrey Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (London: Macmillan, 1888). Published a short time before Zangwill had written his essay, Ward's bestselling and controversial novel told the story of an Oxford clergyman who begins to doubt the doctrines of the Anglican Church following his encounter with modern German Bible criticism and begins envisioning instead a new religious order of "constructive liberalism" that is heavily inspired by Matthew Arnold's anti-dogmatic teachings. According to Joseph Udelson this novel "haunted Zangwill's thought and career." Interestingly, *Children of the Ghetto* was commissioned to Zangwill by the Jewish Publication Society of America as a "Jewish Robert Elsmere." See Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto*, chap. 3, esp. 38-9.
- ³⁹ Israel Zangwill, "English Judaism," 403.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 383.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, 389.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, 379.
- ⁴³ Nordau to Zangwill, CZA A-120/509/17 Nov. 1895.

- ⁴⁴ Entry of 21 November 1895 in Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl*, tr. Harry Zohn, Ed. Raphael Patai, 3 vols. Vol. I: May 1895-July 1896 (New York: Herzl Press/ Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 276.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 280, 276.
- ⁴⁶ See Herzl's descriptions of his conversations with the two in the entries dated 23 and 24 Nov. 1895 in *ibid*, 278-9
- ⁴⁷ Stuart A. Cohen, "Israel Zangwill's Project for Jewish Colonization in Mesopotamia: Its Context and Character," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (1980), 200-208; David Vital, "The Afflictions of the Jews and the Afflictions of Zionism: The Meaning and Consequences of the 'Uganda' Controversy," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, eds. Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 119-132 and *idem*, "Zangwill and Modern Jewish Nationalism," *Modern Judaism* 4 (1984), 243-253.
- ⁴⁸ Israel Zangwill, "Zionism" [Oct. 1899], in *Speeches*, 151-166 on 155, 152.
- ⁴⁹ Ahad Ha'am, "The Law of the Heart" (orig. 1894), tr. Leon Simon, in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 254.
- ⁵⁰ Joseph Haim Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, tr. David Patterson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992). On Brenner's London phase see the memoir by Asher Beilin, *Brenner Be-London* [Hebrew: *Brenner in London*] (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 2006), as well as Anita Shapira, *Brenner: Sipur Hayim* [Hebrew: *Brenner: A Biography*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2008).
- ⁵¹ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism, 1600-1918* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919), 349.
- ⁵² Israel Zangwill, "The Martyrdom of Max Nordau" [January 1923], and "Nordau and Abarbanel" [1923], in *Speeches*, 140-142 and 146-150. Zangwill had high hopes of drawing Nordau to support the ITO, but with no success. Zangwill to Nordau, CZA A-119, 3 Oct. 1905 and 10 Aug. 1907.
- ⁵³ The controversy is recorded and reconstructed in detailed in Milton P. Foster "The Reception of Max Nordau's Degeneration in England and America," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1954) as well as Linda L. Maik, "Nordau's Degeneration: The American Controversy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989), 607-623.
- ⁵⁴ Steven E. Aschheim, "Max Nordau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Degeneration," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1993), 643-657; Derek J. Penslar, "From 'Conventional Lies' to Conventional Myths: Max Nordau's Approach to Zionism," *History of European Ideas* 22 (1996), 217-226; Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin De Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- ⁵⁵ Max Simon Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 [orig. 1895]), v.
- ⁵⁶ Bernard Shaw, "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" [orig. July 1890], and "The Perfect Wagnerite" [orig. 1898], in Shaw, *Major Critical Essays* (London: Constable, 1978).

- ⁵⁷ Bernard Shaw, “The Sanity of Art,” in Shaw, *Major Critical Essays*, 281-332. The essay was first published in 27 July 1895 under the title “A Degenerate’s View of Nordau” in an American literary periodical called *Liberty*, and expanded into Shaw, *The Sanity of Art: An Exposure of the Current Nonsense About Artists Being Degenerate* (London: New Age Press, 1908).
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 315-6.
- ⁵⁹ Eleanor Marx-Aveling, and Israel Zangwill, “A Doll’s House Repaired,” *Time* (March 1891) 239-253 at CZA A-120/241/232/465. See Nahshon, “Israel Zangwill — Child of the Ghetto,” 17-19; Rochelson, *A Jew in the Public Arena*, 78, 130-32. Shaw and Zangwill became friends around spring 1892, thanks to Marx-Aveling. Alluding to the Shavian criticism of the Puritanism of the general public, the anonymous caricaturist of *Pall Mall Magazine* who illustrated one of Zangwill’s essays on the subject depicted Nordau kicking Ibsen’s Doll House
- ⁶⁰ Israel Zangwill, *The Master: A Novel* (New York: Harper & brothers, 1895).
- ⁶¹ Israel Zangwill, “Men, Women and Books,” *The Critic*, 23 (20 April 1895), 688.
- ⁶² Israel Zangwill, “Without Prejudice,” *Pall Mall Magazine*, 3 (June 1894), 346.
- ⁶³ Israel Zangwill, “The Twilight of the Peoples,” *Cosmopolitan*, 19 (May 1895), 117. The word “gradgrind” Zangwill uses alludes most probably to the name of the mill-owner in Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854), “a man of facts and calculations,” that is a person who is hard and cold, and solely interested in facts.
- ⁶⁴ Israel Zangwill, “The Twilight of the Peoples,” 117.
- ⁶⁵ Israel Zangwill, “Men, Women and Books,” *The Critic*, 23 (20 April 1895), 687-688 on 688.
- ⁶⁶ See in particular Hermann von Helmholtz, “On the Relations of Optics to Painting (1871),” and “The Facts in Perception (1878),” in Hermann von Helmholtz, *Science and Culture: Popular and Philosophical Essays*, ed. David Cahan, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 279-309 and 342-380.
- ⁶⁷ Israel Zangwill, “The Twilight of the Peoples,” *Cosmopolitan*, 19 (May 1895), 117-118.
- ⁶⁸ Israel Zangwill, “Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite,” in *Speeches*, 28-46 on 38, 35. Speech delivered in response to his toast as Guest of the Evening at the Maccabaeans Dinner, 13 Nov. 1892. See CZA A-120/95/fols. 31-34.
- ⁶⁹ Claude G. Montefiore, *On the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Hebrews* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1892).
- ⁷⁰ Israel Zangwill, “The Maccabaeans” [July 1893], in *Speeches*, 44.
- ⁷¹ Israel Zangwill, “The New Jew” [Oct. 1898], in *Speeches*, 54-63, esp. 58-9.
- ⁷² *Ibid*, 56-7, 63.
- ⁷³ Israel Zangwill, “Zionism” [Oct. 1899], in *Speeches*, 155.
- ⁷⁴ Israel Zangwill, *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, 430.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 431.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 522.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 435, 437.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 434-4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 436.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 515.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 520.

⁸² Max Simon Nordau, *Doktor Kohn: Ein Lebenskampf*, 5 ed. (Berlin: E. Hofmann & Co., 1919). Translated into English as *A Question of Honor: A Tragedy of the Present Day*, tr. Mary J. Safford (Boston and London: John W. Luce & Co., 1907).

⁸³ Nordau to Zangwill, CZA A-120, 1 Jan. 1898.

⁸⁴ Max Nordau, "Speech to the First Zionist Congress" [1897], tr. Arthur Hertzberg, in Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (op. cit), 237, 238.

⁸⁵ Zangwill, "The Ghetto" in *Speeches*, 3.

⁸⁶ Zangwill, to be sure, did not coin the term "melting pot," but merely used an image that could be dated all the way back to 1782 to J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield & company, 1904 [orig. 1782]). I would like to thank Noam Pianko for providing me with this reference.

⁸⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity, 1991), 281-2.

“SOME LESSER KNOWN ASPECTS”

The Anti-Fascist Campaign of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1936-40

Daniel Tilles

Assessments of British fascism have often placed the movement somewhere between an irrelevance and an inconvenience, with even Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF), the best supported interwar group, deemed by its most prominent historian to be of “only marginal significance,” a “nuisance” at worst.¹ However, from the perspective of the country’s Jewish community, the emergence and growth of native fascism cannot be so easily dismissed. In particular, the extreme brand of anti-Semitism that came to be associated with it represented the most serious external threat that Anglo-Jewry had faced since Readmission in the seventeenth century, as various organisations stoked existing antipathy towards Jews and fostered new prejudice, most tangibly in east London, where incidences of “Jew-baiting” proliferated in the mid-1930s.

Although elements of the community had been involved in opposing the BUF from its earliest days — even before it had adopted an anti-Jewish position — it was only in 1935-6, as Mosley’s Blackshirts initiated their viciously anti-Semitic “East End campaign,” that Anglo-Jewry as a whole was forced to consider a concerted and systematic response. The following three years saw significant developments in and disagreement over the approach to self-defence,² and central to this debate was the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the official representative body of the community, with Geoffrey Alderman noting that, “by the outbreak of war, communal defence had assumed its place as the greatest of the Board’s priorities.”³ Its response to fascism, however, has been widely condemned by historians, characterised as unsympathetic, ineffective, and even counterproductive,

with the Jewish leadership failing to protect the community in its hour of greatest need.

The first comprehensive academic analysis of interwar Jewish defence—the general outline of which has been accepted to some degree by most subsequent scholars—was offered by Gisela Lebzelter in *Political Anti-Semitism in England*. She argues that the Board, with its assimilatory outlook, was desperate to avoid the “public display of Jewishness” that communal defence would entail, and was therefore “extremely reluctant to combat anti-Semitism” on an overtly “Jewish” basis, preferring instead to rely on the authorities to do so and placing trust in British traditions of tolerance and fair play. Although it eventually relented, establishing a body to direct defence policy in mid-1936, the Co-ordinating Committee (CoC—known from late 1938 as the Jewish Defence Committee), Lebzelter argues that the Board did so purely to alleviate intra-communal pressure and to prevent the appropriation of defence work by independent Jewish groups, not because its own analysis of the situation had changed.

Much of this pressure emanated from east London, where the large, recently arrived Jewish community experienced Blackshirt provocation first hand, and where the Jewish People’s Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JPC) emerged, representing a popular defence organisation whose energetic approach appealed to young, working-class Jews far more than did the conservative official communal line.⁴ The Board, keen to avoid any perception of Jewish political partiality, emphasised that it opposed only anti-Semitism, rather than fascism *per se*; but the JPC, as its name made clear, specifically aligned itself against the fascist movement, arguing that not just anti-Semitism but also its propagators should be fought. Furthermore, while the official leadership urged Jews to avoid confronting anti-Semites directly, the JPC advocated physical opposition to fascism, a stance that won it many friends in Jewish communities targeted by the BUF.⁵

This image of a division within Anglo-Jewry over defence—between an unsympathetic, unpopular and unrepresentative elite, urging restraint and trust in the authorities, and an active, effective and popular movement that understood the dangers of fascism—has become ingrained in the subsequent historical narrative, and is usually presented as one manifestation of the growing rift between the “old” and “new” elements of the community. David Cesarani, for example, notes how the emergence of British fascism “triggered a debate that...tore Anglo-Jewry apart,”

with “the advent of the JPC deepen[ing] the fractures” between those advocating an active, anti-fascist approach and the “absent leadership” of the Board. Neil Barrett, meanwhile, contrasts the “assertive response” offered by working-class Jews with the “tardy” and “modest” reaction of the elites.⁶ Such a perspective is strongly influenced by the Board’s strident contemporary critics,⁷ who have been disproportionately represented in subsequent accounts, while it has also fitted comfortably within the wider popular perception of virile and heroic working-class resistance to fascism in Britain, as epitomised by the famous Battle of Cable Street.

More specifically, in terms of practical action taken, the Board has been further criticised, with two aspects of defence policy highlighted in particular. First, its anti-defamation campaign, which encompassed the organisation of meetings and publications aiming to refute anti-Jewish charges and to stress the positive contribution Jews made to British life. Second, efforts at internal “improvement”: to stamp out illegal or supposedly unpopular Jewish behaviour, in the belief that it bred antipathy towards the community and provided ammunition for anti-Semites.

This twin approach, which eschewed direct opposition to fascism itself, has been negatively contrasted with the active response to the BUF offered by other elements of the community, and condemnation of the Board’s line has been near universal. Lebzelter dismisses it as “naive,” and “apologetic,” while Todd Endelman concludes that the Jewish leadership’s “arrogance, alienation from the fears and concerns of second-generation Jews, and failure to act boldly” had grave long-term consequences for its standing. Similarly, Cesarani highlights how the Board’s “lack-lustre defence of Jewish rights” harmed its position, finding that in terms of anti-fascism it had a “mixed record.” Barrett, while less critical, still regards the Board’s attitude as “complacent,” and David Rosenberg criticises its “dignified apathy.” Most vociferous perhaps has been Alderman, who condemns both the sentiment behind the defence campaign, which he believes was aimed “not so much at protecting the Jews from their detractors, as at shielding the detractors from the Jews,” and its effect, of “arguably strengthen[ing] the anti-Semitic case” by taking fascist slanders at face value and apologetically admitting alleged Jewish shortcomings.⁸

However, this widely accepted interpretation has been founded largely upon analysis of only these two aspects of defence policy, and downplays or, in some cases, almost completely ignores activity aimed more directly at the propagators of anti-Semitism. Rosenberg, for example, maintains

that the Board “was solely concerned with countering anti-Jewish defamation and would not embroil itself with the issue of fascism,” while Tony Kushner believes that it “refused to protest directly against the anti-Semitic threat to Jews, [leaving] the working class Jewish community... to deal with the problem itself.”⁹ Where the Board’s opposition to fascism is mentioned, it is usually completely overshadowed by the attention devoted to more “apologetic” policies,¹⁰ dismissed as an attempt by the Jewish elite to police the community,¹¹ or presented as secretive activity of which little is known.¹²

One explanation for this is that the Board’s own records have been underused. Barrett and Rosenberg, for example, make no reference to its files, while Lebzelter’s claim that parts of its work are “difficult to assess since they were never described in great detail” is no longer valid given the subsequent release of extensive archival sources.¹³ Even those who do make reference to this material have generally done so sparingly and selectively. The omission of this evidence is particularly significant because, while aspects of the defence campaign aimed at improving the community’s image were, by their nature, carried out in the public arena, much of the Board’s anti-fascist activity, for equally good reason, took place privately and remained unpublicised. Moreover, its own records do much to reveal the private attitudes, motivations and analyses that lay behind the Jewish leadership’s response to the growth of political anti-Semitism.¹⁴ This study, through a wide range of primary material, most of it absent from existing accounts, aims to explore, as the Board itself put it, the “lesser known aspects” of its defence work, namely efforts to directly counter the fascist threat of the mid- to late-1930s.

THE ANTI-FASCIST CAMPAIGN

As mentioned above, one initial criticism aimed at the Board is that its response to BUF anti-Semitism was “tardy,” especially in comparison to the more urgent activity undertaken by Jews who experienced fascism first hand. Thus, Cesarani and Lebzelter’s accounts first outline the creation of the JPC, which represented an expression of Jewish dissatisfaction with the Board’s “prolonged hesitancy to defend the community,” before then describing how “at last...[the Board] decided to end its ambivalence” by establishing the CoC in July 1936.¹⁵ In fact, the CoC had been set up

a week *before* the JPC — with the latter not beginning to function properly until September — and had resulted from months of discussion within the Board.¹⁶ It should also be remembered that the BUF had not adopted anti-Semitism as official policy until late 1934, while its systematic encroachment into Jewish areas begun a year later. So, while the Board had hitherto monitored fascist activity and liaised with the authorities on the subject, it had only been in 1936, with verbal and physical attacks on Jews increasing and the police failing to adequately deal with the situation, that an urgent need for formal defence apparatus had arisen.¹⁷

One reason often posited for the Board's alleged reluctance to respond to growing Blackshirt activity, and for its caution once it decided to act, is that the “bourgeois” Jewish elites, tucked safely away in their “gilded ghettos,” failed to empathise with their less fortunate co-religionists who were daily targets of the fascist campaign.¹⁸ Without any direct experience, they were unable to understand this new threat, one upshot being a refusal to oppose fascism, rather than just anti-Semitism.¹⁹ Such complacency led to a focus on anti-defamation and communal improvement, which would supposedly strike at the causes of anti-Jewish sentiment, while an unrealistic and unreasonable demand was made for Jews not to associate themselves with confrontational anti-fascism. Indeed, Alderman goes as far as to claim that Neville Laski, the Board's president, had only agreed to form the CoC as part of a “systematic effort by the Board to police Anglo-Jewry,” rather than because of any real desire to help the Jewish victims of fascist anti-Semitism.²⁰

The first charge, that the Jewish leadership failed to sympathise, is contradicted by much contemporary evidence. In early July 1936, before the establishment of either the CoC or the JPC, a high-level deputation from the Board met with the Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, to express its concern at the physical and verbal abuse Jews were increasingly subject to in east London. Laski himself had attended a fascist meeting, and admitted finding it hard to control himself in the face of such invective; while he understood that free speech had to be protected, and promised to encourage Jews to stay away from such events, he stressed that “human nature has its bounds, and . . . the apparent immunity and licence enjoyed by the Fascists” was causing anxiety among East End Jews. Sir Robert Waley Cohen, a vice-president of the Board, pressed Simon to introduce stricter punishments for those preaching such hatred, emphasising the “feeling of insecurity and alarm among the Jews in the areas affected.”²¹

Such efforts continued through the rest of the decade, with the Board's demands becoming ever more urgent as the anti-Semitic threat intensified. The next March, Laski was again in contact with the Home Office to discuss anti-Jewish meetings, warning that "any self-respecting Jew in the crowd would have the greatest difficulty in restraining himself, not only vocally, but even physically." In the circumstances, he felt that the police's tendency to target Jewish hecklers, rather than the speaker, was, "to put it mildly, a little hard on the interrupters," and demanded "such drastic measures as are permissible within the law" to prevent the use of provocative language.²² The president also corresponded regularly with the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Philip Game, reminding him in mid-1938 that fascist meetings in predominantly Jewish districts were of "special nuisance value and danger," and asking if it would be possible to ban them in advance.²³ Over time, he became bold enough to forward complaints of alleged police partiality against Jews, while he himself protested at the inconsistent enforcement of laws relating to defamation and provocative language.²⁴

Publicly, too, concern was expressed. As early as December 1934, Laski had met with Jews in east London to reassure them that the Board was aware of growing fascist anti-Semitism, and over the following years he and other prominent figures made periodic addresses in the area to explain their position.²⁵ Waley Cohen, who had been an early advocate of creating an independent Jewish defence body, was keen to express sympathy with fascism's victims, writing to the *Jewish Chronicle* (JC) in mid-1936 to acknowledge the "growing and justifiable anxiety... [at] the campaign of calumny and falsehood" directed against the community, emphasising that "the leaders of Anglo-Jewry are fully alive to the poisonous seriousness of the attacks."²⁶ Later that year, Sidney Salomon, the secretary of the CoC, in an interview with the *Evening Standard*, absolved of blame those Jews who assaulted fascists, arguing that it was "not human nature... to stand calmly by while Blackshirts shout insults."²⁷

More importantly, such proclamations were not simply palliatives, designed to placate the community or convince the authorities that the Board was in touch with the situation; they were supported by a deliberate campaign directed against British fascism. One reason these efforts have been ignored or downplayed by historians is that initially the communal leadership did indeed fail to formulate an adequate response to the onset of the BUF's East End campaign. Above all, it

struggled to reconcile a reluctance to oppose a legal political party (which would contradict both British traditions of free speech and the Board's own long-standing policy of apoliticism) with genuine revulsion at the fascists' anti-Jewish stance. The resultant position — that Jews should separate and oppose only the anti-Semitic elements of fascist policy — was clearly untenable, and soon gave way to a more sensible line, with the Board coming to see anti-Semitism as an “accompanying feature... [of] Fascist views” and formulating an anti-fascist policy that was compatible with its status and principles.²⁸ While some scholars have acknowledged that this change in attitude did take place, it is usually claimed to have occurred only in late 1938 or over 1939, as developments on the international stage made opposition to fascism more acceptable and pressure from within the community mounted.²⁹ In fact, concrete efforts to oppose the BUF began two years earlier, in late 1936, and resulted from the CoC's own analysis, not external compulsion.

The fundamental basis of the Board's anti-fascism was an understanding that any visible Jewish opposition to the BUF was exploited by Mosley to support the claims of victimisation by “the power of organised Jewry” that he used to justify his anti-Semitism.³⁰ As such, most of the work to hinder the BUF's progress was deliberately unpublicised. As early as 1936, a private complaint to the Home Secretary by Laski, who had attended a meeting addressed by the prominent BUF anti-Semite “Jock” Houston, led directly to the latter's arrest. Around the same time, Laski forwarded a donation towards the legal costs of John Marchbanks, who, in a well-publicised case, had been sued for slander by Mosley.³¹ Over the following year surreptitious assistance was lent to the Blackshirts' opponents in local elections, and the CoC subsequently kept meticulous track of all prospective fascist parliamentary candidates, giving help to their rivals in by-elections three years later.³² Meanwhile, Laski sanctioned efforts to scrutinise the BUF's finances, hiring a private investigator with no connections to the Jewish community to search for any embarrassing evidence of foreign funding to use against this proudly “British” movement. However, with the fascists' accounts “obviously faked,” and uniformed Blackshirts intimidating the investigator, this venture met with no success.³³

The Board also undertook the production and distribution of anti-fascist literature; again, often not doing so under its own name. In 1936 it published and circulated 50,000 copies of an article by George

Lansbury, MP for Bow and Bromley, entitled “Anti-Semitism in the East End,” which attacked the BUF’s “terrible doctrine of hatred,” highlighted its intimidation of east-London Jews, and accused the authorities of bias towards the fascists.³⁴ The next year, as part of its campaign against the BUF in March’s local elections, a more explicitly anti-fascist leaflet was released, drawing attention to some of the hypocrisy behind Mosley’s rhetoric: that he had criticised fascists as “black-shirted buffoons” in the 1920s, had claimed “fascism is in no sense anti-Semitic” in 1933, and that his “Super-British Party get[s] its money from non-British sources.”³⁵ From late 1938, in response to a surge in BUF activity after a period of decline, further publications were released: *The BUF by the BUF* highlighted ex-members’ criticism of the movement and Mosley’s leadership of it, while titles such as *Be on your guard! How fascists work* and *Britain’s Fifth Column — A Plain Warning!* speak for themselves.³⁶

A further realisation on the Board’s part was that Britain’s fascist movement, which by the mid-1930s had only a few thousand members, thrived off the publicity that opposition to it brought, as had been aptly demonstrated by two major events in late 1936. First, Arnold Leese, leader of a minor fascist party, the Imperial Fascist League (IFL), had been tried for seditious libel and creating public mischief in relation to accusations he had made in print that Jews practised ritual murder. The trial provided a perfect platform for Britain’s most extreme political anti-Semite (whose defence included the claim that Jews were descended from the devil), and its outcome, with the jury finding Leese guilty of the second charge but not the former, lent the impression that his allegations had some credence. Finally, his refusal to pay the resultant fine led to six months’ imprisonment, further enhancing his claims to “martyrdom.”³⁷

The Board, having supported the government in bringing the case, now realised that such measures afforded unnecessary publicity to otherwise inconsequential figures and groups, making it far more wary of pursuing such avenues. Laski, himself a lawyer, discouraged a Jewish ex-serviceman from taking legal action against a fascist publication, stressing the slim chances of success and warning that “it would only give publicity on a much wider scale to the infernal impudence and provocation of the [fascist] papers, which really have a very minute circulation.” The president did, however, endeavour to remedy the situation, pressing the Home Secretary to revise defamation laws to prevent defendants exploiting pleas of “justification,” as Leese had done.³⁸

Second, and more significant, the famous Battle of Cable Street, at which 100,000 or so anti-fascists violently blocked a procession of 2,000 Blackshirts, while remembered as a decisive victory against fascism, actually boosted the BUF in the short term, energising its support, evoking some public sympathy, and generating publicity that attracted thousands of new recruits.³⁹ This was representative of a wider trend, with Laski advised by numerous sources, including senior personnel within the Home Office and police force, as well as his own informants in the East End, that the BUF deliberately acted provocatively to incite violent opposition, with the aim of garnering press attention and casting itself as a victim.⁴⁰ It was this understanding that informed the decision to encourage Jews to avoid physical confrontation, despite, as noted above, an awareness that this was a difficult demand to make of those confronted by the Blackshirts’ offensive behaviour. Additionally, efforts were made to bring about a ban on fascist activity in areas with large Jewish populations.⁴¹

The decision to pursue unpublicised, non-confrontational anti-fascism appeared to be vindicated by the reports that arrived through late 1937 and 1938 indicating the BUF was in rapid decline.⁴² Laski celebrated that the movement was “dying with a rapidity which is not surprising but certainly gratifying,” and repeated his belief that overt anti-fascism would simply “fan the dying embers and give them publicity, which is the only thing that can keep them alive.” However, there was no room for complacency, and an internal CoC report warned that the BUF’s failings should not “release us from the duty of keeping constantly on the defensive.”⁴³ As such, the Board’s approach now comprised three main strategies: a campaign of meetings and propaganda that focused only on the few areas in which the fascists remained active; gathering intelligence on all anti-Semitic movements; and continual contact with the authorities to pass on this information and to encourage the restriction of anti-Semitic activity.

Over 1937 the CoC established the London Area Council (LAC), a subsidiary body in the East End that took over the anti-fascist campaigning of the Association of Jewish Friendly Societies (AJFS), which had already been working in harmony with the Board. The aim was to shadow the fascists by holding outdoor meetings (around 50-60 of them a month) in the same locations as Blackshirt ones. As such, “very hostile” audiences were often faced, and in this regard the campaign was more effective in presenting to gentiles the Jewish response to fascist propaganda than was

the JPC's, which generally focused its activity on Jewish areas and attracted sympathetic crowds.⁴⁴ Speakers, mostly local Jewish volunteers, were coached to refute the most common fascist claims, armed with an array of specially prepared speakers' notes covering various important themes. Such "defensive" work was supplemented by more positive propaganda too, stressing the Jewish contribution to British life.⁴⁵ Attendance at meetings varied greatly, ranging from as many as thousands to just a handful of listeners — although low attendance was often seen as a positive sign, indicating that the "Jewish question" had become less of an issue in the area concerned. The campaign was supported by an extensive collection of publications covering similar topics that were distributed through various channels, including by volunteers outside fascist meetings. By the outbreak of war, around two million copies of over 50 different leaflets and pamphlets had been circulated.⁴⁶

While such efforts have often been dismissed as apologetic — or as ineffectual in tackling the irrational roots of anti-Semitism — it is not hard to understand why the community's representative body felt it undesirable to allow untruthful and harmful allegations to remain unchallenged. As the Board's solicitor advised, if "the lies are unanswered . . . public opinion is formed from them," while Selig Brodetsky, a CoC member and future president of the Board, felt that there was much "innocent anti-Semitism, due to ignorance," that could be combated by propaganda work.⁴⁷ Salomon acknowledged that they were open to charges of producing "apologia" and that "one cannot hope to convert an anti-Semite"; but propaganda was aimed at the majority who "are 'anti' not through prejudice but through ignorance."⁴⁸ It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign. The CoC did receive praise for its publications from numerous sources, while it believed that the work of the LAC had "literally fought the Fascist open-air campaign to a standstill" (a contention supported by the JC).⁴⁹ It is certainly true that over 1938 the BUF shifted its focus away from outdoor meetings in the East End, and its more extreme expressions of anti-Semitism were moderated, but a number of factors lay behind these developments.

As well as public anti-defamation directed against fascist propaganda, behind the scenes the Board undertook comprehensive efforts to monitor and neutralise the threat of organised anti-Semitism. Central to the first of these tasks were the "vigilance committees," a nationwide network of institutions and prominent individuals who sent reports from their region,

which were collated and periodically presented to the CoC. Although some scholars have claimed that the committees were created largely to identify potentially embarrassing Jewish misbehaviour,⁵⁰ in fact, their founding purpose was to observe anti-Semitic, and particularly fascist, activity, and this remained the primary aim.⁵¹ Additionally, numerous other correspondents, particularly in London, regularly reported on fascist events, with some making substantial efforts to investigate the movement and its supporters.⁵²

But the most ambitious element of surveillance work, and one that Laski kept largely hidden even from fellow members of the CoC, was the infiltration of fascist organisations themselves. These efforts began in 1936, when a senior BUF officer, having grown disillusioned with Mosley's turn to anti-Semitism, decided to pass intelligence to the Board. “Capt. A,” as he was known, worked within Blackshirt headquarters, and as such was able to supply extremely sensitive information. Details of where future BUF events were to be held, for example, allowed the LAC to arrange counter-meetings at the same locations, while his reports on the BUF's planned activity were passed on to the police and home office.⁵³ Most significantly, he provided lists of BUF members, and in September 1939 these were handed over to the authorities, aiding the wartime observation of fascists and helping identify those who were interned in 1940, bringing about the BUF's demise.⁵⁴

Inspired by this success, in 1937 Laski managed to plant an agent in the IFL too, with his reports revealing much about its internal workings and extreme brand of racial anti-Semitism.⁵⁵ More problematic was the penetration of two extremist groups that developed in the build up to war, the Militant Christian Patriots (MCP) and the Nordic League (NL), which, unlike the BUF, operated largely underground. Through his contacts with the police, Laski secured the services of a former Special Branch inspector, who, under an assumed identity, secured membership of the two organisations. His investigations revealed the degree to which the NL sympathised with and had connections to the Nazi regime, as well as the extreme nature of its anti-Semitism, extending to advocacy of genocide. Such was the extent of his integration that he was invited to an NL summer school in Germany, where links between the movement and senior Nazi figures became further apparent. As well as providing reports on the potentially treasonous position of the NL and its subterranean activity, which the Home Office found ‘astonishing,’ he was able to

supply the authorities with the names of Nazi agents in Britain. His work also helped expose Captain Archibald Maule Ramsay, a Conservative politician who had developed an extreme anti-Semitism and sympathy for Nazism during the 1930s, and whose involvement with far-right groups, including the NL and MCP, led to his internment during the war. In addition to discussing Ramsay's position with the Home Office, the CoC also felt it their "duty privately to bring certain aspects of this activity to the attention of his constituents," provoking an angry local reaction towards the MP.⁵⁶

The authorities were certainly appreciative of the Board's intelligence offerings, with Simon's successor as Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, finding them "of the utmost value" and passing on his thanks to Laski for his regular updates.⁵⁷ This highlights the third aspect of the Board's anti-fascist work: its contact with and lobbying of the authorities, the extent of which has already begun to become apparent. Laski had quickly realised that while the Jewish community was able to respond to the fascists' propaganda, there was little it could do directly to inhibit their activity, angrily informing one critic that "the Board is not a police force."⁵⁸ Although the disruptive tactics of activist anti-fascists had impacted on the BUF — and Laski publicly admitted that a "policy of aggressivism" did "on occasion... have [its] utility"⁵⁹ — their overall efficacy, as noted above, was questionable. Hostile opposition had dogged the BUF since its inception, and, while it helped tarnish the image of the movement, frustrating its electoral ambitions, it also created a vicious circle of violence that kept the fascists in the public eye. Moreover, Jewish involvement in this conflict had dangerous consequences for the community. Not only was it exploited in anti-Semitic propaganda, it also inspired physical violence against Jews. A week after Cable Street — declared by the BUF to be "Jewry's biggest blunder," with one speaker promising, "By God there is going to be a pogrom" — the most serious anti-Jewish violence of the interwar period took place, with a band of fascist youths attacking Jewish individuals and property in a rampage through the East End.⁶⁰ Laski's mole in Blackshirt headquarters had warned of this danger, informing him that after the embarrassment of Cable Street the fascists were determined to intensify their anti-Semitic campaign, a prophesy that was fulfilled over the following months.⁶¹

The Board, therefore, preferred to rely on the authorities to curtail fascist activity, a policy that was relatively effective. The abovementioned

meeting with Simon in July 1936 had prompted the Home Secretary to issue comprehensive new directives to the police for clamping down on fascist “Jew-baiting,”⁶² and the Board’s lobbying for firmer action contributed to the introduction of the Public Order Act (POA) at the beginning of the following year. Among other stipulations, the act tightened laws on provocative language and behaviour and gave police the power to ban political processions in a specified area, a measure that was regularly enacted in east London. While its precise impact is still debated, and its implementation was far from consistent, the POA certainly played a part in hampering the BUF in the East End. There was also, over 1937-8, a moderation of the BUF’s more extreme anti-Semitic language, with the POA a contributory factor. A leading Blackshirt was, for example, arrested under the new regulations for an anti-Jewish diatribe at a meeting, and both the police and a CoC informant observed that fascist speakers now felt compelled to “tone down their remarks” regarding Jews.⁶³

The Board was aware, however, that the act was being inconsistently applied, a point Laski raised with the Home Office, highlighting that in some cases “the vilest accusations... [continue] to be made against Jews, apparently without any hindrance on the part of the police,” and urging clearer instructions for officers on the ground. Such demands, as Lebzelter acknowledges, certainly appeared to “carry considerable weight with the authorities,” and Laski himself believed that his regular promptings “had been a considerable factor in the more stringent enforcement of the Public Order Act.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, his constant contact with senior figures, corresponding frequently by letter and telephone and organising periodic meetings, was, as we have seen, instrumental in keeping them informed of fascist activity and the position of the Jewish community, and played a major role in the eventual internment of leading British fascists.

ANALYSING THE THREAT

What emerges from the above is that the Board had a relatively sophisticated understanding of the variegated and evolving nature of Britain’s broad, if shallow, fascist movement. Certainly it was able to take a wider perspective than many activist anti-fascists, whose experience was often limited to the BUF’s abortive East End campaign, which embodied just one stage of that organisation’s anti-Semitism and was not necessarily representative

of other fascist groups. The CoC realised that although the BUF “was the largest and . . . most vocal” body, “there were other organisations which also required the most careful watching.” Moreover, the threat they presented was not static, with Laski’s successor as chairman of the CoC, Gordon Liverman, noting that “the miasma of anti-Semitism is very difficult to cope with by a fixed and settled plan, wandering as it does from phase to phase.”⁶⁵ The Board was thus keen to present a wide-ranging and flexible defence policy, with individually tailored and constantly evolving responses to different fascist groups.

In the case of the BUF, this had originally involved monitoring for any indications of an anti-Jewish position. When it became a direct menace to Jews, the Board worked with the authorities to clamp down on the fascists where they most endangered and antagonised the community, attempted to rein in the anti-fascist disruption that advertised the movement, and countered the BUF’s political ambitions. Once it saw that the party was in decline, the focus was on neutralising anti-Semitic propaganda, ensuring the enforcement of the POA, and closely monitoring any remaining activity, only intervening where necessary. Finally, as the BUF experienced a resurgence in late 1938-9, efforts were again made to encourage the authorities to step in.

The CoC also appreciated the differences between BUF’s extreme and all-encompassing anti-Semitism aimed at areas such as the East End, which exploited pre-existing socio-economic and cultural friction between Jews and gentiles, and a subtler, but perhaps more dangerous anti-Jewish propaganda directed towards a broader audience, associating Jews with issues of wider concern, such as the growing prospect of war and the influx of (mainly Jewish) Central European refugees. In early 1938 it was observed that BUF activity had begun to migrate from east London to areas such as South Kensington, where it “addressed to the middle classes” a brand of anti-Semitic “innuendo” that was successfully attracting educated, but no less anti-Jewish, audiences.⁶⁶ The CoC believed that such “West End” anti-Semitism was in many ways more harmful, and required a “completely different” response.⁶⁷

Outside London, where over 1936-7 the BUF’s presence was minimal and anti-Semitism was largely absent from propaganda, a lighter touch had initially been favoured — there was no need to “create a Jewish problem in localities where it does not exist.”⁶⁸ However, as the extent of popular anti-Jewish sentiment became apparent, and the BUF focused on national

concerns rather than local issues in areas with large Jewish populations, the CoC modified its work accordingly. Salomon warned in 1939 that provincial anti-Semitism, although often inconspicuous, was being “vigorously” cultivated by fascists. The debate over refugees had revealed a widespread “undercurrent of anti-Semitism,” while “underground forces” were exploiting “the international situation to lay all the blame for the present state of affairs on the Jews.”

As such, anti-defamation now focused on these new issues. It highlighted the benefits that refugees brought to Britain and emphasised the humanitarian case for their reception, as well attempting to help the newcomers themselves integrate into British life.⁶⁹ Interestingly, as well as refuting the other main charge — that Britain was fighting a “Jewish war” against Germany — the Board also turned the tables on the fascists, painting them as unpatriotic Nazi agents while encouraging Jews to contribute to the war effort.⁷⁰

Because it refused to pigeonhole the array of anti-Semitic groups into one category, as some Jewish anti-fascists — especially those influenced by left-wing ideology — were prone to do, the CoC was able to appreciate the peculiarities of each. The IFL, for example, was understood to have “fewer members but...an even more venomous policy” than the BUF.⁷¹ As such, and as Leese’s court case had demonstrated, direct efforts to silence the movement accorded it a significance that its size did not merit and drew attention to its ideology; observation and anti-defamation were more appropriate tools. The MCP offered a similar but “somewhat milder version” of IFL propaganda, infused with a “violent anti-Zionism and anti-Bolshevism.” While its activity remained underground, investigation into its sources of funding and constant monitoring sufficed; but when it attempted to hold public meetings these were successfully countered by the Board, which contacted the proprietors of the venues in question and persuaded them to cancel the events.⁷²

Other organisations were carefully watched — the National Socialist League, the Britons, the Nationalist Association — but Laski was most concerned by the rise of subterranean and “aristocratic” anti-Jewish bodies such as the MCP and NL. Although the BUF had taken “a back seat” over 1938, these new groups’ activity, combined with a rising “Jew-consciousness” around Britain fed by anti-war and anti-refugee propaganda, was helping create a situation “infinitely more dangerous” for the community.⁷³ Such was the level of concern that one worried CoC member feared Britain could

see anti-Jewish legislation within three years. In response, Laski proposed a decentralisation of defence work to reflect the spread of anti-Semitism, giving local representatives more scope to implement appropriate policies in their own area. Although the outbreak of war interrupted this restructuring, it did nothing to allay nerves; the persistence of anti-Semitic propaganda (with Jews now alleged to be shirking and profiteering from the war effort) and public receptiveness to it meant that defence work continued with “undiminished vigour.”⁷⁴

The Board’s identification of a broad and increasingly visible “undercurrent” of anti-Jewish prejudice also encouraged it to expand wider anti-defamation and “improvement” efforts not aimed specifically at fascist anti-Semitism. While many Jewish activists attacked fascism as “the source of anti-Semitism,” and focused on defeating the BUF,⁷⁵ the Board understood that although fascists exploited and exacerbated ill feeling towards Jews, they were not a root cause of it in themselves. The CoC did, however, struggle to devise an effective programme to tackle popular anti-Semitism — with Salomon conceding that it was far more “intangible” and harder to combat than the extreme fascist variety — leading to the kind of “apologetic” policies that have been attacked by historians. There were, though, genuine attempts to better understand prejudice towards the community, with the CoC agreeing in 1939 to provide funding for the embryonic “Mass-Observation” public-opinion surveys, in the hope that they would reveal more about popular attitudes towards Jews. The previous year it had also set up a sub-committee to investigate what it euphemistically referred to as the “internal causes of anti-Semitism,” while another body, the Trades Advisory Council, was established to improve relations between Jews and gentiles in trade and industry.⁷⁶

COMMUNAL RELATIONS

So, while the Board has been criticised for failing to properly analyse anti-Semitism, it is clear that this was not the case. Moreover, although its position has been unflatteringly contrasted to activist anti-fascists, and in particular the JPC, who it is claimed had a better understanding of organised anti-Semitism and how to defend against it, closer examination reveals that the CoC’s objectives had much in common with its counterpart’s. The JPC’s three founding aims were to unite the community

against its enemies, to expose the dangers anti-Semitism posed to democracy and the liberty of all people, and to cooperate with non-Jewish bodies fighting for the same cause.⁷⁷ The Board certainly shared a desire to present a cohesive Jewish response, while it also came to adopt an identical line in terms of the wider dangers of anti-Semitism. In 1937, LAC speakers were instructed to warn their (predominantly non-Jewish) audiences that “the stirring of race hatred” threatened the “sacred liberties and freedom” of all people and, if allowed to continue unopposed, would lead to “civil and political strife”; they were to call on “all right-thinking men and women to stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of democracy and humanity.”⁷⁸

Like the JPC, the Board also endeavoured to cultivate links with a variety of non-Jewish groups in its fight against organised anti-Semitism. This, of course, generally involved politically neutral bodies, such as various church institutions, but Laski was also prepared to compromise the Board’s traditions by cooperating with political organisations, as was the case with the assistance given to election candidates outlined above. But the boldest move came in October 1936, when he arranged a meeting with Herbert Morrison, Labour’s leader of the London County Council, and Harry Pollitt, general secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). While this encounter has been partially described elsewhere, accounts have usually focused only on the advice Laski received relating to Jewish misconduct in the East End.⁷⁹ More significant was the fact that the president was prepared to meet — albeit secretly — with Britain’s most prominent communist and that he did so with the primary objective of obtaining his collaboration in hampering fascist activity in the East End. During an earlier discussion, Morrison had informed Laski that he favoured “defensive” rather than “aggressive” anti-fascism, emphasising that the BUF thrived off conflict. He was happy to tell his supporters to avoid fascist events, but felt that this would be of little use without communist cooperation. Thus the two met Pollitt, with Laski proposing that they each “use our joint and separate influences to keep those over whom we might be deemed to have some control off the streets and [away] from [the] meetings and processions of Mosley.” Although Pollitt “sympathised,” he rejected the idea on the grounds that it would be impossible to persuade his followers to support such a policy. He did, though, show a willingness to limit communist activity in particularly volatile areas (and the police noted a significant reduction in communist meetings in east London the next

month). Pollitt also suggested organising a public gathering to be jointly addressed by communist, Jewish, Labourite and church representatives, an idea Laski felt had “some genius” to it.⁸⁰

The Board’s approach was, therefore, a pragmatic one; like the JPC, it was willing to work with almost anyone with an interest in combating anti-Semitism. Such collaboration expressly avoided offering support for any particular party or ideology, a position that, again, was not altogether dissimilar to the JPC’s. Although the latter has often been cast as an explicitly political organisation, it is important to understand that its principle aim was to oppose anti-Semitism and its propagators. Its position was therefore only political in so far as it opposed any anti-Semitic political party (a stance the Board also came to adopt); it did not, however, promote or overtly support any particularly ideology of its own — other than democracy in general — and its publications stressed that it was “non-political.”⁸¹ It is certainly no secret that the JPC was closely connected to the CPGB and various labour organisations, through overlapping membership and activity, and its rhetoric had a left-wing flavour; but its official position remained a non-partisan one and it did not feel obliged to tow any party’s line. In a similar vein, many figures associated with the Board had marked political tendencies (indeed, some members of the CoC were MPs), but their defence work was also divorced from any particular ideology.

The only significant programmatic differences between the Board and the JPC were the former’s initial reluctance to oppose fascism and the latter’s support for a confrontational approach to doing so. This hampered early negotiations between the two, after the JPC had indicated a willingness to collaborate.⁸² But as the Board developed its own anti-fascist position, and with physical conflict between Blackshirts and Jews declining by 1938 (with the police noting that anti-fascists were ‘beginning to realise that active opposition is more likely to assist the Fascist cause than to hurt it’), the two sides grew closer.⁸³ Discussions were held over the following months, but, while it was accepted that there was “little difference” between their views, any comprehensive agreement remained elusive. This was, however, wholly due to disagreements relating to control over, rather than content of, policy, with the CoC keen for the JPC to be absorbed completely into its own defence apparatus and the latter understandably wary that doing so would diminish its influence. Agreement was reached on limited collaboration, with the two sides allowing their speakers to address each other’s meetings and CoC publications distributed at JPC events.⁸⁴

The shared aims of these two supposedly rival bodies, and the cordial nature of negotiations over 1938-9, helps demonstrate the shortcomings of another common claim: that arguments over the response to fascism “tore apart” the community. While a lively and at times hostile debate had taken place in 1936, with the Board receiving widespread criticism, the adoption and growth of its own defence campaign, alongside the diminishing presence of fascism in the East End, brought about a more cooperative mood. Indeed, far from dividing Anglo-Jewry, fascist anti-Semitism in many ways brought it closer together: by attacking all Jews with equal vehemence, it forced what was, after half a century of mass migration and uneven socio-economic development, a fairly heterogeneous and discordant community to unite in self-defence.

Although a vocal minority of Jews remained critical of the Board — and have been disproportionately represented in the historical narrative — a large section of the community came to accept its leadership in the fight against fascism and anti-Semitism. One indication of this support came from the CoC’s appeal for contributions towards its “defence fund,” which had raised £60,000 from thousands of donors by the end of 1939 (as a gauge, the annual cost of running the defence campaign was estimated at £16,800). Most generous were Jewish trade groups, who felt that they in particular stood to gain from better relations with gentiles, but money was also received from synagogue collections and numerous individuals, often with the promise of an annual subscription.⁸⁵ Backing was given by the *JC*, which “expressed [its] readiness to cooperate with the Board,” a promise it fulfilled; collaboration continued with the ASJF (which absorbed its own defence fund into the CoC’s) and another body, the Jewish Ex-Servicemen’s Legion (now known as AJEX); and reports reveal growing communal appreciation of the Board’s work. By late 1938, Laski was even able to hold a well-attended and “highly successful” meeting in the East End, with “the vast majority of those present expressing in no uncertain terms their support of the Board of Deputies and the Defence Committee.”⁸⁶ A variety of opinions over the best approach to countering anti-Semitism remained, of course; even within the CoC periodic disagreements emerged, helping shape the evolution of its approach. However, by 1939 there was little question that the Board was firmly in control of communal defence — and that it had the explicit or tacit consent of much of Anglo-Jewry in doing so.

CONCLUSION

The traditional image of the Board of Deputies' response to British fascism — its attitude, analysis, and activity — is, then, in need of some revision. The Anglo-Jewish leadership clearly sympathised with the Jewish victims of fascism, and endeavoured to fulfil its responsibility to represent the entire community. Admittedly, many prominent figures had not immediately been prepared to oppose the fascists, rather than just the anti-Semitism they exploited, but this was not a completely unreasonable position given that the BUF was a legitimate political party and had originally excluded anti-Semitism from its programme, before adopting it in oscillating phases over 1934-5. Italian Fascism, meanwhile, eschewed anti-Semitism altogether at this stage. However, an acceptance that fascism and anti-Semitism had become inextricably connected, and that countering the latter would have to encompass opposition to the former, was quickly reached, and took place far earlier than historians have acknowledged.

From this point, not only was a robust and deliberate defence policy developed, but the Board was able to understand, better than many Jewish anti-fascists, the variegated nature of the fascist threat, and presented flexible, wide-ranging and appropriately tailored responses to the various manifestations of political anti-Semitism that emerged over the mid-to late-1930s. Its campaign did not, of course, include support for the confrontational approach favoured by many in the community, but it is hard to see what it could be expected to have done in this regard. Whatever the merits of physically confronting the Blackshirts — and the Board's own analysis and the informed advice it received suggested that such tactics were generally counterproductive — it would have been almost impossible for the community's representative body to condone what was often illegal behaviour, and would have severely harmed its influence with official contacts had it done so.

But to publicly implore Jews to avoid militant activity should not be confused with an opposition to other forms of anti-fascism. As well as applying pressure on the appropriate authorities to enact and enforce laws restricting the fascists' offensive behaviour, the CoC's own efforts encompassed more subtle, behind-the-scenes targeting of various anti-Semitic movements and the organisation of anti-fascist meetings and publications. While its propaganda efforts have been deemed by many

to be excessively apologetic, it is not difficult to understand why the Board felt compelled to answer directly specious allegations aimed at the community that were receiving a sympathetic hearing in many places. Such anti-defamation was, by its nature, defensive and somewhat apologetic, as members of the CoC themselves acknowledged; but it was considered to be the lesser of two evils, a price worth paying to defend Anglo-Jewry's name. Moreover, while it was accepted that obsessive anti-Semites could not be “won over,” such individuals were a small minority in Britain; the anti-defamation campaign targeted the hopefully more rational majority, among whom anti-Jewish sentiment was widely but thinly spread, with ignorance or misunderstanding felt to be at the heart of much prejudice. Meanwhile, further efforts were made to understand the root causes of dislike towards the community.

The Board was also aware that while the most extreme forms of anti-Semitism, exemplified by the BUF's East End campaign, were a serious threat to the Jews that experienced them, they had a narrow appeal and shallow roots, and could be mitigated by appropriate restrictions on fascist activity and counter-propaganda. Far more dangerous in the long term was the more prevalent “undercurrent” of popular anti-Jewish sentiment that was exposed, exploited and encouraged by a variety of far-right groups in the build up to war. The Board understood that this latter type of prejudice — which has also been highlighted by some of the recent research into British anti-Semitism⁸⁷ — required a more comprehensive approach than a focus on fascist anti-Semitism allowed. As such, over 1938-9 changes to defence policy began to be implemented by the CoC, although the outbreak of war once again forced a change of tack.

For reasons of brevity, this essay has not been able to deal with the aspects of the Board's wider campaign against non-fascist anti-Semitism, in particular its more general anti-defamation and “improvement” policies. These have, however, been dealt with at length elsewhere — although, again, accounts have perhaps been unduly critical and represent another area deserving of re-evaluation. But it is clear that the measures directed against Britain's fascist movement were not only a more significant element of the defence campaign than has previously been acknowledged, but also, far from being “complacent,” “naive,” or “timid,” were comprehensive, prudent, and, in places, relatively bold.

Above all, though, they were effective, playing a role in the diminution of the BUF's most extreme and directly threatening behaviour, in keeping

any remaining fascist activity in check while countering anti-Semitic propaganda, and, ultimately, in helping bring about the demise of Britain's interwar fascist movement. Moreover, the Board's leadership in such matters came to be widely accepted, even supported, by broad sections of Anglo-Jewry, allowing a more mature debate over defence to develop than is acknowledged by the traditional image of an irrevocable division between "working-class" and "elite" Jews, and providing at least one sign of unity in what was otherwise a diverse and divided community.

NOTES

- ¹ Richard Thurlow, "State Management of the British Union of Fascists," in Mike Cronin (ed), *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 50, and *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 87. See also D.S. Lewis, *Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism and British Society, 1931-81* (Manchester University Press, 1987), 259-60; Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-45* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 305; W. D. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 313-4.
- ² For details of the debate that emerged in the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* (JC), see David Cesarani, *Reporting Anti-Semitism: the Jewish Chronicle 1879-1979* (University of Southampton, 1993), 25-7, and David Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism: How Jews in Britain Countered the Threats of the 1930s* (London: JCARP, 1985), 48-53.
- ³ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 285.
- ⁴ It is important to note that in 1936 criticism of the Board emanated from right across the community, not just activist, working-class elements. Even traditionally friendly sources, such as the JC, expressed their dissatisfaction with the Board's efforts at this stage.
- ⁵ Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England, 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 138-43; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 293.
- ⁶ Cesarani, *Reporting Anti-Semitism*, 149, 152 and "The Transformation of Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940," in D. Cesarani (ed), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990), 128-9; Neil Barrett, "The anti-fascist movement in south-east Lancashire, 1933-1940: the divergent experiences of Manchester and Nelson," in Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligot (eds), *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52, 62, and "The Threat of the British Union of Fascists in Manchester," in Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (eds) *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 56-70. See also Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1665 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California

- Press, 2002) 203-4; Elaine Smith, “But What Did They Do? Contemporary Jewish Responses to Cable Street,” in *Remembering Cable Street*, 54; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 152; Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 58.
- ⁷ See “Jewish People’s Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism and the Board of Deputies” (London: JPC, 1936?); Elaine Smith, “Jewish responses to political antisemitism and fascism in the East End of London, 1920-1939,” in Tony Kushner & Kenneth Lunn (eds), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical perspectives on fascism and race discourse in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 1989), 63-4; Phil Piratin, *Our Flag Stays Red: An account of Cable Street and political life in the East End of London* (London: Wishart and Lawrence, 1978), 19; Morris Beckman, *The Hackney Crucible* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), xxiv, xxix.
- ⁸ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 144-5; Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 212; Cesarani, “Communal Authority,” 130-1; Barrett, “BUF in Manchester,” 67; Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 41-2, 50; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 286 and *London Jewry and London Politics 1889-1986* (London: Routledge, 1989), 101.
- ⁹ Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 56; Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (Manchester University Press, 1989), 166-7. See also Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 74.
- ¹⁰ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 144-51. Rosenberg provides just one sentence on this aspect of the defence campaign, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 70.
- ¹¹ Endelman and Lebzelter both believe that the Board’s “vigilance committees,” ostensibly established to monitor anti-Semitism, were primarily tools to keep track of Jewish misbehaviour, *Jews of Britain*, 211, and *Political Anti-Semitism*, 148. See also Barrett, “BUF in Manchester,” 61.
- ¹² Smith acknowledges that “much of the Board’s defence work was unpublished and conducted in private,” and mentions that meetings with the Home Office and police took place, but fails to elaborate further, “Jewish responses to political antisemitism,” 67. Barrett notes that Laski “seems to have assisted the intelligence services, regarding the activities of certain right-wing groups, on a number of occasions” without offering details, “BUF in Manchester,” 61.
- ¹³ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 144.
- ¹⁴ Sharon Gewirtz notes that the Board’s files “provide an insight into the motivations of the BoD’s leadership which public statements or minutes of meetings will often conceal or distort,” “Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany 1933-39: The Anti-Nazi Boycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 26/2 (1991), 256.
- ¹⁵ Quotes from Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 143, 154. Cesarani, “Communal Authority,” 129-30.
- ¹⁶ JC, 15 March 1936, 9; “Report of Activities: July-November 1936”: P[arkes] L[ibrary] MS60 17/16; Neville Laski to Nathan Laski, 22 July 1936 and A.G. Brotman to the secretary of the South African Board of Deputies, 24 August 1936: L[ondon] M[etropolitan] A[rchives] ACC3121/E3/245/2.

- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* On BUF anti-Semitism, see W.F. Mandle, *Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists* (London: Longmans, 1967), Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, and Martin Pugh, “Hurrah for the Blackshirts!”: *Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Pimlico, 2005).
- ¹⁸ Smith, “Jewish responses to political antisemitism,” 67; Barrett, “The anti-fascist movement,” 52; Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 47; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 150, 154.
- ¹⁹ Rosenberg, *Facing Up to Antisemitism*, 46, 56, 59-60.
- ²⁰ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 293.
- ²¹ Report of meeting in LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2.
- ²² Laski to Sir Russell Scott, 8 March 1937: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/1
- ²³ Game to Laski, 15 June 1938; Laski to Game, 22 July 1937: LMA ACC3121/E3/247.
- ²⁴ Laski to Game, 15 August 1938; “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson,” 23 May 1939: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2, ACC3121/E3/247.
- ²⁵ Laski to the honorary officers of the Association of Jewish Youth, 11 Dec. 1934: LMA ACC3121/E3/244; CoC minutes (located in B[oard] of D[eputies] A[rchives] C6/1/1/1-2), 23 Sept. 1936; 25 Nov. 1936; 3 Jan. 1939.
- ²⁶ JC, 26.6.36, 9-10; Robert Henriques, *Sir Robert Waley Cohen, 1877-1952* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 361-2.
- ²⁷ *Evening Standard*, 4 Nov. 1936.
- ²⁸ “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson” (see note 23 above).
- ²⁹ Kushner, *Persistence of Prejudice*, 166-7; Smith, “Jewish responses to political antisemitism,” 66; Rosenberg, *Facing Up To Antisemitism*, 59; Copsey, *Anti-Fascism*, 75-6.
- ³⁰ See *Blackshirt*, 2.Nov. 1934, 1-3.
- ³¹ Laski to Scott, 19 Oct. 1936, Laski to John Marchbanks, 16 Sept. 1936: BDA, C6/9/1/3.
- ³² “The Jewish Defence Committee: Some Lesser Known Aspects of its Work,” 7-8: PL MS134 AJ33; CoC minutes, 1 July 1937; Laski to Waley Cohen, 16 July 1937; Waley Cohen to Laski, 16 May 1939; Laski to Waley Cohen, 19 May 1939: PL MS363 A3006/1/3/54, MS134 AJ33.
- ³³ “Memorandum on Certain Activities in Reaction — October 1937,” Edward Iwi to Laski, 10 Feb 1938; Laski to Iwi 11 Feb. 1938: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/1; Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 1-2.
- ³⁴ CoC minutes, 23 Sept. 1936; George Lansbury, *Anti-Semitism in the East End* (London: Woburn Press, 1936).
- ³⁵ CoC minutes, 21 Jan. 1937; *Do you know these facts about Mosley and his Fascists?* (London: Woburn Press, 1937). Interestingly, the overtly anti-fascist nature of the

- publication caused some consternation within the CoC, with some members feeling that its “political tendencies . . . were not in accordance with the traditions of the Committee’s publications” — an indication that certain figures had yet to accept an anti-fascist position, CoC minutes, 13 April 1937.
- ³⁶ *The BUF by the BUF* (1939?), *Britain’s Fifth Column — A Plain Warning!* (1940), both published by Anchor Press, Tiptree; *Be on your guard! How fascists work* (unknown publisher, 1940).
- ³⁷ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives] H[ome] O[ffice] 144/24967/45 and 52; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 50-1. Thurlow comments that the case “opened a Pandora’s Box of possibilities for the racial nationalists.”
- ³⁸ Letters between Laski and Mark Selincourt, 26 & 28 Nov. 1938, LMA ACC3121/E3/247; “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson.” See also Barrett, “BUF in Manchester,” 64.
- ³⁹ TNA ME[tropolitan]PO[lice] 2/3043/268-9; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 81; Thomas Linehan, *East End for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex, 1933-1940* (Frank Cass, London, 1996), 202-3.
- ⁴⁰ See Game to Laski, 30 July 1937; Laski to Scott, 20 Sept. 1936; report of Laski’s meeting with Sir Russell Scott, 14 April 1937: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2.
- ⁴¹ See CoC minutes, 15 July 1937.
- ⁴² See “Mosley in Manchester,” “London Area Council — Meetings Report,” “Reports of Blackshirt Activities in the Provinces”: CoC minutes, 29 March & 26 July 1938.
- ⁴³ Laski to Iwi, 11 Feb. 1938; report on BUF municipal election results: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/1-2.
- ⁴⁴ See “London Area Council Monthly Reports,” CoC minutes, 29 March & 24 May 1938; Smith, “Jewish responses to political antisemitism,” 65.
- ⁴⁵ A collection of speakers’ notes can be found in Sheffield University Archives, Zaidman Collection, 118/6/15-40.
- ⁴⁶ “Memorandum on Publications,” CoC minutes, 7 March 1940. See *The Kol Nidrei — Anti-Semitic Lies Refuted* (1939), *The Jews of Britain* (undated) (London, Woburn Press).
- ⁴⁷ Letter from Charles Emanuel, 21 July 1937: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2; “Problem and Policy of Defence”; CoC minutes, 11 April 1940 (the memorandum was first submitted to the CoC in February 1939).
- ⁴⁸ Sidney Salomon, *Anti-Semitism and Fascism in Post-War Britain. The Work of the Jewish Defence Committee* (London: Woburn Press, 1950), 12-3.
- ⁴⁹ “Report on Distribution,” “The Jewish Defence Committee — Retrospect and Prospect,” CoC minutes, 13 May 1937; 3 Jan. 1939; JC, 4. Feb. 1938, 22.
- ⁵⁰ See note 11.
- ⁵¹ “Vigilance Committee Reports,” CoC minutes, 10 Dec. 1936; 1 July 1937; 13 Feb. 1939; CoC minutes, 12 Nov. 1936; “Vigilance Committees in Great Britain. A General

Survey,” PL MS60 17/16; minutes of meeting between executive officers of the Board and those of AJFS, 9 July 1936: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2.

- ⁵² Such efforts were impressively extensive and intricate. See, for example, BDA C6/9/1/3.
- ⁵³ Laski to chief constable of Manchester Police, 7 & 20.Oct. 1936: BDA C6/9/1/3; Laski to Sir Russell Scott, 20 & 22 Sept. 1936: LMA ACC3121/E3/242/2.
- ⁵⁴ “Some Lesser Known Aspects,” 13-4.
- ⁵⁵ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 48-9; “Some Lesser Known Aspects,” 2.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 14-7; TNA HO 144/21381/248-93, 144/22454/47-82; “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson.” On the NL, MCP and Ramsey, see Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, The Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-40* (London: Constable, 1998), and Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 51-7.
- ⁵⁷ “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson.”
- ⁵⁸ Laski to M.E. Waldman, 21 April 1937: LMA ACC3121/E3/245/2.
- ⁵⁹ Laski, *Jewish Rights*, 133.
- ⁶⁰ TNA MEPO 3/551; *Blackshirt*, 10 Oct. 1936; *News Chronicle*, 12 Oct. 1936.
- ⁶¹ Laski to chief constable of Manchester Police, 7 Oct. 1936: BDA C6/9/1/3.
- ⁶² TNA MEPO 2/3043/329-331.
- ⁶³ Mandle, *Anti-Semitism and the BUF* 67; Pugh, *Hurrah*, 229-30; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 80. TNA MEPO 2/3043/165; report on BUF meeting, 20 Aug. 1938: BDA C6/9/1/3.
- ⁶⁴ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 144-5; “Interview with Mr J. F. Henderson”; CoC minutes, 15 July 1937.
- ⁶⁵ Gordon Liverman to Alec Nathan, 14 Feb. 1940: CoC minutes, 7 March 1940.
- ⁶⁶ “Secretary’s Report,” “LAC Monthly Report,” CoC minutes, 24 May 1938.
- ⁶⁷ CoC minutes, 17 July 1939; “Addendum to Secretary’s Report,” CoC minutes, 8 Nov. 1939.
- ⁶⁸ CoC minutes, 13 April 1937.
- ⁶⁹ “Secretary’s Reports,” CoC minutes, 18 Jan., 13 March, 24 April & 23 May 1939; *How Refugees Help Lancashire — New Industries and Secret Processes*, (London: Watts & Co., 1939); *Refugees — The Plain Facts* (London, Woburn Press, undated); *While you are in England: Helpful information and guidance for every refugee* (Tiptree: Anchor Press, undated).
- ⁷⁰ *Britain’s Fifth Column*. Two more wartime pamphlets were entitled *True Blue Patriots of the BUF* and *The Jews and Patriotism*.
- ⁷¹ “Some Lesser Known Aspects,” 2, 9-10.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 10; “Secretary’s Report,” CoC minutes, 13 March 1939. On defence activity during the war see CoC minutes, and Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, 163-87.

- ⁷³ “Secretary’s Report,” memorandum by Laski, “Central Jewish Lecture Committee — Report of Conference,” CoC minutes, 13 March & 25 May 1939.
- ⁷⁴ Laski to Philip Allen, 15 & 31 Oct. 1939: LMA ACC3121/E3/247; CoC minutes, 3 Oct. 1939; “Secretary’s Report,” CoC minutes, 23 May 1939.
- ⁷⁵ So claimed J. Jacobs, a leading figure in the JPC, adding that “it is not possible to get rid of anti-Semitism without getting rid of Fascism.” Report on JPC conference, 15 Nov. 1936: PL MS60 17/16.
- ⁷⁶ Salomon, “The Work of the Jewish Defence Committee,” 7; CoC minutes, 24 May 1938; 18 Jan., 24 April & 10 May 1939.
- ⁷⁷ The JPC outlined these aims in its periodical, *Vigilance*. See also TNA MEPO 2/3112.
- ⁷⁸ *Speakers’ Handbook*, 23. See *Anti-Semitism — A World Danger* (London: Woburn Press, 1938?).
- ⁷⁹ Alderman and Barrett both imply that the meeting was called to discuss ill feeling towards Jews, *Modern British Jewry*, 286, and “The BUF in Manchester,” 61-2. While this theme came to dominate proceedings, it was not the original purpose.
- ⁸⁰ “Note of Interview with Mr Herbert Morrison,” “Note on Interview Between L[aski], M[orison] and P[ollitt]”: PL MS134 AJ33; TNA MEPO 2/3043/238-44.
- ⁸¹ Jacobs told JPC members: “We are not a political body, but that does not mean that when a certain party calls itself a political party and makes its main plank the fight against the Jews, that the Jews should not retaliate by attacking that party and the policy it stands for,” report on JPC conference, 15 Nov. 1936. He repeated this sentiment in a letter to the *JC* two years later, ‘categorically denying’ any political bias: *JC*, 16 Dec. 1938, 14.
- ⁸² “Report of Activities”; “The JPC Jewish and the Board of Deputies.”
- ⁸³ TNA MEPO 2/3043/89.
- ⁸⁴ Regular reports on these negotiations and the collaboration between the two sides can be found in the CoC’s minutes between March 1938 and February 1939. Quote taken from “Conference Between the London Area Council and the Jewish People’s Council,” CoC minutes, 24 May 1938.
- ⁸⁵ CoC minutes, 6 Dec. 1939; “London Area Council Monthly Report,” report from finance sub-committee, “Memorandum on Publications,” CoC minutes, 24 May & 1 Nov. 1938, 7 March 1940; “Comments on Receipts and Expenditure of the Jewish Defence Committee”: PL MS134 AJ33.
- ⁸⁶ CoC minutes, 4 Jan. 1937, 29 March 1938; “Work of the London Area Council,” “Secretary’s Report,” CoC minutes 13 Dec. 1937, 3 Jan. 1938; *JC*, 24 June 1938, 10; 2 Dec. 1938, 39; *City and East London Observer*, 17 Oct. 1936.
- ⁸⁷ Work on Anglo-Jewish history over the last two or three decades has demonstrated that, while more extreme, organised and political expressions of anti-Semitism may have held limited appeal in interwar Britain, a subtler, but pervasive and no less

pernicious, antipathy towards Jews was present, manifesting itself, for example, in attitudes towards refugees and “aliens” in the build up to and during the second world war. See Kushner, “The Making of British Antisemitism, 1918-1945,” in David Cesarani (ed), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), and Cesarani, “The Study of Antisemitism in Britain: Trends and Perspectives,” in Michael Brown (ed), *Approaches to Antisemitism: Context and Curriculum* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1994). As Kushner notes, and the CoC understood, the threat of political anti-Semitism was not expressed purely through physical and verbal provocation in the East End — although this, of course, was a huge concern for the Jews it affected — but also by its reinforcement and exacerbation of existing negative stereotypes of Jews.

“THE DARK ALIEN EXECUTIVE”

Jewish Producers, Émigrés and the British Film Industry in the 1930s

Edward Marshall

During the 1930s, cinema was the most popular form of entertainment in Britain and therefore provided the dominate medium for the expression of national identity.¹ According to A. J. P. Taylor, going to the pictures was “the essential social habit of the age.”² While debates raged over the positive or negative influence of film culture, it was a decade marked by unprecedented expansion and consolidation within the industry. Entrepreneurial opportunities had been opened up by the Cinematograph Films Act in 1927, which imposed minimum quotas for British made films and thereby assured British producers a domestic market and a source of revenue. This protectionist agenda led to a huge growth in the number of production companies, but its unforeseen consequence was the glut of “quota quickies.” These low-budget films were designed to take advantage of guaranteed distribution and were usually of questionable quality. Nevertheless, access to the potential rewards of international markets, especially America, remained the ultimate ambition for the major studios. To help modernise the British film industry, foreign technicians were brought in and their technical expertise made a considerable impact. Yet, the reaction of the press and social commentators to these new arrivals was not usually favourable, as the immigrant presence was seen to be taking away jobs from British workers and, even more invidious, attracted the charge of cultural invasion. The outsider’s contribution was dismissed as inevitably producing films which were not authentically British. The fact that most of these émigrés were Jewish, at least in the sense that they had been publically identified as such and forced into exile, only abetted cultural anxieties.

The role of émigrés filmmakers has been highlighted in several pioneering accounts, which explore the importance of immigration and diversity as a source for cultural creativity.³ Building upon these insights, this study looks to place them into a wider context, since the reaction to refugees was influenced by the number of prominent Jews already within the industry, as well as the cultural debate surrounding cinema as a mass medium. Indeed, the evolution of anti-Semitic sentiments as mediated through popular culture and the challenges this discourse has posed to the careers of Jews provides another crucial area for future research, as does the ways in which individuals have sublimated their ethnic identity, or asserted it, at different stages during the history of the film industry. While the Jewish community in Britain has never accounted for more than one per cent of the total population, the impact of Jews within the film business has been far greater than demographics would suggest. As an emerging sector of the economy, which expanded rapidly and lacked established networks, cinema offered new opportunities for entrepreneurs, creative individuals and performers. Although prejudice was not absent from show business circles, it was rarely detrimental to career progression and was far more likely to be directed from outside critics than expressed by those within the entertainment industry.

It is impossible to demonstrate the depth of Jewish participation in the film trade during these years, but it is worth outlining some of the major figures and developments. As production opportunities expanded after the Quota Act, cinemas were also built at an unprecedented pace, size and grandeur. The industry as a whole was increasingly dominated by two so-called combines, Gaumont British Picture Corporation (GB) and Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC), large conglomerates that controlled a range of businesses to produce, distribute and exhibit their films. Yet, by the end of the decade, Odeon had emerged to rival GB and ABPC as a major cinema chain, although it avoided the riskier production side of the business.⁴ Jewish entrepreneurs owned two of these three circuits. Gaumont was controlled by Isidore Ostrer and his brothers, while the driving force behind Odeon's rapid rise was Oscar Deutsch. ABPC had been founded by a Scottish lawyer, John Maxwell. Moreover, cinema exhibition was an industry that attracted significant Jewish involvement with prominent circuits including Sol Levy's Scala, Sydney and Cecil Bernstein's Granada, Solomon Sheckman's Essoldo, along with numerous other smaller operators.⁵ The burgeoning mass entertainment market was increasingly

viewed as a lucrative opportunity for entrepreneurial investment, but aspirations for cultural improvement were also brought to the fore. Writing in the journal *Design and Construction*, Deutsch articulated his bold vision for his iconic brand:

It was always my ambition to have buildings which were individual and striking, but which were always objects of architectural beauty... we endeavour to make our buildings express the fact that they are specially erected as the homes of the latest, most progressive entertainment in the world.⁶

As well as Odeon, the huge potential of cinema in Britain was symbolised by the rapid expansion of Gaumont. The company's principle directors were Isidore and Mark Ostrer, who had been born in the East End of London before working their way up to become wealthy wool brokers and merchant bankers. Isidore Ostrer also held a variety of other media interests, including the *Sunday Referee* newspaper, Baird Television, Bush Radio and Radio Luxembourg. The brothers took control of GB in 1929 and it became something of a family business with their other siblings all employed within the organisation. Maurice, as well as sitting on the board, took on the role of producer; Harry worked on scripts and David was involved in distribution. Apart from owning the largest chain of cinemas in the country, Gaumont acquired two important distributing companies, Ideal Films and W. and F. Films, and the production company Gainsborough Pictures. All three of these had owners with Jewish backgrounds. Ideal Films had been owned by Harry Rowson and W. and F. Films was the property of Charles Moss Woolf, a former fur merchant, who successfully entered the rental business and then joined forces with the Ostrer brothers.⁷ Michael Balcon had founded Gainsborough Pictures and, after its take-over, became head of production for Gaumont. This process of financial consolidation laid the foundations for ambitious plans to produce more profitable and prestigious films.

Although Michael Balcon cemented his legacy at Ealing Studios with films designed primarily for the domestic market, his outlook at this stage in his career was decidedly global. In 1925, he had stated that "British pictures with an international appeal will save British film production."⁸ Philip Kemp has suggested that Balcon's position within the Jewish diaspora, he had family members living in Europe, South Africa, Canada and America, was central to this approach: "Thinking internationally came naturally to him,

and from the first his films reached across national borders.”⁹ Whatever the truth about such psychological motivations, Balcon did predominately look abroad for innovations and expertise. He instigated a series of co-productions with Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA), Germany’s premier studio and the largest production company outside Hollywood, an exchange of talent and resources that lasted ten years and was only ended when the Nazis took control of UFA.¹⁰ While at Gaumont, Balcon’s memoir indicates that Isidore Ostrer pushed for even closer collaboration with UFA: “Ostrer was convinced that co-production with Germany was what we at GB should develop.”¹¹ One result of these attempts to compete with international filmmakers was the increased employment of foreign talent in an effort to raise British production standards. Balcon noted that this investment was designed to provide a home-grown legacy and he established training schemes, which meant “many of the first-class British technicians received their early instruction under the supervision of the men we had brought from the Continent.”¹²

Gaumont was far from alone in hiring European technicians, especially those who had worked in Germany, long before Hitler’s rise to power created an exodus. The European backgrounds of many within the British industry no doubt encouraged them to look abroad for talent, but these moves were primarily motivated by a desire to improve the technical quality of British films. The most prominent émigré filmmaker was Alexander Korda.¹³ He had fled his native Hungary after being briefly imprisoned by Admiral Horthy’s right-wing government, and then worked in Vienna and Berlin, as well as an unsuccessful stint in Hollywood, before arriving in Britain. Korda was an ambitious, intelligent and flamboyant personality, who collaborated with numerous foreign individuals, including both his brothers, director Zoltan and set designer Vincent, as well as scriptwriter Lajos Biro and cinematographer Georges Périnal. Given Korda’s renown for hiring émigrés, the stock industry joke became that the five Union flags flying outside his studios represented the total number of British staff on the company’s payroll.¹⁴ Yet, despite his foreign origins, much of Korda’s reputation was built upon British historical and imperial epics. *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), which he directed and produced, was Britain’s first truly international box-office triumph and won the Best Actor Oscar for its star Charles Laughton. The financial success of the film established Korda as the country’s most celebrated producer and allowed him to secure a partnership with the Prudential Assurance Company to fund his new

studio at Denham and future film projects. As such, his initial success not only set a trend for more historical films, but also encouraged a move to produce "quality" pictures that could compete with Hollywood.

In response to the influx of émigrés, the national and trade press often capitalised on a suspicion of foreigners when criticising cinema for failing to adequately capture the British way of life. *World Film News* asserted that "the preponderance of aliens in key positions in the industry... tends to produce products lacking national character."¹⁵ Graham Greene, novelist and film critic for the *Spectator* magazine, mounted repeated attacks on the pernicious alien presence debasing national film culture:

England, of course, has always been the home of the exiled; but one may at least express a wish that émigrés would set up in trades in which their ignorance of our language and our culture was less of a handicap; it would not grieve me to see Mr Alexander Korda seated before a cottage loom in an Eastern county, following an older and better tradition. The Quota Act has played into foreign hands, and as far as I know, there is nothing to prevent an English film unit being completely staffed by technicians of foreign blood. We have saved the British film industry from American competition only to surrender it to a far more alien control.¹⁶

That this alien control was Jewish is implicit within much of Greene's criticism of "the dark alien executive tipping his cigar ash behind the glass partition in Wardour Street," but on occasion it was explicit: "How the financial crisis has improved English films! They have lost their tasteless Semitic opulence and are becoming — English."¹⁷ Greene's remarks are indicative of the prevalent casual anti-Semitic attitudes of this period, which can be seen in the writing of many contemporaries.¹⁸ According to these commonplace assumptions, Jews were incapable of truly understanding British culture, acting instead as purveyors of vulgarism and ostentation that was apparently anathema to British reserve and good taste. For high-brow critics, such as Greene, who viewed cinema as an art-form, the commercialism of the industry was blamed on the Jews who were prominent in Hollywood and Wardour Street. On the far-right of the political spectrum, Jews were viewed as an inherently foreign element within British society. Arthur Lane's notorious anti-Semitic volume *The Aliens Menace* (1934) listed the Ostrer brothers, C. M. Woolf, Michael Balcon and Sidney Bernstein as aliens despite the fact they

had all been born and brought up in Britain.¹⁹ While Lane's comments represented an extreme position, the language used by far more moderate critics was frequently replete with xenophobia.

By the end of the decade, the financial crisis coupled with the retirement of Isidore Ostrer and the death of Oscar Deutsch allowed J. Arthur Rank, a Methodist flour-mill millionaire, to secure a dominant position within the British film industry. Rank, in the words of his first biographer, "simply inherited the fruits of the financial skill of Isidore Ostrer at Gaumont-British, Deutsch and Elcock at Odeon, and put the results together."²⁰ While Neal Gabler has suggested that "Jews invented Hollywood" almost singlehandedly, it would be misguided to propose an equivalent myth for the British context, as such reductionist approaches ignore the valuable contribution of non-Jewish figures.²¹ Nevertheless, it is evident that many individuals with Jewish upbringings were hugely influential in establishing the film business on both sides of the Atlantic and were to find employment in this emerging sector of the economy in vastly disproportionate numbers to their total within the general population. What remains relatively unexplored in the British context is the extent to which Jewish backgrounds affected not only the films produced by these individuals, but also wider cultural perceptions of the industry. Given the high proportion of Jewish and foreign involvement, were these movies perceived as authentically British and what does this heterogeneous formation mean for our understanding of national cinema?

"JEWS ARE NEWS":
REPRESENTING THE PAST
AND PRESENT ON SCREEN

Firstly, it must be recognized that Jewish involvement in the construction of cultural products does not necessarily alter the dominant images of Jews that others have created and which are widely accepted. Up until the twentieth-century, the British stage had predominately presented ugly, spiteful and materialistic Jews and it was these products of gentile fantasy that formed the basis of early celluloid representations. Most British films from the silent era with Jewish characters, such as *The Robbers and the Jew* (1908), *The Invaders* (1909), *A Bad Day for Levinsky* (1909) and *The Antique Vase* (1913), portrayed them in overtly negative terms. With

cinema looking to gain respectability and increase profits, producers tried to capitalise on literary and theatrical success by filming classic tales, often with actors from the legitimate stage.²² It was therefore not long before the most famous of Jewish characterisations, Shylock (*The Merchant of Venice*), Svengali (*Trilby*) and Fagin (*Oliver Twist*), were brought to the silver screen. All three figures had gained such a hold of popular consciousness that they had not only usurped in prominence the eponymous hero of their tales, but also had their names enter into everyday parlance as synonyms for usurer, villain and, most tellingly, Jew.

One of the most celebrated stage to screen transfers was *Trilby* (1914), which starred Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Svengali.²³ Silent film proved a natural medium for Tree's stylised melodramatic performance, which included exaggerated make-up, wild hair and beard, shabby costume and flaying gestures. All these contributed to an instantly recognisable exotic caricature that was widely praised. Indeed, *The Cinema* noted that the "play of his hands alone is an education, and his facial expressions are, in places, positively blood-curdling."²⁴ While Tree's physical appearance evoked the passions of his audience, the story itself also resonated within another contemporary discourse about Jews. As Michael Hammond has suggested, Svengali's exploitation of *Trilby* "shares thematic similarities with the white slave narratives, young girls caught up in the social evils abounding in the city, rendered helpless and submissive, usually by ethnic 'others.'"²⁵ In most films of the 1920s, the Jew's grotesque outward appearance acted as a signifier for inward moral corruption. Evidence that such stereotypes and symbolism were alive and well in 1930s' British cinema is provided by Jeffrey Richards' description of a single character in *The Ticket of Leave Man* (1937): "a cunning, hook-nosed, hand-wringing, 'Oi Veh' Jewish stereotype, Melter Moss, who is pawnbroker, money-lender, fence and forger."²⁶ Yet, while such images were common, a more diverse range of representations did start to appear during the decade, mostly as the result of the input of producers, writers and performers with Jewish backgrounds. However, few of these depictions were entirely positive, instead they tended to reflect ambivalent feelings, and the engrained cultural stereotypes evolved rather than disappeared.

One identifiable shift involved Jews on screen increasingly becoming characters to be laughed at rather than feared. The Jewish position within the film industry even became a subject for comic depiction. As Sue Harper has highlighted, the Crazy Gang film *Okay for Sound* (1937),

produced by Maurice Ostrer and Ted Black, was firmly located within British film culture and included a self-referential component:

It contains a German Jewish producer, Mr Goldberger, who must be interpreted as one of the Ostrers, C. M. Woolf or Alexander Korda; there is a bluff northern fancier, who even looks like J. Arthur Rank, and there is a charismatic German director muttering 'Verrückte Kerl!' ('crazy fellow'), who must signify Berthold Viertel or one of the other well-known continental directors working in Britain at the time.²⁷

Since the film was designed to be understood by a mass audience, such representations were clearly poking fun at popular perceptions of the industry. Goldberger was played by Fred Duprez, originally an American vaudeville comedian, utilising a Yiddish infused accent and a fast-talking style of delivery to convey this Jewish movie mogul who cheats and outwits his backers. Yet, this was merely one example that reflected the ubiquity of Jewish jokes during the interwar period. Even in the silent era, inter-titles could be used to stress the foreign origins of Jewish characters. *London Love* (1926) has a kind-hearted film producer, Aaron Levinsky, describing the wedding of the tale's heroine as "Much vaste with confetti and vaste of good rice but all a great publicity."²⁸ During the 1930s, ethnic humour and its exponents regularly migrated from music hall to the silver screen. So-called Hebrew comedians, such as Julian Rose, Joe Hayman and Max Bacon, relied on costume, dialect and gestures to emphasise the perceived alien qualities of their comedic Jewish personas. The stereotypes underlying much of the dialect comedian's "shtick" [gimmick] can be discerned by the fact that one of Rose's films, *Money Talks* (1933), was advertised as the "amusing predicament of a Jew trying to lose his money!"²⁹ More fool than threat, Max Bacon appeared in *Soft Lights and Sweet Music* (1936), a variety revue film, singing his popular song about the Jewish East End, "Cohen the Crooner," while Joe Hayman's perpetually confused alto-egos muddled their way through at least eight films between 1933 and 1940. An editorial in *The Times* criticising the quality of British films, suggested the Hebrew comedian had become a stock character of the quota-quickies: "One or two plays indigenous to one or other corner of the country will be filmed, but their character will probably be reconstructed to suit the personality of a popular Cockney or a Hebrew comedian. That is the way of the studio."³⁰ Indeed, Hebrew comedians were marketable mainstream entertainers in 1930s' Britain, but their broken

English, shabby clothing and materialistic desires only reinforced negative notions about of how Jews acted and what they looked like.

Turning away from the comedic, some complex and dramatic Jewish portrayals did emerge, but these were usually confined to a historic setting. *The Wandering Jew* (1933) was one such example, produced by a prominent Jewish producer, Julius Hagen.³¹ Born in Hamburg, he came to Britain as a stage actor before entering the motion picture business in distribution and then switching to production. As head of Twickenham Film Studios, Hagen capitalised on the market for quota-quickies and formed a partnership with Warner Brothers, but the slump that eventually destabilised the entire industry caused him to declare bankruptcy in 1938. Nonetheless, Hagen was at the height of his powers when *The Wandering Jew* was filmed and this prestige production was described by *Kine Weekly* as "the most ambitious and spectacular subject yet attempted at Twickenham."³² It was adapted from E. Temple Thurston's popular play about the enduring legend of the Wandering Jew, who is condemned to walk the earth until the Second Coming after he insults Christ.³³ In 1923, a silent screen version had been filmed with Matheson Lang reprising his stage role as Matathias. Lang had built a reputation based on ethnic impersonation, which he duly acknowledged: "I am chiefly known for my Jews and Chinamen!"³⁴ While Maurice Elvey directed both versions, Conrad Veidt was cast in the central role for the remake and added to his reputation in Britain for playing exotic figures.

Veidt was a star of German cinema, whose predilection for Jewish roles led directly to his exile from his native country.³⁵ Although he was not Jewish, Veidt's wife and many of his friends were, which no doubt contributed to his choice of roles at a time when he could have easily avoided such controversy. During an interview with *Picturegoer*, Veidt articulated his attraction to Matathias: "the very fact that in this man is concentrated the history of a great people who can trace their history right back to biblical times only enhances its fascination."³⁶ Indeed, the narrative of the Jew cursed to continually walk the earth, moving from country to country and forced to forge new identities resonates with the turbulent experience of the Jewish diaspora and Jewish-Christian relations. Yet, intriguingly, while most versions of the tale have the Wandering Jew living through the ages and still walking the earth at the end, the film has a significantly different finale. After protecting a Jewish couple and curing their child, Matathias is finally redeemed and allowed to die. However, it is not a peaceful death,

as he is burnt at the stake by the Spanish Inquisition because he is a Jew. It is therefore tempting to view the contemporary context as important in explaining this change, with the death of Matathias acting as a poignant demonstration of the unchristian character of those who persecute others with such a hysterical zeal.

Conrad Veidt's next film was unequivocally designed to be viewed and interpreted in light of contemporary events. Throughout the 1930s, it was common practice to submit a scenario report to the British Board Film Censors (BBFC) in order to ascertain the regulator's attitude to the proposed material prior to production.³⁷ Scripts dealing with the contemporary persecution of Jews in Germany were routinely rejected on political grounds and no overt condemnation of the Nazi regime was permitted until war was declared.³⁸ Gaumont had made repeated attempts to produce a film criticising anti-Semitism in Germany, but only succeeded in gaining the censor's approval when they adopted a historical setting. *Jew Süss* (1934) depicted the political intrigues and anti-Semitism of eighteenth-century Württemberg, and, in the words of Sue Harper, acted as "a liberal pro-Jewish apologia."³⁹ While the costumes and lavish sets provided an element of deniability that allowed the censor to turn a blind eye, the film's intention was made abundantly clear with dialogue such as: "1730 — 1830 — 1930. They will always persecute us." Yet, circumventing the BBFC's official policy was far from the end of the film's difficulties.⁴⁰

To adapt Lion Feuchtwanger's novel, Balcon selected a team of writers he believed would bring their own valuable and different perspective on the story: "Dorothy Farnum, a well-known American screen-adaptor; A. R. Rawlinson, a typical Englishman who could bring the story the English viewpoint; and Heinrich Fraenkel, a German scenarist who was responsible for the German-Jewish detail" and the historical research was partly conducted by "Mr. Honig, the Jewish and Hebrew expert."⁴¹ Given such attention to detail, it is not surprising that the film was reported to have cost between £100,000 and £125,000, which at the time was "considerably more than has ever been spent on a British picture."⁴² Hinting at the fact that this was a project with personal significance rather than economic motivations, Balcon revealed that the unprecedented expenditure was approved "owing to the intervention of Isidore Ostrer."⁴³ When *Jew Süss* was to be released in America, under the alternative title *Power*, Balcon had to counter concerns from the Jewish community in New York that the film might prove offensive. He managed to avert a boycott by arranging a special screening

for Albert Einstein and receiving his personal endorsement.⁴⁴ Neither was *Jew Süss* free from criticism in Britain. Rabbi Samuel Daiches felt the film was "bound to create anti-Jewish feeling . . . at a time like the present." In his reply, Balcon highlighted the scene in which Paul Graetz recites the sacred verse "Shma Isroel" (Hear, O Israel) as "a heartfelt declaration of faith from a man who really meant it and who is moreover a refugee from Germany, and as such really able to appreciate the theme of religious intolerance and persecution."⁴⁵ In this moment, the suffering of character and actor are conflated as an appeal for tolerance.

At the box-office, *Jew Süss* was the fifth most popular film in Britain during 1934, while the top grossing release was an American production with another central Jewish theme, *The House of Rothschild*.⁴⁶ The reaction of the British press was rather mixed. The reviewer for *The Times* was not alone in finding the film rather slow going, but did praise the quality of the acting and, in particular, Veidt's performance was described as "invariably magnificent, a mask of cynicism in the grandest possible manner which slowly changes to an even more imposing, and for once genuinely imposing, expression of agony."⁴⁷ While arguing that the story was far more complex than simply a plea for religious toleration, the review in *The Era* acknowledged that "Jews are news" and therefore filmgoers will "interpret this film in light of German events."⁴⁸ The same theme was given a different slant by C. A. Lejeune, the film critic in *The Observer*, who wrote:

Presumably, the picture of "Jew Süss" must be regarded as a plea for sympathy with an oppressed people, but even if you discount the fact that most of the Jews in this picture are just what the less tolerant Gentiles have always imagined them to be, you may feel, as I do, that "The House of Rothschild" has already argued the case against pogroms reasonably well. With all the sympathy in the world for the oppressed Jew, I fancy that there are other problems worthy of being tackled at some expense by our native film industry.⁴⁹

To some extent the character of Süss was portrayed as the stereotypical unscrupulous Jew, wielding political power to his own advantage, which is precisely why the tale could be so easily reinterpreted in the infamous Nazi version, *Jud Süß* (1940). As Omer Bartov has noted, Feuchtwanger's original story contains "all the crucial ingredients of modern antisemitic phobias and demonology."⁵⁰ However, despite the moral ambiguity inherent within the narrative, Veidt's character is redeemed by his devotion to his

fellow Jews in confronting the persecution of an anti-Semitic state. If the connotations of supposed Jewish machinations were hard to dissociate from the ethnic pride of Süß, it was a problem likewise facing Jews in the real world during these years.

Although *Jew Süß* was the most overt anti-Nazi film produced before the start of the war, other films from the decade also conveyed an underlying message about events on the continent and the threat posed by German aggression. According to James C. Robertson, Victor Saville's espionage thrillers of the 1930s carried messages "constantly inveighing against the dangers of militant German nationalism arising from strident Nazism."⁵¹ This did not go unnoticed by the German Embassy, who made an official complaint to Balcon about Saville's *I Was a Spy* (1933).⁵² Two Austrian émigrés, the producer Max Schach and the director Karl Grune, were responsible for *Abdul the Damned* (1934) and the press recognised the parallels between the despotic Sultan and events on the continent.⁵³ Korda produced *Things to Come* (1936), "a film very much concerned with refugees and the international regulation of brutal, repressive regimes."⁵⁴ Saville's *Storm in a Teacup* (1937) also provided a satire on authoritarian government with the dictatorial provost greeting his supporters with a Nazi salute. Such scenes were not exactly subtle, but the lack of explicit criticism meant they were passed by the censor.

Utilising a historical analogy, *Fire Over England* (1937), produced by Eric Pommer, the former head of production at UFA, portrayed Britain under threat from a despotic continental power and the country's ultimate victory against the Spanish Armada. When the scene from *Fire Over England* depicting the famous Tilbury speech was incorporated into Korda's wartime documentary about the RAF, *The Lion Has Wings* (1939), the correlation between old and new foes was made even more overt. Another of Korda's films, *Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1937), directed by two more exiles Hans Schwartz and Emeric Pressburger, was devised with a similar political inference. The film's writing team, Adrian Brunel, Arthur Wimperis and Lajos Biró, set out with the intention to create "a story of Robespierre and the Terror during the French Revolution which would remind audiences of Hitler and the Nazis."⁵⁵ Once again, after the outbreak of hostilities, these parallels were explicitly drummed home when Leslie Howard transported his iconic hero to Nazi Germany to save eminent Jews from the Gestapo in *Pimpernel Smith* (1941). The time for movies with an overtly propagandist message had finally arrived, but the film industry's war record reveals only

one British offering, *Mr. Emmanuel* (1944), which directly tackled anti-Semitism within Nazi Germany, as Jewish representation was relegated to the margins of the national war narrative.⁵⁶

While this survey only covers a fraction of the output from British studios during the decade, the pattern that emerges from these prominent examples is two-fold. Firstly, the influence of Jewish producers did not necessarily lead to more authentic portrayals of their co-religionists. Jewish representation on screen began to slowly alter, but such depictions were frequently ambivalent and remained tied to established performance styles. Rather than an evil miser, more often than not the Jewish immigrant, peddler or manager was presented as harmless fodder for knockabout comedy. Although this trend signified a softening of the image, laughter can reveal much about the neuroses of a society and the underlying themes were still highly derogatory.

However, a couple of dramatic interpretations did allow for more sympathetic portraits to materialise and, in Sue Harper's assessment, both *The Wandering Jew* and *Jew Süss* constructed "an image of Judaism which was a marked innovation, and an advance on contemporary literary representations."⁵⁷ Secondly, although overt criticism of the German government and contemporary events within the country was strictly prohibited, films became progressively more anti-Fascist throughout the decade. Even though criticisms were cloaked in historical settings and costumes, the parallels drawn between fictionalised despots and the methods of the Nazis were not lost on the press and such messages challenged British indifference to continental affairs. In both cases, despite the mixed results, the agency of Jewish producers, directors and writers cannot be ignored, as they featured prominently in the collaborative processes that brought these varied depictions to the screen.

"BRITISCH FILMS":

FOREIGN FILMMAKERS AND NATIONAL CULTURE

Away from the silver screen, the public debate surrounding cinema reflected anxieties about the power of the new medium to influence and reflect its audience. Some commentators railed against Jewish producers for debasing public morality, while others were concerned that foreigners were undermining the purity of national culture. One of the most virulent

attacks came from a publication, *The Devil's Camera* (1932), which made its intentions clear from its opening dedication "to the ultimate sanity of the white races."⁵⁸ The authors, self-appointed moral guardians of what they perceived to be the Christian values of Britain's indigenous culture, put forth an argument that motion pictures were pandering to the worst instincts within human nature and the whole industry was being exploited by Jewish profiteers and sexual predators:

This book is not an indiscriminate and irresponsible attack on cinematography as such. We object not to the film camera but to the prostitution of it by sex-mad and cynical financiers... Most of the actors and actresses seem ready to go to any length in nakedness and decadence to earn the salaries doled out to them by the little group of mainly Jewish promoters who control the greater part of what is now one of the most skilfully organized industries in the world.⁵⁹

The critique of commercial cinema as too violent, vulgar and salacious was widespread, as was the acknowledgement of Jewish participation. For instance, the *Jewish World* noted the "decadent and immoral nature" of so many films and argued that the large number of Jews involved in these "undesirable entertainments... bring grave discredit on our people by pandering to all that is vile for the sake of the money they can make."⁶⁰ As is often the case, the public discourse was polarised between those looking from the outside and those inside the business. In 1935, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported the views of Mr A. S. Moss, joint managing director of ABPC, who countered the charge of cinema's indecency by suggesting Jews "exercised a distinctly moral influence both on the production and distribution sides of the business."⁶¹ Nevertheless, misgivings continued to be raised. As the producer Walter C. Mycroft noted in his memoir, Jewish prominence in the film industry only encouraged the fantasies of those who believed in "a Jewish Mystery, of suave, secret, sallow men who move behind the scenes in high places, and exert strange power."⁶² As such, it is not surprising that the increasing number of refugees, most of whom were Jewish, finding employment in the British film industry during the 1930s provoked ever more resentment.

The arrival of refugees was met with repeated protests that these foreigners were going to take away jobs from British workers. Korda and Balcon were both known for employing émigrés and, in 1937, tensions escalated when financial difficulties for the production sector resulted

in unprecedented unemployment within the industry. While British film production had always been a precarious business, the huge losses accrued in the 1930s were the product of over-ambition after initial successes, most notably Korda's *Private Life of Henry VIII*.⁶³ Ever more expensive productions were mounted, increasingly financed with advances supplied from banks and insurance companies. Unable to make back such investment at home, these films were dependent on breaking into the fiercely competitive American market, which was rarely achieved. When the bubble finally burst, blame fell on foreign producers such as Korda and Schach, who had utilised these methods to fund their movies, but they were far from alone. British producers had also employed the same tactics, to say nothing of the role of financial institutions which had ploughed their money into such ventures seemingly blinded to the risks because of the potential rewards. Yet, the end result of the crisis was increased hostility towards the foreign presence and, more generally, the power that Jews exercised within the film business.

In the same year as film finance imploded, the Moyne Committee was conducting consultations to draft a new Film Act. The resulting legislation was placed on the statute books in 1938, but its impact was largely nullified due to the subsequent outbreak of war. Nevertheless, the debate that took place provides several insights. During the consultation period, the British Association of Film Directors (BAFD) was actively lobbying the Moyne Committee and a private briefing document produced by the union argued that the employment of foreigners was being favoured within the industry and outlined the following accusations:

BRITISH MONEY WASTED BY FOREIGNERS. With a few notable exceptions, most of the foreign production promoters over here have squandered British money on unworthy and unprofitable pictures, thereby spoiling the money market for reputable British production firms.

FAILURE OF FOREIGN DIRECTORS. Although foreign directors have generally been allotted more money than British directors, they have usually exceeded their budgets and their pictures have not been so profitable or so popular as those directed by Englishmen.

TAKING OUR MONEY ABROAD. Imported foreign directors receive fees far in excess of those paid to Englishmen and then most of them take their money with them or send it abroad.

BUILDING UP A BRITISH INDUSTRY. Naturally foreigners are not anxious to see a vigorous native film industry in this country. Quite the reverse. The new Act will not help us.

“ENEMY PROPAGANDA.” Certain foreign governments are fiercely attacking Great Britain in the press of the world, by radio and films. If we hand over our film production industry to foreign control, this medium of defence will be closed to us. During the war we were conducting direct and indirect film propaganda in 53 different countries — and now we propose to “disarm” ourselves.

OUR LANGUAGE. The language and enunciation of not only the younger generation is being influenced by what they hear on our screens. Even in “British” films, foreign directors misunderstand and misdirect our language.⁶⁴

While high unemployment among British directors, writers and technicians was the root cause of the union’s disquiet, the arguments for improving this situation were often couched in terms of promoting national culture. Another BAFD document repeated the previously cited claims against foreign directors, but it also adopted a far more patriotic argument:

What we want to see is an Act that will legislate for films that are 100 per cent British; which will begin by stipulating that everyone concerned in the Making of British films is a British subject. That is what the industry wants. That is what the public expects. That is the only basis of quota which any self-respecting British industry can accept. If we feel that we are British, let our films say what we feel... If British Films are to be the mirror of our age and of our people, they must be made by our people, for our people.⁶⁵

These sentiments were not only expressed behind closed doors, they were advocated with equal vehemence in the press. A front-page editorial in *The Era*, entitled “Why the Films Bill is a Betrayal of Britain,” declared that current legislation was “designed to promote the making of foreign films in Britain — what this newspaper has called ‘British’ films” and, as such, constituted “a betrayal of public interest and policy.”⁶⁶ Industry figures, such as Oscar Deutsch, tried to reassure the public regarding the underlying problem of job security. He publicly announced that “while I have done everything in my power to assist exiled German Jews, there has never been any question of displacing British labour,” since the refugees had been recruited for “the purpose of training them for work in other countries.”⁶⁷

Such avoidance tactics were required in a climate where positive arguments about the contribution of these immigrants and the skills they brought to the country were unlikely to have garnered much support. As with the wider debate on refugees, a restrictive view of immigration was dominant. While Britain’s benevolence in aiding helpless victims of persecution might be championed, the potential benefits of immigration were usually ignored. In 1939, *Kine Weekly* adopted a comedic approach to its “annual awards” in order to repeat the charge that the highest paid and key creative positions were reserved solely for foreigners:

Best Director of a British Film: Leopold Kryshic Stockolevitch

Best Script of a British Film: Hiram Z. Wimplepole

Best Photography of a British Film: Zchshwwstry Owyowschekkow

Best Bit of Carpeting in a British Film: Bill Smithers Esq.⁶⁸

Resentment over employment opportunities lay at the heart of many of these attacks, but the rhetoric often came laced with the language of anti-Semitic discourse. It cannot be denied that émigrés took jobs away from British workers, but the debate was far larger in scope. It was a reflection of a wider political and cultural phenomenon, a discourse about British values and how these are expressed on screen. To its detractors, cinema was a manifestation of a decadent society, cultural malaise and national decline, and the blame often came to rest on an alien presence. Underpinning these arguments were the notion that Jewish immigrants and even Jews born in the country, constructed in public consciousness as rootless cosmopolitans, could not accurately reflect British hopes and desires. As such, the native film industry was widely perceived as being undermined and diluted by an alien invasion.

“MORE BRITISH THAN THE BRITISH”:

ALEXANDER KORDA AND THE NATIONAL FILM

Opening its consultation process, in November 1936, the Moyne Committee reported that films were a vital means of “presenting national ideas and customs to the world.”⁶⁹ As has been demonstrated, the influx of émigrés was strongly attacked by certain social commentators on the grounds of the outsider’s inability to appreciate and therefore contribute to the dissemination of national culture. However, this line of attack ignored the

fact that several foreign filmmakers, most notably Alexander Korda, became key promulgators of British values.

Since Korda was the most successful émigré producer, he naturally became the focus of much adverse comment. Yet, when it came to his films, rather than his finances or hiring policy, Korda's patriotic credentials were rarely in any doubt. Although he was endeavouring to produce a product that would appeal to an international audience, he believed the best way to achieve this was to make films rooted in manifestly national subjects. As Korda stated during an interview with *Cinema Quarterly*, "it is because *The Private Life of Henry VIII* is English to the backbone I feel it will appeal and succeed abroad."⁷⁰ Since this film did more than any other to put British film making on the international map, many critics were happy to embrace his view of the film, in the words of *Kinematograph Weekly*, as "a masterly British achievement."⁷¹ Likewise, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934) was produced by a multinational crew, but the *Sunday Times* was proud to declare that "in every respect it constitutes a triumph for the British film world."⁷² The protagonist, Sir Percy Blakeney, was the personification of idealised English aristocracy, a character who relies on guile and humour rather than resorting to anything as unsavoury as violence. Adapted from the Hungarian Baroness Orczy's popular tale, the film version cemented the reputation of Leslie Howard, the son of Hungarian and Jewish parents, as the classic English gentleman. When Howard was killed during the war, the *Manchester Guardian* described "a frank, *intensely English* quality in Howard's voice, face and bearing."⁷³ Despite the suspicions of certain social commentators, not only did Jews and foreigners within the film industry embrace traditional British values but they often did so with a greater zeal than most of those whom reactionary writers viewed as the indigenous population.

Continuing the trend was another Jewish Hungarian who worked for Korda during the 1930s, Emeric Pressburger. He had been a screenwriter at UFA before arriving in Britain and securing a job with Korda's London Films, where even the company's name resonated with patriotic sentiment. Pressburger struck up a formidable partnership with Michael Powell and the films they went on to produce together are among the most celebrated celluloid evocations of national character. While Pressburger's scripts included "good Germans" and explored the difficulties of moving to a foreign land, both themes are prominent in *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), his depictions of Britain struck an enduring chord with critics and audiences alike. For instance, as Raymond Durnat has remarked, Powell

and Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) might well be the "quintessential Anglican film . . . co-auteured, very appropriately, by a Jewish Hungarian."⁷⁴ Cristopher Challis recalled Pressburger describing the deep affection he felt for his adopted homeland: "You know, Chris, I am more English than you. You were born here, but I *chose* to become English."⁷⁵ The tendency for émigrés to explore overtly British subjects on screen was at least partly explained by Korda's assessment of his own success: "An outsider often makes the best job of a national film. He is not cumbered with excessively detailed knowledge and associations. He gets a fresh slant on things."⁷⁶ Indeed, Korda's treatment of historical topics was far from reverential, he appreciated that the British were happy to laugh at themselves as much as at other national caricatures, and readily utilised familiar stereotypes.

Korda was equally lauded for his films about empire, such as *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* (1938) and *The Four Feathers* (1939), which presented a romantic vision of colonial rule. The recurring themes of these films were of bravery, sacrifice and the civilising influence of British rule, which indicated the extent to which Korda was "a confirmed Anglophile who saw the Empire builders as the embodiment of all the most noble traits in the English character and spirit."⁷⁷ Yet, a financial motive also existed, what Jeffrey Richards has termed "patriotism with profit."⁷⁸ While the jingoistic aspect of the pictures appealed to the domestic market, the opportunities for action and adventure attracted an international audience. The business rationale was evident from Hollywood's decision to produce its own colonial epics such as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and *Gunga Din* (1939). Gaumont also followed suit and produced *Rhodes of Africa* (1936), directed by Berthold Viertel, a celebration of Cecil Rhodes' empire building in South Africa. By tapping into the commercial potential of empire, Korda was following in the footsteps of the impresario Imre Kiralfy, who had been born in Budapest but became Britain's premier exhibition organiser through the creation of imperial themed spectacles.⁷⁹ For exiles, such as Korda, who had attuned their perceptions and personas to British sensibilities, the films they created became an extension of this same process. The famous Hollywood writer and Jewish activist Ben Hecht recalled how complete this reinvention had become when he met Korda:

the talk reached the topic of Jewish troubles then beginning to brew in Palestine, Sir Alexander Korda, born a Jew in Hungary, declared in a Jewish-Hungarian accent, "If the Jews make any trouble for the English in Palestine, we will annihilate them!"⁸⁰

If these words signalled Korda's ambivalence, even contempt, for his Jewish background, they also reflected his investment in an image of the British Empire that he helped to mythologize. Korda was determined to become part of the establishment and eventually secured this status by taking up British citizenship, making friends with prominent members of the Conservative Party, including Winston Churchill, and becoming the first film producer to be knighted, due to services to the war effort.⁸¹ After his experiences in Hungary, Korda realised that his Jewish heritage could be a significant hindrance and coming to Britain allowed him to mask this to some extent by his foreignness. Alex's nephew, Michael Korda, remembered that the brothers looked to downplay their Jewish origins: "They always described themselves as Hungarians, which was sufficiently exotic to forestall all questions."⁸² As such, Korda's alien origins were always to the fore, but he achieved acceptance through producing quintessentially British films and, in the national consciousness, he was viewed as "a Hungarian who became more British than the British."⁸³ Nevertheless, by Korda's own admission, it was his status as an outsider that provided insights into what made British culture distinct and underpinned his success as a national filmmaker.

In summary, far from transforming Jewish representation or attempting to reflect national diversity on screen, the involvement of Jewish and émigré producers in the 1930s' British film industry predominantly created consensual cultural products. Yet, for those critics who wanted an "authentic" national cinema, one that drew upon tradition, heritage and the myth of a "pure" indigenous culture, their input was an anathema. Indeed, the success of Korda, Balcon, Pressburger and others actually demonstrated the extent to which national identity was fluid, culturally constructed and constantly being negotiated. Moreover, immigrant arrivals were in a unique position to appreciate what differentiated their adoptive nation from others, or at least the ways in which the British wished to perceive themselves as different, since the process of integration required an understanding of what one was attempting to merge into. Whether or not it was a reaction to xenophobic and anti-Semitic remarks directed at them, émigré and second-generation producers often projected an idealised image of Britain as benevolent imperial master and fair-play loving democracy. As such, they performed a decisive role in shaping the discourse on national identity. Detractors may have highlighted the foreign origins of these filmmakers as their greatest weakness in understanding the British psyche, but this outsider perspective could actually prove their most vital asset.

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NOTES

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- ⁷⁶ Cited in Michael Korda, *Charmed Lives: A Family Romance* (London: Allen Lane, 1980), 101-2.
- ⁷⁷ Kulik, *Alexander Korda*, 135.
- ⁷⁸ See Jeffrey Richards, "Patriotism with Profit: British Imperial Cinema in the 1930s," in *British Cinema History*, edited by James Curran and Vincent Porter (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), 245-56.
- ⁷⁹ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: the Exhibition Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 90-3; Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain, 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 178-9.
- ⁸⁰ Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century* (New York: Primus, 1955), 497.
- ⁸¹ For details of Korda's involvement with the British Secret Service, see William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War 1939-45* (London: Sphere, 1977), 230, 369; Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-44* (London: Brassey's, 1998), 67-8; and Robert Calder, *Beware the British Serpent: The Role of Writers in British Propaganda in the United States, 1939-45* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 242, 247.
- ⁸² Korda, *Charmed Lives*, 34.
- ⁸³ *Ibid*, 92.

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