

**REPRESENTATIONS OF JEWS AND  
JEWISHNESS IN ENGLISH PAINTING  
1887-1914**

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by

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# Representations of Jews and Jewishness in English Painting 1887-1914

by Peter Gross, University of Leeds

## **Abstract**

(abstract by Supervisor Dr Eva Frojmovic, Centre for Jewish Studies)

This thesis concerns itself with pictorial representations of Jewish subjects in the period between the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition on 1887 and the Twentieth Century Art Exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1914, on the eve of the First World War. It is organised in two parts. Its beginning and end, so the introductory first chapter argues, can be glimpsed in Barraud's celebratory painting of Lord Lionel Rothschild being sworn into parliament (painted 1872, 25 years after the event) and the alienated Jewish subjects of the East End hauntingly captured by Mark Gertler in the years immediately preceding World War I.

The first part is devoted to the analysis of what the author identifies as an Anglo-Jewish artistic discourse. Its defining characteristics emerge, so the author argues, in the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition held in honour of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee at the Albert Hall in 1887. These characteristics include a deliberate attempt to visualise the Jewish community as a well-integrated part of middle / upper-class English society, sharing with the latter a past, a present and a future. This present and future include also the civilising mission of empire. By contrast, the immigrant East End of London is emphatically not part of this discourse. After a detailed reading of the Exhibition, two case studies are presented in this part of the thesis: the painters Solomon J. Solomon and John Singer Sargent, the former being an observant yet acculturated London Jew and the latter being a non-Jewish American painter then resident in London. Their works discussed here span the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter on Solomon J. Solomon is presented with a focus on a number of paintings that can be seen to thematise an Anglo-Jewish discourse. Among these are single and group portraits that show Jewish sitters as

successful members of English society. Especially noteworthy are “mixed” groups that show Jewish and Gentile sitters together in a semi-neutral space of middle and upper-class sociability and civic ritual. Solomon’s monumentally sized Allegory of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament, while offering an ostensibly harmonising vision, is perhaps Solomon’s more daring and problematic work, since it re-inscribes the supersession of Judaism by Christianity.

The chapter on Sargent’s portraits of Jewish sitters revisits the thesis that Sargent’s images encode anti-Semitic stereotypes. The author proposes to read these paintings from the point of view of their contemporary reception. The documents adduced are interpreted to show that while some of Sargent’s paintings did sometimes play to deeply embedded anti-Semitic stereotypes among his critics, they were just as often openly admired as masterpieces of character depiction. Thus emerges a style of heightened characterisation that could stop short of caricature in some cases, but that could also capture qualities that the painter admired in sitters some of whom, such as the Wertheimers, he considered friends.

The second part of the thesis is titled *An Offer of Integration*. In parallel to the first part, it begins with a detailed reading of an exhibition, the Exhibition of Jewish Arts and Antiquities held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1906. The author argues that this show, with its significant location now in the heart of the East End, represented an offer of integration towards the immigrant communities of the East End. At the same time, it could be seen as a response to the Aliens Act of 1905 which brought immigration from Eastern Europe largely to an end. The author argues that the show constituted a part of an active programme of, as the author names it, *Anglification*: a cultural and educational project aimed at transforming immigrants into Englishmen (and –women). In relation to this programme, the author places three chapters on three modernist painters who painted scenes in the East End in the first and second decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: William Rothenstein, Alfred Wolmark and Mark Gertler.

Rothenstein “discovered” the “aliens” of the East End in ca. 1905 and produced several paintings of religious subjects over the next two years, culminating in *Carrying the Law*. The author posits that Rothenstein, an acculturated Jewish man of German-Jewish background from Bradford, painted scenes of Jewish prayer and study in a

broadly Rembrandtesque, late impressionist mode and sought to foreground their spiritual depth and nobility, rejecting the picturesque and anecdotal genre established in more conservative painters such as Pilichowski. Especially in Jews mourning in synagogue, almost all narrative detail (synagogue furniture, scrolls, books) have been eliminated and the painting relies for its effect entirely on the antique effect of the full-length prayershaws (typical of Eastern European Jews – Anglo-Jews preferred the scarf shaped small prayershaws) on the interiority of the praying men. The emphasis on interiority and spirituality, and the exploitation of the archaic black-and white aesthetic of the full-length prayershawl, was to set a precedent for a number of modernist painters engaging with Jewish subjects, such as Jacob Kramer. By contrast with Rothenstein, so the author argues, Alfred Wolmark took a different position towards his “Jewish paintings”. Again, this represents a relatively short phase in his oeuvre, preceding his colourist phase. In *The Last Days of Rabbi Ben Ezra* (1903), Wolmark undertook to translate Robert Browning’s well-known poem into the artistic idiom of a Rembrandtesque Eastern European Jewry.

As a conclusion, the epilogue revisits the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition to trace how enduring the Anglo-Jewish discourse was.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS OF VOL. 1

Abstract .....	ii
List of Figures .....	vi
Prologue: A place of memory.....	1
Part I: An Anglo-Jewish Discourse .....	7
Chapter 1: Introduction: Looking back to the present; looking forward to the past .....	8
Chapter 2: Defining an Anglo-Jewish Discourse: The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 .....	53
Chapter 3: The Importance of Being Solomon .....	96
Chapter 4: The Dangerous Mr Sargent.....	142
Part II: An Offer of Integration.....	215
Chapter 5: The Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906: An Anglo-Jewish U-turn.....	216
Chapter 6: The Lachrymose Mr Rothenstein .....	261
Chapter 7: Alfred Wolmark, the Painter of the Ghetto .....	319
Appendix 1: Biographical Glossary .....	363
Appendix 2: Pictorial References .....	368
Appendix 3: Population statistics for Chapter 5 .....	375
Bibliography.....	376

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Solomon J. Solomon, *Laus Deo*, Oil on canvas, c1899, 236.5 x 173 cm, Private collection
2. Solomon J Solomon, *Your Health*, Oil on canvas, 1893, 240 x 142.5 cm, location unknown
3. Solomon J Solomon, *A Dinner Given by Sir H. Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart*, Oil on canvas, No date, 71.1 x 102.9 cm, Wellcome Foundation, London
4. Solomon J Solomon, *Mr Ernest Hart*, Oil on board, No date, 35 x 26 cm, Wellcome Foundation, London
5. Solomon J Solomon, *On the Threshold of the City, 22 June 1897*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 236 x 172 cm, Location unknown
6. Solomon J Solomon, *High Tea in the Sukkah*, Ink, graphite and gouache on paper, 1906, 39.6 x 29.2 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York
7. Solomon J Solomon, *The Commons Petitioning Queen Elizabeth to Marry*, Canvas on plaster, 1911, 442 x 249 cm, Houses of Parliament, London
8. Solomon J Solomon, *An Allegory*, Oil on canvas, 1904, 269 x 150, Harris Museum & Gallery, Preston
9. Solomon J Solomon, *Sir George Faudel Phillips*, Oil on canvas, 1897, 145.0 x 105.5 cm, Private collection
10. John Singer Sargent, *Lady Faudel Phillips*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 144.8 x 94 cm, Private Collection
11. Max Beerbohm, *Tite Street*, drawing, 1908, Private collection
12. John Singer Sargent, *Synagogue*, Oil on canvas, Installed 1919, 164 cms wide, Boston Public Library
13. John Singer Sargent, *Lord Ribblesdale*, Oil on canvas, 1902, 254.2 x 148.6 cm, Tate Britain, London
14. John Singer Sargent, *Sir George Lewis*, Oil on Canvas, 1896, 80 x 59.6 cm, Private collection
15. John Singer Sargent, *Mrs Carl Meyer and her children*, Oil on Canvas, 1896, 201.4 x 134 cm, Private collection
16. John Singer Sargent, *Mrs Flora Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 147.5 x 95.2 cm, New Orleans Museum of Art
17. John Singer Sargent, *Mr Asher Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 147.5 x 97.8 cm, Tate Britain, London
18. John Singer Sargent, *Asher Wertheimer*, Graphite on woven paper, 1898, 24 x 15.1 cm, Fogg Museum, Harvard University Museums, Gift of Mrs Francis Ormond
19. John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Mr Asher Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1901, 190.5 x 130.8 cm, Tate Britain, London
20. Thomas Lawrence, *Daughters of Col. Thomas Cartaret Hardy*, Oil on canvas, 1801, 161 x 135 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio
21. John Singer Sargent, *Mrs Ralph Curtis*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 219.3 x 104.8 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.
22. John Singer Sargent, *Mr Alfred Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1901, 163.2 x 114.9 cm, Tate Britain, London

23. John Singer Sargent, *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand, the Children of Asher Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1902, 161 x 193.7 cm, Tate Britain, London
24. John Singer Sargent, *Mrs Flora Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1904, 163.2 x 107.9 cm, Tate Britain, London
25. John Singer Sargent, *Hylde, Almina and Conway, Children of A. Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1905, 188 x 133.4 cm, Tate Britain, London
26. John Singer Sargent, *A vele gonfle*, Oil on canvas, 1905, 163.2 x 107.9 cm, Tate Britain, London
27. John Singer Sargent, *Lady Aline Sassoon*, Oil on canvas, 1907, 161.3 x 105.4 cm, Private collection
28. John Singer Sargent, *Almina Wertheimer*, Oil on canvas, 1908, 134 x 101 cm, Tate Britain, London
29. John Singer Sargent, *Dr Pozzi at Home*, Oil on canvas, 1881, 202.9 x 102.2 cm, The Armand Hammer Museum UCLA, Los Angeles.
30. William Rothenstein, *In the Spitalfields Synagogue*, Oil on canvas, 1904, 76.2 x 96.5 cm, Hugh Lane Municipal Museum of Art, Dublin
31. William Rothenstein, *An Exposition of the Talmud*, Oil on canvas, 1904, 114.8 x 145.2 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
32. William Rothenstein, *In the Corner of the Talmud School*, Oil on canvas, 1904, 89.5 x 70.5 cm, Gallery Oldham
33. William Rothenstein, *Aliens at Prayer*, Oil on canvas, 1905, 127.4 x 105.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
34. William Rothenstein, *The Talmud School*, Oil on canvas, 1904/5, 83.8 x 94.9 cm, Sternberg Centre, London
35. William Rothenstein, *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, Oil on canvas, 1906, 127.5 x 115.5 cm, Tate Gallery, London
36. William Rothenstein, *Reading the Book of Esther*, Oil on canvas, 1907, 87 x 106 cm, Manchester City Art Gallery
37. William Rothenstein, *Carrying the Law*, Oil on canvas, 1908, 160 x 188 cm, Johannesburg Art Gallery
38. William Rothenstein, *Carrying the Law*, Oil on canvas, 1907, Cartwright Hall, Bradford
39. Max Beerbohm, *A Quiet Morning in the Tate Gallery*, Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 1907, 37 x 32 cm, Tate Gallery, London
40. Simeon Solomon, *Coptic Baptismal Procession*, Watercolour, Gouache & Gum Arabic, 1865, 25.9 x 42.4 cm, Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford
41. Alfred Wolmark, *Waiting for the Tenth (aka The Rabbis)*, 1900, Oil on canvas, 166 x 226 cm, Private Collection
42. Alfred Wolmark, *Reading the Talmud/The Loner*, ca. 1907, Oil on canvas, 61 x 73.7 cm, Six Trees Ltd, London
43. Alfred Wolmark, *The Last Days of Rabbi Ben Ezra*, 1903, Oil on canvas, 184.2 x 320 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York
44. Alfred Wolmark, *In the Synagogue*, dated 1897 (?), Oil on canvas, 85 x 69 cm, Ben Uri Art Gallery, London
45. Alfred Wolmark, *Young Rabbi with a Beard (aka Young Rabbi with a Book)*, 1898, Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 45.7 cm, Private Collection
46. Alfred Wolmark, *In a Synagogue*, Oil on canvas, 67cm x 88.3 cm, 1906, Private collection (Gitl and Marton Braun)
47. Alfred Wolmark, *Sabbath afternoon*, ca. 1910, Oil on Canvas, 73.6 cm x 61cm, Gitl and Marton Braun

48. Alfred Wolmark, *Succoth*, 1909, Oil on canvas, 121.9 x 121.9 cms, Private collection



## Prologue - A Place of Memory

What characterizes a member of a minority group is that he is forced to see himself as both exceptional and insignificant, marvellous and awful, good and evil  
 What characterizes the sensation of being a member of a minority group is that one's emotions are forever locked in chains of ambivalence – the expression of an emotion forever releasing its opposite...

Norman Mailer, *Cannibals and Christians*, 1966

“The end is where we start from.”  
 T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*

All cemeteries are, by their very nature, places of memory - both on the personal, individual level and for the communities they serve. The country churchyard, whose gravestones tell the history of “ the Village and the Great House”, is not just the stuff of novels. The churchyard and its records are often the most complete chronicle of the history of a particular small area. Larger urban cemeteries may contain even richer historical legacies, but they are often more disparate, less focussed and may rather tell fragments of many different histories.

The United Synagogue Cemetery, opened in Willesden in 1873, provides a wealth of information about London's Jewish community, as it moved from the City and the East End in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and developed over the next 100 years.

It also became a very surprising starting point for me as it changed from not simply a place of personal memory to one that provides an almost complete

backdrop to the time and place of this study. My grandfathers died within a week of each other in 1943 and both were buried in Willesden, where, over the years, they have been joined by other members of my family. Visiting this particular cemetery has thus been a part of my life for as long as I can remember.

My maternal grandparents were typical of the immigrant waves from Russia that flooded into London's East End in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Family myth would have it, that my grandfather's first name, Kiva, may have had more to do with Kiev, his claimed place of origin, and his inability on arrival to speak English to the immigration authorities than with his, possibly adopted, Hebrew name "Akkiba" – an explanation that was certainly repeated in different forms in many Jewish families, whose forebears arrived at this time.<sup>1</sup> My paternal grandparents belonged to an earlier wave of immigration from Germany. My great grandparents were born into the then tiny Jewish community of Leeds. I always knew that my Grandfather had been involved in a "photograph to painting" business. But it was not until reviewing the catalogue of the *Jacob Kramer Reassessed* exhibition, held at the Ben Uri Gallery in 1984, that I discovered he had employed Kramer's father, when the latter arrived in Leeds in 1900.

To these, personally important, but in reality insignificant, players in the story of the Jewish population, research at Willesden added many of the key figures in the development of the history of Anglo-Jewry.

Lionel de Rothschild, the first Jew to serve as an MP, is buried at Willesden together with many of his contemporary family and his succeeding generations. His imposing gravestone with its Hebrew and English texts would surely have seemed very alien to his Grandfather, the founder of the dynasty, whose grave in Frankfurt, Germany, is marked by a much simpler, all Hebrew, headstone. Close by are the graves of many of the Montagus, his business rivals and contenders for leadership of the Jewish community. The Samuel family, the Cohens, the Waleys and the Waley-Cohens, Jessels, the first Jewish Master of the Rolls are all to be found here. Nathan and Herman Adler, the father and son who as Chief Rabbis dominated the religious life of Anglo Jewry for more than 60 years, and the Reverend Simeon Singer, whose version of the United Synagogue Prayer Book served the Jewish community as the standard text for almost a century, are buried in Willesden, together with Moses Angel, head master of the Jews Free School in the East End (once the largest school of any kind in the British Empire).

From the world of art and art dealing, Willesden is the final resting place both of Jacob Duveen, whose benefactions were so important to the Tate, and Asher Wertheimer, all of whose family were painted by Sargent (the pictures subsequently also being donated to the Tate). Other Sargent sitters at Willesden include Carl Mayer's family. The most interesting artistic trio in Willesden are Simeon Solomon, Solomon J. Solomon and Mark Gertler. Ironically their gravestones seem to reflect their separate destinies. Simeon, who died destitute, has a gravestone that is now broken beyond recognition. Solomon J.'s grave is

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<sup>1</sup> Just such a problem is reputed to account for the renaming of Max to Mark Gertler, one

marked with all the Edwardian pomp and respectability that reflect the man and his life. Gertler's grave is tucked away in a far corner of the cemetery marked only by a very simple stone.

What is significant about Willesden in terms of this project? An annotated list of names, even a full one rather than this very shortened version, may be of passing interest but of itself seems at first glance to tell us little.

Willesden is important because it would seem to represent the triumph of a markedly anglicised version of Judaism in the face of all of the pressures and potential schisms of the period between 1880 and 1914. The old – original – section of Willesden is almost indistinguishable from many Christian graveyards of the same period. The broken columns and covered urns so beloved of Victorian monumental masons are to be found in abundance here. If there is an absence of angels and crucifixes, there is an almost equal absence of obvious Judaica. In part this may have been a result of practical necessity. With a relatively small community to serve prior to the 1880s, Jewish monumental masons were few and it may often have been easier to employ Christian masons, who would adapt their standard models. But the examples of “English” Victorian gravestones are so frequent in this section of the cemetery that one suspects it was often a matter of fashion and deliberate choice. Hebrew lettering occasionally seemed to present a serious problem even to the most experienced carvers. There are inter-war period tombstones by Eric Gill, which illustrate this problem vividly. None of the tombstones are exclusively in Hebrew. Indeed,

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of the key artists in this study.

many of them only have a bare minimum of Hebrew with most of the text in English. This even applies to the tombstones of Singer, the Adlers, and many of the other Rabbis buried in Willesden. This is a marked contrast to Alderney Road, the first Ashkenazi cemetery established in the East End shortly after the readmission in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where almost all of the tombstones are exclusively in Hebrew and their style is much simpler.

There are other Jewish cemeteries in London. The original Sephardi cemetery was opened in Mile End Road in 1637. The Federation Synagogues, which were of special importance to part of the immigrant community at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, opened their first cemetery in Edmonton in 1890 and this site continued to receive new graves until 1937. The Reform Synagogue had its first cemetery in Balls Pond Road in 1840, which was then replaced by the Joint Synagogues Cemetery (with the Sephardis) in 1897. These sites tell other parts of the story of London's Jewish population. However, as the principal United Synagogue cemetery in London for almost one hundred years, the anglicised vision of Judaism and Jewishness reflected in Willesden is significant evidence of how the majority of the Jewish community developed.

Willesden is more like the country churchyard, to which I alluded at the outset, than like an urban cemetery. It encompasses a very large segment of the history of the whole Jewish community. It seems to demonstrate an underlying fundamental cohesiveness within that community. Whatever their business, social or leadership rivalries, Grand Dukes lie near Grand Dukes; the rich and the poor, the famous and the infamous, the devout and the lapsed, the established

immigrants of earlier generations and the East Enders, who had begun to move upwards (socially) and outwards (geographically), are all buried together in Willesden. Whatever the splits and social divides, they did not lead to a splintering of the community with the consequent establishment of many, much smaller burial places. In the latter part of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there were really only three fully functioning cemeteries of different branches of Judaism serving London at any one time. Although the grip of the Cousinhood was to weaken – dramatically – after the First World War, the vision of Anglo-Judaism that they espoused was to be a dominant strand for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is with this, as a significant element of the total social, cultural and religious background, that the pictorial representations included in this study need to be seen.

**PART I**

**AN ANGLO-JEWISH DISCOURSE**

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction:

**Looking back to the present; looking forward to the past.**

#### Aims, Hypotheses and Methodology

To see ourselves as others see us.  
R. Burns, *To a Louse*

This study investigates Visual Representation of the Jew over a sixty-year period from 1860 to just after the end of the First World War. Its aims are to assess what individual images tell us about how Jews saw themselves and how others saw them. It is hoped that we will thereby obtain a deeper comprehension of the meaning of the construct “the Jew”, as it was understood in geographic and social terms, gauge how it developed during the period under review.

Post-colonial discourse, the concept of nationhood and the consequent assimilation/ colonisation or exclusion of others and the concepts of alterity and of ambivalence are central to the analytical method I shall adopt. This study moves from the particular to the general. It examines individual representations and the conditions that surrounded their creation in order to build up an understanding of the different readings of the construct “the Jew”. It works from the bottom up rather than deconstructing more generalised views from the top down.

The main arguments underpinning this study are based on the following set of hypotheses:

During the period under review, the Jewish population of England and the practice of Judaism there were largely controlled by a dominant ideology, that of Anglo-Jewry



or Anglo-Judaism. This ideology flowed down from a close knit, inter-related group of families, who increasingly dominated Jewish affairs, claimed representation of that community throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to do so until after the First World War. (Throughout this study, I shall reserve the use of the term Anglo-Jewry to apply to this dominant group). This dominant ideology assumed that Jews could, should and would be accepted into and by English society as English. It is important to emphasise that this aim was not universal among all Jews, but was a central plank of Anglo-Jewry's policy. The key to such acceptance was believed to lay in acculturation by Jews and in the adoption of the cultural norms of English behaviour. Assimilation, in the sense of total absorption, of a complete suborning or loss of identity was not regarded by the leaders of the Jewish community as an a priori necessity for such acceptance. The host society was to accept the setting of limits by the acculturated Jewish community, which would permit them to retain "transmissible distinctiveness".<sup>1</sup> Judaism aimed to be regarded as another form of acceptable religious dissension, not a separate racial identity.

Anglo-Jewry regarded itself as having acquired the right to be an integral part of English society. As it won the battle for Jewish political emancipation in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (which only affected and was largely of any interest to the very upper levels of the Jewish community), so it sought to improve the position of the entire Jewish population. If there were still to be boundaries between Anglo-Jews and the host communities, such boundaries should be regarded in the eyes of Anglo-Jewry as permeable and flexible on both sides.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Finestein, 'Jewish emancipationists in Victorian England: self imposed limits to

Notwithstanding polarities of opinion and struggles for leadership and power within the ranks of the leaders of Anglo-Jewry, there was a broad consensus on this ideology and the methods for achieving its aims. Until the 1880s, this ideology and its practical manifestations were broadly unchallenged among English Jews. The ideology also received a significant though by no means universal measure of acceptance within the host community. Anti-Semitism was present, as a continuing strand of belief/attitude within certain parts of the English population, at this time. However it was only rarely during this period a factor of central importance in English politics. Although it may have informed the behaviour of certain segments of the host population, its appearance as significant was localised in time and place.<sup>2</sup> It did not in this period manifest itself with the long term and more deep seated pervasiveness that it achieved in Germany nor the intensity that characterised its sporadic outbursts in France.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding this hypothesis about anti-Semitism, it is also apparent that there was an underlying feeling about the “stranger” status of the Jew as “multi-faceted, contradictory, belonging and not belonging.”<sup>4</sup>

The immigrant waves of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and very early 20<sup>th</sup> century severely tested the dominance of this ideology within the Jewish community. They also created circumstances within the host community that upset the carefully constructed balance of acceptance and gave rise to outbreaks of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, I would posit that the ideology retained its dominance and that the broad measure of

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assimilation’, in Frankel and Zipperstein ed., *Assimilation and Community*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting confirmation of the change in the climate from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century emerges in Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, p. 184: discussing interpretations of Shylock, he argues that ‘Kean’s Shylock was far more in tune with a more liberal age, even though his interpretation fell well short of the “sympathetic” Shylock of Henry Irving later in the century’.

<sup>3</sup> The Dreyfus Affair in France is part of general European historical knowledge. The Marconi Affair in England is a topic for specialists.

acceptance of the position of Jews within the host community remained unaltered – despite these localised and sporadic problems. The arrival, after 1880, of a very different kind of Jew (the Eastern European immigrant), who outnumbered the native Jewish population, threatened the ability of Anglo-Jewry to retain its position of “belonging” in English society. Their efforts to anglicise the immigrants were simultaneously coupled with a distancing from them. Jews who had struggled to shake off the brand of “other” were faced with identifying within their own ranks a new “other”. This “other” not only challenged Anglo-Jewry’s comfortable perceptions of its own identity, but raised the very real possibility that the host community would come to equate all Jews with this new underclass<sup>5</sup> rather than making any distinctions between the quasi indigenous Anglo-Jews and their newly arrived co-religionists.<sup>6</sup> These immigrant Jews had to be labelled in some way as to distinguish them from the quasi-indigenous Jewish community, until they could be changed, concealed or moved on.

In terms of visual representation, which is the primary focus of this study, this line of argument in turn provides a further set of working hypotheses. I would propose that although the use of visual stereotyping remained a “shorthand” for representations of the Jew in cartoon and pastiche and in the illustration of literature, where it was in support of an author’s view, its use in academic art declined throughout the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will argue that as artists emerged from

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<sup>4</sup> Finestein, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> As H. Maccoby perceptively argues of reactions to parallel groups of Chassidim ‘They evoke rather a shuddering distaste combined with a willingness to believe evil of them. Their idiosyncratic style of dress is construed as ostentation and their separateness as hatred of mankind.’ *Pariah People*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> This was not an attitude confined to Anglo-Jewry. On the other side of the world, Australia’s established Jewish community evidenced the same reaction to their immigrant influx in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

the new generations of Jewish immigrants, they may consciously or otherwise have drawn on artistic heritages from Russia and Eastern Europe that were alien or unavailable to English artists and earlier generations of English/Jewish artists. Artists from the immigrant generation may also have drawn from a seam of specifically Jewish artistic practice that encompassed certain styles of synagogue decoration and liturgical ornamentation as well as visual representation. The encounter with modernity and avantgarde practice that occurred among some of the younger artists covered in this study in the final decade and a half of the period under review provided new ways of depicting their subjects. Thus some representations of the Jew underwent a further distancing from the conventional and/or stereotypical approaches adopted in the middle and latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### A Framework of Reference

Just as each of the images reviewed in this study was produced within a specific set of conditions, so this study as a whole requires a framework of reference within which to locate the analysis it undertakes. For explanatory purposes what immediately follows adopts an approach based on individual disciplines. However this is done in order to establish a multi-disciplinary approach on which to draw throughout this study, rather to suggest individually isolated avenues of investigation.

From a Jewish perspective, the history of the English Jewry in this period has become an arena of heated debate among contemporary historians. After the

groundbreaking early work of Lipman, views on the extent and degree of anti-Semitism in England have come almost full circle. The quasi-hagiographic work of Roth gave way to the more balanced views of historians such as Black and Endelman. These in their turn have been challenged by the writers, such as Kushner, who tend towards a far more anti-Semitic reading of events within English society. Rubinstein has presented a more recent revisionist view of this same period suggesting that some of his contemporaries are wilfully finding reds (or anti-Semites) under every bed. This spectrum of opinion provides one series of polarities within which to locate visual representation.

I have proposed that Anglo-Judaism, which might be defined as a version of “what the Rothschilds wanted”, was the dominant ideology for Judaism in England in this period. Although this was a dynamic rather than a static concept, until at least the end of the First World War it provided one “norm” for representation in cultural practice. However, Jewry in England comprised not just the official version of United Synagogue orthodoxy, but included other significant strands of belief and practice (Sephardi, Reform and Eastern European/Federation). These variants and their inherent histories had other understandings of the construct “the Jew”, which therefore influence and inform representation.

Gilman’s psychologically and physiologically based work on *The Jew’s Body* provides a wealth of material and visual examples in support of his theories of the particularity of the male Jew and how he was regarded - mainly in Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Daniel Boyarin, especially in *Unheroic Conduct*, provides a Talmud based alternative reading of Jewish sexuality. The tradition that he invokes obliges

one to consider yet another set of representative and interpretative possibilities based on “edelkayt” (delicacy/gentleness/nobleness of soul), in place of the dominating male hero, who emerges as an iconic figure in much of Western art.

The processes of assimilation and acculturation both as matters of historical opinion and also as sociological phenomena require very detailed consideration in the context of this study. In his writings on the sociological theory of assimilation, Bauman draws on experiences in England and Germany both within and after the period covered in this study. In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, he analyses the Jew as the archetype of Sartre’s *le visquieux*, “an entity ineradicably ambivalent sitting astride a barricade... blurring a boundary line vital for the construction of a particular order”.<sup>7</sup> The concept of the Jew as outsider, as “other”, which Bauman, among many others, investigates in his work is a theme which both provides locus for and can be tested by the experience of visual representation. His work is, within the terms of this study, complemented by the interpretations of historians such as Lunn and Holmes, who investigate the concepts of Englishness and of nationhood during this period. It is also complemented by the work of writers such as Hyman and Sorkin. Their detailed analyses of subsets of the Jewish community provide an invaluable affirmation that the process of assimilation was a different experience for different groups of Jews at different times. These macro and micro sociological interpretations of assimilation are yet a further series of contexts to be considered in this work, which compel one to pose questions about the absence, presence and nature of assimilation and acculturation as it is (or is not) depicted in works considered in this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 61.

This period was also one of ferment in artistic practice. The upheaval of Impressionism was rapidly followed by a plethora of other movements – Post-Impressionism, Pointillism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism and Cubism – each in their turn (and in some cases overlapping one another) challenging old verities and opening up alternative avenues. Artistic practice in England lagged behind the avant-garde of Paris, but was eventually challenged and altered by it. This history provides yet another dimension for investigation as the encounter with modernity and new modes of artistic practice provided artists with fresh ways and new sources of representation.

As with the wider general history, within general art history there is a Jewish dimension that is relevant for this study. The potential links to earlier examples of Jewish art and the possible importance of Russian art (primitive, realist and avantgarde) are factors that will be considered and utilised as part of the analytical framework. During the period from the mass emigration from Russia in the 1880s to the Russian Revolution some 40 years later major Jewish artists emerged. They worked both in Russia and in Western Europe and America and established the École Juive in Paris after the First World War. I have argued elsewhere, that there was also a proto-Jewish School in London just before that War.<sup>8</sup>

The literature on the specific topic of this study is quite scant. Much of it either pre-dates the newer historical perspectives and theoretical discussions of the past ten to fifteen years and therefore does not address some of the primary topics I have

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<sup>8</sup> *A Loss of Identity*, Unpublished MA dissertation, London 1995.

outlined earlier.<sup>9</sup> It does not focus closely on the issue of Jewishness.<sup>10</sup> It is narrowly framed and case specific and does not seek the wider perspective which is my ultimate aim.

As far as specific artists are concerned – apart from the references made above – there is little recently published work on Solomon J. Solomon or William Rothenstein and virtually nothing on either Wolmark or Kramer or on some of the minor figures such as Amszewitz and Rosenberg, whose work I will be considering.

The Geffrye Museum's 1985 Exhibition of the Solomon family and Colin Cruse's work on Simeon Solomon provide helpful background and insights into his work on specifically Jewish themes, which I shall be investigating later.<sup>11</sup>

The significance of stereotypes is of particular importance in any discussion of the representation of the Jew in this period. Felsenstein's seminal work on the period between 1680 and 1830 provides a valuable starting point from which to investigate the relevance of stereotypes in the period of this study – not just in cartoons and pastiches but as consciously or unconsciously employed models that inform the work of any artist seeking to represent the Jew.

Nochlin, Adler and Cohen have all dealt with areas that directly relate to this study. Nochlin's and Cohen's works on Alphonse Levy, however, are not concerned with England. Adler's investigation of Sargent's Wertheimer portraits is fully within

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<sup>9</sup> This is for example true of Woodeson's otherwise highly informative biography of Gertler.

<sup>10</sup> For example Richard Cork's 1987 study of David Bomberg.



the area I propose to cover. However, as my hypotheses indicate and as I shall try to demonstrate later, I feel her readings of anti-Semitism may be overplayed.

Juliet Steyn has published a number of articles relating to exhibitions at the Whitechapel that featured the work of the artists I will be considering. Her focus is, however, more on the exhibitions themselves; their reception and what they tell us about attitudes to Jews and the tensions she detects within the overall Jewish community. My focus is more artist centred and I have taken issue with her elsewhere over some of her conclusions.<sup>12</sup>

In this chapter I wish to start the study of visual representation of Jews by concentrating on an examination of two principal pictures and some allied images, which seem to illustrate polar opposites at the beginning and end of this period, but which upon examination may be more closely linked. These need however to be placed within a historical/political context, which I shall now outline.

### A Period of Change

In a progressive country change is constant.  
B. Disraeli, Edinburgh 29 Oct 1867

In 1887, as part of the Queen Victoria Golden Jubilee celebrations, an Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition was held at the Royal Albert Hall in London. As a tool in its project to be regarded part of English society or perhaps in the belief that it

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<sup>11</sup> 'Versions of the Annunciation', in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, ed. Liz Prettejohn, Manchester University Press, 1999, and *Jewish Quarterly* (Autumn 1998).

<sup>12</sup> *The Whitechapel Art Gallery* unpublished MA Essay, London 1994.

already was, Anglo-Jewry felt it appropriate to record its own membership of the English community. The exhibition, which celebrated more than 200 years of the history of Jews in England, was intended to achieve this. Item 14 in the catalogue, “Aaron, son of the Devil,” an entry from the Forest Roll of Essex of 1277, was believed to be one of the earliest images of a Jew in Public Records. The inclusion of such an item in the 1887 Exhibition is perhaps surprising. It tells us much about the confidence that the organisers and backers of the Exhibition must have felt about the position of Jews in turn of the century Victorian society. It could be included as a curious memento of the past that in no way reflected the contemporary situation; something at which the organisers believed that Jew and non Jew could look as a historical relic without feeling it had any relevance to the contemporary situation.

The period covered by this study was one of calm and equipoise followed by a subsequent time of seismic change for Jewry in England. Following its readmission in 1656, the Jewish community (at first largely composed of Sephardim) gradually increased in size - partly as a result of natural growth and partly by a process of trickling immigration from Western Europe. This immigration brought in increasing numbers of Ashkenazi Jews, who gradually came to dominate what by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a 30-40,000 strong community. At its head emerged a small group of families, whose financial success had and was increasingly to lead them to positions of power and influence within the country as a whole. Inter-marriage from early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the rise of the Cousinhood or the so-called Grand Dukes – the families, whose wealth and social standing allowed them to adopt positions as that community’s natural leaders. Although some members of this emerging hierarchy dated their arrival in England to Cromwell’s time, others, notably

for example the Rothschilds, were relative newcomers to England and English society.

The struggle for political emancipation for the Jews was one of the long running sagas of English parliamentary history of the period. It is an area of particular relevance to this study. An understanding of the basic facts and of the main strands of the argument is therefore vital to an appreciation of their importance in defining the position of Jews in England, just before the tidal wave of immigration called this apparent balance into question.

The July 30<sup>th</sup> 1847 issue of the Jewish Chronicle announced (under what for that publication at that time amounted to a banner headline). [quote missing]

**City of London Election**

**THREE LIBERAL CANDIDTES RETURNED**

...

**CITY OF LONDON ELECTION – RETURN OF BARON LIONEL DE ROTHSCHILD**

At length, principle has triumphed, and truth has worked its victory. The citizens of London, with an overwhelming voice, have declared the equal rights of all British-born subjects. No longer will conscience suffer for obeying its true dictates. No more will exclusive sectarian privileges stain the justice of this country. The last and final blow has been struck against the prejudices, against the narrow policy of the past...

Those, who are so eminently skilful in the management of their own interests, may safely be entrusted with a share in watching over the affairs of a nation that adopts them into its legislature and the election of Baron Rothschild is a great triumph of enlightened principle.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Punch*, July 1847, p. 41.

However as O'Connell, champion of the Irish and Catholic causes, was presciently to warn Goldsmid "You ought not to confide in English liberality. It is a plant not genial to British soil".<sup>14</sup> On July 26<sup>th</sup> 1858, eleven years after he had first been elected, Baron Lionel de Rothschild was finally able to take his seat without having to swear an oath on "the faith of a true Christian".

In 19<sup>th</sup> century England, nationality was based on one's place of birth. Jews born in England were by definition English. Taking a seat in the House of Commons did not therefore require any form of positive naturalisation legislation, but rather the removal of what might have been regarded as relatively minor obstacles. The House of Commons had defined itself not just as a Christian body, but as an institution based on the Church of England. However, with the passage of enabling legislation for Protestant Dissenters in 1828 and for Roman Catholics in 1829, the stage could have been set for the Jews to follow. Legislation was first presented to the Commons in 1830. For lack of Government support it failed that year. Although the Bill was passed in the Commons thirteen times in succeeding years, it was, until the Lucan solution of 1858, thrown out each time by the Lords. What started out as an almost theoretical exercise in political emancipation became a fight about political realities with the return of Rothschild in 1847 by the electors of Tower Hamlets and Salomons by those of Greenwich in 1851. What commenced with the consideration of the potential place of Jews across a wide spectrum of political roles began to look more and more like a fight for very narrowly focussed exclusion. With a typically English blend of deliberate obfuscation, cynical manipulation and partial legislation, the de facto/jure rights to municipal and mayoral positions were ceded to Jewish

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in M. C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain*, p. 123.

incumbents. The absurdity of Parliament's opposition to Jewish members was most clearly demonstrated when Salomons, still fighting for a place in the House, was elected Lord Mayor of London in 1855. The Lucan compromise, which finally permitted its resolution, consisted in allowing each Chamber to decide on its own oath process at induction.<sup>15</sup> Throughout this tortuous process there was continued and very real opposition in both Chambers. Even at the end of the battle, while accepting the Lucan compromise and passing the Bill into Law, Lord Derby (whose views on Jews may have been typical of many of his class at this time)<sup>16</sup> and their Lordships also sent back to the Commons their reasons for dissenting in respect of their own Chamber. The final legislation was theoretically time limited and it was some years before the position was fully tidied up and made a permanent feature of the political landscape. There was opposition in the Commons as well. Even when all the relevant acts had received assent and Rothschild was presented for an investiture that was a *fait accompli*, the matter went to debate and in final division of the 106 members present 37 still voted against. Hansard records that in the debate all of the dissenting members were eager to point out, as had they and their predecessors in earlier debates, that they were not motivated by opposition to Rothschild as an individual, or to the Jews as a race. Their opposition, as they all declared, was purely on the grounds that the Commons was a Christian Assembly and therefore not a place for Jews. Most of their arguments sound no more convincing now than they probably did then.

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<sup>15</sup> The weight of historical opinion would seem to indicate that Lucan's formula had little or nothing to do with breakthrough emancipatory legislation and everything to do with a face saving solution for cutting an increasingly large Gordian knot into which Parliament had tied itself.

<sup>16</sup> In a debate of 10 July 1857, Derby argued that the Jews 'are among us but not with us'. See Finestein, p. 167.

Some historians have presented the later stages of this struggle purely in terms of a power conflict between the powers of the Commons and the Lords – almost abstracted from the Jewish dimension. However this ignores the very real opposition outlined above. It does however seem reasonable to propose that the arguments over emancipation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century never created the furore that accompanied the attempted passage and subsequent repeal of the 1753 Jew Bill. Felsenstein tentatively characterised that as “the last full blown embodiment of those attitudes to the Jews that we have earlier been able to trace to the late Middle Ages”.<sup>17</sup>

The religious question was a highly complex and emotive one, encompassing as it did many different, sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary strands of argument. Judaism was for many Christians at one and the same time the religion that rejected the Messiah/killed Christ *and* the source from which Christianity derived. Maccoby argues that this inherent polarity is one of the wellsprings of anti-semitism. “Demonising ideological anti-semitism is confined to populations adhering to religions derived from Judaism”.<sup>18</sup> Judaism was not a proselytising religion<sup>19</sup> and therefore did not challenge the accepted order, but it was an exclusive religion that would not willingly let outsiders in – a reverse “otherness” from which the apparent host was excluded. Although Jewish numbers were small and in themselves not threatening, Judaism and Jews could have levelled against them charges of

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<sup>17</sup> Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, p. 187.

<sup>18</sup> Maccoby, *Pariah People*, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> ‘...proselytising was contrary to the terms of the Resettlement Agreement of 1656. They (sic the Sephardim) tried to enforce this policy among the Ashkenazim and certainly had the support of the Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Tevele Schiff, who refused to convert Lord George Gordon in 1787’. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, as quoted in Sharman Kaddish, ‘Eden in Albion’, in *Building Jerusalem*, p. 109.

ultramontanism,<sup>20</sup> which were in some ways similar to those levelled at the Catholics. The question of potentially divided loyalties and allegiances on religious and on other grounds was a critical strand in the opposition to Jews in this period. Perhaps these very conflicts exacerbated the sense of unease felt by the host community.

As noted earlier, numerically the Jews were insignificant even in London. Outside it they were all but invisible. However, the very success that had catapulted figures such as Montefiore of the earlier generation and Rothschild and Salomons to the forefront of English society made them figures not just of envy but also of fear. The Rothschilds, both in London and via their banking network throughout Europe, wielded supranational power that made them the Victorian forerunners of the largest of multi-national corporations of today – and just as hated and feared. To admit them to the House might not just consolidate a base for the few, but also lead to a flood of Jews, who, it was suspected, might follow.

Similar enmity does not appear to have been felt about the Quakers. They too had established parallel positions of eminence and leadership for themselves in industry and in joint stock banking – far more publicly visible activities than the rarefied world of international finance in which the Rothschilds and many of their more successful co-religionists moved. Perhaps it was the combination of perceived difference and real power may have been at the root of this fear and rejection of the

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‘Judaism is not and by its nature cannot be a proselytising religion’ Arthur Cohen *The House of Lords and the Jews* 1853 quoted in Finestein, p. 174.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, for example, Alderman argues in *Modern British Jewry* that, while Disraeli and Anglo-Jewry’s leaders exerted considerable and successful influence for the Jews of Bulgaria, Roumania and the Danube in the Balkan Crisis of the 1870s, it had sombre

Jews. The affirmation formula used by the Quaker, Joseph Pease, the first of his religion to be admitted to the House in 1833, was not allowed to serve as a precedent in 1857 for the Jews. *Strange Bedfellows* - a well-known Punch cartoon (27 June 1857) commenting on this situation - is remarkable in stereotyping Rothschild, while depicting Pease, the Quaker, in a neutral light. Rothschild in this cartoon has the flashy clothes, the swarthy complexion and the hooked nose of the stereotypical Jew. He is wearing three hats – an allusion to the trade of the clothes peddler.<sup>21</sup> Although satirical work often resorts to these stereotype conventions, their use and the acceptance of it by all sides are very revealing indicators of the climate of the day.

It is important to note that there was by no means unanimity within the Jewish community itself either on the tactics for gaining emancipation or indeed on the desirability of the very goal itself. “How would they satisfy both themselves and the gentile majority in reconciling expectations of due conformity with the retention of dignified distinctiveness”.<sup>22</sup> Hard line religious leaders such as Crooll fought for separatism. “The Jews as a separate nation must ever be wary of sinking roots among their hosts in the lands of the Galuth”.<sup>23</sup> This, of course, played into the hands of the Christian anti-emancipationists. Secular leaders, for example, Goldsmid argued that their possession of land conferred rights and privileges, but that these privileges were being denied to the Jews. Although emancipation had vital long-term implications for Jews in England, it may be argued that at the time it was an issue of little interest

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overtones with the emergence of anti Jewish sentiment and the foregrounding of Disraeli’s ethnic origins.

<sup>21</sup> Although this trade was very closely linked with Jews in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was declining in importance as Jewish clothes peddlers became clothes manufacturers. But stereotyping seems not to have time to be accurate.

<sup>22</sup> M. C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain*, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.



to any but the upper echelons.<sup>24</sup> Shmueli has proposed a mindset which he refers to as Emancipationist Culture, that is “a Jewish culture whose material and spiritual endeavours seek to accommodate secular needs ... animated by the desire to end the exile and the mentality associated with the exile”.<sup>25</sup> This seems to encapsulate very well many of Anglo-Jewry’s motivations throughout this period.

A triangular illustration of the socio-economic class structure of the Jewish population of England early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would have had a very wide base of lower classes. Jewish pauperism, although primarily dealt with from within the community, was a very real problem. However, as the century progressed, a prosperous Jewish middle class emerged quite rapidly. Any discussion of Jewry in England has to recognise its diversity and changing nature; it was a heterogeneous entity with its own internal dynamics and tensions. Although it is tempting to characterise the subsequent clash between the host Jewish community and the new waves of immigrants as if each were homogeneous groupings, that would be an oversimplification.

The community was largely centred in London within a few tightly defined geographic areas. Relative to the total population, it was a statistically insignificant minority. Prior to the 1880s, it never constituted more than 1% of even the London population. Thus, the threat of domination or displacement by some numerically large alien horde was hardly a credible reason for anti-Jewish feeling, except perhaps in very small pockets of the capital and at particular moments in time.

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<sup>24</sup> ‘The degree of interest in the campaign was proportionate to the extent of comfort and affluence’. Finestein, p. 114.

<sup>25</sup> Shmueli, *Seven Jewish Cultures*, p. 168.

By the outbreak of the First World War, successive waves of immigration commencing about 1880 and peaking just after the turn of the century had resulted in a quadrupling of the Jewish community and the introduction of a new phenomenon – the East European Jew.<sup>26</sup> Economic depression, anti-Jewish legislation and active anti-Semitism, brutally manifested by the pogroms, which received encouragement from the very highest levels, made the lives of Russian and East European Jews increasingly intolerable. It is estimated that more than 2 million of them left the Pale of Settlement by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The overwhelming majority of these migrants found their way to the U.S. Approximately 150-200,000 made their new homes in England. Often non-English speaking, sometimes illiterate, usually very poor, professing versions of orthodox Judaism that were far removed from the anglicised practices of the indigenous Jewish community, this new element threatened the balance that had been so painstakingly created over the generations, both within the Jewish community itself and of its relations with the host population. The tensions and schisms resulting from this immigration form an essential part of the fabric of this study.

The term assimilation is often used in discussions of the position of Jews in this period. It is a term that needs very careful consideration as its ability to be used in both active and passive modes can lead to a lack of precision and clarity. Applied in its positive form and from the standpoint of the host community, it seems true to

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<sup>26</sup> All Jewish population figures for this time are little more than educated guesstimates on the part of their authors as neither the base figure for the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century nor the figures for

argue that there was never a project of assimilating the Jews. They were simply there to be rejected or accepted almost on an individual basis. From the standpoint of Anglo-Jewry it is equally true to say that as a body they too never sought to be assimilated. As a body they sought acceptance by acculturation, with the ability to maintain their own form of religious dissension. Individual cases are perhaps more revealing than any attempt at a homogenising theory of group behaviour. Thus at one end the poet David Sassoon seems to have been prepared to shed all of his Jewish past to gain acceptance. The Rothschilds seem to have regarded acceptance at the very highest levels of English Society as a right, while continuing to practice their own religion. Montague, who, as we shall discuss later, championed the cause of a much more traditional form of Judaism, represented a more “Jewish” wing of Anglo-Jewry.

Anglo-Jewry’s project, when faced with the influx of Eastern European Jews, was to anglicise them as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. Their motives for so doing were many and mixed. On the positive side the programme of positive acculturation may be seen as a genuine attempt to ensure that the new immigrants were adapted to and adopted by the host society as quickly and easily as possible for their own benefit. It is also clear that this project of Anglicisation, combined with moves to ensure dispersal out of the London ghettos or out of London itself, to encourage onward transmigration to the US or even repatriation (to countries in which an active policy of discouraging emigration in the first place was also being waged by Anglo-Jewry), had less altruistic motives.

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*Jewish* immigration are based on reliable statistical data. However, the orders of magnitude

The leadership of Anglo-Jewry and the more affluent Jewish middle class were anxious not to be seen in English eyes as part of this alien horde. They did not want to risk upsetting the carefully created balance that had been achieved over so long and that had so recently been crowned by Rothschild's entry into the House of Commons on his own terms. Anglicisation may be viewed as the least aggressive form of a disappearing trick that the host Jewish community sought to play on/with the new arrivals. Just as the emerging definition of Englishness depended on the exclusion or colonisation of "others", so the definition of Anglo-Jewishness depended on the exclusion or colonisation of its own "others", the new immigrants. Anglo-Jewry neither sought to assimilate or be assimilated by the immigrant Jews. The tactics referred to above would however have had the effect of rendering them more assimilable by others. There would seem to be no evidence to suggest that this type of assimilation programme was a positive, conscious Anglo-Jewish strategy. However, it may have been a possible consequence of the various individual tactics employed; a consequence of which at least some of the leaders were aware.

Lower down the social scale, even the poorer Jewish population had little reason to welcome the further overcrowding and economic competition that the new immigrants caused. The only exceptions were those, more ruthlessly enterprising, who saw in "the Greeners", as these raw, unaware immigrants were disparagingly known, a source of ready income to be exploited by anything, from the fast confidence tricks that deprived them of what little they had almost on arrival to their use a source of cheap labour to be "sweated" in appalling conditions in makeshift workshops.

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are generally accepted as correct.

Looking back to the present

I think that it is the best club in London.  
C. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*

Just as there was an 11 year gap between Rothschild's election and his eventual entry into the House of Commons, so there was coincidentally an even longer gap between that event and its commemoration in painting.

His investiture was depicted in a painting by Henry Barraud dated 1872.<sup>27</sup> This work has been misdated in exhibition catalogues as having been painted in 1874. However, research with the Rothschild Archive confirms it as having been painted two years earlier. This dating is significant, because it provides a plausible explanation for the timing of the commission. Following his own instructions, Lionel's personal papers were destroyed after his death, and there appears to be no specific information on the genesis of this painting. However, its place within the Rothschild collections and the subject matter suggest that it may have been presented to him by members of his family to celebrate not 16 years of being an M.P. (as would have been the case with the 1874 dating) but rather the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his original election to the House in 1847. (Ironically two years later in the General Election he was to lose his seat for the last time).

In this picture the viewer is placed in the Speaker's Chair as Rothschild, flanked to his right by Sir John Russell and to his left by Mr Abel-Smith, is presented

to the House at 4.20pm. On the left, bathed in the afternoon sunlight, sit his fellow Liberals. To the right, in the gloom, sit the Tories - save for Rothschild's personal friend and by now supporter Disraeli, who is picked out in light from another source. The symbolism of those who saw the light and those who were in darkness is more than a little heavy handed. Close inspection reveals that at this historic moment, few, if any, of the members are actually looking at Rothschild or the Speaker. In attempting to recreate a recent historical event it would seem that Barraud painted the bodies and imposed on them heads/faces guided by other contemporary sources some of which may even have been semi-caricatures. In some cases the heads do not fit or are placed at extremely awkward angles. This might explain why so few are actually looking in appropriate directions.<sup>28</sup> Rothschild himself, placed in the centre of the middle ground, is more sympathetically and accurately portrayed. He actually looks like a younger version of the man portrayed in 1879 shortly before his death in a picture by "W.F.H".

Despite the central positioning of Rothschild, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the subject is as much the institution of Parliament and its setting in the Palace of Westminster as the investiture of its new member. That would certainly accord with Rothschild's publicly stated views during the period of his candidature. He consistently adopted a public stance of modest deferral to the will of the House (and of the Law), while fighting long and hard for his right to be a part of it.

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<sup>27</sup> Barraud was a London based painter best known then for his sporting, portrait and genre pictures. He is now remembered, if at all, for working with his brother on pictures of horses and other animals. The painting is in the collection of N. M. Rothschild.

<sup>28</sup> Barraud used a similar 'technique' in a contemporaneous picture *90 members of the MCC in front of the Pavilion at Lords* (Museum of London).

The importance of this painting, for this study, lies not in its technical/painterly merits or demerits but as an historical document. It looked back from the 'present' comfort of the Rothschilds in the early 1870's to the 'past' struggle and to the triumph that placed one of their number (and after him an increasing number of other distinguished Jews) at the very heart of power in England and gained for them acceptance in that most august of Gentlemen's Clubs – the House of Commons. For Rothschild it was intended to be the final seal of his acceptance as an Englishman.

Rothschild was not merely a figurehead for upper class Jewish interests in the struggle for full emancipation but a very active participant in his own elections. However, once elected there is only one reference to him in Hansard as a participant in debate - in 16 almost uninterrupted years as an M.P. Perhaps his tactic was to extend the power he already wielded from his offices in New Court to the private venues of the lobbies, Committee rooms and corridors of Westminster rather than the public arena of the House itself. This contrasts sharply with the parliamentary career of his near contemporary Sir David Salomons. Salomons was even more politically active in promoting his membership of the House. At one stage, after he was elected in 1851, he even refused the Oath but insisted on voting and was in consequence fined £500. Once finally admitted in 1859, he was a frequent speaker both on financial matters and in relation to Jewish affairs – subjects on which the House might have welcomed Rothschild's views as the generally acknowledged leader of both.

What was important to Rothschild was his right *as an upper class Englishman* to participate in the affairs of the House rather than the public exercise of that right. Lionel's mother "inculcated her sons with a sense of national identity and pride...". "A seat in parliament was part of the birthright of the wealthy English gentleman and they (Lionel and Mayer) were determined Jewish gentlemen should share it."<sup>29</sup> Their desire for English gentlemen status found expression in an earlier painting by Sir Francis Grant, a leading society painter of the period, who in 1855 depicted the four brothers hunting in their estates in the Vale of Aylesbury.<sup>30</sup> This was a far cry, in two generations, from the Judengasse in Frankfurt, the home of their Grandfather Mayer Amschel, founder of the dynasty. This picture was almost certainly commissioned in order to confirm for the family and for all that saw it, their status within an English gentleman's hierarchy. The family knew they were accepted leaders of the Jewish and financial worlds. What they fought for was acceptance by and into this English world. The scion of another leading Jewish family, Siegfried Sassoon, called his biographical recollections *Memories of a Fox Hunting Man*. This pastime, as much as any other, typified the life of the English gentleman to which the upper echelons of Anglo-Jewry aspired.

But this very position of an English Gentleman was a Victorian construct, which was in the process of evolution.<sup>31</sup> Englishness itself was by no means a settled concept in this period. Bauman has argued that in the process of assimilation the final chalice is always dashed from the lips of the would-be assimilee as the rules of

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> 'The term *Goyim Naches* (sic, Gentile Pleasures) refers to violent physical activity such as hunting, duelling or wars – all of which Jews traditionally despise': Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 42.



engagement/ assimilation are altered. The very process of seeking admission to the inside confirms the status and locus of the outsider. In this context Rothschild was seeking to define himself in such a way as to merge into a construct of Englishness that was itself in flux. Englishness needed concepts of “otherness” (amongst them Jewishness) as part of its mechanism of self-definition.

In contrast to this Rothschildian view of events, there were four cartoons in *Punch* in this period that graphically illustrate not only some of the concerns of the anti-emancipation lobby, but perhaps also how the Jews were viewed by other segments of the population. *The House of Commons according to Mr Disraeli's views* by John Leech in *Punch*, 10 April 1847, is particularly interesting as a starting point. The figures on both sides of the House, with the notable exception of Disraeli himself, are almost all “Jewish”<sup>32</sup> – even Lord Russell is a corpulent figure with a hooked nose. An almost textbook range of Jewish signifiers is deployed – the Jewish nose, the Jewish beard, the swarthy complexion, the pendulous lip, the jewellery. There are even two figures wearing yarmulkes and with the long side curls of the very religious. Three of the figures are wearing multiple hats – the Jew as peddler. *Punch* July 24 1858 depicted a very shabbily dressed Jew, probably intended to be Rothschild, with a huge hooked nose, kicking his three peddler's hats in the air in glee at his final admission. A week later, a more respectably attired Rothschild is lampooned assessing the value of the Mace. If *Punch* satirised him on the one hand, the accompanying text spoke approvingly of his admission and disapprovingly of

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<sup>31</sup> ‘The last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth was a golden age of ‘invented traditions.’’ Canadine in Hobsbawm and Ranger eds, *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 138.

<sup>32</sup> A close parallel to this can be found in *The Times* (03/09/1852) report on the opening of the Great Synagogue. ‘It did not need much scrutiny of the varied yet homogeneous

those who opposed it. *Punch*, February 19 1859, illustrated the fears of a Jewish stampede, with perhaps its most graphically stereotyped depiction of Rothschild forcing his way into the Chamber - by his nose. Salbstein argues that overall *Punch* was even handed in its treatment of the Jews and their opponents, and if one takes into account the textual as well as illustrated material, this may be a defensible position. Cartoons and especially political cartoons require that visual shorthand that will enable the point of the illustration to be grasped instantly by the reader – hence the use of stereotyping and exaggeration of readily recognisable features in cartoons of all periods. However, in the context of this study it is important to recognise that in all of these cartoons the imagery of the Jew is negative – we are back to the same visual imagery as used almost 600 years earlier with Aaron, son of the Devil.

The cartoons illustrate very clearly that even when the apparent final goal of acceptance into the House was achieved, Rothschild was not transformed by the process into an Englishman; in the eyes of the *Punch* cartoonist and those of some of his fellow MPs, he remained a hooked nosed Jew.

### Looking forward to the Past

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.  
L.P.Hartley, *The Go-Between*

The event depicted in the Barraud painting of Rothschild may be said to represent the apogee of Anglo-Jewry's rise within English society. Mark Gertler's *A Jewish Family*, painted in 1913, confronts the viewer with everything, which

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physiognomy in the place to convince you that you were among a distinct race... Look where you would the faces were not European or not at least English.' Finestein, p. 15.

Rothschild and the leadership of Anglo- Jewry had been striving to eliminate in the post 1881 period.<sup>33</sup>

Mark Gertler was born in the East End in 1891 of immigrant parents (from Przemyśl in Galicia in the Polish part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Within months of his birth they returned there – assisted in their passage by the London Board of Jewish Guardians; a working example of the repatriation policies mentioned earlier. However, they came back to England in 1897. Around 1910 Gertler was at the Slade, to which he had gone with a loan from the Jewish Educational Aid Committee and the endorsement and personal backing of William Rothenstein.

In response to the active encouragement of his Professors<sup>34</sup> to paint Jewish subjects, Gertler began to paint among other topics pictures of his family.<sup>35</sup> Two of these, *The Artist's Family* painted in 1910/11 and *Family Group* of 1913, are helpful in understanding *The Jewish Family*. The first might be regarded as a point of departure and the second as a progress marker against which to measure the far more radical nature of the style and content of the final 1913 image studied in this chapter.

At this time, Gertler wrote in a letter to Carrington:

Just one of the things that makes me so happy, that is my nice friends amongst the upper class. They are so much nicer than the rough East Ends I am used to.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tate Gallery, London.

<sup>34</sup> JEAC Archives. Mark Gertler. 20 June 1910.

<sup>35</sup> 'The subject is one that I am devoting myself to with some assiduity', *Jewish Chronicle* 9 February 1912.

<sup>36</sup> Carrington p. 62.

Reading the early life sections of Woodeson's biography of Gertler and the artist's own correspondence, one encounters a young artist struggling to reconcile many probably irreconcilable conflicts of class, wealth and religion. One of the propositions Gertler seemed perhaps have wanted others to believe was that he was the "poor struggling artist from the crowded tenements of the East End". While this may have been true of the early days, it seems less likely to have been an accurate description of the world in which he subsequently grew up. The struggles with and against his own Jewish background were clearly genuine ones, which informed much of his work. As we shall see the ties of religion were in his case further complicated by his very close relationship with his Mother. The illusion he sought to create of the penurious East Ender is one that needs to be qualified, if one is to take account of his background in assessing his work.

*The Artist's Family* is of a family group at home about to play an affectionate joke on their sleeping Mother. The subjects are located at 14 Spital Square in the East End, which served both as a family home and as a base for his father Louis' fur business. In the fourteen years between their return and the painting of this picture the Gertlers had progressed from sharing one room at the home of a friend on their arrival, through a succession of four homes in the East End to reach the respectability of Spital Square. A nostalgic Mark could have walked to all of his former homes in fifteen minutes, as they were located within less than half a mile of one another. Economically and socially, they had progressed far since their return in 1896, but geographically their world was still the tiny area of the Jewish East End. This was not untypical of many Jewish families in this era. However, far from being some rough East End home, Spital Square "... retained an air of seclusion and

respectability in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries being gated and set with bollards to prevent through traffic... Spital Square featured the finest of all the early Georgian houses of Spitalfields”.<sup>37</sup>

The apparently comfortable, middle class environment that would seem to have been the reality of Spital Square in 1909 hardly accords with the “artist starving in his garret” image that Gertler may have tried to cultivate. Although I have been unable to locate any photos of No14, the neighbouring houses are all large and of considerable standing; some with interiors which are a tribute to the taste and wealth of their owners at that time. They had originally been the homes of the grand silk merchants – the success stories of the earlier Huguenot immigration. No 14 had four storeys and a basement. Its frontage was approximately 25 ft with four large windows on each of the main upper floors. Even if, as is possible, there were other families living at No 14, all the available evidence points to its being among the best housing available in the neighbourhood.

The room in which the family is seated is larger than one might first judge from the clutter of furniture and people. Its breadth can be gauged by the line of the chaise longue, the armchair and the table, which would seem to occupy most of the horizontal space. From the width of the wallboards and the door, the room might be estimated at about 18 ft wide. Since we can only see a fraction of one window on the right hand side and we know there were probably two in each room, the artist/viewer must be located near the middle of the room. The perspective has been foreshortened. It is reasonable to surmise that this was a device used to heighten the sense of intimacy and close physical contact that is one of the features of this composition.

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<sup>37</sup> The Spitalfields Trust 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Exhibition Catalogue p. 12.

But it is also possible that there was an element of deliberate ‘impoverishing’. The non-descript floor coverings, the simply painted wall, the clothes left hanging over the chair and the banister in the landing outside and the at first sight apparently cramped environment may have been used to disguise a more comfortable reality. Perhaps Gertler was as much ill at ease at coming from a prospering middle class environment as with being Jewish. This discomfort may be referred to another statement by Mark Gertler, made to Carrington at this time:

The worst kind of person is the rich English Jew !!! Ugh those patronizing horrors.<sup>38</sup>

The picture shows Mark’s elder brothers, Jack and Harry and the younger of his two sisters, Sophie, playing with their Mother. One of the most noticeable features of the image is the warmth and affection of the family for one another, which it so clearly shows. The brothers and sister all have intentional, physical contact with one another. There is a clear linkage of the figures in a cohesive family group. A very strong horizontal line is created just above the middle of the picture from Harry’s hand on Jack’s left shoulder at the right of the picture across the latter to Sophie’s extended arm and the taper, with which she is about to tickle their Mother, Golda. A slightly weaker parallel is formed by the line of the chaise longue, Jack’s left knee (on which Sophie’s hand is resting), Sophie’s knees, the open book and Golda’s clasped arms. The light wall in the background and the lighter flooring in the foreground, the strong verticals formed by the window to the right of the picture and the door frame to its left (almost leading on to the table edge) serve to cocoon the family group in the centre of the canvas.

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<sup>38</sup> Carrington p. 54.

While they are dressed respectably and in the case of Sophie, perhaps stylishly, the sleeping Mother is dressed in a heavy black dress – typical of if not indeed the same dress as Gertler painted her wearing many times in this period. Her exposed forearms and hands are thick and pudgy and there is little sign of jewellery or adornment. This is not a lady born to the middle class but rather a working woman, who has arrived here after years of struggle. She is both physically and “historically” separated from the next generation of her family. The contrast is so acute that one of Gertler’s fellow students described the picture as “the interior of Gertler’s comfortable, bourgeois kitchen with his family cook sitting dozing by the table on which a glass of diluted tea meant to represent wine and ...Gertler's brothers mocking her intemperance”.<sup>39</sup> The glass does contain tea, but the squeezed lemon on the table reveals that there was no pretence about this being alcohol; this is the way a Jewish lady of this time and age might have taken her tea.

In terms of an Anglo-Jewish project to anglicise immigrants, this picture depicts something of a success story. The Gertlers were by 1910 of or very close to being in the middle class. They had moved up the ladder towards a degree of acculturation. They were living with a degree of comfort and style in their own home. They could also afford to have one son studying at art school and not contributing, at the age of 20, to the family’s income. This was a far cry from the world of the unsuccessful innkeeper they are supposed to have left behind in Galicia.

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<sup>39</sup> Woodeson p. 78.

The fact that they had not moved out of the East End may, one suspects, could have been as much a matter of personal choice as of economic ability.<sup>40</sup>

In the three years that separate this image from *Family Group* and *The Jewish Family*, Gertler was subject to a variety of social, personal and cultural influences, which interplayed with one another to impact on his artistic practice.

Almost as soon as he came into contact with the non Jewish world and from then on throughout his life, Gertler struggled with what he saw as a polarity between his own Jewishness and this new Gentile environment. His efforts to make himself part of the latter were always hampered by his own very strong roots in the former – and in particular by his attachment to his Mother. Letters to Carrington testify to this powerful tension:

I shall be neither Jew nor Christian”.<sup>41</sup>

By my ambition I am cut of from my own family and class and by them I have been raised to be equal to a class I hate! They do not understand me nor I them. So I am an outcast”.<sup>42</sup>

The possibility and extent of his Jewish self-hatred is a topic to which I shall be returning.

The waves of immigration, of which the Gertlers were a part, peaked around the turn of the century and the belated Aliens Act of 1905 (passed to curtail a tide that was already ebbing) prevented a possibility of their repetition. However, the period running up towards the outbreak of War and the passing of the far more

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<sup>40</sup> Their initial choice of Spital Square and continued residence there may possibly also have been influenced by the presence from 1884 onwards of the German Square at 10/11 Spital Square.

<sup>41</sup> Carrington p. 35.



draconian Aliens Restriction and Defence of the Realm Acts of 1914, was one of social tension – especially in the East End, where the Gertlers and the majority of the immigrant Jewish population still lived. Currents of at least anti-alienism and at worst anti-Semitism became stronger. No one as sensitively attuned to these feelings as Gertler, to whom they must have seemed very disorienting. In trying to cut himself loose from the ties of his traditional Jewish upbringing, he found himself attempting to move into a world that seemed less and less inclined to accept him.

On a personal level, these feelings of divided loyalties and not belonging were further fuelled by his infatuation with Dora Carrington, whom he met at the Slade. Carrington might be viewed as the embodiment of his struggle with and against his background. She represented for him the antithesis of his upbringing and the ideal of his future ambitions. The fact that this infatuation was never to be slaked by a fully realised relationship could only have increased Gertler's sense of not belonging.

On a more positive note, his artistic career was flourishing. In 1911 he exhibited at the Friday Club and at the New English Art Club (NEAC) and won a British Institute Scholarship. He left the Slade in the following year, set up a studio in his brother Harry's home at 32 Elder Street (again only within the half mile circle) and was elected a member of NEAC. Gertler, lionised by many of his fellow students and highly regarded by many of his teachers at the Slade, was emerging as a figure of some note in the contemporary art world of London and growing in awareness of his own abilities.

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid* p. 49.

In terms of artistic influences, this immediate pre-War period was also the time in which he made the first of many trips to Paris and saw at source some of the revolutionary new work that was being created there. In July 1912, he was introduced for the first time to Egyptian Art at the British Museum by his fellow Jewish artist Jacob Epstein – thus perhaps widening his perspective to achievements and practices of much earlier cultures. But possibly one of the most important influences on his art at this time – and on the work of many of his young contemporaries - were Fry's exhibitions of Post-Impressionism at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912. These exhibitions were hated by many of the critics, much of the public and most of the artistic Establishment, whose tastes were not attuned to the challenges of these avant-garde art forms. As Nash, then one of Gertler's fellow students at the Slade, observed "How much better pleased he (Tonks) would be if we did not risk contamination and stayed away".<sup>43</sup> Even by today's standards, the size and scope of Fry's 1910 *Manet and the Post Impressionists* exhibition would be classified as a blockbuster. The catalogue records 186 paintings (apparently many more were actually exhibited), which read like a roll call of the period.<sup>44</sup> To young artists like Gertler, just starting out on their artistic careers, the impact of works by Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Manet and Picasso – not to mention a host of other, only slightly less stellar, figures must, from Tonks' viewpoint, have fully justified his fears in terms of widening their perspective beyond the narrower framework of Slade teaching orthodoxy. Although the 1912 *Second Post Impressionist Exhibition* may not have had quite the first time shock value of its predecessor, its 147 French works (including 21 paintings by Matisse and

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<sup>43</sup> Reynolds, *The Slade*.

<sup>44</sup> Robins, *Modern Art in Britain 1910-14*, pp. 181-186.

12 by Picasso) and 33 Russian works – together with some 51 pictures by British contemporaries – cannot have failed to have continued where the latter left off.<sup>45</sup>

Some of these Russian paintings may have had particular importance for this study. For English Jewish artists of Eastern European origin, these paintings may have had resonance that could be appropriated into their own work as a quasi-private form of primitivism not so readily accessible to their English contemporaries.

The Gertler who painted *The Artist's Family* in 1910 was a different person from the man who had undertaken *Family Group* and *The Jewish Family* some three years later. *Family Group* depicts Harry, his child and his wife, Ann. In contrast to the setting of *The Artist's Family*, Gertler has made no attempt to locate his subjects in a convivial environment. They are isolated in a room that has none of the comforts of a home, no furniture, just scuffed floorboards and an undecorated background wall.<sup>46</sup> The man and woman are two separated figures with no actual or even potential physical contact. The man seems to be inviting – very diffidently – an unseen figure to the left to look at the woman and child. The gesture is similar to that which Gertler employed in *The Rabbi and his Grandchild* of the same year, but in this case it quite clearly does not involve physical contact with them. Neither of these paintings have the light playful touch that adds such charm to *The Artist's Family*.

The woman is almost reduced to a single vertical column with barely a break caused by her elbow jutting out a little on her left side or by the tilt of her right hip

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<sup>45</sup> 'The best known of these were Natalia Goncharova... and Mikhail Larionov. Both of these artists were represented by neo-primitivist examples of their work which characteristically

supporting the weight of the child. This is all the more remarkable when one notes that Ann was at the time pregnant.<sup>47</sup> Overpainting to her right would seem to indicate that originally Gertler had thought in terms of a different position for the arm, but had then changed it to hug her side closely and so create this column like effect. The verticality of these two figures and their very real separation is emphasised and echoed by the vertical brushwork in the rear wall. Even the child held close is struggling to break away. While this is not an unnatural action for an infant, Gertler could have depicted the child at rest on the shoulder rather than struggling to establish personal independence.

The only visual link between the figures seems to be the red apple Harry is holding, which echoes the dress and cap of the woman. There is no eye contact between the subjects or with the viewer. Harry is looking down and away, Ann's eyes are almost closed and also look away and the child's eyes are reduced to mere slits. I have emphasised this sense of separateness, because it contrasts so strongly with the feelings of the 1910 picture and because as I shall demonstrate it appears to point the way to the even more radical ruptures of *The Jewish Family*.

Stylistically, *Family Group* would seem to have been influenced by some of the Post Impressionist and other modernist paintings that Gertler could by then have seen and absorbed. There are intimations of Manet in the placing of the flat figures against an inherently neutral background. There are perhaps similarities with some of the figures in Picasso's Blue and Rose period painting. There are possible echoes of

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drew upon examples of Russian folk craft, children's art, *lubok*, hand-coloured popular cartoons and especially Russian cartoons.' Robins, *Modern Art in Britain 1910-14*, p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> I would suggest that this may have been executed in his new studio in Harry's home.

*La Vie* in the position of the woman and child and the awkward hand gesture of the man and in the very strong verticals of the composition. There are also similarities with some of Picasso's *Saltimbanques* and *Harlequin* paintings of the early 1900s in the overall composition. But what is as important are not compositional or stylistic formulae, but a similar feeling in the Gertler of the subjects not belonging to "normal" society, of being in some way apart from it and defying the norms of bourgeois respectability. Whereas *The Artist's Family* were obviously a unit rooted in their home and part of the society in which they lived and worked, the *Family Group*, like Picasso's figures, are outsiders, lone figures.

The flat expanses of bright colour (possibly an influence from Gauguin, whose works Gertler probably saw in Fry's 1910 Post-Impressionist Exhibition and who may also have been the inspiration for the Breton style of head dress), the use of only limited modelling confined to Harry's face and that of Ann, the almost crude, "primitive" styling of hands and arms must have caused despair among those who had taught Gertler and rated his drawing talents equal to those of Augustus John. However, when, as I shall show later, one relates this to other contemporaneous paintings executed by Gertler, these technical innovations in his artistic practice are evidence of the Modernist road forward along which Gertler was travelling as he looked back at the past.

*The Jewish Family* painted in the same year is an even more complex image. Firstly, one must ask: in what sense this is a family at all? Who is related to whom? Are the old man and the older woman on far the right husband and wife? Is the

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<sup>47</sup> Conversation with Luke Gertler May 1999.

younger woman their daughter and the child their grandchild, and if so, where is her husband/the child's father? This picture is capable of many different readings, some of which are mutually reinforcing while others may conflict. I have attempted to examine a number of different interpretations in order to expose the multiple layers of meaning which I believe it contains.

There is a possible line of interpretation based on Gertler's family. The older woman could be Golda, his mother; the peasant figure and particularly the red headscarf are the Golda motifs to which I referred earlier. However, the resemblance to Golda is not strong and this would be very unusual as his Golda oeuvre is otherwise almost instantly recognisable. The male figure could be his father, who was a very religious man and had a beard. However, the only visual evidence I have been able to find of him does not support the long beard ending in two points and this figure is of a much older man. Gertler's father is largely conspicuous by his absence in his work. But then, since he was totally absent for much of Mark's infancy and young childhood, this is perhaps not altogether surprising. Following the Gertler family theme, one might surmise that the younger woman could be one of his sisters or perhaps Celia, Harry's wife. This last explanation could make the child hers – but this would create an age break between this figure and that of the infant in the *Family Group* referred to above and painted in the same year. The absence of a ring on her finger, while not conclusive proof that she was not married, does not provide us with the contrary positive evidence that its presence would have. Is the child perhaps Mark himself, the six year old, on his return to England? There are references in Woodeson to an orange leather coat that Mark was given as a child about the time of the family's second departure from Przemsyl. It seems to have been a very important

gift and he may have been recalling this in the orange/yellow 'robe' the child is wearing. Although I believe there are allusions to his family and his past, I believe it is too simplistic and overstraining the bounds of interpretation to see them all just as members of Gertler's family, even allowing for some playing with time within the composition.

Before examining each figure closely, I want to pose some questions of contrast between this and the earlier *Artist's Family*. In my discussion of the latter I referred in some detail to the location of the work, to the very strong sense of family unity it portrayed and to a feeling of belonging. Where are the figures in *The Jewish Family* located? They are not in any defined location; they are not even, like the *Family Group*, in a room of some kind. Are they new arrivals waiting by some quayside to be met by a family member or friend? Are they standing in a street having been thrown out of their home? Gertler has created a feeling of rootlessness – both in the sense of having been uprooted and also not having put down roots. They are both dispossessed and unpossessing. They seem to belong nowhere. The feelings of displacement and marginalisation in this image hark back to earlier expressions of Baudelairean modernity such as Manet's *Le Vieux Musicien*. But even that paradigm of displacement sites its subjects in a potentially recognisable locale; in that case one of the open spaces caused by the destruction of Hausmann's Parisian rebuilding programme. This rootlessness is, of course, the very antithesis of all that Anglo-Jewry was seeking to achieve with its policies of integration, acculturation and Anglicisation. Jews were supposed to be part of English society, not outside it.

In my discussion of *The Artist's Family*, I alluded to the almost continuous and very strong, physical contact between each of the subjects. In *The Jewish Family*, there is no physical contact at all, not even any eye contact. Each of the figures is separate and alone. The younger woman and the child look out to the viewer but the former seems wrapped up in her own thoughts. There is no sense of cohesion or unity between the figures, of family bonding, there is just isolation. The older woman on the right of the picture is facing away from the other figures. The set of her shoulder and the angle of her hip suggest disinterest in and even outright rejection of them. There is a hint that her unseen hands – out of frame – may be busy with some other task that is of greater concern to her. Her red headscarf - one of only two patches of strong bright colour in the picture - is an interesting signifier on many levels. Orthodox Jewish married women were obliged to wear a wig or in its place a head scarf. Thus in his own Jewish terms by employing this device Gertler is perhaps signalling the religion of the woman. At the same time by emphasising this adherence to a Jewish tradition he is also denying acculturation and Anglicisation. The headscarf and the coarse clothing she is wearing mark out the older woman as poor and working class, possibly a peasant. I mentioned earlier the use of the red headscarf as a possible Golda motif, even though the figure herself bears little other resemblance to Golda. The choice of the colour red for the headscarf in many of the “Golda as peasant series” may simply have reflected her own real life choice. But it is possible that it has additional significance. In an article entitled ‘Judas’s Red Hair and the Jews’, Mellinkoff discusses the possibility of an artistic tradition of the use of red hair to depict Jews.<sup>48</sup> While I am not suggesting that Gertler must have been consciously aware of this lineage, it is not impossible that he had in some way

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<sup>48</sup> R. Mellinkoff, ‘Judas’ red hair and the Jews’, *Journal of Jewish Art* vol. 9, 1982. Boyarin



absorbed it. Mane-Katz, a contemporary of Gertler in terms of age, who first arrived in Paris from the Ukraine in 1913 (and subsequently settled there after the War) used red hair as a signifier of Jews in many of his pictures. It was also used by Chagall. Gertler may have been using a similar colour code or have been subconsciously affected by similar images and usages.

Steyn suggests that the two women ‘are joined together’ and questions whether they represent the good and the bad, the ugly and the beautiful.<sup>49</sup> I have already indicated that I feel the older woman is actively turned away from the others and that their individual isolation and separateness is one of the key themes of this work.<sup>50</sup> The younger woman looks out to the viewer, but at the same time seems lost in a reverie of her own. She is painted in a primitive fashion. The forearms and hands are deliberately heavy and almost clumsy. The face has mask like qualities. The eyes are reduced almost to black holes with deep shadows around them. The modelling around the nose is severe and the shadow cast across the side of her face emphasises this mask like appearance – as does the high forehead and the tight bunching of the hair. Gertler may, as a result of his trip to Paris and his awareness of current trends, have known of the incorporation of so-called primitive art into modern works.

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also alludes to this in *Unheroic Conduct*, as does Felsenstein in *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*.

<sup>49</sup> *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Arts Centre, 1992, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> There is a sense in which one could come some way towards Steyn’s position. Perhaps Gertler was playing with time in this picture. The older woman might be Golda as she was in 1913 and the younger one, Golda as Gertler imagined she might have been, when she first arrived in England in 1891 at the age of 27. It is a possible strand of interpretation, but again I feel that to overemphasise this kind of linkage is to stretch the interpretation beyond its natural limits.

Steyn relates the old man in this work to the Rabbi in a contemporaneous work by Gertler – *The Rabbi and his Grandchild*.<sup>51</sup> However, taken on his own, the Rabbi in that picture has a certain melancholy dignity (and there are sexual undertones to that image to which I shall return later). The figure in *Jewish Family* is much sadder and older. He is far more akin to the paradigm of the gentle wise old man/rabbi, which Boyarin seeks to establish. Once again Gertler resorts to a deliberately heavy, crude ‘primitive’ style.

In ‘Judas’s Red Hair and the Jews’, Mellinkoff also refers an artistic tradition of links between the yellow robe, money purse, Judas and the Jews.<sup>52</sup> This would provide another, alternative reading to the interpretation I offered earlier that the painting records Max’s orange coat from Przemyśl. Here again, I am not positing actual knowledge or awareness on the part of Gertler, but simply the possibility of some perhaps subconscious awareness that may have prompted the use of this particular colour code.

The use of a primitive style in this work is, I believe, a stylistic choice intended to emphasise the ‘otherness’ of the figures it depicts. It is most important to recognise that within this project the ‘otherness’ being depicted is Jewish – the work is called a *Jewish Family*. But Gertler does not resort to stereotypes to make this point. Only the figure of the old man fits into norms of “Jewishness” (the beard, the yarmulke, the long robe). However, even these are not deployed in a stereotypical fashion. In 1910, Gertler was seeking to present cohesion and a sense of belonging in

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<sup>51</sup> *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Arts Centre, 1992, p. 16. Southampton Art Gallery.

<sup>52</sup> Once again echoed by Felsenstein in his discussion of Shylock in *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*.

a particular time/space continuum. In 1913 alienation and marginalisation were his chosen themes. By then, his own internal struggles were emerging and are reflected in this work. In it, the subjects are set apart from the host society. They are also isolated one from another. This is not about present reality but about psychological alterity. Rothschild may have achieved the outward manifestations of acceptance almost 60 years earlier, and in his wake even the immigrant generation (which included the Gertlers) was making its way in this society. But Gertler is asking his viewer to look at the internal struggle that he felt still existed and to the sense of displacement that nourished it. It is in his harking back to his own roots, and using primitive motifs as part of this encounter with the problems of modernity, that Gertler was looking forward to the past.

In his review of the Twentieth Century Art Exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1914, the critic of the *Jewish Chronicle* said of *The Jewish Family*: “there is real psychological insight and feeling, Mr Gertler has here succeeded in conveying an inexpressible sense of homeliness (sic !) and there is a fine spiritualism in the picture that will make it stand out as one of the best in the collection.” Correcting what I assume was a proof reader’s error by substituting homelessness for homeliness would make this comment an accurate appraisal. It was also high praise indeed in the context of this review. The overall tone was decidedly anti-modernist to the point of being scathing in its condemnation of works by, amongst others, Bomberg, Nadelman and Modigliani. The reviewer was clearly far more at home with a more traditional, academic approach.

We should have been better pleased had there been a more satisfactory representation, for surely Messrs Rothenstein, Amschewitz, Snowman and a good many others have not been altogether idle these last half dozen years or so.

Gertler may have been willing to tackle themes of exclusion and ‘otherness’, but Anglo Jewish opinion, as expressed by its sometime house organ, the *Jewish Chronicle*, was not comfortable to be reminded of differences. The paper was working within the parameters of a creation of heritage that, as Cesarani argues, was success based.<sup>53</sup> It wanted to look for Jewish success stories, stories that furthermore were couched in forms – be they visual, literary or real – that could be readily understood and accepted by their readers as confirming their beliefs. Gertler was working from another agenda; one which confronted failure and rejection as integral parts of his heritage.

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<sup>53</sup> Kushner (ed) *The Jewish Heritage in British History - Dual Heritage or a Duel of Heritages*.

## CHAPTER 2

### Defining an Anglo-Jewish Discourse: The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887

#### Introduction

The Soirée at the Albert Hall on Saturday night, given by Mr F. D. Mocatta, Chairman of the Committee, was a brilliant opening to a rare and exceptional Exhibition ... The occasion is unique. You may have exhibitions often, but a Jewish exhibition is not an everyday affair... It would be impossible to give a complete list of all Mr Mocatta's guests. It will suffice to say that practically the whole of the official portion of the Jewish community attended the soiree ... There were also a number of distinguished Christian visitors ... The gathering was in every respect as representative as is the list of the Committee of the Exhibition.<sup>1</sup>

The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887, which ran from April 2 to July 2, was, if measured by the number and range of its exhibits, a major cultural offering. Its catalogue contained 2954 entries; given, however, the use of single headings for multiple items, the actual number of exhibits was even greater. It was presented at the Albert Hall with satellite displays at the Public Record Office, the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum.<sup>2</sup> A programme of lectures, musical and cultural events accompanied the Exhibition.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1887, Supplement pp. 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> The catalogue itemised 2626 entries at the Albert Hall, 51 at the Public Records Office, 19 at the South Kensington Museum and 258 at the Kings Library in the British Museum. These latter institutions were used because the items they displayed could not be released for display elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> *Papers read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, published by *Jewish Chronicle*, London 1888.

May 5	Joseph Jacobs	The London Jewry 1290
May 12	Lucien Wolf	The Middle Age of Anglo-Jewish History
May 16	Rev F Cohen	The rise and development of Synagogue Music
May 26	Walter Rye	The Persecution of the Jews
June 2	Rev A Lowy	Hebrew Literature in England

In the weeks following the opening, both the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish World* published series of articles and supplements, the detailed explanatory style of which would indicate that they, like the Exhibition, were aimed beyond an exclusively Jewish audience. The scale and scope of this Exhibition would alone provide sufficient reason to examine both the generality of the representation of ‘the Jew’ presented therein (as evidenced by range, type and dating of the objects displayed) and the particularity of the choice and images of those individual Jews included.

This chapter reviews the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition (the 1887 Exhibition), the version of the history of the Jews in England it posited, the positioning of Jews in contemporary English society it sought to map out and, within this, the nature of the hegemony assumed by the leaders of Anglo-Jewry over the Jewish community of that time. It focuses particularly on the visual representations of Jews that the Exhibition offered. It proposes that, in part formative of and in part formed by the creation of and reception for the 1887 Exhibition, there emerged a discourse about the place of Jews in England, which I shall term the Anglo-Jewish discourse and which set terms for it that were to survive for Jews in England without substantial change through all of the upheavals that characterised Jewish history in the first half of the twentieth century. It became the dominant ideology of Anglo-Jewry within or against which cultural practice by and/or about Jews had to function throughout the period under review in this study and long beyond. (In the final

June 9	Dr C Gross	The Exchequer of the Jews in the Middle Ages
June 16	Dr Graetz	Historic Parallels in Anglo-Jewish History
June 23	Dr Gaster	Jewish sources of the Arthur and Merlin legends

chapter of this dissertation, I will review the 1956 Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History – in commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles in order to demonstrate how the presentation of the Jew that it offered and its underlying discourse was some seventy years later still indebted to and informed by the seminal importance of this earlier Exhibition). I will argue that central to comprehension of the discourse is an understanding that one of the aims of those involved in the 1887 Exhibition was to prove a shared identity with its hosts – an identity based on shared language, shared history and shared culture. In order to establish such a position, the Exhibition was perforce obliged to jettison any part of an image of foreignness that might taint other's views. As I will demonstrate this positioning helps to explain many of the main lines of choice of exhibits - references to Jews in the Domesday Book, however fleeting, spoke to a shared history, whereas religious artefacts from recent immigrants would have spoken of an alien culture.

The naming of an Exhibition  
Hinging around a hyphen

In common with any undertaking of this magnitude, the rationales underlying the conception of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 were many and varied, as were the reasons, both theoretical and pragmatic, which led to the final selection of exhibits. When it was first discussed in the press, it was referred to as an Anglo-Jewish Archaeological Exhibition.<sup>4</sup> Although the Exhibition's final remit was far removed from the constraints implied by that classification, it did retain more of an archaeological nature than might otherwise have been the case. The response to requests for exhibits exceeded expectations and led to the need for previously

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<sup>4</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 April 1886, referring back to a letter from Isidore Spielmann, which it had published 23 April 1886.

unforeseen curatorial decisions. I would, however, argue that, perhaps from the very outset, and certainly as the project evolved, a definite agenda regarding the place of ‘the Jew’ in England emerged.

To understand what this involved, one might best start by examining the actual words used in the title to define the Exhibition. These, I suggest, reveal two significant strands of argument - one relating to its Anglo-Jewishness and the other to its Historical status.

This was first and foremost an ‘Anglo-Jewish’ event. The choice and order of words, positioned around this hyphen, remains critical to a proper appreciation of the agenda on offer. There are several ways of interpreting this ordering of adjectives. From a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective this might be read as exposing potential uncertainty about the Englishness of these Jews and an emphasis on their Jewishness. Taking a 19<sup>th</sup> century stance I believe that Anglo-Jewry adopted its order for the opposite reason - so as to emphasise its Englishness. It was not, as it might have been, a Judaeo-English Exhibition. That could have opened up the possibility of a reading, which placed Jews on the outside. Whilst from a host community standpoint, the Jews would have been viewed at most as marginal to, if not indeed outside, any inclusive understanding of Englishness, this was not the reading that the organisers of this Exhibition sought to confirm. The term Anglo-Jewish described how those responsible for the Exhibition viewed themselves, as a group within English society and how they wished the host community to view them – with an equality of the English and Jewish elements in the perception of their identity. A double edged, almost contemporary cartoon, *A hint for the persecution of the Jews in England* by



du Maurier, which appeared in *Punch* in 1883 is indicative of just how far a journey they still had to travel in the eyes of some.<sup>5</sup> The text reads:

Dramatis Personae; Reginald Front-de-Boeuf 19th Earl of Torquilstone (a lineal descent of the famous Baron immortalised in “Ivanhoe”), Viscount Front-de Boeuf, his son), Alderman Isaac (descended from Isaac of York), Rebecca (daughter of the Alderman)

Scene The old Torture dungeon in Torquilstone Castle, recently restored.

The Earl: ‘Hearken , thou son of Israel, unlike my knightly ancestor, I covet not thy money bags, hard-up though I be. T’is thy fair, wise Daughter Rebecca I would fain have, to wed my big booby of a Son, yonder, not indeed for her dowry’s sake, princely as thou mayest deem fit to make it, but in order that by mixing our degenerate Blood with thine, oh worthy scion of an Irrepressible Race, the noble and comely but idiotic breed of Front-de Boeuf (which biddeth fair to be snuffed out in the struggle for existence) may survive to hold its own once more! Nay, and thou consentest not, Sir Jew, then by my halidome I’ll... [Torture must be left to the Reader’s invention]’

The English aristocracy might by then have been intermarrying with Anglo-Jewry, but as the cartoon makes clear, both visually and textually, its motives for so doing and its view of those with whom negotiations for such intermarriages were conducted were clear.

The desire for a linkage with an English as opposed to a British identity is also revealing. At a time when the power and influence of the British Empire was reaching its peak, the wider association of Britishness might have been deemed more valuable. Perhaps an insistence on ‘Anglo’, for the key adjectival definition, indicated a desire, by those making that choice, to place themselves at what they perceived as the epicentre – being specifically English. This would distance them from others within the Union – the Welsh, Scots and particularly the Irish, whose religious exclusion, although, by then overcome by earlier acts of emancipation, so uncomfortably paralleled some of the socio-religious problems encountered by the Jews. The leaders of Anglo-Jewry were London based and disposed to think in terms

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<sup>5</sup> Drawing for *Punch*, 28 July 1883, p. 42.

of England (or indeed London) rather Britain. For many, the City, in its narrow financial sense, was the focus of their daily lives. Their day-to-day social and cultural dealings would have been far more closely linked to society in London and the Home Counties than to that part of the English aristocracy/society, which was based in the Country. Their world metaphorically and literally was a cab ride away from the Exhibition either across Hyde Park or into the City.

For those active in Jewish affairs at the time of the Exhibition the phrase Anglo-Jewish also had acquired a very specific meaning. The Anglo-Jewish Association came into existence in 1871 and *inter alia* provided those families associated with the Reform Synagogue (created in 1842) with a forum from which they were once again able to play a fuller and more formal role in the affairs of the Jewish community.<sup>6</sup> The General Committee of the 1887 Exhibition, which drew its members from a wide spectrum of Jewish religious and secular leadership, included among its number several of those whose socio/religious affiliations lay within this, perhaps the most anglicised and acculturated, wing of the English, Jewish community.

The desire for an Anglo-Jewish identity was very much a class issue. As we have seen earlier, the mid-nineteenth battle for Jewish political emancipation, which engendered so much contemporary comment, was primarily the concern of a very small group at the upper echelons of the Jewish community. Similarly, the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 was a top down project, fostering the

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<sup>6</sup> By 1878 it was already meeting with the Board of Deputies to discuss the creation of conjoint committees. *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 January, 1878.

aspirations of those at the apogee of the Jewish establishment. How it was that this small group at the head of a numerically insignificant minority felt they had the right to lay claim to a place in contemporary English society and to link themselves back as part of English history? Statistical data on the size and growth of the Jewish population of England at this time based on an official census are unavailable. One is obliged to rely on estimates based on extrapolation from different sources. In an article dated 7 June 1878, the *Jewish Chronicle* published one such estimate. This calculated the total Jewish population of the United Kingdom in 1877 at 68,300, of whom 53,900 resided in London.<sup>7</sup> Although both the absolute totals and the bias towards London are higher than other more widely propagated estimates, even if one accepts this estimate, it still leaves the total Jewish community as a tiny minority relative to the nation as a whole or indeed just to London – perhaps one percent. Absolute numbers, however, only tell a fraction of the story about the importance and visibility of the Jewish community of this time. The Introduction has outlined some of the key aspects of Jewish political emancipation in mid Victorian Britain and the rise to positions of power and influence in mid to late Victorian society of the leaders of Anglo-Jewry. Certain events indicate just how much further Jews had progressed by the last decades of the nineteenth century and how much things had changed, since Lionel de Rothschild's eleven year struggle from 1848 onwards to transform his election as a Member of Parliament into a seated reality.

In politics, the elections of 1880 saw Jewish candidates representing both main parties and the return, unremarked by any anti-Jewish controversy, of several of them in London and provincial constituencies – in some cases aided by the

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<sup>7</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 June 1878, p. 12.

willingness of the competent authorities to alter polling days to avoid clashes with a Jewish religious holiday.<sup>8</sup> Socially, the most significant mark of acceptance was the attendance and active participation of the Prince of Wales at the marriage of Leopold de Rothschild in 1881.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on the world of art, which is of special relevance to this study, one might contrast the remarks made by Sir William Collins (1788-1847) when introducing his family to Solomon Hart (1806-1881) after the latter had been elected as a Royal Academician in 1840, ‘Mr Hart is a Jew and the Jews crucified our Saviour, but he is a very good man for all that, and we shall see something more of him now’ with the attendance at Hart’s funeral in June 1881 of Sir Frederic Leighton, then President of the Royal Academy, and fellow academicians Poynter, Richmond, Alma-Tadema and Prinsep.<sup>10</sup> Individually any one of these facts might have little more than anecdotal significance, taken cumulatively with many other similar examples, they point to a degree of acceptance by one side and acculturation by the other that justified Anglo-Jewry’s efforts to manifest its status and position through such ventures as the 1887 Exhibition.

As its title makes clear, the organisers of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition also wanted it to be regarded as ‘historical’ in scope. In order for the Exhibition to act as a vehicle for assuring the current and future position of Anglo-Jewry, it looked back to the past, proposing a shared history with a network of common references. At a moment when issues of nationhood were actively being

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<sup>8</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 April 1880.

<sup>9</sup> The Prince was present both at the formal ceremony at the Central Synagogue and at the wedding breakfast (at the home of Arthur Sassoon, the bride’s brother in law), where he proposed the toast to the bridal couple. *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 January 1881.

<sup>10</sup> From *A History of the Royal Academy of Arts*, Sandby, London, 1862, vol II, p. 74. Quoted in Julia Weiner, ‘Solomon Alexander Hart RA 1806-1881’, in *The Jews of Devon and Cornwall*, ed., E. Friedlander, Bristol: Hidden Legacy Foundation, 2000, pp. 41-50, esp. p. 45. Attendees at Hart’s Funeral in *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 June 1881.

debated and indeed constituted, the promoters were of course aware of the work of the French historian and philologist Ernest Renan (1823-1892) whose *Qu'est qu'une nation?* lecture of 1882 was of particular significance for the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition.<sup>11</sup> Anglo-Jewry was seeking to affirm itself as English rather than to be identified as part of an alien race. Renan provided arguments against the idea of a nation based on race. He suggested that the 'nation is a soul' and that nationhood was to be found in the possession of shared past and on 'present day consent'.<sup>12</sup> If Anglo-Jewry could, via instruments such as the Exhibition of 1887, establish a shared past, it could argue that it had already achieved or should be accorded the latter. Renan's theoretical model was, I would suggest, one of the conceptual bases for the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition and his place on the General Committee perhaps a manifestation of this philosophical debt.

In her analysis of the ways in which Jews presented themselves through the medium of Exhibitions between 1851 and 1940, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett suggests three possible positions for Jews: as identifiable only by religion and otherwise indistinguishable; as an inassimilable race with immutable characteristics; and as a nation within a nation.<sup>13</sup> This Exhibition was neither the history of a separate race nor the celebration of a nation within a nation. It was rather a proposal of a sharing of history for more than six hundred years by a group distinguishable only by religion and that being an acceptable form of dissent. This was not intended by the promoters to be an Exhibition about 'otherness'. To the extent that 'the Jew' as Other was present, he was an historic figure, who should be viewed in that context by

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<sup>11</sup> Renan's lecture was delivered at the Sorbonne on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1882. The text quoted is a translation by Martin Thom in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by H. Bhabha, pp. 8 - 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, University of California Press, 1998, p. 80.

‘us’ – encompassing both Gentile and Jewish Englishmen alike. The Other Jew, the immigrant in the East End, was in the context of the Exhibition ignored by a Committee which set its face resolutely westwards towards the English community. Although either directly as individuals or as part of the hegemonic group within the Jewish community in England, the members of the General Committee for the 1887 Exhibition were involved in many initiatives relating to the immigrants, so far as the Exhibition itself was concerned, the immigrant Jew was a presence denied.

Sir Isidore Spielmann was acknowledged ‘from its inception to its end [as] the leading spirit of the undertaking’.<sup>14</sup> He wished it to be regarded as the Anglo-Jewish contribution to the Golden Jubilee celebrations marking Queen Victoria’s accession.<sup>15</sup> Like other similar initiatives, it would seem that Spielmann’s efforts were part of a heightened consciousness within Anglo-Jewry about its position within English Society. In 1885 Lucien Wolf, Moses Gaster (1856-1939) who in 1887 was named Haham (Chief Rabbi of the Sephardi congregation) and Leopold Greenberg (1861-1931) who in 1907 was to become editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, had worked together successfully to ensure that the Bevis Marks Synagogue, certainly the most famous Jewish landmark in London at that time, was not demolished. Their strategy presented Bevis Marks not as exclusively Jewish but as part of the general English heritage.<sup>16</sup> This stratagem was used extensively two years later in the 1887 Exhibition.

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<sup>14</sup> For Spielmann, see Biographical Note App. 1. F.D.Mocatta, *Report to the Members of the General Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, 29 September 1887, p. 2. See also, *Jewish Chronicle*, Endnote 4.

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, p. 194; *Jewish Chronicle*, Spring 1886; *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition* pp. xxv.

<sup>16</sup> Sh. Kaddish, ‘A Monumental Task’, *AJA Review*, vol 23, 1994.

Lucien Wolf and Dr Joseph Jacobs (1854-1916), who were both members of the General Committee and of the various sub-committees, were responsible for most of the main catalogue and played key roles in the physical creation of the 1887 Exhibition.<sup>17</sup> F.D. Mocatta chaired the General Committee, which included representatives of almost all of the important Jewish families.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the practical need to ensure their financial support and influence, this was probably prompted by a desire to ensure solidarity internally and to demonstrate a unified front externally. It was a measure of the position of religion within the total spectrum of Anglo-Jewish affairs that its leading members could happily co-exist on bodies like this, despite what would otherwise have seemed to an outsider, often strongly held opposing religious views. Jewish religious leadership was represented by most of its principal figures: the Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler (1802-1890) and his son Hermann Adler (1839-1911), by then Delegate Chief Rabbi; Dr. Moses Gaster; the Reverend Professor D.W. Marks (1811-1909), Chief Minister of the West London Reform Synagogue; as well as by Zadoc Kahn (1839-1905), Grand Rabbi of Paris. Among leading Jewish lay figures was Sir John Simon MP.<sup>19</sup> The General Committee was not, however, exclusively Jewish. It included the Dean of Westminster from whose official collection more than 400 items of historical interest were included, the writer Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901) and other eminent Victorians.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For Wolf and Jacobs, see Biographical Notes App. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Mocatta Biographical Note App 1. Among the General Committee members were representatives of the Rothschilds, the Samuels, the Montagus, the Montefiores, the Goldsmids, the Sassoons, the Cohens and the Davis families. A comparison of this list with the memberships of the Council of the United Synagogue and the Anglo-Jewish Association at the same time (See for example *Jewish Chronicle* 8 April 1887, p. 10) reveals just how closely these same leading families were involved in all aspects of Anglo-Jewish affairs.

<sup>19</sup> Simon. Biographical Note App. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Other Committee members included: Francis Galton (1822-1911) the eugenicist; James Glaisher (1809-1903), Chairman of the Palestine Exploration Fund; Holman Hunt (1827-1910), the painter; and Robert Browning, the poet (1812 –1891).

The Albert Hall, the principal venue, was a major cultural centre with very obvious connections with the Queen. By definition, it should therefore have offered the potential to ensure a place for an Exhibition relating to Anglo-Jewry both within the mainstream of English culture and as part of the loyal celebrations of the Jubilee. The locations for the subsidiary displays, although forced on the organisers for practical reasons, were also within the mainstream of the London exhibition world. The organizers were no doubt aware of the underpinning for their intentions that such locations ought to have brought.

It is *prima facie* tempting to read the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition as an affirmation of the settled position of Jews in late Victorian Britain. This was, if not the belief, certainly the aspiration of those organising it. The Jubilee Leader in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 17 June 1887 explored in hagiographic terms the twin themes of the progress made by the Jews during Victoria's reign and the Britishness/Englishness of the nation's Jews, albeit that it was less than clear as to which set (British) or sub set (English) Jews owed their allegiance:

For it is impossible to imagine another space of fifty years working a revolution equally vast in the condition of the Jews of this country and more truly causing a people that walked in darkness to see a great light ... it is not because we can admit for one moment that there is any possibility of separating the British Jew by a single hairbreadth from the rest of his fellow subjects in the general rejoicing ... No longer an alien the English Jew is now an integral part of the nation.<sup>21</sup>

However, such a reading ignores a counter series of events and positions which had to be negotiated by the Exhibition. The major problem for Anglo-Jewry was the immigration of Jews from East Europe and Russia which had begun to reach very significant proportions at the time of the pogroms of 1881. By 1887 this flow had assumed proportions that were *inter alia* exacerbating the arguments about

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<sup>21</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 June 1887.



limitations on such entry and were a factor in the rise in anti-alien feeling in what was for other reasons already a fraught situation.

The suggestion that immigration should be restricted first arose as one response to the massive unemployment and riots that marked London winters in the mid 1880's.<sup>22</sup>

The circle of wealth and privilege of Anglo-Jewry in the second half of the nineteenth century comprised of little more than a handful of the main families at the top of the Jewish population. From the mid-century, a Jewish middle class had begun to emerge. This was gradually providing a counter balance to those at the lowest end of the economic scale and making for a less acute dispersion of wealth and poverty in the demographics of the Jewish population. Once, however, immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia began in earnest after 1881, the economic distribution pattern of this population was again dramatically skewed downwards. Prior to the 1880s, Anglo-Jewry might plausibly have looked forward to the gradual social enfranchisement of a burgeoning middle-class as part of its vision of the Jew in England by creeping Anglicisation; a reactive process, in which integration would occur almost by passive osmosis. However, the post 1881 immigration radically altered that possibly. The events in Russia and Eastern Europe and their impact close to hand on the streets of the East End were on the agenda of those very members of Anglo-Jewry who were involved in promoting the 1887 Exhibition. It is, however, fair to argue, that by 1887 the greater part of this population explosion had yet to occur and that the immigrants, although a rapidly growing segment of the English Jewish population, were only a part of the total picture. Significantly, however, they were not simply marginalized by scant reference in the 1887 Exhibition but I would argue totally, and deliberately, overlooked in and by it. The 1887 Exhibition

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<sup>22</sup> Feldman, 'The Importance of Being English', in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p. 58.

excluded virtually any depiction or discussion of the Jewish poverty – either in the medieval past or by reference to the contemporary immigrants. Poverty in London had been documented as early as Mayhew's seminal *London Labour and London Poor*, 1851. This had inter alia catalogued the extent and nature of the Jewish dimension of this problem. Although Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London*, based on research undertaken between 1886 and 1903, was not first published in 1889, there was frequent comment in the press, which again shed light on specifically Jewish aspects of the poverty problem. As Gertrude Himmelfarb has argued with reference to the early period:

The London poor seemed to be afflicted with a kind of poverty in extremis; a poverty that made them not so much a class apart or even a nation apart (as in the two nations image) but a 'race' apart.<sup>23</sup>

It was almost as if the Jewish immigrants were simultaneously members of two rejected races.

Much as some of Anglo-Jewry's leaders might have wanted to present the 1887 Anglo-Exhibition as a statement of achieved status, it was in reality more of a plea for confirmation of a position still being acquired; a plea, which was to be proved by the weight of evidence presented. At a time when the nature of Englishness was itself being created and transformed, Anglo-Jewry was ambitiously seeking to define a set place for itself within this landscape of national identity, but as Stuart Hall has argued:

Cultural identities ... undergo constant transformation ... they are subject to the continuous play of history culture and power.<sup>24</sup>

The discourse which emerged in and from the 1887 Exhibition was to be a seminal influence on Jewish thought and attitudes. I would suggest that throughout the period

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<sup>23</sup> G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, London: Faber & Faber, 1984, p. 311.

<sup>24</sup> Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in *Identity: community, culture, difference*, ed. J. Rutherford, p. 223.

of this study and, indeed, until the latter part of the twentieth century as evidenced by the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition, this 1887 model with its seemingly uncritically liberal reading of the progress achieved by and acceptance of Jews in England since the Cromwellian era, became an accepted standard with reference to which other views were obliged to position themselves. Paradoxically, just as Anglo-Jewry was seeking to define its place in English society with recourse to this carefully judged balance around a hyphen, the underlying realities were already moving inexorably in ways that would create unforeseeable challenges to this delicate placing. Anglo-Jewry could not, in 1887, have appreciated the disruptive potential and long-term impact of the new immigration. Although, as we shall see, less than twenty years later the defining discourse might have remained the same, those promoting the Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery could no longer ignore the presence of the immigrant community.

#### A particular vision - a shared experience

‘a rich legacy of memories’<sup>25</sup>

From the outset, the organisers of the 1887 Exhibition entertained very ambitious intentions for the event which was ‘... to bring together all objects illustrating the history of the Jews in England’.<sup>26</sup> To this already highly comprehensive aim was added the task of displaying examples of Jewish Ecclesiastical Art and Jewish Antiquities both from within England and from overseas. Such was the response that the organisers of the Exhibition were unable to present everything offered. As a

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<sup>25</sup> Renan, 1882 Lecture, translation by Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. Bhabha, pp. 8-21.

<sup>26</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, 1887, p. vii.

result, the curatorial choices made by the Literary and Arts Committee sometimes strayed from a strictly Anglo-Jewish criterion. It is a reflection of the bias of the Exhibition that, despite its title, this Committee was composed of those from the historical and academic worlds rather than those active in the practice of the arts or literature – even though such expertise was already present on the General and other Committees.<sup>27</sup> The most notable inclusion of items from outside the realm of Anglo-Jewish experience was the material from the Strauss collection of Judaica, which had first been displayed in Paris in 1878. This led at least one correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle* to question the accuracy of the Exhibition's title and its capacity to achieve its own mission.<sup>28</sup>

The stated aims of the final version of the Exhibition seem to have been perhaps more limited, though ultimately more achievable. It defined itself as:

An Exhibition illustrating Anglo-Jewish History and Jewish Ecclesiastical Art, at the Royal Albert Hall, Kensington, with the following objects:-

1. To promote a knowledge of Anglo-Jewish History; to create a deeper interest in its records and relics, and to aid in their preservation.
2. To determine the extent of the materials, which exist for the compilation of a History of the Jews in England.<sup>29</sup>

However, the sub-text of these objectives was more significant. The Exhibition clearly sought to locate the Jewish community firmly within the long run

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<sup>27</sup> The curatorial role of the Literary and Arts Committee is described in Mocatta's Report (see endnote 14?). The composition of that Committee is listed in the 1887 Exhibition catalogue, p. x).

<sup>28</sup> "I endeavoured to show that if the original object of the Exhibition had been carried out in a more concentrated and thorough manner, it might have been a means of acquiring more matter relating to Anglo-Jewish history ... The original idea of the Exhibition has in a great measure been shut out and therefore it is not entitled to be called Anglo-Jewish Historical". Signed, A Student of Anglo-Jewish History, *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1887.

<sup>29</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. vii.

of a shared history of England.<sup>30</sup> It aimed to demonstrate that, notwithstanding a period of expulsion from 1290 to 1656, Jews had over a considerable period and increasingly in more recent times, contributed to the welfare of the realm, and to position the current generations of Anglo-Jewry as incontrovertibly English – albeit of a dissenting religious persuasion.<sup>31</sup> Their call was for Jews to be part of a national unity that respected religious diversity. It was this version of Anglo-Jewish history and the discourse that informed it, which was to persist well into the twentieth century.

The Exhibition at the Albert Hall was divided into four main sections covering Historic Records and Relics, Jewish Ecclesiastical Art, Antiquities and Coins and Medals. The supplementary Exhibitions covered Documents, Religious Items and Jewellery, MSS, Engravings and Printed Books respectively.

The catalogue introduction to the Historic Records section comprised a largely hagiographic review of the Jewish experience in England. In terms of items on display, the Exhibition commenced around the time of the Norman Conquest. Dr Gaster's lecture on Jewish sources of the Arthur and Merlin legends sought to extend the idea of shared history back into English historical mythology. The treatment of the Jews in this pre-expulsion period was largely explained in terms of roles and positions imposed on them by external forces. The catalogue suggested that the primary area of activity for the Jews of that era was money lending, which was

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<sup>30</sup> It was probably no coincidence that the first lecture given in conjunction with the Exhibition was entitled "The London Jewry 1290".

<sup>31</sup> This was echoed by the *Jewish Chronicle* in its Jubilee Leader (17 June 1887) which stressed the equality of loyal feeling among *British Jews, British Methodists, British Catholics and British Quakers*. The emphases are mine and serve to highlight the grouping of dissenters of all religious persuasions. As discussed above, the *Jewish Chronicle* seems to have been more British than English in its outlook.

explained (and sub-textually excused) as being the result of the need for a non-Christian group to act as a conduit for an activity, barred to others by Canon Law.<sup>32</sup> Jewish money-lenders were located within the nexus of Royal finances. The catalogue, adopting a Victorian, Anglo-Jewish position, took for granted a desire on the part of their mediaeval co-religionists to assimilate. Their inability to achieve this goal was attributed primarily to the fact that they were prevented from so doing because ‘... citizenship involved spiritual communion ...’ and only secondarily to ‘... the hatred with which they were regarded as the arch-enemies of the Church’.<sup>33</sup> The accusations of ritual child murder, a contributory overt reason for the Expulsion, were dismissed summarily – even though the Exhibition itself included items which related to such purported incidents. The significance of exhibits relating to this early period is to be found in the way in which they further the aim of presenting a shared history stretching almost as far back in time as the written history of England itself. The gap of two hundred and fifty years between expulsion and re-admittance was passed over in such a way as to permit all but the observant visitor/reader to ignore its obvious significance. Although the Exhibition itself may have been silent on this period, some of the lectures in the accompanying programme, including Wolf’s ‘The Middle Age of Anglo-Jewish History’ dealt with it in some detail and also referred to the research that had already been published by others.

The double bind for Anglo-Jewry was that in order to validate a claim of shared history, the Exhibition needed to look back at the past, thus recalling both links and events during periods of persecution. The connection with the past and the

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<sup>32</sup> ‘They thus formed a kind of sponge which first drained the country dry owing to the monopoly of capitalist transactions given them by Canon Law, and then could be squeezed into the Royal Treasury’. *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Holy Land brought into the debate the potential for latent or even overt anti-Semitism within the Christian Church. Recalling a shared past also foregrounded the existence of concepts of the meaning of the term 'Jew' that were derived from accumulated reception of received opinions and teachings rather than actual lived experience. As Zygmunt Bauman has suggested:

..the age of modernity inherited 'the Jew' already firmly separated from the Jewish men and women who inhabited its towns and villages.<sup>34</sup>

References to history opened the possibility of a debate between present reality and a received past and had the dangerous potential of allowing the latter to overshadow the former.

The history of the post re-admittance period, as presented in the Catalogue, was couched in terms of the Jew as just another religious dissenter. Within that framework, the so-called external history of the Jews in terms of their relationship with the host community and their struggle for emancipation was recounted as an albeit uneven but almost inevitably successful upward trajectory towards full acceptance and equality by the mid nineteenth century. The internal history of the Jewish community was characterised as having been continuous and peaceful.<sup>35</sup> The creation of the Reform Synagogue in 1840/1 was dismissed as having stirred up exaggerated feelings of conflict at the time but which had long since abated.<sup>36</sup> The tensions within the United Synagogue as it expanded from its City base to serve the emerging communities elsewhere in London and the suburbs went unmentioned, as

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<sup>34</sup> Z. Baumann, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> This was a much understated version of a potential schism, which in religious terms led to the issue of formal letters of excommunication for the new community. It was to be almost another 20 years before in 1905 the Chief Rabbi entered a Reform Synagogue. This was on the occasion of F.D. Mocatta's funeral.

did arguments involving the role of the provincial Jewish communities and their relationship to the centre. Items relating to several of these communities were displayed in this section as evidence of the implied peaceful spread of the Jewish population throughout England. No reference was made to the problems that had to be faced by the arrival of immigrants with a very different set of socio-religious beliefs. This omission was made notwithstanding the presence on the General Committee of figures who were only too well aware of these rising tensions such as: Canon Samuel Barnett (1834 –1913), who played a major role in the religious and cultural life of the East End from 1873 onwards; the Reverend Brooke Lambert (1834-1901), Vicar of St Marks in Whitechapel; and Samuel Montagu whose active participation was central to political and Jewish life in the East End.<sup>37</sup>

Mapping the locations of the Jewish members of the various Committees involved in the Exhibition and the lenders thereto graphically proves a social, if not a financial, bias away from the City and certainly its easterly environs. Anglo-Jewish history for this Exhibition meant the history of a Jewish establishment, by then living in London's West End and the neighbouring areas, physically and socio-culturally separated from its own past and from the Jewish population in the East End. This Exhibition was about that acculturated Jewish establishment. It looked outwards and westwards to the host community. For an Exhibition that set comprehensiveness as one of its distinguishing criteria, the gaps resulting from this are all the more glaring. In taking the 1887 Exhibition of 1887 as a starting point for an investigation into the visual representation of 'the Jew' in English art before the turn of the century, one has to be aware that it was a very particular presentation. It was mediated by the

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<sup>37</sup> For Barnett and Samuel, see Biographical Notes App. 1.



aspirations of Anglo-Jewry and intentionally not, despite its protestations of comprehensiveness, an unalloyed reading of its subject.

There were socio-political as well as cultural-religious problems inherent in involving, at this early date, the immigrant communities on the other side of London in the East End. As this immigrant community increased in numbers and visibility, so the leaders of Anglo-Jewry adopted policies aimed at dealing with what it perceived as a problem with the propensity to destabilize its own position. Given that among the underlying aims of the Exhibition was a confirmation of the place for Anglo-Jewry within the mainstream of English life, it would have been almost inconceivable for the organisers to have celebrated this alien culture as part of their version of Anglo-Jewish history. Theirs was a culture shared with the English community and not one, which they the Anglo-Jews shared with aliens – albeit fellow Jews. It would have been problematic to have included the culture of the immigrant community. The mass arrivals were at that time still of relatively recent origin and their cultural heritage was clearly outside the terms of reference of the 1887 Exhibition.

One way in which a definition of identity can be expressed is in terms of what that definition excludes. Anglo-Jewry's project of self-identification deliberately excluded the immigrant Jewish community. By writing the new immigrant community out of the Exhibition *ab initio*, Anglo-Jewry signalled that it did not consider the immigrants to be a part of the topic under consideration. Here again Anglo-Jewry found itself in an awkward double bind. On the one hand, concern for and action on behalf of persecuted Jews in other countries was regarded as an

undeniable obligation for Anglo-Jewry. Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) was a prime, but by no means the only, mover in this respect.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, such action inevitably linked Anglo-Jewry to an alien culture and fuelled the arguments of those who argued about the Englishness of Jews and their true allegiances. In 1878 and again in 1881 in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, Professor Goldwin Smith had argued on this issue with the Rev Hermann Adler - the latter's responses were republished in the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>39</sup> Professor Goldwin Smith contended that patriotism was impossible for the Jews because, 'Their only country is their race, which is one with their religion'.<sup>40</sup> Adler published lengthy refutations of this charge and of Goldwin Smith's alternative postulation that Jews who were patriotic could not be true Jews.

As details of the pogroms in Russia emerged, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported almost weekly on the plight of their Jewish co-religionists. In this period, however, it remained an 'over there' problem, which needed to be addressed at source with aid and assistance from here. One such response was the Mansion House Relief Fund Appeal which elicited support from beyond just the Jewish community and the formation in 1882 of a more permanent successor, the Russo-Jewish Committee. But while expressing the utmost concern for the plight of Jews in Southern Russia and exhorting the community to rally to their aid, a leader in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 9 December 1881 was careful to retain an attitude, perhaps typical of that blend of moral rectitude and pragmatism that typified the Victorian era, in the advice it proffered as to the dispersion of such aid and the destination of such emigrants.

As for the class of men who should be assisted to emigrate, those who are likely to be able to earn a living for themselves should clearly receive preference ... those who reach a haven of safety will in a short time be

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<sup>38</sup> For Montefiore, see Biographical Note App. 1.

<sup>39</sup> See Goldwin Smith, *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3, April and May 1878; vol. 4, July 1878; vol. 10, October and December 1881; vol. 12, November 1882. See Adler, *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 April, p. 12; 19 April 1878, p. 10; 7 October 1881, p. 11; 21 October 1881, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in, *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 April 1878, p. 10.

enabled to assist many of their kindred without appealing to outside aid ... sound practical sense on where are our brethren [are] to be sent to ... he [Mr A Kushkedt of the New York Committee] advocates Bosnia in addition to America while others give the preference to Palestine. We see no reason why the three schemes should in any way clash.<sup>41</sup>

Even before the mass immigration in the last decade of the nineteenth century brought into sharp focus for the London world the figure of the impoverished Jew from Eastern Europe, articles in the *Jewish Chronicle* were already voicing concern over issues that indicated a growth in a separatist culture. Thus a leader of 30 January 1880, while overtly condemning the existence of *Chedarim* (privately run single classrooms for religious and Hebrew instruction run by a religious teacher or Melamed) on health and safety grounds, writing that, '[they are] nothing less literally and figuratively than a plague spot in its midst', was fundamentally more exercised by the need to abolish institutions (including, in a passing reference, the *Chevroth*, usually small, local places of worship established by groups of the immigrant communities) that perpetuated difference: 'Whatever tends to perpetuate the isolation of this element [the immigrants] of the community must be dangerous to its welfare'.<sup>42</sup> On 4 February 1881, the same journal turned its full attention to the 'Minor' Synagogues (*Chevroth*), those local religious institutions which owed their existence to their specific appeals to very narrowly (often geographically) defined segments of the immigrant community, and defined them as institutions whose 'whole spirit is opposed to the general tendency of the age in English Judaism' and which 'stand out as embodiments of isolation'.<sup>43</sup> The loss of control implied by their continued existence and concern over the host community viewing all its Jews in the light of these manifestations of Judaism are two among other possible explanations

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<sup>41</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1881.

<sup>42</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 January 1880, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 February 1881, pp. 9-10.

for such strong language applied to what was in reality, at least at that time, such a limited threat.

As we shall investigate at length with reference to the 1906 Whitechapel Exhibition, Anglo-Jewry felt that the immigrants needed to be reconstructed as English and to accept the shared vision in order to be allowed to be part of this project. Throughout this discussion the term 'anglify' rather than 'anglicise' has been used to describe this process because of the former's more active connotations. This motive would explain why the emerging Yiddish culture of the East End of London was and had to be denied. It was the antithesis of Anglo-Jewry's shared culture project. It was a denial of the English self-image that Anglo-Jewry was seeking to affirm. Yiddish culture was grounded in the concepts and beliefs of the Ostjuden – the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia - and included unfamiliar cultural values. Furthermore, it employed a language that would not normally have been understood by others even within the Anglo-Jewish community and which marked its users as outsiders. For Anglo-Jewry this Yiddish culture was not about sharing common ground, it was a sign of otherness. It marked out the Jew as different. To incorporate this vision of Jewishness into the discourse of the 1887 Exhibition risked blurring the lines between the acculturated, 'established' English Jew and the alien Jewish immigrant. For Anglo-Jewry the distinction between the two groups may have seemed obvious and the proposition of such difference intellectually tenable. It clearly, however, risked posing serious questions of credibility in the eyes of at the very least some segments of the host community on whom such fine definitions between Jew and Jew might easily be lost. For some, the more one group of Jews claimed a difference from another, the easier and perhaps

more justifiable it might be to treat them all as one and to reject or brand them as 'other'.

Just as the leaders of the indigenous Anglo-Jewish community were unwilling to accept the immigrants in their unreconstructed form, so segments of the immigrant community, the heterogeneity of which must be recognised, had their own reservations. The cultural values and, perhaps more significantly for some, the religious practices of their Anglo-Jewish hosts were divorced from those the immigrants brought with them. Some rejected the putative authority of the Chief Rabbi over their own religious leaders. Whatever the motivation for or explanation of the exclusion of these segments of the Jewish population, their absences are as important as other presences in understanding the representation of the Jew on offer at this Exhibition and by this discourse.

The Historic Records section of the Exhibition covered a very wide range of objects and artefacts, documents and pictures dating from the pre-expulsion to the contemporary period. This would seem to have been the first occasion anywhere on which such a large scale attempt had been made to bring together such a comprehensive record of Jewish existence within another host community.

Contracts, building title deeds, pictures and plans were selected to provide the evidence of long-standing Jewish presence.

We have been too long accustomed to date our settlement here from the days of the Lord Protector and altogether to ignore our residence during the reign of the Norman and Angevin Kings.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sermon preached by Rev Dr H. Adler at Bayswater Synagogue, 15 April 1887; reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 April 1887.

It sought to prove both by their individual importance (which varied in degree) and by their aggregation how such Jewish threads formed part of the whole fabric of English history. It would seem that the organisers were following a Victorian proposition that equated replication and aggregation with ‘scientific’ proof. Perhaps the most important historical ‘fact’ demonstrated by the display of old contracts was the linkage between these documents (or *shetar* in Hebrew) and the Star Chamber in mediaeval English history. Quite what any but the most avid and expert viewer would have made of the sheer number of documents and fragments of documents included is hard to judge. The placement of the Exhibition itself (as opposed to its Gala event), which was in rooms on the outer corridor rather than the main body of the Hall, must have dictated a very crowded display.<sup>45</sup>

The Pictures and Plans of Jewish Buildings sub-section included details of the earliest Synagogues and their Jewish institutions (schools, hospitals, infant asylums), thus demonstrating more than two hundred years of religious worship and active presence and substantiating the geographic spread outside London and across the country. This presentation might also be interpreted as demonstrating how buildings, perhaps previously unremarked as ‘Jewish’ by those who passed them every day, were as much a part of the shared urban landscape as their English counterparts.

Personal records and documents traced a long historical record of the Jews and their dealings with the host community. The Historic Records section also

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<sup>45</sup> Although the opening party was held in the main body of the Albert Hall, the actual Exhibition was housed in four rooms around the perimeter area, each measuring 60 ft by 20 ft.

included the Portrait sub-section of the Exhibition and the Newman Collection of Prints. This is examined in more detail after this overview of the Catalogue. In addition to these, this part of the Exhibition had two sub-sections, which merit comment.

The life of Sir Moses Montefiore, who had died at the age of almost one hundred and one eighteen months prior to the Exhibition, was celebrated in a separate section of “Montefioriana”. He was presented as a paradigmatic figure within Anglo-Jewry and for the wider community of that time – a religious man, who achieved financial success at an early age and devoted himself to the cause of world-wide Jewry for which he received international recognition at the highest levels. Notwithstanding the greater (financial) power of other families, it was Sir Moses, with his established status within the English socio-political establishment, who was singled out in this way. Sir Moses was, however, in many ways a less than obvious quasi-role model to have chosen. His deeply held religious convictions informed many of his views on wider, secular matters. His less than ardent support for the cause of Jewish political emancipation was in part due to his concern about the lessening of rabbinical authority that he feared would inevitably result therefrom.

This segment also contained a sub section featuring a collection of items relating to the Beni-Israel, the Jewish community of India, which, the catalogue stated, could trace its roots there to 490 AD. This Exhibition, which took place in the Jubilee Year of the Empress of India, perhaps deliberately, sought to point out that there had been a Jewish presence that very substantially predated the arrival of British rule in that part of world. A similar motive of creating linkage between the Jewish community

and the British Empire of Queen Victoria could have explained the inclusion of items relating to the Jewish communities in Australia and South Africa and a map of the British Empire showing past and present Jewish congregations.<sup>46</sup> These items would seem to have been intended to create an association between the British Empire and Jewish presence in its farthest outposts within an Exhibition relating to Anglo-Jewish history and could be interpreted as seeking to strengthen the bonds between the two communities to the point where they might be viewed as inextricably intertwined.

The Introduction to the Ecclesiastical Art section was apologetic in tone in its opening remarks about the failure of efforts in the field of visual art to create Jewish style, which it variously ascribed to the strictures of the Second Commandment and the effects of the Diaspora.

Whether the Hebrew consciousness is normally deficient of artistic sympathies, or whether it has been dulled in this respect by the Biblical command anent (sic) on graven images, are interesting questions upon which we need not dilate ... Our historic survey must be limited to the remark that, whatever the normal artistic capacities of the Hebrew people, they must have been strongly affected, if not altogether transformed, by the stupendous catastrophe of the Dispersion ...<sup>47</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle's* supplement of 8 April 1887 dwelt in greater detail on the consequences of the latter.

Nevertheless as a consequence to the dispersion and their contingent disappearance as a coherent nation, it necessarily follows that they have ceased to be able to express what might rightly be termed a national art...the collective term Jewish Ecclesiastical Art .. assumes rather the character of Ecclesiastical Art as applied by Jews and presents variations in accordance with the schools of the different countries wherein Jews have settled.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, Item 549 relates to the Great Synagogue, Sydney in 1845, Item 551 relates to the Melbourne Synagogue in 1853, Item 552 relates to the Kimberly Diamond Fields Synagogue in 1881 and Item 900 relates to a map of the British Empire.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Supplement, *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1887, p. 3.



Far from making an appeal for recognition of a separate Jewish Art, this comment must be interpreted as valorising the concept of local adaptation.

One of the underlying characteristics of this Exhibition was its didactic nature. The Ecclesiastical Art section was, perhaps, less concerned with the artistic beauty of the items on display than with explaining and demystifying their use. The employment of ornamentation and finery was explained as being in the glory of G\*d – a position that should have been readily understood by Catholic and High Church visitors. The section was broken down into specific groups of objects following what Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett has referred to as ‘the Jewish plan’, with each group of objects being headed by an explanatory text outlining the purpose of the items and their role in Jewish practice.<sup>49</sup> The Delegate Chief Rabbi, the Reverend Dr Hermann Adler, a member of the General Committee and its Executive, had addressed this topic in his sermon at Bayswater Synagogue.

Had there been less mystery about our religious observance, there would perhaps have been less prejudice, certainly greater freedom from foul aspersions. It is the object of one section of this Exhibition to remove something of the mysteriousness ...<sup>50</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle* dated 8 April 1887 reiterated this point.

The Exhibition is of an educational character. It is calculated to remove something of the mystery that somehow seems in the mind of the outside world to environ all that is Jewish.<sup>51</sup>

Two sets of items that might have aroused contentious comment – the instruments for circumcision and the knives for kosher slaughtering – were only minimally represented in this section or elsewhere in the Exhibition; there were five

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<sup>49</sup> Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, p. 86 “objects were arranged ... namely by ritual setting – synagogue, home and person (life cycle events)”.

<sup>50</sup> Sermon preached by Rev Dr H. Adler at Bayswater Synagogue, 15 April 1887; reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 April 1887.

<sup>51</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1887, p. 10.

items for the former and four for the latter, accompanied by two comments on the efforts made to ensure that such slaughter was achieved as painlessly as possible. Given the interest that was to focus – albeit briefly – on the possibility that kosher slaughtering knives were used in the Ripper Murders in 1888 this minimal display was perhaps fortunate. One may legitimately surmise that this quasi-omission might have been motivated by a desire to pass over items such as these which demonstrated real differences with the practices of the host Christian community, and to emphasise more familiar (candelabra) or easily explained items (scrolls of the Old Testament). The Jew represented by this discourse was similar rather than different.

Mention has already been made of the inclusion of items from the Strauss collection. Insofar as this Exhibition provided an opportunity to display items of interest to a Jewish or pro-Jewish gentile audience, there is some logic in their inclusion. At their first public showing at the Exposition Universelle at the Palais du Trocadéro in Paris these items were referred to as ‘objets d’art religieux hébraïques’.<sup>52</sup> This placed them within the categories of ancient/oriental/Old Testament religion but outside the realm of Western Europe. Although their presence undoubtedly augmented the quality of the 1887 Exhibition and may have assisted an understanding of Jewish ritual and have increased an appreciation of Jewish ecclesiastical art, there was no linkage with the Anglo-Jewish theme.

The collection of Antiquities which comprised the third major section of the Exhibition inevitably moved outside a rigid Anglo-Jewish definition since Antiquities of a purely Anglo-Jewish nature hardly existed. The introduction,

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<sup>52</sup> Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, p. 82.

perhaps reverting to the original nomenclature of the Exhibition, claimed that Jewish Antiquities ‘ranged over the whole field of historic archaeology’.<sup>53</sup> This section, which included many items from Palestine, sought to locate Anglo-Jewish experience within the much broader base of Jewish history and its Antiquities. Perhaps the importance of this section to the Anglo-Jewish discourse is the linkage it provided between contemporary Jewry and the Judaism of the Old Testament and the Holy Land. The inclusion of items discovered by *inter alia* the Palestine Exploration Fund which, as has already been noted, numbered several of its leading figures amongst the membership of the Exhibition’s General Committee, demonstrated the connection between the Anglo-Jewish community, current Victorian archaeological endeavour and Palestine as the Holy Land.

Unsurprisingly, given the underlying discourse of the Exhibition, Jewishness as a separate racial or ethnic identity was not explored as a topic among the exhibits – save for one startling exception. Jewish Composite Photograph [Catag Item 1280], lent by Committee member, Francis Galton, was included with an explanatory quotation in the Catalogue.

A number of photographs of Jewish lads being taken; these were imposed one on another on the same sensitive plate, which gave ultimately only the common features of the various faces and thus gives the nearest approximation to the Jewish type that science can afford.<sup>54</sup>

Within an Exhibition which sought to emphasise similarities and eliminate all but legitimate religious dissent as the difference between the English Jew and his gentile English counterpart, the inclusion of such an item – albeit of fashionable scientific interest - seems perverse. If a Jewish type could indeed be established – even by

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<sup>53</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. 133.

<sup>54</sup> *CFG Journal*, the Anthropological Institute, November 1885.

other perhaps more scientific means than those employed in the Galton loan – it would have immediately destroyed much of the argument so painstakingly constructed by the rest of the Exhibition. There are several possible explanations for its inclusion ranging from the pragmatic to the theoretical/scientific.<sup>55</sup> It might be argued that for those who included the item, the Jews it displayed were deviant from the English Jew, who was the true focus. It would then follow that Anglo-Jewry believed that these deviant Jews could then be anglified and/or eventually changed by “breeding of the right sort of man” in some process of Social Darwinism.<sup>56</sup> Without a belief in the potential for such a change, the inclusion of this item would have severely undermined one major line of the Exhibition’s argument about the indistinguishability of the English Jew from his fellow Englishman.

As the introduction to the Numismatic Section admitted, the Exhibition could not show that which did not exist – that is to say specific Anglo-Jewish coinage. Nevertheless, relevance for the subject was sought by the claim that once again it helped to place Anglo-Jewish history within a wider context.

The Portrait sub-section of the Catalogue adopted an historical chronology in its presentation – items were listed by the date of birth of the subject with commentaries on the salient dates and facts of their lives.

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<sup>55</sup> Galton’s membership of the committee may have been the result of a professional association with Jacobs. In these circumstances, the offer of a loan or suggestion of an exhibit which had apparent connections to the topic of the Exhibition from a leading scientist of the day could hardly be rejected. For a fuller discussion of Galton, Jacobs and the Jewish Composite, see Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, p. 64 et seq.

<sup>56</sup> Beatrice Webb in Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain 1900/1914*, quoted in Z. Baumann, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 34.

The section opened with five images of Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657) and his intercession with Cromwell which led to the re-admission of the Jews in 1656. Although attributions to Rembrandt (1606-1669) and Solomon Hart (1806-1881) are given for three of the five works in this particular group, most of the works displayed elsewhere were either unattributed or by artists who are less well known today. A feature of the catalogue is that throughout far greater prominence is given to lenders than to artists. This was an Exhibition about Anglo-Jewish history and not about individual artists. The owner/collector was deemed to be more important than the creator. The main works by Jewish artists in this section of the Exhibition included a self-portrait by Solomon Hart, two portraits by Abraham Solomon (1823-1862) and a portrait of Sir Anthony de Rothschild by Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886), Abraham's sister. The third member of the Solomon family, Simeon (1840-1905) was represented by photos of his drawings of Jewish Ceremonials which were included among the Miscellaneous Prints, Photographs and Drawings sub-section.

Of the one hundred and ninety eight images in the Portrait sub-section, more than one third are of rabbis or of persons connected with Jewish religious worship and learning. Throughout the period covered by these exhibits and especially in the earlier portion of that chronology, the history of Anglo-Jewry is in large measure recounted through its religious leaders – from Yacob Sasportas (1618 -1698), the first Chief Rabbi of the Jews of England after the Resettlement, to the Adlers, father and son, the then current Chief Rabbi and Delegate Chief Rabbi of Great Britain respectively.<sup>57</sup> The difference in their titles is revealing of changing attitudes by and about Jews and their position in English society during this two hundred year period. Whereas Sasportas was referred to as the Chief Rabbi of the Jews in England - a

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<sup>57</sup> Cat. reference items 952, 1075, 1117.

distinctly identified separate group - in the case of the Adlers, the absence of a reference to Jews in their titles might be read as the Jews taking and/or seeking to have others take Jewish presence in England for granted. Examining some of the individual representations used in this part of the Exhibition, one is struck by the absence of Judaïca surrounding the figures. The portrait of Aaron Hart might be read as being of a Jew, more because his wearing of a yarmulke and the Hebrew inscription on the book on which he is leaning than because of some possibly assumed Jewish features in his physiognomy.<sup>58</sup> There is little else in the image that would mark out the sitter from any other clergyman of the period. The Frederick Barlin (active in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century) portrait of Rabbi Meldola and the Slater portrait of Rabbi Hirschell are also both devoid of any Judaïca apart from Hebrew text on the spines of books. Neither is wearing anything that would mark him out as a Rabbi and although one might perhaps surmise from their general physiognomy that these were not of Anglo-Saxon origin, there is little to suggest positively from their appearance or dress that they are Jews.<sup>59</sup> The selection of individual images seems to have been done with some care for the interpretation that might emerge and perhaps with an eye for images, whose neutrality, as to the Jewish ethnicity of their subjects, would have supported the main lines of an Anglo-Jewish positioning.

Predictably, given the composition of the General Committee and the project in which they were involved in promoting this Exhibition, one of the two remaining groupings into which the portraits might be gathered related to members of the Cousinhood – the inter-married leadership of mid to late nineteenth century Anglo-Jewry and their forebears. This started with early members of the Sephardi

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<sup>58</sup> Cat. reference 959.

<sup>59</sup> Cat. references 985 and 1004. Hirschell was also depicted in an engraving by W. Holl, after a painting by Slater, published 1808, used in the exhibition (Item 1012). This engraving includes Hebrew text at the foot of the illustration.

‘aristocracy’, predecessors of the Montefiores, Levy Barent Cohen (1747-1808) many of whose descendants were involved in the Cousinhood’s inter-marriages, Isaac D’Israel (1776-1848), father of Benjamin Disraeli and the first generation of the Rothschilds. It then moved towards the contemporary members of the Anglo-Jewish leadership. Inevitably given the business interests of the majority of Anglo-Jewry’s main families, many of the subjects of these portraits came from the world of finance. However, the organisers were apparently conscious of a need to project a wider image and politicians and members of the professions were also included. Here again the examples of the portraits of the Economist, David Ricardo (1772-1823) whose marriage to a Quaker and subsequent conversion was not mentioned, and the Member of Parliament, Ralph Bernal (1784-1854) give no visual clues as to the sitters’ Jewish origins – neither would have stood out in any way in a group showing of eminent person of their periods.<sup>60</sup>

The last and in some instances less predictable and more interesting grouping was that which included prominent Jews from outside either of these spheres. These included actors and musicians (including some from the world of popular culture), leading figures from the worlds of secular learning and academe, prominent converts and supporters of Jewish affairs.<sup>61</sup> Once again, revisiting the Exhibition by way of the actual items that were displayed, the same care about possible interpretations seems to have been taken in for example the choice of representations of Mrs Bland and

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<sup>60</sup> Cat. references 1024 and 1025.

<sup>61</sup> Moses Mendes (d. 1758), poet and author of musical comediettas; Myer Lyon aka Leoni, Opera singer and composer; Mrs Bland (1769-1810), actress and singer; Isaac Nathan (1792-1864), composer and song writer; John Braham (1774-1856), opera singer and composer; Henry Russell, (b. 1813), song writer; Ferdinando Mendez (d. 1728), physician; Jacob de Castro Sarmiento (1691-1762), physician; Benjamin Gompertz (1779-1859) mathematician; Nathan Benmohel, (c1800-1869) linguist; Emanuel Deutsch (1829-1873) orientalist; Professor J. Waley (d. 1874) lawyer and economist; Sir George Jessel (1824-1883), lawyer and Master of the Rolls; Judah Benjamin (1812-1884), statesman and lawyer; Lord George Gordon (1750-1793); The Duke Of Sussex (1773-1843).

John Braham. Although the Condé image of Mrs Bland is a mixture of the ingénue and the risquée actress with the almost revealing décolletage, she could hardly be interpreted as a dangerous ‘belle Juive’ figure.<sup>62</sup> Braham was represented in full stage costume in an 1802 cartoon by Dighton (1752-1814), in the Newman collection section, but an engraving by Cardon (1772-1813) shows a young man with no apparent hint of Jewish origins.<sup>63</sup> Without overstating the case, a pattern of awareness about the potential for English as opposed to Jewish readings of images seems to have been present in some of the choices of individuals and their representations.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting and surprising inclusion was that of a group of Jewish boxers.<sup>65</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the inclusion of this particular sub-group might suggest that more than a decade before Max Nordau (1849-1923) was to promote ‘muscular Jewry’ as part of the Zionist movement, the organisers of the 1887 Exhibition had recognised value in promoting this aspect of Jewish achievement alongside the more traditionally recognised and frequently deployed figures of religious learning, civic worthiness and financial success. Mendoza was a particularly interesting subject to include, because, as the catalogue noted, he was the ‘the founder of the so-called elegant or scientific school of Boxing’ and was during his career introduced to the Prince of Wales.<sup>66</sup> His inclusion might therefore be interpreted as a demonstration of how Jewish influence could transform even raw fighting into scientific pugilism. It seems more likely, however, that these sportsmen

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<sup>62</sup> Cat. reference 1023.

<sup>63</sup> Cat. reference 1035.

<sup>64</sup> In some cases the importance of the subject or practical availability of an item may have dictated its selection.

<sup>65</sup> The Exhibition contained pictures of the following: Daniel Mendoza – Catag reference 1019. Biographical Note App. 2; Dutch Sam (1775-1816), Catag. Reference 1029; Aby Belasco (1797-1824), Catag. reference 1074; Barney Aaron (c1800-1859), Catag. Reference 1074; and Young Dutch Sam (1801-1843) Catag. Reference 1029.

<sup>66</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. 55. Catag. reference 1019. Biographical Note App. 1.



were included as a mark of Englishness that linked nineteenth century Anglo-Jewry with eighteenth and early nineteenth century English ‘Sporting Life’ traditions. In adopting the value sets inherent in either ‘muscular Jewry’ or the ‘Sporting Life’ Anglo-Jewry, it may be argued that this was going against the values of its own culture and what Daniel Boyarin has proposed is a deep seated reverence for *Edelkayt* - the nobility of the gentle scholar, the respect for control and inner spirituality.<sup>67</sup> As Boyarin argues:

The term *goyim naches* refers to violent physical activity such as hunting, duelling or wars – all of which Jews traditionally despised, for which they in turn were despised.<sup>68</sup>

The Muscular Jew is the antithesis of the idea of the gentle scholar.<sup>69</sup> The significance of this argument extends beyond the specific discussion of the inclusion of Jewish boxers as part of an Anglo-Jewish past. In its desire to prove its inherent Englishness, Anglo-Jewry may in 1887 have fallen into the paradox so clearly articulated by Bauman.

The harder you try to assimilate the more you emphasise the power of those with whom you would assimilate, of the group by whom you wish to be accepted.<sup>70</sup>

Women were conspicuous by their absence from this male gendered version of Anglo-Jewish history and its informing discourse. Only thirteen solo portraits of women were included in this selection and all but one of these, Mrs Bland, were portrayals of women in their roles as mothers or wives of leading families within Anglo-Jewry. Catherine da Costa Villareale was described in terms of the importance of her father, ‘Director of the Bank of England’, and her two husbands – even the

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<sup>67</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 8 et seq.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70.

<sup>70</sup> Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 70.

reference to her daughter only recorded the fact that she became Viscountess Galaway.<sup>71</sup> Ester Hana Montefiore was described as the Grandmother of Sir Moses and the daughter of a Leghorn coral merchant – the only achievement listed for her was that she bore eighteen children!<sup>72</sup> Judith Levy was described with reference to her father, Moses Hart, and her husband, Elias Levy; though she was credited with subscribing £4,000 to the rebuilding of the Great Synagogue.<sup>73</sup> Only as the records move towards contemporary figures do more balanced attributions appear. Lady Montefiore, wife of Sir Moses, was at least credited with having ‘assisted him in all his communal labours’ – albeit that the balance of her entry related to her writings of ‘Private Journals’.<sup>74</sup> Hannah, Baroness de Rothschild, fared better – aside from mention of her father, Levi Barent Cohen, and her husband, N.M. Rothschild, she was characterised as ‘an active worker in the Anglo-Jewish community’.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, we are told that the life of Charlotte de Rothschild, Lionel’s wife ‘was devoted to charity’, but the entries for Leonora and Evelina, her daughters, revert to the ‘wife of/mother of’ model.<sup>76</sup> This type of attribution and commentary may have owed as much to mid/late Victorian values and attitudes as to those of the Jewish community.

The Portrait sub-section was followed by one devoted to the Newman Collection of Portraits and Prints.<sup>77</sup> Of the one hundred and twenty nine catalogue entries, sixty-eight were of individuals, most of whom featured in the previous

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<sup>71</sup> Cat. reference Item 967.

<sup>72</sup> Cat. reference 971.

<sup>73</sup> Cat. reference 981.

<sup>74</sup> Cat. reference 1053.

<sup>75</sup> Cat. reference ?

<sup>76</sup> Cat. references 1105, 1115, 1116.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Alfred Newman (1851-1887). An active member of several Committees of the present Exhibition. Deeply interested in Anglo-Jewish history, he brought together a remarkable collection of books, pamphlets, and portraits bearing on the subject. He started and organised a movement against the demolition of the ancient Synagogue in Bevis Marks, 1885’. *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. 67.

portrait section, and a further twenty seven were of synagogues and of homes and places of Jewish interest. As in the Portrait section, women were all but ignored.

The remaining exhibits comprised caricatures, cartoons and other similar items, in some of which poor Jews made their only entry into this Exhibition. The images often presented stereotypes such as the ubiquitous Jewish second-hand clothes dealer; even though, as Mayhew had shown thirty years earlier, such figures were on the decline even in his time. No attempt was made to present the more recent status of the poor Jew, let alone to include such presence as a line of investigation in the overall project ‘...to promote a knowledge of Anglo-Jewish history’.<sup>78</sup> The inclusion of cartoons that took the stereotype of the Jew as the butt of their humour was explained by organisers and contemporary Jewish commentators as being a relic of past prejudice now all but expunged. As the *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1887 noted:

Perhaps one of the most striking pieces of instruction for the Christian visitor is that conveyed by the caricatures of the past which the Committee have had the courage and good sense to exhibit. They represent a phase of English opinion that in its cruder forms is now past but survivals of which still linger on in popular talk. The Gentile visitor will be ashamed of these representations and his shame will be to his credit... The Exhibition is a remarkable record of prejudices outlived by dint of honourable conduct, a record of which not only Jews may be proud, but of which England has reason also to be proud.<sup>79</sup>

The congratulatory note of this comment might be read as containing faint undertones of Jewish superiority – the behaviour of Jews helping the English overcome an unwarranted prejudice which was unworthy of those who held it. It is also an interesting example of how the desire to demonstrate a shared culture may have induced the organisers to include anti-Jewish material; as if it was better to have been part of the cartoon history/culture – albeit negatively portrayed - of England than ignored by it.

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<sup>78</sup> *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, p. vii.

<sup>79</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1887.

The promoters presented Judaism as an ancient religion, as Christianity's precursor in the Holy Land. Its rituals were displayed as modes of worship, which could be understood by any visitor to an Exhibition of this kind – Jew and Gentile alike – and in such a way as to counter any preconceived notion that they were an inexplicable series of mysteries, which could only have meaning for the initiated insider. The profusion of religious artefacts was intended to elucidate and demystify Judaism and to display it as another legitimate and unthreatening form of dissenting religious practice within Victorian English society. The Judaism that defined 'the Jew' in the context of this Exhibition, although rooted in the past, was presented or shown as aspiring to be of everyday relevance to Victorian society and to co-exist with other religions within this wider context.

The Jew in England was not to be viewed as a recent immigrant or an outsider, but as one who could trace his ancestry back almost one thousand years in a country to the life and culture of which he had contributed and within whose society he had long been accepted. He was above all a subject of the Monarch like any other Englishman. The Anglo-Jew was defined by an acceptance of those standards of behaviour established by the leadership; a leadership that presented a united front both internally and externally and admitted of no significant dissension from its codes. Anglo-Jewry believed its codes accorded with those of the host nation and permitted that degree of mutual assimilation without loss of religious freedom that was a main plank in its construct of Anglo-Jewish history. There was a very strong sense of class in this presentation and the overall image of the Jew it sought to establish. Anglo-Jewry's leaders regarded themselves having, as of right, a place

among the upper echelons of English society and anything that vitiated against such a reading was largely ignored by the Exhibition.<sup>80</sup> Although the Exhibition inevitably focused on the lives of the leading Jewish figures during its period, there was little of a Disraelian sense of celebration of the unique contribution of the Jewish race. Indeed, it would seem that the organisers went out of their way to avoid such a reading.

The question has been raised, is it wise for our community thus to thrust itself upon public notice? Does not our strength and wisdom lie in dignified reserve, in the absence of all ostentation? Now I may aver on behalf of the zealous originator of the project, and indeed on behalf of all those who laboured with him, that they view with aversion everything that savours of flaunt and ostentation.<sup>81</sup>

### Contemporary Critical Reception

Looking back on the Exhibition as it closed, the *Jewish Chronicle* was almost unstinting in praising its success.

Tomorrow the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition closes. Except, perhaps, financially it has been in every way an unqualified success.....Altogether the Exhibition has more than fulfilled the expectations that were raised by it. Mr Isidore Spielman and his fellow workers have every reason to be satisfied with the results of their labours.<sup>82</sup>

This praise may seem a little overdone, in the light of the attendance which had totalled little more than 12,000 in a three week run – a very low figure for an exhibition of this size in this era. Although the General Committee included, as we have noted, a significant non-Jewish element, including minor aristocracy, members of Parliament, the clergy, the army, academe and the liberal professions, many of the major figures of late Victorian society were conspicuous by their absence from it or

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<sup>80</sup> One of the more revealing, although perhaps inadvertent, examples of this class bias is the advertisement placed in the Catalogue by Charles Baker-Boys and School Outfitters. This company clearly assumed that visitors to the Exhibition – Jew or Gentile – would be of the private school segment of the population.

<sup>81</sup> Sermon preached by Rev Dr H. Adler at Bayswater Synagogue, 15 April 1887; reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 April 1887.

<sup>82</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, ?.

from attendance at the Exhibition. Queen Victoria was in Cannes at the time of the opening, but did not, on her return, pay it a visit although a month later, in May 1887, she journeyed to the East End to open the first completed section of the People's Palace (the eponymous Queen's Hall) accompanied by Walter Besant.

The non-Jewish press was generally sparing in its coverage of the event. *The Times* published a short piece on the Exhibition which focused on some of its older items – the cartoon of Aaron from the Essex Rolls, the Bodleian Ewer and the linkage between the Hebrew contracts and the Star Chamber – as well as the use of images of actors and boxers.<sup>83</sup> *The Daily Telegraph's* more comprehensive review was concerned about the manner in which the Exhibition over reached its more limited title and aim, an opinion similar to that expressed by 'a Student of Anglo-Jewish History' whose views in his letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* is noted above.<sup>84</sup>

Far transcending the scope indicated by the title, the exhibition of objects illustrating Jewish life and thought arranged at the Royal Albert Hall is a complete collection of Semitic archaeology one branch alone of which is covered by the designation Anglo-Jewish, all the rest serving to throw an extended light on the whole history of Judaism in various parts of the world...Portraits are perhaps the chief if not the only Anglo-Jewish element properly speaking.... In short were a fresh history of Judaism to be written with special reference to the moral and material advance of the community in England the materials might be sought with great success in this admirably complete Exhibition.<sup>85</sup>

Although during the month of April the *Illustrated London News* mentioned other Exhibitions every week, neither it nor the *Art Journal* nor the *Connoisseur* made any mention of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition. In terms of what I have described as

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<sup>83</sup> *The Times*, 6 April 1887.

<sup>84</sup> 'A Student of Anglo-Jewish History', *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1887.

<sup>85</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 1887.

its underlying aim and discourse, perhaps the most damning-with-faint-praise review of the Exhibition was that of the *Athenaeum*.

No visitor whether Jew or Gentile who has had an opportunity of visiting the above Exhibition now being held at the Royal Albert Hall can fail to be interested in the numerous objects there on view connected with the Jewish cult.<sup>86</sup>

The idea of an ‘interesting’ separate ‘Jewish cult’ was of course precisely what the promoters of the 1887 Exhibition were seeking to avoid. The problem of mounting an Exhibition of this kind, one aim of which was to prove a shared position, is that the act of so doing emphasises – as we have noted with various of the individual exhibits – not only points of conjunction, but also of disruption. It can indeed alert others to the points of dissimilarity. As Baumann suggests:

One cannot knock on a door unless one is outside; and it is the act of knocking which alerts residents to the fact that he who knocks is outside.<sup>87</sup>

Notwithstanding a less than enthusiastic reaction by most of the non-Jewish press and its seeming failure or unwillingness to accept what I have proposed was the underlying discourse of the 1887 Exhibition, that discourse gathered strength in later years. As Anglo-Jewry confronted the ever increasing problems posed by the immigrant Jews, the discourse established by its Exhibition provided the vision of the place of ‘the Jew’ in England to which it adhered and which it was to offer to the immigrants and their succeeding generations.

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<sup>86</sup> *Athenaeum*, ?

<sup>87</sup> Z. Baumann, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 78.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Importance of being Solomon

Solomon J Solomon by his reputation in his art, his loyalty to his race, his popularity and his youth was the very man.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

From a twenty-first century standpoint, Solomon J. Solomon may, perhaps justifiably, be regarded as a relatively minor figure in the pantheon of late Victorian and early Edwardian art; little more than a portraitist of some distinction and a contributor to the War effort through his work on camouflage. Such a judgement minimises his achievements.<sup>2</sup> It would ignore the positive assessment by his peers in the English art world.<sup>3</sup> It would disregard the view of his contemporaries both within the Anglo-Jewish community and abroad, for whom he was almost the portrait painter of choice.<sup>4</sup> It would overlook the major part he played in the development of

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<sup>1</sup> H. Cohen, personal notes on the appointment of Solomon J. Solomon as first President of the Maccabeans, quoted in Olga Phillips, *Solomon J. Solomon*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> The work of Solomon J. Solomon is included directly or by reference in many of the studies and exhibitions of late Victorian/early Edwardian Art - as for example most recently in *Exposed. The Victorian Nude*, Tate Britain, London 2002 and in *Art in the Age of Queen Victoria*, Royal Academy Travelling Exhibition, 1999-2001. In terms of solo exhibitions or monographic academic studies, he has been largely ignored for some time. The most recent solo exhibition of his work was held at the Ben Uri Gallery: *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, Ben Uri Art Society ; London: Ben Uri Art Gallery, 1990. This owed its genesis as much to his position as a former President of that organisation (1924-6) as to any sudden rediscovery of a long undervalued talent. Jenny Perry's extended catalogue essay for that Exhibition represents the most recent publicly available study of the artist. Prior to that, Olga Phillips' 1933 biography *Solomon J. Solomon* remains the only published study. I am indebted to Irit Miller of the University of Haifa for her co-operation in providing me with information on the artist based on her research for an as yet unpublished doctoral thesis.

<sup>3</sup> He was a founder member of the New English Art Club in 1886 and of the Society of Portrait Painters in 1891. In 1896 he was elected an Associate Member of the Royal Academy and in 1906 he became a Full Member. In 1918 he was elected President of the Royal Society of British Painters.

<sup>4</sup> In 1903 his work was discussed, together with that of Israels, Ury, Lilien, Liebermann and Epstein, in Martin Buber, *Jüdische Künstler*, Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1903. S. L. Bensusan, who wrote the chapter on Solomon, pp. 140-153, was a member of the Maccabeans (discussed later in this chapter) from 1892 to 1905, during the period of



the succeeding generations of talented young Jewish artists both on a direct personal level and through his work with the Jewish Educational Aid Society. Finally, it would fail to take into account his role within Anglo-Jewish society, of whose intellectual and cultural elite he was a leading member.

This chapter does not seek a twenty first century rehabilitation of Solomon's artistic reputation, but rather aims to assess the contribution he made in terms of visual representation to the Anglo-Jewish discourse established for and by the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Exhibition. The analysis starts with an examination of the extent to which Judaism and Jewishness influenced the life and work of the artist during the period of this study. A brief overview of his contribution to portraiture is followed by a discussion of his role as a painter of English myth and history. This is of particular importance because it provided Solomon with a priori authenticity and credibility as a visual interpreter of Englishness as he produced pictures which reflected the English aspirations of Anglo-Jewry. The chapter discusses selected images which, it will be argued, provide visual affirmation of facets of the discourse emerging from the 1887 Exhibition and, in particular, those which relate to a shared present and a shared past.

### A Jewish upbringing

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Solomon's Presidency of that organisation. His generally favourable assessment examined Solomon as a portrait painter of distinction – hinting at a greater facility with male as opposed to female subjects: 'Vielleicht ist seine Porträtkunst in männlichen Bildnissen erfolgreicher als in weiblichen' – and addressed the literary treatment of his historical works. In November/December 1907, two of Solomon's works – *A Family Group: the Artist's wife and children: Papa Painting* (Tate Gallery, London) and *In the Field* (Ben Uri

Solomon J. Solomon, the fourth son in a family of twelve children, was born in 1860 in Borough in South London.<sup>5</sup> His father, Joseph, was clearly a man of some financial standing; Solomon was able to enjoy a lengthy period of privately funded art training without the burden of contributing to the family coffers – unlike the scions of other, later immigrant families. Jewish education and observance formed an integral part of his upbringing. Each weekend the Borough Synagogue Rabbi, Simeon Singer, taught Solomon and his siblings Hebrew and German.<sup>6</sup> Solomon also sang in the choir at the Borough Synagogue, which, as contemporary records and illustrations show, was an imposing edifice of a kind likely to make a lasting impression on a person, who, according to his biographer, ‘had a certain sympathy with formality and etiquette’.<sup>7</sup> When in 1877 he went to art school in Paris, particular arrangements were made for him to stay with a Jewish family.<sup>8</sup>

The economic circumstances of his birth and his own professional success as an artist assured Solomon’s personal and professional entrée into the higher echelons of Anglo-Jewish society.<sup>9</sup> In 1897 he married Ella Montagu, daughter of Hyman Montagu, who was the curator of the numismatic section of the 1887 Exhibition. Because of an earlier intermarriage between second cousins, this then linked

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Gallery, London) were exhibited at the *Ausstellung jüdischer Künstler*, Galerie für alte und neue Kunst, Berlin.

<sup>5</sup> For fuller details of his early upbringing and life see Olga Phillips, *Solomon J. Solomon*.

<sup>6</sup> Biographical reference App. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Olga Phillips, *Solomon J. Solomon*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>9</sup> By 1905 he had a home in London and one in Birchington, Kent. “At about the time of these family moves, he was being paid between £150 and £350 for a single portrait and...was at that time earning not less than £1,000 a year and probably considerably more. This was enough to support a family and two households comfortably”. Jenny Perry, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, Ben Uri Art Gallery Catalogue, 1990, p. 10. Correspondence regarding the purchase of *An Allegory* confirms a price of £1,260 in 1904. Letter to Mr J Hamilton, Chairman of the Preston Art Gallery 10 May 1904, Harris Museum Archives Preston.

Solomon to the Beddingtons, another leading family within the Anglo-Jewish community – Alfred Beddington was a member of the General Committee of the 1887 Exhibition. Patronage from Samuel Montagu (no relative of Solomon's in-laws) further enhanced and advanced his career. In 1897 Samuel Montagu commissioned a mural by Solomon for the Royal Exchange, *Charles I demanding the Five members at the Guildhall 1641-2*.<sup>10</sup> Solomon's sister Lily who was also an artist was married to the architect Delissa Joseph (1859-1927) who designed several of the synagogues built in this period.<sup>11</sup>

This emphasis on the importance of Judaism and a Jewish heritage within Solomon's early upbringing is particularly relevant in the context of this study. Solomon remained, throughout his life, a committed Jew - both in religious and social terms. He was conscious of what he regarded as the obligations that this imposed on him. His writings include a major lecture/article (examined later in this chapter), in which he articulated his belief that the continued existence of an identifiable Jewish people was dependent on an underlying foundation of Orthodox Judaism. His version of orthodoxy was defined largely within the terms of that espoused by the United Synagogue of his day and not those more traditional/radical versions, introduced into late Victorian England by some of the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia. Judaism and a sense of his own Jewishness influenced his daily life and attitudes. He did not paint on the Sabbath and was a regular attendee at Synagogue – walking, it is recorded, from his Birchington country home

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<sup>10</sup> Royal Exchange, London.

<sup>11</sup> Including Hammersmith (1890), Dennington Park-Hampstead (1892) for which Solomon J. Solomon designed stained glass windows, South Hackney (1897), Finsbury Park 1901,

to neighbouring Westgate for Sabbath services in a private Synagogue of a friend.<sup>12</sup> Demonstrating his awareness of the obligations imposed on him because of his religion and his place within Anglo-Jewry at the time of his nomination for the Presidency of the Royal Society of British Artists in 1918, Solomon reputedly said, ‘I feel ought to accept the Presidency, because I am a Jew’.<sup>13</sup> This personal commitment to Judaism did not, however, inform his work in quite the same overt manner as some other of the artists whose work I will review later. Subjects such as Jews at prayer, genre pictures of Jewish life, scenes in the Jewish East End did not figure in his oeuvre. He was a painter of the Anglo-Jewish world. He was, of course, aware of the situation of the immigrant Jews flooding into the East End. As we shall see in a later Chapter, it was one of Solomon’s relatives who the young William Rothenstein claimed was responsible for introducing him to the Machzike Hadass, the venue for his own Whitechapel series of paintings. Solomon knew and worked both professionally as an illustrator and publicly on various Jewish committees with the key literary figure of the Jewish community in England in this period, Israel Zangwill, who could have made him aware – had such a need existed – of East End Jewry.<sup>14</sup> Solomon, however, had his own direct links with that part of the Jewish community and with many of the young Jewish artists emerging from it through his work with the Maccabeans and the Jewish Educational Aid Society. As we shall see, he was a subsequently also a key figure in the Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1906. Despite all of this, Solomon’s artistic vision, like that of the Anglo-Jewish discourse, remained resolutely set westwards in his case all

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South East London 1904. A. Renton, *The Lost Synagogues of London*, London: Tynesider Publishing, 2000, p. 182

<sup>12</sup> Phillips, *Solomon J. Solomon*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Perry, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, Ben Uri catalogue, p. 15

of his life. His Jewish subjects whether in portraits or thematically were those of the Anglo-Jewish community. It would be hard to divine the turmoil within English Jewry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from a review of Solomon's oeuvre. There is no sense in his work of a conflict between his Jewishness and his Englishness, no questioning of his belonging or being an outsider, no unresolved ambivalences between different sets of values. He seems to have been comfortable with his Anglo-Jewish identity – an Englishman of the Mosaic persuasion. This should not be interpreted as meaning that he ignored his socio-religious heritage. Awareness of what Jewishness and Judaism meant to him was an essential underlying factor which, as I shall seek to prove, was present both in his painting and in his public pronouncements and writings.

#### A choice of style and a choice of subjects

In 1876 Solomon went to Heatherlys, a private art school, and in the following year to the Royal Academy Schools. In 1879 he studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris under Alexandre Cabanel (1823-89), one of the most successful painters in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century and a fierce opponent of Impressionism. This was followed by a brief period at the Academy in Munich before Solomon embarked on two years of travel with his friend and fellow artist Arthur Hacker (1858-1919) to Spain, Morocco, Italy, Germany and Holland. He returned to Paris where, for a further nine months, in 1882-3 he again worked with Cabanel. His stylistic debt to Cabanel is evident in such early works as *The Judgement of Paris*,

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<sup>14</sup> Biographical Note. App. 1.

*The Birth of Love* and *Eve*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, although Solomon was in Paris as a student and then as a young, practicing artist during the period of the Impressionist movement, his personal artistic preferences lay elsewhere. Solomon, at just that age when he might have followed an avant-garde line, demonstrated a closer allegiance to contemporaneous academic practice rather than to the experiments of emerging modernity. This decision by the then twenty two year old painter may in some ways account both for his popularity among his contemporaries and its subsequent decline.

Success and recognition of his talent and industry came early. In 1881 he had his first painting hung at a Royal Academy Summer Exhibition - a singular achievement at a time when this Exhibition was the main art-selling event of the year.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, he became a regular contributor at the Royal Academy exhibitions exhibiting in what became known as 'Solomon's corner' every year but three until his death in 1927.

Solomon's importance as a portrait painter in late Victorian England should not be underestimated. His paintings included King George V, Queen Mary and the young Prince of Wales. He would have painted Queen Victoria from life had she not died before he could commence the commission.<sup>17</sup> In 1914 he took over the commission to paint *The Coronation Luncheon for King George V and Queen Mary*

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<sup>15</sup> Solomon J Solomon, *The judgement of Paris*, Oil on canvas, 1891, dimensions and whereabouts unknown; Solomon J Solomon, *The Birth of Love*, Oil on canvas, 1896, 254 x 127, whereabouts unknown; Solomon J Solomon, *Eve*, Oil on canvas, 1908, 310 x 142, Ealing Public Library, London. *The Studio*, Vol VIII, 1896, p. 10, reviewing *The Birth of Love* as part of the 1896 Royal Academy Exhibition, referred to it as '... typical of his French academic style (he studied under Cabanel).'

<sup>16</sup> *Portrait of a Gentleman*. Details unknown.

<sup>17</sup> His 1904 portrait of Queen Victoria, based on photography, was presented by the Earl of Cadogan to King Edward VII.

after the death of the original artist, John Bacon (1865 -1914).<sup>18</sup> He also painted members of the English aristocracy and many of the leading politicians of his day. In 1909 he painted Prime Minister Asquith (1852-1928) and in 1910 Prime Minister Ramsey Macdonald (1866-1937).<sup>19</sup> Working at this level not only made him an increasingly obvious choice for commissions by leading Anglo-Jewish figures, but also gave those portraits reflected weight within an integrationist dialogue between Anglo-Jewry and the host community.

Solomon's role as portraitist of the Anglo-Jewish community is demonstrated most clearly by an examination of his annual exhibits at the Royal Academy Summer Show and the Exhibitions of the Society of Portrait Painters. From 1885 until his death in 1927 he usually included among his exhibits at the Royal Academy at least one portrait of a prominent member of the Anglo-Jewish community.<sup>20</sup> The role call of Anglo-Jewish subjects was equally marked in his contributions to the annual Exhibitions of the Society of Portrait Painters. Of the thirty pictures Solomon exhibited there, between its inaugural exhibition of 1891 and 1914, eighteen were of Jewish sitters.<sup>21</sup> Solomon was also invited to undertake specially commissioned portraits of Jewish notables. These included the German Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz at the time of the latter's visit to London for the 1887 Anglo-Jewish

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<sup>18</sup> 1914- 1922,? x 226 cm, Guildhall, London.

<sup>19</sup> Asquith was Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916 and Macdonald was Prime Minister in 1924 and again from 1929 to 1931. *The Rt. Hon. H.H. Asquith, Prime Minister*, Oil on canvas, 1909, 120 x 90, National Liberal Club, London; *Ramsay MacDonald M.P.*, Oil on canvas, 1910, 90.2 x 72.4 , National Portrait Gallery, London.

<sup>20</sup> Including Mrs Ludwig Messell (1885), Israel Zangwill (1894 and 1905), Sir Benjamin Cohen and Sir John Simon (1889), Adolph Tuck (1900), Ellis Franklin, J.Phillips and J Levy (1901), Sir Joseph Sebag-Montefiore (1903) Albert Seligman [and his daughter] (1904), Dr Hermann Adler (1907), Albert Jessel (1910), George Mosenthal and Nina Salaman (1913).

<sup>21</sup> Society of Portrait Painters, London Metropolitan Archives, Acc 3489/21/22/23/24/25.

Exhibition,<sup>22</sup> two portraits of Lord Mayor Faudel-Phillips (see below) during his 1897 mayoralty and, in 1906, Dr Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi.<sup>23</sup> These portraits, exhibited in public spaces, contributed in visual terms to the integration of those particular individuals and, by extension, albeit to a lesser degree, of the Anglo-Jewish community as a whole within English contemporary society. It would take another decade and a quasi-generation before Solomon's successors attempted to include the lower and immigrant echelons of English Jewry in similar public exhibitions.

The exploration of the medieval was a theme that had played a significant part in English cultural and artistic practice in the mid nineteenth century and in the formation of Englishness in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The public fascination with the middle ages continued into the Edwardian age on many levels. The legacy of the Gothic Revival was so deeply ingrained in British society that many forms of medievalism had become part of the national character, from the gothic architecture exemplified by the Houses of Parliament to the chivalric code of conduct of the British gentleman.<sup>24</sup>

There are examples of this in the work of Solomon's predecessors and contemporaries including Millais' *Knight Errant*, 1871 and Dicksee's *Belle Dame sans merci*.<sup>25</sup> It was a theme which attracted Solomon and featured often in his pre-1914 oeuvre. But, as we shall see, it was not just the visual representation of scenes from stories of knightly endeavour which interested Solomon. The idea of a code of behaviour to which the true hero/Englishman would submit was of importance to the

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<sup>22</sup> This was shown at the Royal Society of British Artists Exhibition that year.

<sup>23</sup> This was shown at the Royal Academy Exhibition of that year.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Lacy, *Students of Arms: a survey of arms and armour study in Great Britain from the eighteenth century to the First World War*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, 1999, ch. 6, pp. 312 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Sir Frank Dicksee, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Oil on canvas, 1902, City of Bristol Art Gallery, Bristol.



artist. It paralleled his personally held beliefs about the importance of the code of conduct that should guide the life of the practising Jew. The conflation of knightly conduct with that of Jewish ethics presents us with an interesting paradox. The figure of the Knight is the paradigm of Boyarin's concept of *goyim naches*, discussed in the earlier chapter on the 1887 Exhibition and, by extension, the antithesis of the gentle scholar of the Jewish code. I would, however, suggest that Solomon might not have been aware of or overly concerned about such a potential clash since his views of Judaism were probably far more influenced by contemporary Orthodoxy as practised by his class and circle in late Victorian Britain than by a perhaps more rigorous Hassidic view of Jewish virtue.

Solomon's *Laus Deo* (Fig. 1), exhibited at Royal Academy Exhibition of 1899, was praised by the critics of the *Magazine of Art*, who commented that its 'execution and handling are very able' and the *Art Journal*, who referred to its, 'fine feeling of movement and action'.<sup>26</sup> The image, which explored the world of Knight Errantry, had long cultural antecedents which one might trace back to Arthurian legend or Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.<sup>27</sup> It is also open to more contemporary readings. For the critic of the *Art Journal*, the links were with the medieval world at one remove via the Pre-Raphaelites. Although, as the critic remarked, Solomon's knight 'is quite evidently no relation to any of the sad eyed and ascetic warriors of Burne-

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<sup>26</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, May 1899, p. 391. *The Art Journal*, May 1899, p. 162. Isidore Spielmann thought highly of the work and wished to exhibit it at *Exposition Universelle* in Paris the following year but Solomon demurred on the grounds that it was by then an 'unrepresentative work'. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, Ref CXIV 5 MSL/1999/2/2226 and 2227.

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) – Parts of the *Faerie Queene* were first published in 1590.

Jones'.<sup>28</sup> He was a powerful hero figure – quite literally the knight in shining armour. The image is, however, more than the depiction of the heroic knight figure singing to boost his spirits as he leaves what the *Art Journal* critic described as 'the enchanted glade'.<sup>29</sup> This critic went on to question whether the figure behind the Knight, carrying the helmet which had been replaced by the Laurel Leaves of Victory, was not a 'guardian angel', but perhaps 'the fairest temptress of them all'.<sup>30</sup> This touched on this recurrent theme in Solomon's thought and work – this idea of a higher code of conduct to which humankind must adhere if it is to defeat temptation and achieve its full potential. In *Laus Deo* that code is enshrined in the positive edicts of chivalry. The critic of the *Jewish Chronicle* writing on 5 May 1899 suggested a less complicated reading in which the figure hovering above the Knight was in fact '...Fame to guard and direct'.<sup>31</sup> Here the linkage could have been between the chivalric, heroic main subject and possibly a contemporary reference to Queen Victoria; the building to the left and rear of the middle ground echoes the shape of the Rotunda of Windsor Castle, a place by then already enshrined in English history for more than 800 years.

Solomon's 1906 Diploma work for the Royal Academy took as its subject the quintessential story of medieval/mythological England, *St George* (Fig. 2).<sup>32</sup>

The image of the knight in shining armour, particularly Saint George, was increasingly used as a symbol of the Empire and was to be seen in monument, posters and books extolling discipline and martial virtue.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See *Art Journal*, May 1899.

<sup>29</sup> See *Art Journal*, May 1899.

<sup>30</sup> See *Art Journal*, May 1899.

<sup>31</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1899, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> *St George*, Oil on canvas, 1906, 212.1 x 105.4, Royal Academy.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Lacy, *Students of Arms*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Reading, 1999, Chapter 6, pp. 312 ff.

Solomon presented St George to the viewer as the heroic knight - sharing many of the physical attributes of the subject of *Laus Deo*. St George is the victorious hero defeating Evil in the form of the impaled dragon. As a work of art, the critics were less convinced. The reviewer in *The Speaker*, 19 May 1899, referred to it as ‘a quaint conception’.<sup>34</sup> Marion Spielmann, reviewing the exhibition for *The Graphic* of 12 May 1899, described this work as:

Another piece of classical mythology is that of Mr Solomon – a ‘St George’ carrying off the lady – more admirable in composition of line than convincing in arrangement.<sup>35</sup>

The battling Saint, however, seems less to be ‘carrying the lady’ or even rescuing her by slaying the dragon, than to be ensnared by her. One must question whether Evil is only limited to the dragon, which is demoted to a position of relative focal obscurity at the foot of the picture. As with the reading of *Laus Deo* by the critic of the *Art Journal* which identified the figure at the Knight’s head as the ‘fairest temptress’, I would suggest that, in *St George*, Evil is in fact also personified in the form of the damsel, coiled around him. The serpentine manner in which she entwines herself can be read as a deliberate visualisation of such temptation. Solomon is surely prompting a reading which demonstrated that the path of righteousness lay not simply in conquering the obvious expressions of Evil, but in resisting its subtler and more dangerous manifestations.

In both of these works, one should also note the care and attention that Solomon lavished on the actual suits of armour worn by his heroes. As Michael Lacy

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<sup>34</sup> *The Speaker*, 19 May 1899, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> *The Graphic* 12 May 1899, pp. 612

has argued, by the turn of the century armour had moved from being the subject of archaeological and historical research into being regarded as a fine art object in its own right.

The view of medieval arms and armour as objects of applied, or even fine, art was further reinforced with the opening of the Wallace Collection to the public in 1900.<sup>36</sup>

Recognition of Solomon as a valid interlocutor and contributor to this pantheon of romanticised English heroes and to the discourse and formation of Englishness served to make him even more important to the cause of the Anglo-Jewish discourse. The more Solomon became recognised through works such as these, as an artist, who understood the qualities of Englishness, as the English would like to perceive them, the more his depictions of Anglo-Jews might be accepted as part of a present and indeed a past that was shared with them.

### Solomon and the Maccabeans

Within the Jewish community, Solomon was a major figure in the wider sphere of Jewish intellectual life. At the age of thirty one he was in 1891 elected Founding President of the Maccabeans, a position which when combined with his continued success as a painter, proved to be a springboard to a series of important roles within the Jewish community.

The Maccabeans, ‘a club for Jewish professional gentlemen, with the object of bringing together Jews who are interested in literature, science, artistic or professional pursuits’, had its antecedents in a less formal grouping ‘the Wanderers

of Kilburn'.<sup>37</sup> The Maccabeans started out as a quasi-social dining and discussion group, meeting about six times a year, furthering the interests of Jews by the promotion and support of professional, learned and charitable activities. Its early members included many of the leading Jewish intelligentsia of the period - Zangwill, Spielmann, Meldola, Delissa Joseph, Singer - as well as such non-Jewish notables as Canon Barnett who was a very early member.<sup>38</sup> In 1896 some of the philanthropic aims of the Maccabeans and their supporters found a new outlet - the Jewish Educational Aid Society (JEAS). This organisation, and the funds of which it disposed, sought to provide assistance for secondary education 'for exceptional talent in cases of exceptional need'. Solomon may not always have been the most forward-thinking member of the Arts Section of the JEAS. He turned down the first application from Mark Gertler who then only obtained JEAS funding for his training at the Slade School of Art thanks to the intervention of William Rothenstein. As we shall see later, Rothenstein himself benefited from the support and influence of Solomon. Solomon's presence and influence, however, contributed greatly to the credibility of the JEAS and enabled it to achieve much in his area of activity – support for art students.<sup>39</sup>

Among his friends (and portrait subjects) were both his own contemporaries such as Arthur Hacker, as well as older figures like Sir Henry Thompson (see below).

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Lacy, *Students of Arms*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Reading, 1999, Chapter 6, pp. 312 ff.

<sup>37</sup> For background on the Wanderers, see *The Jewish Dickens*. Exhibition and catalogue, London: The Jewish Museum, 1999, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Mocatta Archive, University of Southampton, MS126/ AJ 17.1.1.1 ff.

<sup>39</sup> For a fuller discussion of the JEAS see Tickner *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 149-153 and also Tickner and Gross, 'The Jewish Education Aid Society and Pre-First World War British Art' in *The Ben Uri Story*, London, 2001, pp. 59-65.

He was, as we have already noted, a friend of fellow Jewish intellectuals such as Israel Zangwill and non-Jews like the writer and humorist, Jerome K. Jerome (1859–1927). Perhaps it was this apparently ready ability to mix across such a wide spectrum of English society, as well as within the middle and upper echelons of Jewish society, that made his selection as President of the Maccabeans so appropriate.

In 1901 Solomon, by then a successful, established and mature artist presented a paper to the Maccabeans entitled ‘Art and Judaism’, which is as revealing about his views on Judaism as it is about art and the links between the religion and art. The paper is a vital component in contextualising Solomon’s work as it sheds light on his personal conceptual and philosophical outlook.<sup>40</sup>

The twin themes of Solomon’s dissertation were the contrast between and effects on art of Hellenism and Hebraism and the negative role played in the development of art practice among Jews by the edict of the Second Commandment. ‘Art and Judaism’ did not emerge just at the turn of the century as an autonomous production by a Jewish painter and intellectual. It formed part of a longer and wider debate within contemporary writing and discussion on these issues both in England and continental Europe among both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals in the mid and late nineteenth century. From within the English cultural/ literary milieu, Solomon’s interest and thoughts would almost certainly been influenced by the seminal work of Mathew Arnold whose *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1869,

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<sup>40</sup> The paper was delivered to the Maccabeans, London 28 April 1901 and published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, July 1901, pp. 553-566.

devoted an entire chapter to a discussion of the influences of Hellenism and Hebraism on historical and contemporaneous religious thought.<sup>41</sup> Finestein observed in his assessment of this chapter and of Arnold's view that 'rabbinic Judaism tended by its nature to be out of accord with aesthetic values' but perceptively noted that:

Beneath, not always expressed, is the suggestion that what might be called the Jewish spirit has a restlessly creative quality which is distinctive of it.<sup>42</sup>

It is probable that Solomon was also aware of the writings on these subjects of, for example, Heine (1796-1856), who was specifically mentioned by Arnold, Graetz and in the wider context Ernst Renan.<sup>43</sup>

Solomon's lecture revealed a profound appreciation of what he saw as the values of Orthodox Judaism and the potential dangers of assimilation. He extolled the Jewish code as 'a set of laws aiming at moral excellence' or, as Arnold put it, the 'strictness of conscience' which was at the core of his interpretation of Hebraism, which 'obtained to prevent a people so assimilative in every respect as the Israelites' from taking on the mores of their host communities. Solomon understood the dilemma posed by a need to keep rigidly to the letter of the law 'religious enthusiasm ... partakes of a certain degree of fanaticism' even though such adherence had the potential to alienate those who adopted such a posture not just from non-Jews but from the majority of their co-religionists.<sup>44</sup> He felt that the majority of his co-religionists were in fact 'grossly material and self indulgent' and that to such Jews

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<sup>41</sup> For Arnold, see Biographical Note App. 1.

<sup>42</sup> For a fuller discussion see Israel Finestein, 'Mathew Arnold' in *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times*, Vallentine Mitchell, London 1999.

<sup>43</sup> For a fuller discussion of these topics see Kalman Bland, *The Artless Jew* - especially Chapter 2, pp. 37-58.

<sup>44</sup> *Jewish Quarterly Review*, July 1901, pp. 553-566.

‘Judaism does not appeal with adequate force’.<sup>45</sup> He was, however, uncompromising in his rejection of reform as a solution.

... with the reformed section, the whole Jewish service, both at home, where it hardly exists, and in the Synagogue, has been de-characterised beyond recognition, let down in fact to the level of a patronizing Gentile approval.<sup>46</sup>

Solomon rejected the notion that pre-Diaspora Jews had had artistic talent - ‘It is clear that the artistic craftsmen engaged in building the first temple were non Israelites’ – and argued unequivocally that since ‘... reproduction of natural forms, more particularly the human form, was forbidden to the Jews. Art in such conditions could not flourish’.<sup>47</sup>

In his discussion of the influence that Hebraism, standing in opposition to Hellenism, had had on artistic practice, Solomon contrasted the Greek ideal of the perfected human form with the Hebraic idealization of ‘the purity of the conception of his G\*d’.<sup>48</sup> His argument propounded an equation, which linked Hellenism with Paganism and then with Catholicism:

... the numerous saints savour of Paganism. The service and its practices generally are so largely sensuous as to warrant one in asserting that the spirit of this Church is Pagan.<sup>49</sup>

Solomon contrasted this linkage with that between the Hebraic tradition and Northern European Protestantism: ‘The strict English Sunday is in spirit the Hebrew Sabbath’.<sup>50</sup> Kalman Bland points out that Solomon ignored in his article David Kaufmann’s contribution to the *Jewish Quarterly* of 1897 on paintings and sculpture

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*



in early modern Italian synagogues.<sup>51</sup> The explanation for this may lie in a rejection by Solomon of specifically religious art both by and for Jews. In his writing, Solomon argued that this Hebraic influence on Northern Protestantism had affected the types of artistic practice most commonly seen - 'Portraiture, landscape and genre are the main themes. Of religious art there is not much'.<sup>52</sup> Solomon's artistic output fell into the former categories and it would thus have been intellectually consistent (if not academically rigorous) for him to have ignored Kaufmann's evidence, as perhaps being a minor aberration to his own general rule. In terms of his own definitions and categories one might classify Solomon, the artist, as Hebraist.

#### Solomon portrays Anglo-Jewry

In the introduction, Solomon's central role as a portrait painter within and of the Anglo-Jewish community was outlined. The paintings detailed in the analysis, which follows, have been selected, because they demonstrate most vividly aspects of the Anglo-Jewish debate and the ways in which the concept of sharing past and present were visually represented by the artist.

#### Mr Hart is invited to dine

I was born a Jew, I am living as a Jew and I shall die as a member of the great and glorious House of Israel.<sup>53</sup>

In 1893 Solomon exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition *Your Health* in which Mr Ernest Hart was the principal subject (Fig. 3). Some time between 1894 and 1897,

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<sup>51</sup> Bland, *The Artless Jew*, p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> *Jewish Quarterly Review*, July 1901, pp. 553-566.

as a testimonial to Hart, its President, the *Medical Sickness and Accident Society* commissioned Solomon J. Solomon to paint *A dinner given by Sir H. Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart* (Fig. 4).<sup>54</sup> Given his reputation as a portrait painter of contemporary Victorian society and his then recent election as an Associate of the Royal Academy, Solomon would in his own right have been a potential contender for this commission. Thompson and Hart may also have played a part in his selection. Hart and Solomon had met at a Maccabean dinner in 1892 and by 1893 Solomon had painted the dinner scene at Hart's mentioned above.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Hart's electoral address as reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* 14 January 1898.

<sup>54</sup> *A dinner given by Sir H. Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart*, Oil on canvas, No date, 71.1 x 102.9 cm, Wellcome Foundation, London. There has been some confusion between these two works and the second has been variously titled: *A Welcome Home Dinner at Sir Henry Thompson's*; *An Octave for Mr Ernest Hart*; *A Dinner Party at Mr Ernest Hart's*. The confusion may date from 1928. The unillustrated Royal Academy Winter Exhibition catalogue for that year used two titles, *Your Health* and *Dinner Party at Mr Ernest Hart's* in reference to Exhibit 288, p. 64. The size given corresponds to that of the later image by then in the Wellcome collection and not to the earlier *Your Health Your Health* was exhibited in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1893 and is unlikely ever to have been entitled *A Welcome Home Dinner at Sir Henry Thompson's*, as Hart did not return from his trip to America until November 1893. See C. A. Earnshaw, Letter to the Director of Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, 10 May 1951, Wellcome Library Archive, London, S. J. Solomon Departmental Papers. The Wellcome Foundation has owned *A Dinner given by Sir H. Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart* (as it is now titled by the Wellcome Library) since 1909. The work is undated but the *British Medical Journal*, 29 May 1897 reporting on the affairs of the Medical Sickness and Accident Society stated, "We may mention that the testimonial in recognition of the work of the founder and President [Ernest Hart] on his retirement [Hart retired as Chairman in 1894 but the position of President was created for him and he held this until his death in 1898] has been expended in the commissioning of Mr Solomon J. Solomon, A.R.A., to execute a portrait picture of a dinner at which were present many of the leaders of the profession to welcome Mr Ernest Hart on his return from America". The reference to Hart's return from a trip to the United States would place the event depicted, if not the work itself, somewhat earlier – towards the end of 1893. The reference to Solomon as an A.R.A. would, however, suggest a later date – 1896-7 – for the actual execution of the picture, since Solomon's election to the Academy did not occur until 1896. It seems unlikely that the work was painted after mid 1897. In September of that year Hart's diabetes had resulted in the amputation of his leg. The Hart portrayed in this composition does not obviously resemble a terminally ill, amputee, who was to die less than six months later. The *British Medical Journal* article continued by identifying several of the other figures in the later work, who correspond to the subjects subsequently named on a key plate attached to the image when it was exhibited in the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition in 1928.

<sup>55</sup> Hart spoke at a Maccabean Dinner in October 1892. The *Jewish Chronicle* obituary for Hart on 14 January 1898 refers to his friendship with members of the Maccabeans and especially its Council. According to the extant records of the Maccabeans, Hart does not,

Ernest Hart was born in London in 1835 into a middle class, professional, Jewish family; his father Septimus Hart was a dentist. Ernest was educated at the City of London School where he crowned a highly successful scholastic career by gaining a Scholarship to Queens' College, Cambridge.<sup>56</sup> In practical terms, this opportunity was closed to Hart because, although entry was not denied to Jews, he could not at that time, have graduated without having to profess his faith as a Christian.<sup>57</sup> Hart, therefore, applied to use the scholarship to pursue medical studies in London. He did so first at St Mary's and then at St George's Hospitals. He devoted his life to medicine in three distinct, though sometimes overlapping, fields. He was appointed House Surgeon at St Mary's in 1856. After holding several other surgical posts there he was, from 1863 to 1869, Dean of the Medical School. From 1866 onwards he became very active in matters of public health and served on numerous enquiries and committees for the rest of life; thereby making significant contributions to the national welfare. In the same year he took up the post of Editor of the *British Medical Journal* – which he held until his death in 1898. He also served as Chairman of the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the *British Medical Association* and was Chairman and then President of *Medical Sickness and Accident Society*.<sup>58</sup> This professional success led to financial security. He simultaneously had homes in London's West End and in Totteridge and was a noted collector of Japanese art. Hart publicly attested to the importance he attached to being Jewish; as for example at the

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however, appear to have been a member of that organization. Mocatta Archive, University of Southampton Library. MS126/ AJ 17.1.1 ff.

<sup>56</sup> He was school captain and won the Chamberlain Scott Prize.

<sup>57</sup> This disability was not formally removed until the passing of the Universities Tests Acts of 1871.

time of the 1885 General Election, when contesting the parliamentary seat of Mile End as a Radical (see the quotation at the head of this section). He was willing to use his editorial position at the *British Medical Journal* to publish papers in the 1870s and 1880s in defence of 'shechita' (kosher slaughtering).<sup>59</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* in its 14 January 1898 obituary for Hart had no qualms about asserting that:

It need hardly be said that Ernest Hart was an enthusiast in all matters relating to the Jewish race.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps, however, one should look more closely at the differences between Hart's acknowledgement of his Jewish origins and the degree of his commitment to Judaism per se in his life. Hart's first wife, Rosetta Levy, was Jewish. Hart subsequently remarried in 1872 but his second wife, Alice Rowland, was not Jewish. Notwithstanding Hart's public declaration that he would die a Jew, his funeral service was held at the Marylebone Parish Church in Paddington and was conducted by Canon Samuel Barnett and the Reverend Brooke Lambert.<sup>61</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* was silent on the details of Hart's funeral, even though this obliged it to pass over the opportunity to quote from Barnett's eulogy,

The sick poor are better cared for, children are safer from harm, national health is more considered and the medical profession is now honoured because Ernest Hart lived.<sup>62</sup>

*Your Health* (Fig. 3), the first of the two canvases in which Hart was depicted a principal dinner guest, was favourably received by *The Magazine of Art* in its Royal

<sup>58</sup> It is a measure of the esteem in which he was held and the importance of his role in the BMA that his death was marked by the publication of a ten page, double column obituary.

<sup>59</sup> Israel Finestein, 'Mathew Arnold', in Idem, *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times*, London 1999. p. 230.

<sup>60</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 January 1898.

<sup>61</sup> In memoriam, Ernest Hart, British Medical Association, *British Medical Journal* London, 15 January 1898.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

Academy review of 1893.<sup>63</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle*, reviewing this work on 5 May spoke of thirteen guests – with perhaps another or indeed others hidden by the table decorations. This review, combined with comments in Bensusan's chapter on Solomon in *Jüdische Künstler* (see above), make it possible to identify almost all of the guests.<sup>64</sup> Although Hart, in his own home, is clearly the subject of the toast, he is shown with his back to the viewer and only in half profile, somewhat obscured for the central figure. Solomon seemed at least as concerned with other guests in the foreground: with the trio of ladies to Hart's left and right and in particular with the standing lady proposing the toast. There is a sense within the work of Hart being in some way an outsider; not as a Jew in what was predominantly non-Jewish company, but to the arts world within which many of his young guests lived and worked. Although he was the focus of attention for the assembled company, he was at the same time visually set apart from them.

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<sup>63</sup> 'Mr S. J. Solomon, who has left the classics for a while, has tackled one of the most difficult of all problems – contending and reflected lights at a modern dinner party. That the heads are successful portraits of persons in society is little to the critic, but it is a good deal that a work of so much danger and so full of pitfalls to the artist should have been as cleverly brought to completion. The picture would be better for a little more work. The light hardly appears to be of the right colour and the painting seems somewhat dry; but it is the handling of the subject, which has earned the victory – its reticence and instructive knowledge and taste.' *Magazine of Art*, vol. 16, May 1893, London Paris and Melbourne: Cassell & Co Ltd, p. 298.

<sup>64</sup> 'Is it in defiance of conventional superstition that Mr. Solomon had arranged just thirteen guests at the table, or is it possible that the square shade of the lamp conceals a fourteenth visitor? The servants move about noiselessly refilling the glasses, and all faces are turned toward the host, Dr. Ernest Hart, who in the picture is seen from the back but the profile and the characteristic head render recognition of the gifted medical authority an easy task. It is not difficult either to fit names to the other faces gathered round the festive board. Mr Jerome K. Jerome surveys the scene through his glasses as he stands in the rear, from beneath the lamp Mrs. J. Solomon, mother of the artist, directs a smiling glance at the host: Mr. Arthur Hacker, the artist, is not far from Signor Tosti [the opera singer]; Sir Benjamin Baker, Mr. Forbes Robertson [actor] whose clear cut features come out particularly well, Mrs. Arthur Raphael, Prince Troubetzkoy and his gifted fiancée Miss Ethel Wright and others serve to complete the group.' *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1893. I am indebted to Ms I Miller of Haifa for bringing this review to my notice. Bensusan's work (see n. 4 above) suggests that other guests included Sir John Tenniel [the artist and Illustrator – possibly the

The setting of the table and the clothes of the participants would prima facie seem to point to this being a formal event. However, the generally relaxed demeanour of the guests and the fact that a lady was proposing the toast (a break with formal Victorian etiquette) would point to a more intimate, personal occasion – as would the presence of a dog by Hart's side.

The conviviality of the party at Hart's contrasted sharply with the formality of a somewhat similar occasion, *A Summer Dinner Party* painted by Chevalier Tayler (1862-1925) in the same Royal Academy Exhibition.<sup>65</sup> The four seated, male figures pass the port after the ladies had retired, a marked difference to the presence of ladies in the Solomon work discussed above. Even at this supposedly more relaxed moment in the evening's proceedings the stiff postures of the subjects and the almost military bearing of the serving staff in the background, whose clothing was used to illustrate a rigid and well defined household hierarchy, all offered a counterpoint to the relaxed intimacy of the work by Solomon. Whereas Solomon brought the viewer close to the table and filled the whole canvas with the guests, Tayler keeps the viewer at an almost respectful distance. There is a sense of spaciousness and of calm in the Tayler which is clearly not a feature of the Solomon. Although both dinners were in a private setting, the occasion depicted by Tayler was clearly governed by a far more formal code of behaviour than that which is obtained in the work by Solomon.

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first male figure to Hart's immediate left (see National Portrait Gallery/ Archive/ Tenniel)] and Harry Furniss (caricaturist and Illustrator) were also among the guests .

<sup>65</sup> Chevalier Tayler, *A Summer's dinner party*, Oil on canvas, 1893, 120 x 90, whereabouts unknown. Chevalier Tayler became noted for his dinner party pictures, which included at other Royal Academy Exhibitions, *Gentlemen*, *The Queen* (1894), *Dinners and Diners* (1902) and *The Anniversary* (1909).

In terms of the Anglo-Jewish discourse on one level Solomon's painting can justifiably be interpreted as responding in its main lines to concepts of belonging and of acculturation. Hart was being fêted in his own home by leading figures from the world of Victorian arts and culture. This acceptance was not, however, by the *haut-monde* of the cultural elite; some of his guests on this occasion might have been characterised as being from the younger, not quite establishment tier of that world.

*A dinner given by Sir H Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart* suffers from no such potential nuancing of interpretation. In this work, Hart is foursquare at the very apogee of the British medical profession. His host and fellow invitees were all among the leading professionals of their day. This combination of one of Anglo-Jewry's leading medical professionals painted by Anglo-Jewry's leading artist has a potential importance that merits exploration in both socio-historic as well as just artistic terms. Hart's life and career, the circumstances surrounding the commissioning of this painting, the nature of the occasion it depicted and the other participants illustrated all combined to make this an almost paradigmatic visual representation of the integrationist aspirations of contemporary Anglo-Jewry in the late nineteenth century and the discourse of the 1887 Exhibition. Examination of the details of this work, however, also reveal the ways in which this apparently acculturated Jew, voluntarily or otherwise, trimmed his Jewish sails, as he negotiated his way in English Society and the medical profession.

The composition of this 1897 image seems much tighter than that of the earlier 1893 dinner party. A smaller number of figures - eleven in all (Hart, the guest

of honour, the eight other invitees, their host, Sir Henry, and his Butler, Newman) are all contained within a more confined visual space. The informality that characterised the earlier work are here replaced by a more earnest, masculine atmosphere – albeit a less militarily rigid one than that which characterised the Chevalier Talyer. The significance of the tight composition of this later work is not simply of interest as a matter of artistic technique. It opens the way to a reading of the work as revealing how closely Hart was incorporated into the highest levels of the British medical community. Solomon has depicted Hart as an integral member of a group that comprised leading medical figures of his day. He was seated in a place of honour by the side of his host, facing out towards the viewer from a central position within the composition and clearly visible in between the foreground figures of Mr (later Sir) Victor Horsley and Dr (later Sir) George Anderson Critchett.<sup>66</sup> Both the final work and the preparatory oil sketch of Hart on his own show him as fashionably attired – perhaps something of a dandy with prominent Dundee side-whiskers and an orchid in his buttonhole.<sup>67</sup> There is nothing either in the appearance of the man or his demeanour that would mark him apart or different from any of the other guests around the table.

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<sup>66</sup> From left to right the picture shows Sir Richard Quain Bt (1816-898) Physician; Sir James Paget Bt (1814-1899) Surgeon and Pathologist; Mr (Sir) Victor Horsley KB (1815-1916), Surgeon, pathologist and physiologist; Mr (Sir) Henry Thompson Bt (1820-1904), Urologist; Mr Ernest Hart; Dr (Sir) George Anderson Critchett (1845-1925) Ophthalmic surgeon; Sir Thomas Spencer Wells Bt (1818-1897) Gynaecological Surgeon; Sir William Broadbent Bt (1835-1907) Physician; Mr (Sir) Joseph Fayrer Bt (1824-1907) Surgeon General, Indian Medical Service; Dr (Sir) Thomas Lauder Brunton Bt (1844-1916), Physician; Key Plate *Royal Academy Winter Exhibition*, 1928, Wellcome Library Archive, London, S.J.Solomon Departmental Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Solomon J Solomon, *Mr Ernest Hart*, Oil on board, No date, 35 x 26 cm, Wellcome Foundation, London.



The picture should also be read as demonstrating not just professional but social acceptance at the highest level. Sir Henry Thompson's Octave dinners, of which this may have been one, were socially important gatherings of the 'great and the good'.<sup>68</sup> He held them in his own home at 35 Wimpole Street, London. Invitees to these dinners were by no means limited to the medical profession. An indication of the place of the host within English Society and the standing of his dinners may be gauged from the fact that among the guests on other such occasions were the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), HRH Prince George (later King George V), Prime Minister Asquith, the writers Conan Doyle and Charles Dickens, and the painter Alma-Tadema.<sup>69</sup> The significance of an invitation to and a quasi-formal honouring by such a gathering should not, therefore, be underestimated. It only adds to the acceptance of Hart to record that in fact it is also likely that Thompson and Hart, 'lifelong friends', dined at each other's homes in Wimpole Street on other, perhaps less formal occasions.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The location of this dinner at Thompson's 35 Wimpole Street home has been confirmed by Sir Henry's family. Wellcome Library Archive, London, S.J.Solomon Departmental Papers. Whether this was an Octave Dinner is, however, open to question. Thompson's Octave's (always male only) were so called because eight guests were invited at 8pm to partake of eight courses served with eight wines. Sir Henry's inspiration for this arrangement was musical. Sir Henry is known to have increased this number by excluding himself as 'one of the notes of the Octave' and regarding himself as 'the staff (sic) that held them together' Quoted in Z. Cope, *The Versatile Victorian. Being the Life of Sir Henry Thompson Bt., 1820-1904*, London: Harvey & Blythe, 1951, pp. 92 ff. For this to have been considered as an Octave and not simply a dinner party for leading figures from the medical world in honour of Hart, it would also have required Thompson not to count his Guest of Honour as one of the eight – a detail that might not have easily been accepted by one apparently so fastidious about such details.

<sup>69</sup> W. D. Dunsmuir and R. S. Kirby, *Journal of Medical Biography*, 1995, London, pp. 187 ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 January 1898. The article also noted that Hart had in fact moved to Wimpole Street before Thompson. Thompson was one of the pallbearers at Hart's funeral. In memoriam Ernest Hart, British Medical Association, *British Medical Journal*, London, 15 January 1898.

Hart may indeed have been proud of his Jewish heritage but, on occasions like this, it would seem he wore its religious obligations lightly. Reminiscing on the genesis of these dinners, Sir Henry alluded to the food served at these and similar occasions, which included several dishes which were intrinsically unkosher.<sup>71</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that loss of or disregard for kashrut at events like this was part of the price that Hart and others like him paid for their entrée into English Society.<sup>72</sup> Anglo-Jews could be invited to share in the pleasures of English society and its traditions, albeit that some, like Sir Henry's Dinners, were recent of invention. It would, however, appear that, even when the entitlement to such participation was based on the most unimpeachable of credentials as were Hart's in the medical world, for all but the highest placed and most profoundly religious, a marked Jewish identity was left at the door with one's hat and coat. This was a fact that Hart, the subject, and Solomon, the painter, understood and accepted.

This picture provides a further dimension when read against both of the earlier works discussed above. Although one can place all three pictures discussed above within a private context as opposed to the public arena, the Thompson dinner could perhaps better be read as being within a quasi-institutional setting. The social importance of Thompson's Octave dinners, their regularity, the formulaic approach adopted by the host and the professional/social standing of the guests would seem to have conferred on them such a status within the fabric of London society – albeit that

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<sup>71</sup> Z. Cope, *The Versatile Victorian. Being the Life of Sir Henry Thompson Bt., 1820- 1904*, London, 1951, pp. 92 ff. One guest, Sir Robert Hutchison, is quoted describing a menu with oysters as a starter and later "... his speciality – ham ..."

<sup>72</sup> Hart's version of Jewish Orthodoxy, which accorded with that adopted by many other Anglo-Jews in late Victorian England, did not require him to wear any head covering and his side whiskers are clearly a statement of fashion rather than religion.

such status was personal to Sir Henry rather than to any office he held. The nature of the occasion and the common profession of the invitees provide another strand in this proposal of an institutional dimension. The dinner was a formal celebration in Hart's honour by the institution of the English medical profession as represented by a group of its leading practitioners. This institutional recognition is of particular significance to the argument I am positing about Solomon's visual representations of the place of Anglo-Jewry within English society.<sup>73</sup> Both this and the earlier *Your health* are visual representations of a shared present within that society. Furthermore, this sharing was unencumbered by any apparent anxiety on the part of the main subject about either his Jewishness or his Englishness.

As a footnote one must observe that, notwithstanding Hart's considerable stature in the medical world, as an editor, as a significant contributor to the status and financial welfare of the medical profession and as a pioneer in the field of public health, unlike every other guest at Sir Henry's dinner, Hart's work was never marked by recognition in the form of an Official Honour. Recognition and acceptance at that level was, at that time, perhaps not so readily available to the middle order of Anglo-Jewry, whatever the contribution to the common good.

### The Lord Mayor of London

This is historical art of historical value.<sup>74</sup>

In 1897, the country celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. The election of George Faudel-Phillips (1840-1923), a Jew,

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<sup>73</sup> I am indebted to Professor Sander Gilman for suggesting this line of investigation.

as Lord Mayor, for this particular year, was a measure of the formal acceptance of the Jews into the upper echelons of English social and governance structure. It was also a mark of the man that this election was universally hailed in the press and that the only comments on his Jewishness were observations of fact rather than expressions of opinion.<sup>75</sup> The election of a Jew as Lord Mayor was not, as we have already noted, a unique event. It was not the power or importance of the office itself that was so significant as much as the Mayor's role was, by the end of the nineteenth century, ceremonial, but rather the high profile held by the incumbent in a year of international celebrations that marks it out as being of interest. In a year when attention was more than ever focussed on London, the City was represented by a Jew; a matter that leaders of that community were not slow to recognise.

Nothing could therefore be more apposite than that an honoured brother in faith should be the first to welcome her Majesty as she enters her most loyal city Tuesday next.<sup>76</sup>

Of even equal importance in terms of this study is the linkage the office provides between Anglo-Jewry and an historically significant institution, the creation of which in 1210 predated the expulsion of the Jews. It provided an opportunity to claim not just a shared present but, through the history of the office itself, a shared past. The diplomatic successes of Montefiore on behalf of his fellow Jews provided one avenue into the highest realms of English society. The financial power of several of the leading Jewish dynasties, most notably of course the Rothschilds, provided another. Faudel-Phillips' career within the governance of the City demonstrated integration at

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<sup>74</sup> *Magazine of Art*, May 1897-8, Review of the Royal Academy Exhibition, p. 468.

<sup>75</sup> For example, *The Torch*, 14 November 1896, '... a member of the Jewish persuasion Alderman Phillips has ever taken the deepest interest in the Jewish Orphan's Asylum and the Jewish Society for the Relief of the Blind', Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library.

<sup>76</sup> Rev. Herman Adler, Diamond Jubilee Sermon, Great Synagogue, London, Sunday 20 June 1897. in H. Adler, *Anglo Jewish memories and other Sermons*, George Routledge,

the very highest levels of this most traditional area of London life and a remarkable degree of acceptance of Jews within its ranks.<sup>77</sup>

George Faudel-Phillips born in 1840, was the second son of Sir Benjamin Phillips, who had been Lord Mayor of London in 1865. Educated at University College School, London and then in Paris and Berlin, in 1867 George married Helen Levy daughter of J M Levy, proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*. He first became involved in the governance of the City of London in 1884 upon his election as Alderman for Farringdon Within - a position also previously held by his father. At the time of his election as Lord Mayor, he was Chairman of a Corporation of the City of London Committee that had been charged with 'preserving the Corporation of London with all its ancient rights and privileges' – thus providing him with a key role in assuring the continued position of one of historic institutions of London life.<sup>78</sup> He remained involved in the affairs of the City after his mayoralty and was a director of De Beers. In 1900-1 he was High Sheriff of Hertford.<sup>79</sup>

He played a major and, by all accounts, highly successful role in the Jubilee celebrations which, of course dominated his Mayoralty. 'No Lord Mayor has ever been more popular than the present holder of that office'.<sup>80</sup> There was, therefore, widespread public approval when the Queen subsequently conferred a baronetcy on

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London 1909.

<sup>77</sup> Faudel-Phillips was the fourth Jewish Lord Mayor of London. His predecessors were David Salomons 1855, his father Benjamin Phillips 1865 and Henry Isaacs 1889.

<sup>78</sup> *Drapery World*, 19 September 1896. Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library.

He was also Governor of the Irish Society from 1891 until his election as Lord Mayor.

<sup>79</sup> He was an Almoner of Christ's Hospital and a Governor of St Bartholomews; a Master of the Spectacle Makers Company. His country home was at Balls Park near Hertford, hence the link with that area. He was a member of the Reform, that most English of Gentleman's clubs.

him.<sup>81</sup> Notwithstanding the pressure of events surrounding these celebrations, Faudel-Phillips also played major roles in events from the purely local to the international level.<sup>82</sup> In tandem with non-denominational interventions, he showed no hesitation in using his office to further the interests of the Jewish community, paralleling Hart's willingness to use his position in the *British Medical Journal* to defend Jewish kashrut. One of his earliest actions as Lord Mayor was to open the Jews Soup Kitchen in Fashion Street for the winter of 1896 with the full panoply of his office and he continued to use both his position and his official residence for Jewish causes and events.<sup>83</sup>

During the course of Faudel-Phillips' mayoralty, Solomon painted two portraits of him, one commemorating the official reception of the Queen at one of the City Gates, the other a formal portrait which I shall discuss in the following chapter. Both works were exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1898.

For the Jubilee itself, Solomon painted the Lord Mayor and his entourage in full ceremonial robes at the entrance to the City at Temple Bar waiting to welcome

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<sup>80</sup> Christian Commonwealth, 8 April 1897. Press cuttings 1896-1897 Guildhall Library

<sup>81</sup> 'Needles to say the baronetcy conferred upon our excellent Lord Mayor, who with Mrs Faudel-Phillips, has discharged his duties so ably is quite one of the most popular of the Jubilee's honours meeting with great and popular approbation.' *The Lady's Pictorial*, 3 July 1897. Press cuttings 1896-1897 Guildhall Library.

<sup>82</sup> 'Thus, close to home he acted with speed and decision in raising money (in July 1897) for the Essex farmers, after disastrous flooding destroyed their crops – and was given the Freedom of the City of Colchester. From very early in his mayoralty he was a key figure in the City's appeal for famine relief for India, which resulted in his being made Knight Grand Commander of the Indian Empire.' Press cuttings 1896-1897 Guildhall Library.

<sup>83</sup> An illustrated article in *The Graphic*, 16 December 1896 reported on the Lord Mayor and his wife accompanied by the City Marshall, the Sword Bearer and the Mace Bearer arriving for the inter opening of the Soup Kitchen; Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library. The *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 April 1897 reported that a reception was held at the Mansion House for the Jewish Deaf and Dumb Society; Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library.

the arrival of the Queen - *On the Threshold of the City* (Fig. 6).<sup>84</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, commenting favourably on this work, noted a theme of particular relevance to the argument about historical continuity – the glorification of the office of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation.<sup>85</sup> Within the visual representation of such an historic institution, the presence of a Jew as holder of that office assumes special importance within the terms of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish discourse. The *Athenaeum* also talked of the historical value of the work, tempering a generally positive assessment by ending, ‘It is true that a canvas one quarter as large might have sufficed for an even greater work on a nobler theme’.<sup>86</sup> The composition placed the Lord Mayor as the central figure among a group of mounted and standing dignitaries awaiting the Monarch’s arrival.<sup>87</sup> The positioning of the Lord Mayor, the tricorne he is wearing, the white fur and red velvet of his robe and the ceremonial sword he is holding all combine to focus our attention on him.<sup>88</sup> By depicting the mounted figure to the right of the Lord

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<sup>84</sup> *On the threshold of the City 22 June 1897*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 236 x 172 cm, whereabouts unknown. Records in private family archives indicate that in 1910 the work was presented to Bethlehem Hospital, London. A sum of £200 is noted by this work, which may mean it was bought from the artist or a third party for this presentation.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Mr Solomon’s representation of the scene at Temple Bar on the occasion of the Jubilee, while it does not entirely escape from the characteristics of a portrait group, aims less at being a record of the Jubilee than a glorification of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City of London. Considering the difficulty of his task Mr Solomon has succeeded in presenting the scene as well as an accurate record of atmospheric conditions even though the decorations of the City are necessarily flattered as to harmony of colour.’ ‘Review of the Royal Academy Exhibition,’ in *The Magazine of Art*, May 1897-8, p. 468.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Although really a group of life size equestrian portraits of the members of the Corporation Mr Solomon’s immense work *On the threshold of the City* is on account of the subject represented a sort of historical document. The theme and its modernness suit the powers of the artist much better than the incidents from classical history with which he has hitherto striven so courageously. The brightness of the effect – sunlight in a City street – the splendour of the costumes and the humour evinced in the well satisfied expressions of the Aldermen are highly acceptable in an exhibition where these qualities are not common and the last is very rare indeed’, in *Athenaeum*, 11 June 1898, p. 762.

<sup>87</sup> These included to his left and right immediately behind him the Sheriffs Ritchie and Rogers.

<sup>88</sup> Solomon was able to take advantage of a ceremonial usage which dictated that in lieu of his own Mayoral black and gold robes the Lord Mayor was provided with special red velvet and ermine robes for such occasions. The Sword was not in fact part of the Lord Mayor’s

Mayor bending his head in apparent conversation with a standing figure at the extreme right edge of the canvas, Solomon ensured that pictorially no one had physical dominance over the Lord Mayor himself. The reality of this ceremony and its circumstances reveal some interesting artistic choices. According to both the official instructions for the occasion and an illustrated report of the event, the Lord Mayor and his Deputation met the Queen on foot.<sup>89</sup> They mounted their horses after, in accordance with the ceremony, the Monarch had returned the Pearl Sword to the Lord Mayor and was ready to be led into the City.<sup>90</sup>

Amidst the bunting that fluttered from the buildings behind the Lord Mayor was the escutcheon of the City of London which is based on the Cross of St George, that most potent symbol of Englishness and early English Christianity, surrounded by banners bearing the royal emblem almost directly behind his head. This placement created a direct visual link between the Lord Mayor and the traditions of his centuries' old office, the history of England embodied in the Cross of St George and the Pearl Sword, and the current monarchy. At its most direct level, one can therefore decode the image as a visual representation of the integration and acceptance of a member of the Jewish community as the titular leader of the City of London and holder in succession of one of the oldest and most prestigious public offices in the land. Institutional acceptance of a Jew is demonstrated even more clearly here than in the case of Hart as argued above.

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regalia. It is referred to as the City's Pearl Sword and may have been originally used ceremonially by Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> at the Royal Exchange in 1570. *The Daily Graphic*, 14 May 1897. Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library.

<sup>89</sup> Ceremonial Instructions, The Remembrancer Office, 18 June 1897. *The Graphic*, 23 June 1897, Press cuttings 1896-1897, Guildhall Library.



The pageant of the occasion inevitably draws the viewer into a presentation of the past. Pageantry and tradition, whether actually based in the long distant past or as with some of the ceremonies of the Victorian era of more recent invention, rely for part of their impact on a real or assumed link with history. By presenting Faudel-Phillips at the Gates of the City awaiting his Sovereign in his ceremonial robes and bearing a ceremonial sword, Solomon was calling on and, at the same time adding to, the accumulated historical memory of his viewers. He inserts into that memory the image of a contemporary Jew who then becomes part of that shared present and, perhaps more importantly, the shared past that was the theme of the 1887 Exhibition.

### Anyone for tea?

‘...everything English with the old Jewish customs peeping through...’<sup>91</sup>

The foregoing images have been examined regarding the manner in which Jews were represented as being part of the shared present and shared past of England. In 1906 Solomon painted a formal portrait of Dr Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition and also a watercolour of the *Election of the Chief Rabbi*.<sup>92</sup> It is, however, a less formal work of the same year that I wish to examine. *High Tea in the Sukkah* is a remarkable record of the anglicification of a traditional Jewish religious festival (Fig. 7).<sup>93</sup> It illustrated even

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<sup>90</sup> Although Faudel-Phillips was apparently an excellent horseman, the decision to depict him mounted may have been dictated by the fact that he was very short and would have been physically overshadowed by others in a standing composition

<sup>91</sup> Theodore Herzl on a dinner at the home of Rev Hermann Adler.

<sup>92</sup> Solomon J Solomon, *The election of the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler*, Watercolour on paper, 1906, 30.5 x 37.9 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York.

<sup>93</sup> Solomon J Solomon, *High tea in the Sukkah*, Ink, graphite and gouache on paper, 1906, 39.6 x 29.2 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York. The media used for this image would

more clearly than the clerical garb of the formal portrait, the degree of acculturation that had permeated Jewish religious orthodoxy and it raises interesting questions about integration and acculturation. At first sight the Sukkah has been faithfully rendered by Solomon with an abundance of fruit and foliage on the walls, the ceiling and on the table. The *lulav* is clearly in evidence at the right knee of the seated male in the foreground. However, if one examines the image more closely, the building in question was certainly not a temporary shelter of biblical derivation. It was definitely a more permanent structure and may even be rather a beautifully decorated conservatory. There were regularly spaced windows. The ceiling looked more permanent than might be anticipated, although one assumes it would have had the obligatory opening to the sky if the building were to be used as a Sukkah, and a picture is hanging on what must almost certainly have been a solid wall at the right hand side of canvas.

However, more remarkable is the meal being consumed and the religious figure in attendance. Depictions of meals in a Sukkah, the partaking of which is one of the key positive injunctions of the festival, from earlier eras such as that by Moriz Openheim in 1867 from his *Bilder aus dem altjüdischen Familienleben* series concentrate on the religious aspect of the observance.<sup>94</sup> There is no such focus in this work. As the title makes clear it is High Tea – a very English mealtime. Into the

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perhaps suggest that it might have been intended for reproduction elsewhere, though the holding institution has no such information. Succoth, the Jewish equivalent to the harvest festival, is one in the season of High Holidays, which commences at the New Year. For seven days Jews were biblically commanded to live in simple booths – Succoth - with roofs open to the stars and decorated with fruits. This was to act as a reminder for the Jews of their lack of permanent habitation after the flight from Egypt. At services during the festival ceremonial use is made of a *lulav* - a combination of branches from the palm, willow and myrtle and an *ertrog* (a citrus plant native to Israel).

<sup>94</sup> Grisaille, 64.8 cms x 55.9 cms, Jewish Museum, New York.

centre of what might otherwise be read as a totally secular, social secular event Solomon has placed, in the role of host, no less a figure than the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler himself. Of the five male figures in the picture he was the only one wearing any head covering. The simple booth erected in commemoration of the flight from Egypt and the serving of meals within a specific religious context has been replaced by a far more solid structure in which fashionable society seem to chatter over tea and sandwiches.

Jewish Orthodoxy for many early twentieth century Anglo-Jews in the West End and its neighbouring areas meant something very different from that which guided the lives of the religiously observant in their own midst or among the immigrant community. Hart and Faudel-Phillips might have felt at ease in such a Sukkah gathering, but it was small wonder that many of the immigrant poor, who by 1906 made up the majority of the Jewish population, had difficulty reconciling their religious observances or views as to what these should be and the role of a rabbi with those of this Chief Rabbi. Indeed, given the views expressed by Solomon in his 1901 lecture, one might ponder his feelings as he rendered 'so assimilative' a Chief Rabbi as this in such an anglicised version of this particular Jewish holiday. Sharing the present seems to have been a one way street in which Anglo-Jewry was prepared to tailor its observances to correspond to the social mores of the Edwardian age. This would seem to be an example of the phenomenon of integration by mimicry.

The Jews in the Court of Queen Elizabeth

In 1912, following his earlier Guildhall precedent, Sir Samuel Montagu made a similar presentation of a mural to the House of Commons, which was entitled *The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry* (Fig. 8).<sup>95</sup> As with the Royal Exchange mural, this later presentation was one in a series of works by different artists presented by different donors to adorn the walls of quasi-public/public spaces in the Palace of Westminster with scenes drawn from England's history. In the light of the struggle for Jewish political emancipation which had only been successfully concluded little more than half a century earlier within these same Houses of Parliament, it is interesting to examine how this historical scene was created.

Earlier works that had been commissioned for the Houses of Parliament were paid for out of the public purse and could therefore legitimately be made the subject of scrutiny by a specially appointed Committee, whose approval was only gained when, *inter alia*, there was satisfaction as to the historical verisimilitude and accuracy of the work. The Montagu/Solomon mural, was one of a series of privately commissioned and funded works which made it more difficult for the House to exercise the same degree of control.

The figure of the Queen was based on a professional model. In keeping with a long tradition of artistic patronage, Montagu himself (by then ennobled) appeared in the work – the figure in profile on the extreme left of the foreground. Some of the other foreground figures were based on current figures of the early twentieth century

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<sup>95</sup> Solomon J. Solomon, *The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry*, Canvas on plaster, 1911, 442 x 249 cm, Houses of Parliament, London. The work carries the subtitle "The Queen, enthroned and surrounded by her faithful Commons, holds up a ring and says 'With this ring I was wedded to the realm'".

political scene.<sup>96</sup> Three of the background figures were, however, members of the artist's family.<sup>97</sup> At first sight, there is nothing remarkable about this. Clearly, since Montagu himself was part of the composition, he had no objections to this device. However, one may legitimately question whether, not just on the grounds of historical verisimilitude, an earlier House Committee would knowingly have sanctioned the inclusion of Jews – even as models – in a work to be placed at the heart of the Palace of Westminster within a scene representing Queen Elizabeth. In taking this route, Solomon's representation simultaneously included Jews literally in the centre of English democracy of the present and figuratively in her historical past in the Court of Queen Elizabeth, at a time when, following the Expulsion of 1290, there were in theory no Jews in England and indeed in practice very few.

What is interesting is not the stratagem, but the silence with which it was greeted. Rothschild had fought for eleven years for the right to sit as a Jew in the Commons little more than fifty years before. The Aliens Act had become law only five years earlier. Once again there was mounting unrest involving the Jews in the East End during this period. It would, however, seem that even those who were actively involved in anti-immigrant movements such as the British Brotherhood did not question or could make no public capital out of this placement of Jews in a work commissioned by one professing Jew and painted by another. I am not suggesting any covert action by Solomon, with or without the collusion of Montagu, to introduce

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<sup>96</sup> According to a key prepared in 1948 following a Parliamentary Question, the identities of the sitters were listed as Viscount Ullswater, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, Mr John Burns, Viscount Harcourt, Colonel John Nolan, Mr R Cunningham Graham, Sir Henry Seymour King and the Earl of Oxford and Asquith. R.J.B.Walker, *A Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture and Engravings in the Palace of Westminster*, Part IV, The Ministry of Public Works, London, 1962, p. 87.

quasi-Marranos into the Court of Elizabeth. I am simply pointing to the change of climate that made it possible for Solomon, following countless artists before him, to use family members, who were easily available as models, in a work of this kind without it apparently raising any controversy.<sup>98</sup>

The only possible clue to any covert resistance may be found in the placing of the work. It was not in the main public areas or corridors, but overlooking the landing of a staircase leading up to the Committee Rooms. For a work whose theme is one of such historical interest, this was a very obscure positioning and one that might possibly have reflected otherwise unvoiced objections.

### An Allegory

‘What the exact purport of his picture may be he has left to the fancy of the beholder.’<sup>99</sup>

The previous examples of Solomon’s representation of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish discourse are all quite specific in terms of subject and presentation. In 1904 Solomon displayed as one of his five exhibits at the Royal Academy, *An Allegory* (Fig. 9), a work in which it would appear that the artist was attempting to represent in visual form the key themes of his 1901 lecture and article ‘Art and Judaism’.<sup>100</sup> Solomon combined elements of classical mythology, paganism, Hellenism, Judaism/Hebraism and Christianity. At the time of its acquisition from the Exhibition Solomon explained the work thus:

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<sup>97</sup> His son, Dorian, his daughter Iris and his brother David. Source; As above.

<sup>98</sup> It might be argued that since the key to the work was not prepared until 1948 these inclusions might not have been known. Given, however, its general location and potential sensitivities over a depiction of Queen Elizabeth, however, such information could have been elicited from the relevant Commons office by anyone minded to investigate.

<sup>99</sup> *Morning Post*, 30 April 1904, Archives Harris Museum and Gallery, Preston.

<sup>100</sup> An allegory, Oil on canvas, 1904, 269 x 150, Harris Museum & Gallery, Preston. This painting was acquired directly from the Exhibition in May 1904. See letter from Solomon to Mr. J.C. Hamilton, Chairman of the Committee. 10 May 1904, Archives Harris Museum and Gallery, Preston.

The Subject of *An Allegory* is the conflict between the biblical and Pagan influences. A recumbent figure of Christ borne along by two winged figures reposing on the knees of the lawgiver in the centre group. Above are the Greek Dieties [sic]. Mars with horse and chariot. A group of Bacchus pouring down wine and Venus throwing down roses on a Ship below (humanity) which is wrecked against the rocks on which recline singing sirens [sic] (the fatal and elusive attractions). The central group is closely followed by a mass of cupids (the emissaries of Venus) who are scattering flowers on the waters.<sup>101</sup>

In order to understand its implications fully I suggest it is helpful to imagine a division of the work which abstracts from its centre the figures of the lawgiver and Christ. This will enable us to examine, as it were separately, those themes and ideas which relate to the areas of mythology and overt paganism and those which relate specifically to the Judaeo-Christian concepts.

The former themes, as described by Solomon in the second part of the above extract, provide what might be characterised as a familiar recital of Victorian moral values set in quasi-classical times - the frailty of man in the face of temptation and the mocking of the pagan, mythological gods. The positioning of the figures involved in this segment of *An Allegory* on the periphery of the main subjects and painted in a subdued palette and a less focussed manner would seem to indicate that these ideas were not of central importance to the work as a whole. Taken on their own, such subjects and ideas might have had to rely on their painterly execution to raise the work above the mundane. The art historical precedents in terms of theme, style and practice might have been found in the works of Solomon's seniors, Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) and Poynter (1836-1919). The former's *The Roses of Heliogabulus*, painted some twenty years earlier, which depicts scenes of feasting in the middle

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<sup>101</sup> Letter dated 13 May 1904 to Mr. J.C. Hamilton, Chairman of the Committee, Archives Harris Museum and Gallery, Preston.

ground and the strewing of petals onto figures drowning among them in the foreground is a possible antecedent for parts of the Solomon work.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Poynter's almost contemporary *Cave of the Storm Nymphs* combined both those elements of naked sirens and the depiction of a storm at sea which are features of the *An Allegory*.<sup>103</sup> Both of these works, like the Solomon, were on a grand scale and probably destined for exhibition or public display.

The central figures of Moses and of Christ focus on the primary implication of Solomon's vision. Solomon was particularly emphatic about the importance of the colour composition of this work.<sup>104</sup> Not surprisingly therefore this is its most highly illuminated and clearly focussed passage within the total composition.

This part of the work is based on the link between the Old Testament – as presented in the form of the lawgiver Moses - and the New Testament - as represented by Christ. This is not, however, a rendition of a Judaeo-Christian progression which illustrates the Church triumphant emerging from the wreckage of an older and outdated past. As we shall see briefly in the next Chapter, Sargent used that concept and its artistic precedents in his Boston Public Library mural series *The Triumph of Religion*.

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<sup>102</sup> Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Roses of Heliogabulus*, Oil on canvas, 1888, 132.1 x 213.7 cm, Private collection.

<sup>103</sup> Sir Edward Poynter, *The caves of the Storm Nymphs*, Oil on canvas, 1903, 145.9 x 110.4 cm, Private collection.

<sup>104</sup> Letter dated 13 May 1904 to Mr. J.C. Hamilton, Chairman of the Committee, Archives Harris Museum and Gallery, Preston.



In this Solomon presentation the Old Testament is represented by the stern figure of the lawgiver. Although the recumbent figure of Christ draped on the latter's knees, Moses - clasping the Tablets of the Law looks ahead as much as down at the recumbent figure. This is not the Moses of a tired, old and perhaps overtaken religion but rather the lawgiver whose vision is focussed forward, whose G\*d has given laws setting limits to be obeyed.

The figure of Christ is clearly based on the *Pieta* of Michelangelo – although close inspection indicates that Solomon, the Jew, could or would not permit himself to include stigmata in his rendition. The shock of a transposition of the Christ figure from the knees of the Madonna to those of Moses forces Solomon's audience to take a very different view of the juxtaposition between Judaism and Christianity. In this visual text, Judaism is not a spent force, it is potent and driving. Although concepts of gendered and psychological decoding of visual imagery would have seemed strange to the firmly Victorian/Edwardian values of Solomon, the relative positioning of the two subjects suggest that the figure of Moses might be interpreted as symbolically giving birth to the figure of Christ. Life and the values of the Judaism and Old Testament, as exemplified by the Tablets of the Law in Moses' arms at Christ's head, flow from the lawgiver to the recumbent Christ symbolising the New Testament and Church.

Given Solomon's views on the linkage between Hellenism, paganism and Catholicism on the one hand, and Judaism and Northern Protestantism on the other, *An Allegory* might be read as a bid for the religious high ground of England to be occupied not by the values of Catholicism with its Hellenistic/pagan undertones or by

High Church Anglicanism, but rather by the values of Judaism in the form of its direct descendant English Protestantism. In setting this agenda for the painting, Solomon was not therefore presenting a seemingly obscure and perhaps unfocussed collection of ideas about past values cloaked in more or less clearly understood pagan mythology. He was rather making a claim for the importance of Judaism at the very heart of the value system of late Victorian/early Edwardian England – Judaism as the still active progenitor and wellspring of English Protestantism. This reading would put *An Allegory* at the apogee of those works within the Solomon oeuvre, which relate to the acceptance of the Anglo-Jewish discourse and the place of the Jew within English Society. The painting is not as its title implies just an allegorical rendering of a religious/philosophical argument but perhaps a statement of Solomon's own feelings about the importance of Judaism.

Whatever its importance in a subsequent assessment of Solomon's works and beliefs, the work was accorded scant comment in the reviews of that year's Summer Exhibition. It was not mentioned by the reviewers of either the *Burlington Magazine* or *The Athenaeum*. *The Magazine of Art* review of the Royal Academy Exhibition, of May 1904, simply recorded:

Mr Solomon's Allegory is most accomplished as an exercise in scholarly draughtsmanship and colour arrangement.<sup>105</sup>

The critic of the *Art Journal's* May 1904 article seemed more exercised by his apparently erroneous understanding that the work had been bought for £1500, 'a high price for a non commissioned work' than by possible interpretations of a work, which was dismissed with the note:

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<sup>105</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, May 1904, p. 364.

... we have a rather cryptic Allegory by Mr S. J. Solomon, which at any rate has the merit of dignified colour and arrangement and is not aggressive.<sup>106</sup>

*Vanity Fair*, 12 May 1904 was equally bemused by its meaning:

Less significant is Mr Solomon J. Solomon's Allegory, though painted finely, one cannot quite comprehend the meaning of the dead Christ borne away by angels.<sup>107</sup>

The more potentially more partisan Jewish press also had problems interpreting the work. The *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1904 simply concentrated on its painterly qualities:

Mr Solomon J Solomon has nearly come into his own this year with his 'Allegory' to which the post of honour in the great gallery is accorded. The composition is somewhat confused and the meaning of the allegory is not very clear but the painting of the principal figures is in the grand style and reminiscent of the old masters<sup>108</sup>

Only the critic of the *Jewish World*, writing on the same date, attempted an interpretation which ended near the mark suggested earlier:

The work of Mr Solomon, which will attract most attention, is 'An Allegory', which has a fine central position on the line in Gallery III. As the artist does not explain the meaning of this remarkable picture, every critic will read it in his own way. The body of the dead Christ is being borne aloft by two angels representing the East and West and he [sic] would seem to be reposing in the arms of Moses, who, at the same time, grasps the two tablets of the law on which are inscribed in Hebrew characters "Thou shalt have no other gods before me". In the background are Bacchus and other pagan divinities. Does the artist intend to signify that dogmatic Christianity as well as paganism must ultimately succumb to the monotheistic teachings of Sinai?<sup>109</sup>

It would seem that none of these critics were familiar with or at least had referred back to the 1901 lecture that is so clearly the genesis of this work.

### Solomon, the Anglo-Jew

<sup>106</sup> *Art Journal*, May 1904, p. 239.

<sup>107</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 12 May 1904, p. 595.

<sup>108</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1904, p. 22.

<sup>109</sup> *Jewish World*, p. 119.

Solomon returned in 1903 to some of the themes of 'Art and Judaism' in a notice he wrote for *The Magazine of Art*:

Art and paganism go hand in hand, Israel's ideal existence is a grappling with that paganism till not a vestige is left.<sup>110</sup>

The subject of the note was not, however, a further discussion of these issues. It was about the Austrian painter Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925). If from no other source, Solomon would presumably have been aware of Lilien's work because in the same year they were featured together in Buber's *Jüdische Künstler* (see above). What is particularly self-revealing in this piece is the role Solomon felt might be played by Lilien.

..although pathos and human suffering to which the wandering race are no strangers lie beneath the pigments of a Josef Israels, the hopes and ideals especially characteristic of the race, embodied in its literature and life might well furnish themes enough for one capable of giving them adequate artistic expression. A young Galician, Ephraim Lilien, the subject of this notice is perhaps the first to make this task his own.<sup>111</sup>

Although the note gave no examples of the Lilien work which Solomon may have been citing, the young Galician born artist's work and his perhaps more positive view of Judaism were to be found around that time in issues of *Ost und West*, and in his illustrations for *Juda, Gesänge* and in *Lieder des Ghetto*.<sup>112</sup> Lilien was also associated from very early with the emerging Zionist movement.<sup>113</sup> Solomon's suggestion of a need for someone to fill this role and his suggestion of Lilien as a candidate may have been linked to Buber's book in the introduction to which Buber stated: 'a national art needs a soil from which to spring and a sky towards which to rise ... a national art needs a homogeneous society from which it grows and for

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<sup>110</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, pp. 240 ff.

<sup>111</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, pp. 240 ff.

<sup>112</sup> Freiherr Börries von Münchhausen, *Juda. Gesänge*, Goslar: Verlag F.A.Lattmann, 1900; Morris Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*. Berlin: Verlag S. Calvary, 1902.

which it exists'. As Margaret Olin has pointed out, Lilien in part responded to this challenge as he 'supplied the Bezalel [School in Jerusalem] with its seal and a *Jugendstil* look that it maintained well into the 1920s.<sup>114</sup>

Solomon was at the time forty three years old, a very successful painter, an Associate of the Royal Academy and numbered among the cultural elite of English Jewry. I would suggest that it might not simply have been a sense of reticence or modesty that prompted him to propose Lilien as a candidate for this task of depicting the positive aspirations of the Jewish race and thereby to disregard his own potential claims. I argued earlier that Solomon was comfortable with his Anglo-Jewish identity. He might, I believe, have regarded this far closer identification with some sort of the essential Jewishness and with the aspirations articulated by Buber as a precondition for such art as being outside his personal realm. He clearly did not want to accept the role of being the painterly equivalent of his literary friend Israel Zangwill or some of the latter's East European contemporaries, even though, as this piece makes clear, he saw a need for someone to occupy that space. Solomon was an Anglo-Jew whose attachment to the Anglo-Jewish discourse of 1887 does not seem to have altered despite the changes in the circumstances of English Jewry prior to the First World War. To have taken up the wider challenge he proposed for Lilien would have involved a closer identification with the Jewish 'race' than this acculturated Jewish Englishman seemed willing to adopt.

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<sup>113</sup> In 1901 Lilien took part in the Fifth Zionist Congress and organised with Buber an exhibition of Jewish painters.

<sup>114</sup> Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art*, p. 44.

## CHAPTER 4

**The dangerous Mr Sargent**

‘It is positively dangerous to sit to Sargent. It’s taking your face in your hands,’ said a timid aspirant; and many stood shivering on the brink waiting for more adventurous spirits to make the plunge.  
W. Graham Robertson.<sup>1</sup>

Introduction

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), the American-born artist, lived in London during the decades either side of the turn of the twentieth century, where he enjoyed great success and was regarded by many there and in his native Boston as the leading portrait painter of the period.<sup>2</sup> Even before his death, however, his reputation waned, and although he has been re-assessed in recent exhibitions, he has never regained that high peak. His portraits of this twenty to twenty five year period might be said to document and reflect the changing nature of English Society, and in particular help us to understand the position of the newly emerging Jewish haute-bourgeoisie.

The task of this chapter is narrowly defined to provide a critical examination of the contemporary reception of the artist’s portraits of English-Jewish sitters and the

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<sup>1</sup> W. Graham Robertson, *Time Was: The reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1931, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on John Singer Sargent is very extensive. The sources and texts relevant to this study are quoted throughout this chapter. The key source is the Catalogue Raisonné of Sargent’s work, Ormond and Kilmurray *John Singer Sargent; Portraits of the 1890s, Complete Paintings Vol.2*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002. Other key texts with which I engage in this chapter are Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent; The Sensualist*; Sally Promey, *Painting Religion In Public* and Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text* Eds. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb. This is the text used for reference in this chapter. Adler’s discussion was recently re-presented as *John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer*

readings thereof. This chapter is not intended as a challenge to the validity of interpretations based on events or receptions which occurred outside this timeframe, but proposes that a more nuanced reading of the works is, in the light of the contemporary reception, more appropriate. The reception of these works in the period between 1890 and 1910 both reflected and informed the cultural climate of that period and these findings may therefore also serve as a source for its re-assessment in a wider cultural context than the largely art-centred focus of this study.

No study of the representation of the Jew in English art during this period could be complete without an engagement with Sargent's series of paintings of the Wertheimer Family, a commission that was eventually to result in twelve separate and group portraits.<sup>3</sup> This territory has been analysed in depth by Kathleen Adler, whose comments on individual aspects of particular paintings will be covered in the chronological review which follows. It is, however, appropriate to outline the main strands of her discussion at the outset. Adler argues that:

The commission represented a challenge to long established codes for grand manner portraiture in a variety of ways, not only in its subject and its display, but also in being so overtly a series of representations of "the Jew". The portraits signal the aspirations of a middle class Jewish family to be regarded in the same light as the aristocracy, and Wertheimer's intention that the majority of them be exhibited in a public space marks a further breach with the conventions surrounding family portraits.<sup>4</sup>

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*Family* in the catalogue of the exhibition of the same name edited by Norman Kleeblatt and published by the Jewish Museum of New York, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Asher Wertheimer (1844-1913) was the son of Samson Wertheimer, a German born bronze maker and art dealer who came to England in 1830. Asher Wertheimer married Flora Joseph, daughter of antiques dealer Edward Joseph, in 1873. They had ten children. Unlike his brother Charles, who dealt in a wide range of collectables, Asher specialised in Old Master Paintings and 'objets d'art'. By the turn of the century he had established himself as one of the leading dealers in London, acting on behalf of the Rothschilds and owning homes in Connaught Place (next-door to F.D. Mocatta) to the north of Hyde Park and in Henley. Notwithstanding his undoubted success in his chosen field, he was still on the fringe of rather than accepted within the upper echelons of Anglo-Jewry – thus at the time of the 1887 Exhibition he was a Guarantor but not a member of the General Committee or any of the subsidiary Committees.

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, p. 83.

Adler contextualises the Wertheimer portraits within a period that was at one and the same time a Golden Age for the Jewish people in Britain and an era of overt and covert anti-Semitism.<sup>5</sup> This reaction was prompted by a perception of excessive wealth and influence at one end of the social scale and excessive presence and poverty at the other. What resulted was adverse oral and written comment, localised social unrest and the passage of legislation aimed at halting further economic and political immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Adler's discussion of the portraits of 'the Jew' as represented by Asher Wertheimer, and more particularly of 'the Jewess' as represented by selected portraits of his daughters Ena, Betty and Almina, deals with what she contends are problematic images, containing elements of "anti-Semitic stereotypes" that skirted close to caricature and challenged accepted canons of female portraiture, but that simultaneously were truthful to the sitters and reflected the warmth of the relationship between the artist, his patron and the latter's family.<sup>7</sup> In her review of the reception of these works, Adler moves from immediate contemporary sources to later events and commentary which will be discussed, together with her observations on individual aspects of particular paintings, later in this chapter.<sup>8</sup>

By the turn of the century, academic portrait painting was a territory under siege. Photography and the challenges of modernity and avant-garde artistic practice,

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<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb

<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, p. 313, endnote 10. W. D. Rubinstein, 'Decline of the Golden Age', *Jewish Social Studies* 34 (January 1972), p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb.



fuelled by writings such as Baudelaire's seminal reviews of the Paris Salons of 1846 and 1859 and his essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, written in 1859-60 and published in 1863, led to what Heather McPherson has described as 'an identity crisis [in the] shifting representative function of the modern portrait'.<sup>9</sup> Sargent was aware of these new trends and directions to which he had been exposed during his time in Paris. Most of his sitters were not the once all-powerful established landed aristocracy, the subjects of grand portraiture in early ages. They were rather the products of the modern era of industry and finance. Although Sargent could not, therefore, simply rely on the signifiers of rank and privilege that were the currency of earlier portraits and had to find new ways of expressing the wealth and position of his sitters, he did so within a traditional framework.

The portrait work of, for example, Courbet, Cezanne and Van Gogh and the early experiments of photographic portraiture provided the genesis for new directions and for the ultimate decline of grand-manner portraiture. Within the time frame and locus of this study, however, one would be hard-pressed to detect such a decline. Reviews of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions and of other major general exhibitions almost inevitably opened with the portraits. There were still portrait painters who lived well and enjoyed considerable status.

Contemporary reviews of the annual Royal Academy Exhibitions regularly bemoaned the standard of much of the work displayed. One is, however, struck by the

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<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Adler, *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb.

<sup>9</sup> Heather McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 145.

regularity with which Sargent's work received praise (except in 1903, by common accord a failure for him), though the praise was sometimes grudgingly conceded:

Mr Sargent is again brilliantly predominant. One is tempted to think Mr Sargent is almost too predominant for now that Mr Furse has gone there is only Mr Shannon to compete with him ...<sup>10</sup>

Royal Cortissoz suggested that Sargent's pre-eminence led others to resent him:

For some years he tyrannised over the Royal Academy in a way calculated to make a great many mediocrities hate the sight of his productions.<sup>11</sup>

If this was true, one needs to bear it in mind when interpreting critical assessments of his work. If Sargent was felt to be unassailable, perhaps he might be indirectly attacked through criticism of his sitters.

The *Vanity Fair* review, of 10 May 1906, of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition suggested a depth to Sargent's work sometimes unrecognised by others:

The day is past when we might think him a mere master of a splendid 'trick'; the very truth is that there is no trick at all. What we see is the real thing – so strikingly real that people step out of their frames and speak to us. After seeing a Sargent we seem to know the subject – to have known him for long – and to understand him as we understand an old friend.<sup>12</sup>

#### Solomon, Sargent and Sir George and Lady Faudel-Phillips

The previous Chapter on Solomon J. Solomon investigated how the Englishness of some of his work validated his position as a portraitist of the Anglo-Jewish discourse, which, I argued, emerged from the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887. The contrast between Solomon and Sargent is provided by a pair of almost contemporaneous portraits, which offers an ideal bridge across which to move in our consideration of their different positions.

In 1898 Sir George Faudel-Phillips was presented with 'a portrait in oils, painted by Mr Solomon J. Solomon, A.R.A, as a mark of the appreciation of East End Jews of his brilliant mayoralty'

<sup>10</sup> *The Speaker*, 6 May 1905, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Royal Cortissoz, *Art and Common Sense*, Smith, Elder, London & New York, 1914, p. 220.

(Fig. 10).<sup>13</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle*'s 6 May 1898 review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1898 confined its comments on this work to an approving, albeit very short note: 'Sir George is painted in his official robes and full justice is done in the finely modelled face of his ever-youthful features.'<sup>14</sup>

The painting is a competent, but not particularly outstanding, example of the plethora of mayoral and other official portraits produced of other sitters by other painters during this period. Its interest lies in the presentation of the subject in full ceremonial robes – a choice rejected by, for example, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema in his 1901 portrait of *Sir Max Waechter*, High Sheriff of Surrey.<sup>15</sup> Solomon was identifying his sitter's contemporary position and simultaneously creating that link with the past, which was integral to the shared history project and was a main strand in the Anglo-Jewish discourse. Faudel-Phillips' mayoral robe rises from the low foreground of the picture, to be surmounted by an ermine cape with two large epaulettes which in their turn retain his chain of office. This is both a painting about the office of Lord Mayor and a depiction of its then incumbent. This presentation perhaps places the portrait within the realm of an official, although not a State, portrait, which Andrew Wilton has suggested is 'an assertion of institutionalised pomp, [which] subordinates individual characteristics.'<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the Faudel-Phillips' personal reactions to this work, Solomon was not the painter of a second Presentation Portrait exhibited the following year at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. *Lady Faudel-Phillips* (Fig. 11) by Sargent is a much more searching exposition of its subject than the anodyne portrait of her

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<sup>12</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 10 May 1906, p. 599.

<sup>13</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 January 1898, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 January 1898, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Sir Max Waechter*, (Present whereabouts unknown), Oil on canvas, 1901, 91.5 x 116.9 cm.

husband.<sup>17</sup> Sir George may have been content with a portrait by Solomon, the safe pair of hands of the Anglo-Jewish world, but for Lady Faudel-Phillips the choice was a portrait by the more fashionable – albeit potentially more dangerous – Sargent. The risks involved in sitting to Sargent were described graphically in a later observation by Wilfrid Blunt:<sup>18</sup>

Sargent has a genius for seeing and reproducing the base passions of his sitters; here is Cromer with bloated cheeks, dull eyes, ruby nose and gouty hands, half torpid, having lunched heavily. Truly my quarrel with him is avenged. The newspapers complain that instead of our “glorious Pro-Consul”, Sargent has given them nothing but a full-fed obstinate Indian official.<sup>19</sup>

Given Blunt’s very active ‘anti-British rule in Egypt’ stance, it is hardly surprising that he seized upon this opportunity to see Cromer, then British Agent in Egypt, belittled;<sup>20</sup> however, this diary note of reactions, his own and those of the press, to Sargent’s 1902 portrait of the *Earl of Cromer*, displayed at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1903, indicates clearly just how far the artist was prepared to deviate from common perceptions and expectations – even when depicting one who was at the very heart of the English establishment.

Reviewing the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1899, the critic on 5 May 1899 in the *Jewish Chronicle* observed of the portrait of Lady Faudel-Phillips:

It is not a very refined picture, and the sitter seems to be rather overweighted by the amount of jewellery she wears, prominent amongst which is the Jubilee medal. However, the lady’s white hair is rendered with great effect, and the portrait is an amazingly clever piece of work.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Wilton, *The Swagger Portrait*, Tate Gallery, London, 1992, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> *Lady Faudel Phillips*, 1898 (Private Collection), Oil on canvas, 144.8 x 94 cm.

<sup>18</sup> For Blunt, see Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Earl of Cromer*, 1902 (National Portrait Gallery, London), Oil on canvas, 146.1 x 96.5 cm. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries*, Martin Secker, London, 1932, p. 469, entry 16 May 1903. For Cromer, see Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries*, Martin Secker London, 1932, p. 469, entry 16 May

<sup>21</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1899, p. 14.

Henry Strachey, cousin of the writer and Bloomsbury leader Lytton Strachey, was even more direct in *The Spectator* on 6 May 1899:<sup>22</sup>

In *Lady Faudel-Phillips* bravura is used with the power of a satire by Pope. Hard merciless wit without caricature is the general impression produced by this picture. The power wielded by the painter of this portrait has something terrible about it.<sup>23</sup>

What was it that Strachey felt was being satirised? In the light of subsequent debates about the anti-Semitic potential and reception of some of Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters, examined later, one might speculate that the critic is referring to the attempt by someone whom he may have regarded as unsuitable, in spite of her husband's rank and wealth, for acceptance into and by English society. This is, of course, the antithesis of the Anglo-Jewish discourse which I have posited emerged from the 1887 Exhibition. As we shall see, however, when so moved, Strachey was prone to use stronger and more direct vocabulary, so this may not have been his main or only mark.

Perhaps Strachey was suggesting that Sargent was satirising a middle-aged lady beyond her prime by portraying her in the same style as he used for younger sitters. The artist certainly made no concession to her age. Her thick body, the details of her upper right arm and forearm and her hands all show the physical signs of middle age with no attempt at concealment.<sup>24</sup> Her face is unsmiling and her make-up – especially around her eyes – severe. Her pose verges on the uncomfortably upright – her dog seems almost precariously poised in her lap.

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 6 May 1899, p. 641. For Strachey, see Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>23</sup> The word *bravura* was used frequently by reviewers of John Singer Sargent's work at this time and its meaning then was 'a display of daring or brilliance of execution; an attempt at brilliance'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. I, 1888. I am indebted to Dr Martin Maw, Archivist of the Oxford University Press for this and other details of definition, acknowledged throughout these notes as OED. There were, as we shall see, occasions when reviewers using the word may have been hinting at failed attempts of daring and brilliance.

This picture is not a benignly disposed, formal portrait in the mode of the Solomon portrayal of Sir George. Sargent provides a pictorially searching examination of his sitter which did not disguise visual truths. C.J. Holmes writing in the *The Burlington Magazine* in 1905 remarked of another work that it posed:

...one of those problems with which Mr John Singer Sargent had made us familiar, the turning of an amazing sitter into a fine picture by accepting and insisting on awkward facts.<sup>25</sup>

It was this willingness to take on the challenges of such potentially uncomfortable encounters and produce from them “amazingly clever piece[s] of work” that characterises some of the most rewarding of Sargent’s portraiture.<sup>26</sup>

Such an approach, while elevating these works above the run of the mill sometimes left the artist open to charges of caricature. Max Beerbohm took the elements of physical size, white hair and the bejewelled feather head piece as the key descriptive signals for what I suggest must have been Lady Faudel-Phillips in his contemporary cartoon *Tite Street* (Fig. 12).<sup>27</sup> This and other works by Sargent which I will review demonstrate that the line between character and caricature was occasionally perilously thin. Thus the *Vanity Fair* critic remarked in his 10 May 1906 review of the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1906:

There are about these two pictures [Mrs Guest and Maud Coates] a peculiar grace and charm and *less of that brutality, which made his enemies in the past hint at the caricature.*<sup>28</sup> (author’s italics)

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<sup>24</sup> Photographs of Lady Faudel Phillips at the time of her husband’s mayoralty indicate that she was a short, heavy set lady with tightly curled white hair. *Lady’s Pictorial*, 7 November 1896, Frontispiece. *The Sketch*, 11 November 1896, p. 115: Press Cuttings 1896-7 Guildhall Library.

<sup>25</sup> C.J. Holmes, ‘Notes on some recently exhibited pictures of the British School’, *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. VII, April to September 1905, p. 324.

<sup>26</sup> C.J. Holmes, ‘Notes on some recently exhibited pictures of the British School’, *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. VII, April to September 1905, p. 324.

<sup>27</sup> Beerbohm, Biographical note App. 1. Cartoon reproduced in Evan Charteris, *John Singer Sargent*, Scribners, New York, 1927, facing p. 160.

<sup>28</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 10 May 1906, p. 599.

This potential towards caricature and his willingness to be ‘truthful’ sometimes at the expense of his sitters are just two of the features of ‘Sargentness’ which I will be seeking out.

### Re-evaluating Sargent in the 1920s

Although this study concentrates on the period ending in 1914, discussion of the possibility of an anti-Semitic dimension in Sargent’s works or in their reception and interpretation is complicated by certain later events, which, I contend, may have created a referential framework applied retrospectively as a basis for interpretation of earlier material.

### The Boston Public Library Murals

The *Triumph of Religion*, a mural series for the Boston Public Library, was a long-term project, begun in 1890 but terminated by Sargent in 1919. Allegations of anti-Semitism were not levelled at the mural’s early sections – *The Frieze of the Prophets* – or the lunette *Israel and the Law*. Indeed, when the latter was exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1909, the Jewish art critic, Marion Spielmann, wrote in *The Graphic* on 8 May 1909:

Seldom has so majestic a design been seen in this country...It is a quiet severely restrained decoration ...as a design pure and simple it is magnificent – stately and harmonious to the point of nobility.<sup>29</sup>

The controversy raised by one of its final elements, *Synagogue* (Fig. 13) which has been analysed exhaustively by Sally Promey in *Painting Religion in Public*, merits

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<sup>29</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 10 May 1906, p. 606.

mention because this reception may have coloured some subsequent readings of earlier works. She notes that: “The five year debate surrounding the image of *Synagogue* began within days of the 5<sup>th</sup> October [1919] unveiling”.<sup>30</sup> Although Sargent defended his depiction of *Synagogue* and its companion piece *Church* by reference to medieval iconography and the art-historical precedent of Rheims and Strasbourg Cathedrals, this was not a dispute to be confined within such narrow, quasi-academic parameters. Promey has detailed the progress of this argument as it grew from local indignation to a campaign which involved not just leaders of American Jewry but protagonists from many sides of American society.<sup>31</sup> It was finally resolved only when the Massachusetts House of Representatives in March 1924 passed a Bill repealing earlier measures which had called for removal of the offending panel.<sup>32</sup> It was because of this controversy it would seem, that Sargent abruptly ceased work on the project in 1919, never painting the final portion, *The Sermon on the Mount*.

Promey notes that the charges of anti-Semitism levelled against Sargent during this five-year controversy “surprised and shocked Sargent’s friends and acquaintances” because of his close associations with leading Jewish families.<sup>33</sup> She argues:

The problematic juxtaposition of *Synagogue* and *Church* in *Triumph of Religion* represented, on Sargent’s part, not a unique personal prejudice against Jews but a largely unexamined appropriation of a wider cultural ambivalence ... The work of both Sargent and Renan reflected and promoted this pervasive cultural ambivalence; elements of both philosemitism and antisemitism can be found in artist, author and their respective cultures.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> S Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, p. 176.

<sup>31</sup> S Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, pp. 176-193.

<sup>32</sup> S Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, pp. 176-193?

<sup>33</sup> S Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, pp. 176-193?

<sup>34</sup> S Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, pp. 207-209.



This would seem to put the painter and his work, and indeed Renan, in what Artur Sandauer would term the ‘allosemitic’ camp, which overarches a simple pro- or anti-stance and places “Jews apart as people radically different from all others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them”.<sup>35</sup> This chapter will investigate the extent to which such an ambivalent attitude was recognised by and commented upon in the contemporary reception of Sargent’s portraits of English Jews and how helpful it is to an understanding of these works.

### The Wertheimer Bequest

Whether Sargent was, or should have been, aware of the risk he was potentially courting in his interpretation of *Synagogue*, the controversy that arose between 1923 and 1926 when nine of his portraits of the Wertheimer family were gifted to the Nation was not of his making. Although again outside the timeframe of this study, this debate has been interpreted as demonstrating antagonistic feelings in some quarters about the paintings, their particular subjects and Jews in general and thus may, I would argue, have influenced in hindsight some subsequent readings of these works.

Asher Wertheimer met Sargent in 1897 and commissioned portraits of himself and his wife Flora to celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. These were exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1898. Thereafter until 1908 the artist painted ten portraits of the Wertheimer children, many of which, as we shall see, were also exhibited contemporaneously at Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions and elsewhere. In 1916 Wertheimer made public his intention to bequeath nine of these portraits to the National Gallery, upon his death or that of his wife, whichever was the

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<sup>35</sup> For a full discussion of Sandauer’s concept of Allosemitism, see Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern’, in *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’*, eds

later. Collins Baker, Director of the National Gallery, recorded that institution's gratitude for 'an offer so important and munificent' (their 1920 insurance value was set at £20,000) and informed Wertheimer that, in a break with normal procedure, the then current Board would ensure acceptance by its successors, whenever the bequest became operative.<sup>36</sup> Although Wertheimer expressed the wish that the paintings be hung together in the National Gallery, this was not a condition precedent of his will.<sup>37</sup> The family gave the nine paintings to the National Gallery on Flora Wertheimer's death in 1922, despite the discovery of a then still valid and potentially over-riding 1871 settlement by Asher Wertheimer, forgotten or regarded by him as no longer operative), which bequeathed them to his children.<sup>38</sup>

At first the pictures were hung together in the National Gallery in accordance with Wertheimer's wishes. Initial press comment was favourable: *The Times* commented on 'a munificent gift' of a 'magnificent collection of family portraits', and the *Morning Post* referred to 'the great Wertheimer gift'.<sup>39</sup> There were, however, also negative reactions as evidenced by what was in fact a very brief but now notorious in the context of Sargent's Wertheimer oeuvre, exchange during Oral Answers in the House of Commons on 8 March 1923.<sup>40</sup> Sir John Butcher enquired as to the conditions

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Cheyette and Marcus, p. 143.

<sup>36</sup> 'With offers of this kind it is customary for a Board of Trustees to state pro forma that they cannot guarantee the action of any future Board: but in the case of an offer so important and so munificent as yours my Board feels that it must make an explicit expression not only of its great sense of obligation to you, but also of its recommendation that this group of pictures shall be accepted by whatever Board may be in office whenever your bequest takes effect'. Letter from Collins Baker to Wertheimer, 28 June 1916, National Gallery Archive S996, Bequest Alfred Wertheimer, Tate 3705.

<sup>37</sup> 'I DESIRE *but without imposing or intending to impose any binding legal obligation* on them that the said trustees shall keep said portraits and exhibit them together in one room in the National Gallery.' Extract from Asher Wertheimer Will 08/02/1918. Author's italics. National Gallery Archive, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Legal correspondence National Gallery Archive *ibid.* A tenth painting, *A vele gonfie*, was bequeathed to the Tate in 1996.

<sup>39</sup> *Morning Post*, 27 December 1922; *The Times*, 6 January 1922.

<sup>40</sup> The report on this occupied less than half a page out of 21 on Oral Answers and

of the bequest. Baldwin, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, noting that “the Trustees highly appreciated the generosity of the gift”, replied that there were no formal conditions to the bequest, nor had the Trustees given any undertaking as to permanent display, and that in the past 60 years there were precedents for the display of works by living artists.<sup>41</sup> Butcher’s supplementary question as to whether there was a room for so many pictures went unanswered. Sir Charles Oman’s request that “these clever but extremely repulsive pictures should be placed in a special chamber of horrors and not between the brilliant examples of the art of Turner” also went unanswered.<sup>42</sup> Adler comments on the ‘sense of disquiet, even revulsion and above all sense of otherness’ in Oman’s remarks.<sup>43</sup> Although they seem clearly to reflect his position, one might question how representative they were of others’ views.<sup>44</sup> *The Times* of 9 March 1923 reported that, ‘The end of the sentence [by Oman] was lost in cheers and laughter’, but there was no such observation in Hansard’s official report.<sup>45</sup> What is significant and supportive of Adler’s comments is that *The Times* deemed such a brief exchange to be of sufficient interest and importance to record in its Parliamentary page.

Sir Joseph Duveen (1869-1939), another Jewish art dealer, funded a Sargent Gallery within the Tate Gallery in 1924. The Wertheimer Portraits were moved there – though not without some prior objections from the family voiced by Asher’s son Conway. In an ‘off the record’ response, Collins Baker, whilst reiterating that with its initial hang the National Gallery had ‘paid this respect to your father’s wishes and this honour to Sargent very willingly’, asserted the Gallery’s right to act as it wished and

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216 reporting the days proceedings as a whole. See Hansard 161 HC Deb 5s, p. 726.

<sup>41</sup> Hansard 161 HC Deb 5s, p. 726.

<sup>42</sup> Sir Charles Oman, ?

<sup>43</sup> Kathleen Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, p. 83.

observed that its original hang had ‘given rise to a considerable amount of antagonistic feeling and criticism in certain *artistic* quarters’.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps significantly, the word ‘artistic’ was a handwritten addendum to the typed copy letter, this being indexed in this text by the use of italics. In the light of the earlier Parliamentary comments, one wonders whether Collins Baker was deliberately diplomatic about wider disquiet. This would add weight to Adler’s comments about general unease. Ironically, included amongst the works displayed in the new Sargent Gallery with the Wertheimer family portraits was Sargent’s *Lord Ribblesdale*, the quintessential portrayal of an English ‘milord’ (Fig. 14) – not what Oman had in mind when he demanded a ‘special chamber of horrors.’<sup>47</sup>

By commissioning the pair of twenty fifth wedding anniversary portraits, Asher Wertheimer was, perhaps, influenced by his brother Charles, who in 1888 had commissioned a portrait of himself by Millais (1829–1896). In 1897 Charles Wertheimer met William Orpen (1878 -1931) at the time of the latter’s move from Dublin and commissioned portraits by him in 1904 of himself, his wife Jessie, his solicitor and his riding instructor and in 1908 of himself, all of which were exhibited in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions of those years.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Kathleen Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, p. 7; Hansard 161 HC Deb 5s, pp. 726.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Collins Baker to Conway J Conway, 11 April 1924, National Gallery Archive S996, Bequest Alfred Wertheimer, Tate 3705.

<sup>47</sup> *Lord Ribblesdale*, 1902, Oil on canvas, (Tate Britain, London) 254.2 x 148.6 cm. William Howe Downes, *John Singer Sargent: His Life and Work*, Little Brown, Boston, 1925, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1981, p. 219. The Royal Academy listings were Exhibit 421 in 1904 and 687 in 1908, but they give no details of the works.

Michelle Lapine has supplemented Adler's arguments about the impact of the series and their eventual destination, focusing attention on a possible reading of the commissions and their eventual bequest as Asher's attempt to acquire status:

Through this gesture, Asher Wertheimer was forcibly inserting himself and his entire family into the "gallery of worthies" as an important collector, patron and member of elite British society.<sup>49</sup>

Whatever the possible validity of this particular line of speculative interpretation, I feel it overlooks certain basic facts about Wertheimer, which might provide a complementary and more nuanced, alternative reading. As an art dealer, Asher Wertheimer had every incentive to ensure that his Sargent collection achieved maximum value; not just for financial reasons, but also as a reflection of his astuteness as a dealer – thereby encouraging others to use his services. He would have seen the benefit accruing to his business from the link between it and his family as subjects of an ongoing series of portraits by the leading portrait painter of the day. There are suggestions that this series resulted from an early financial arrangement. In 1898-9, according to Charles Mount, a commercial agreement may have been reached under which Sargent would execute portraits of Wertheimer's family as payment for commissions obtained by Asher acting in the capacity of dealer/agent.<sup>50</sup> It is unclear how many of the Wertheimer family were so covered. Bruce Arnold referring to this suggests that Charles Wertheimer had a similar relationship with Orpen.<sup>51</sup> If such an agreement indeed did exist, it would have provided further reason for the regular display of these works at major exhibitions to underwrite the arrangement between artist and agent/dealer. Wertheimer may also have felt that the portraits and advance

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<sup>49</sup> Lapine, 'Mixing Business with Pleasure', in *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, ed. Norman Kleeblatt, Jewish Museum, New York, 1999, p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Mount, *John Singer Sargent*, Cresset Press, London, 1957, p. 187.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1981, p. 219.

notice of his intention to bequeath most of them to the Nation would enhance his standing, at least within Anglo-Jewish society in his own lifetime.

Gifts of paintings to the Nation were not unusual at that time. Wertheimer's gift seems to have attracted attention because of the status of the donor and its size and nature. Sargent had already painted eight portraits of the Vickers family mainly in 1884 and added a ninth in 1896. These, however, were not the subject of a single gift to the Nation, the generosity of which seems paradoxically to have been a point of issue with Wertheimer.

The 1920s objectors, and subsequent commentators, ignored an earlier precedent set by the Constantine Ionides, head of the London branch of a Greek family, who, together with other of its members, was a major patron of British artists in the second half of the nineteenth century. Between 1834 and 1880 G.F. Watts (1817-1904) painted an estimated fifty-five portraits of members of five generations of the Ionides family.<sup>52</sup> On his death in 1900, Ionides bequeathed more than one thousand paintings to the Victoria and Albert Museum, including ten of these Watts family portraits.<sup>53</sup> *The Times* report of 23 July 1900 noted that "There have been few collectors of taste so catholic as the late Mr Ionides", ending "Mr Ionides by presenting it to England proves once more the sentiment that animates the Greek

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<sup>52</sup> Based on a list compiled by Dorothea Butterworth. Other artists who painted portraits of the Ionides family include Burne-Jones (1833-1898), Legros (1837-1911), Rosetti (1828-1882), Strang (1859-1921) and Whistler (1834-1903). Archive Watts Museum, Guildford, Surrey.

<sup>53</sup> The gift comprised around 90 paintings, 300 drawings and watercolours and over 700 prints. A separate catalogue of the Bequest was published in 1904 by the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Watts portraits are identified in the Victoria and Albert Collection as items CA1 1139 to CA1 1148. In 1897 Watts donated 17 of his own works to the National Gallery – though none of the Ionides family portraits – and between 1899 and 1902 he donated a further 5, National Gallery Archive.

colony, which has made its home in this country".<sup>54</sup> Unlike Wertheimer, Ionides made it a condition precedent of his gift that his collection should be held together and so identified.<sup>55</sup> Whatever Wertheimer's intentions and initial press and public reaction, subsequent reception seems to have been less favourable than might reasonably have been anticipated. Perhaps what militated against him and the reception of his gift is best encapsulated in *The Times* phrase 'Greek colony'. The Greeks were regarded as a self contained group, whereas the Jews were regarded as pervasive – at all levels of society - 'blurring a boundary line vital to the construction of a particular social order.'<sup>56</sup>

Roger Fry revisits the Wertheimer Portraits – Another Parnassus

In 1923 the hang of the Wertheimer bequest at the National Gallery provided Roger Fry with the opportunity to review these pictures as a group for *The New Statesman* and to air his views both on Wertheimer and Sargent.<sup>57</sup>

Within the context of this study, the article is most often deployed for its argument that Sargent's genius lay in his ability to enhance the social status of his sitters and enable them to transmit this to future generations; but an extended extract of the original text indicates the argument is more complex, ironic and critical in tone:

A rich man has need of a lawyer's skill to enable him to secure the transmission of his wealth to posterity, and a rich man, if he have the intelligence of Sir [sic] Asher Wertheimer and the luck to meet a Sargent, can by the latter's skill, transmit his fame to posterity.

And as we must suppose that it is in the interests of society that a rich man's wealth should be duly transmitted to his heirs, so we may admit that Sir Asher

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<sup>54</sup> *The Times*, 23 July 1900, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> C.A. Ionides' will of 31/08/1899 required that the bequest be kept as one separate collection to be called the Constantine Ionides Collection, not to be distributed over the Museum nor to be lent for Exhibitions. Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, Ionides Bequest.

<sup>56</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

Wertheimer was likewise conferring a benefit on society, both now and in centuries to come, by transmitting his personality and his entourage.  
 ... I see that this record of the life of a successful business man of the close of the Nineteenth Century has a profound historical interest.<sup>58</sup>

Although this idea of the social upgrading potential of a Sargent portrait may have gained purchase in English art critical and historical thought in part from this almost certainly ironic comment by Fry, it is possible that in his turn he picked the idea up from a far more explicit, and potentially overtly anti-Semitic version, in an unidentified Boston newspaper of 5 March 1899 at the time of the exhibition of *Mrs Carl Meyer* as part of a Sargent one man show in Boston: \$10,000 was not much for a multi-millionaire Israelite to pay to secure social recognition for his family.<sup>59</sup> This comment, although made in the American press, fits closely with similarly oriented remarks made in other contexts about Jews in the pre-War period and quoted by Adler.<sup>60</sup>

Fry's comments on the importance of Asher Wertheimer were, I feel, intentionally exaggerated and his incorrect attribution of a knighthood on him, repeated three times, might also have been deliberate. Fry's tone might be interpreted as implying that he did not believe that Wertheimer's fame and status merited the posthumous recognition which he charged Sargent of conferring on him and his family any more than he deserved a knighthood – an honour, I suggest, that probably Fry and almost certainly his editor and possibly some of his readers knew he had not been given. Fry continues:

It was a new thing in the history of civilisation that such a man should venture to have himself and the members of his numerous family portrayed on the scale and with the circumstances of a royal or ducal family and I see that Mr Sargent has quite peculiar and unique gifts for doing what both his patron and posterity required of him ... For Mr Sargent was a brilliant ambassador between Sir Asher Wertheimer and posterity.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This has been corrected from that usually quoted. Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

<sup>59</sup> Ormond and Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 109.

<sup>60</sup> See Kathleen Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, p. 85.

<sup>61</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.



What has been omitted from most uses of this article is that its main target is not Wertheimer or perhaps even Sargent's role as a conferrer of status, but Sargent's position as an artist. Fry's key argument turns on his distinction between pure artists – of whom Sargent was not in Fry's opinion one, and applied artists, the category into which Fry believed Sargent should be placed: 'I had used the term "practitioner in paint" as a term of abuse, comparing it with the honourable title of painter.'<sup>62</sup>

It also introduced a new line into Fry's argument, which surprisingly he did not overtly acknowledge. If Sargent was indeed merely a 'practitioner in paint' then his work would have neither the status nor the longevity of that produced by a 'pure' artist and any status conferred on his sitters would be short lived.<sup>63</sup> 'Sir Asher Wertheimer', perhaps viewed as a counterfeit celebrity by Fry would have acquired counterfeit coin, in the form of a collection of portraits, which would never enjoy the status of great art – a galling fate for a fine art dealer and one that the subsequent exhibition history and reception of these works would seem to bear out.

For Fry, Sargent should not, as some of his fellow critics would have him, be placed high on an artistic Mount Parnassus, 'but on another mountain which frequently gets confused with it'.<sup>64</sup> Fry sardonically commented that those who professed the 'applied branches' were entitled to 'ten times the salary and far higher honours than those who are obsessed by the love of truth and beauty'.<sup>65</sup> This positioning and downgrading in Fry's eyes of Sargent was possibly an important influence on succeeding evaluations of his work and its importance.

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<sup>62</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

<sup>63</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

<sup>64</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

I would argue that these three post 1914 events – the Boston Murals debate, the House of Commons question and the Fry review - have gradually been conflated so as to create a negative, potentially anti-Semitic climate of opinion which may have influenced subsequent readings of Sargent's pre-First World War portraiture and the interpretation of their contemporaneous reception. The combination of post-War anti-German sentiment with a continuation of pre-War anti-Semitic attitudes – as evident among some parts of the ruling elite as within the more directly affected populations of the East End – made Jews with obviously foreign names such as 'Wertheimer' potential targets, especially when their actions made them stand out. To the extent that the Boston Mural controversy had any impact on attitudes in England at the time, it would probably have exacerbated negative sentiments, allowing some to argue that wealthy American Jews were reacting in an oversensitive and inappropriate manner. Similarly, Fry's re-evaluation, which Adler points out, had its own long tail as far forward as John Russell's writings in 1964, although perhaps mainly of interest to those in and around the art world, further added to this revisionist climate.<sup>66</sup> For Sargent to have been able to work the trick of confirming social upgrading for his sitters – especially those of Jewish origin – and then enabling them to transfer this to future generations, it would have been vital for him not to be regarded 'as a painter of Jews' at an early date. If this had been the common perception, the illusion would have been almost impossible to create. In fact, this comment used by Adler and others and which seems to have been derived from the then unpublished dairies of William Blunt, was not in fact made until 1907 as we shall see as part of Blunt's critique of Sargent's portrait of Lady Sassoon.

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<sup>65</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', in *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

<sup>66</sup> John Russell, "Art" in *Edwardian England*, ed S Nowell-Smith, London, 1964, p. 333, quoted by Adler in Nochlin and Garb, p. 85.

John Singer Sargent paints English Jewry

In London his warmest admirers were the wealthy Jews .  
Sir William Rothenstein.<sup>67</sup>

This section examines Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters in the chronological order in which they were exhibited and reviewed at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions and elsewhere. It includes all of the Wertheimer family portraits, whether so exhibited or not, together with other Jewish sitters painted by Sargent during this period. It revisits, where appropriate, Adler's analysis of the works selected in her commentary. Its primary focus is contemporary critical reception as being formative of and informed by general public opinion. It will seek to demonstrate that this reception was, in fact, largely positive. Those commentators who were on occasions negative were often not consistently so throughout their reviews of works, nor were those whose anti-Semitic views were known from other writings. In a period that included close to its start the Dreyfus Affair of 1898 and shortly before its conclusion the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905, what is remarkable is not that it is possible to find some overtly anti-Semitic comments on or contemporary readings of some of these pictures but that such references seem to have been in the minority.

1892 *Mrs George Lewis*<sup>68</sup>

In 1893 this portrait, possibly the first of a Jewish sitter by Sargent to be publicly shown, was exhibited at the New Gallery. It may have been a commission or

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<sup>67</sup> William Rothenstein, 'When to be young was heaven', in *Atlantic*, Boston, March 1931, p. 323.

<sup>68</sup> *Mrs George Lewis* 1892, (Private Collection), Oil on canvas, 136 x 77.5 cm.

‘painted in gratitude for the settlement of a [legal] case’ by the sitter’s husband for the painter.<sup>69</sup> The work is also of interest in the context of this study because, together with Sargent’s 1896 portrait of her husband and 1906 portrait of her daughter Katherine, it forms what would seem to be the only series of a Jewish family, apart from the Wertheimers, to be painted by Sargent in England. As we shall see later, although Sargent painted many of Anglo-Jewry’s leading ladies, their husbands did not sit to him.

### 1896 *Sir George Lewis*

Ironically, in the light of the later controversy, Sargent’s first Royal Academy exhibit with a Jewish theme was a lunette and part of the ceiling decoration for the Boston Public Library project, shown in 1894. Four years after his New Gallery Jewish debut with *Mrs George Lewis*, Sargent in 1896 exhibited his portrait of her husband at the Royal Academy (Fig. 15).<sup>70</sup> Sargent’s subsequent portrait *Mr Arthur Cohen* (see below) of another Jewish lawyer depicted its sitter in a morning coat with a wing collar and tie – perhaps as a scholar or aesthete. Sargent’s 1899 portrait *Sir David Richmond* and his 1902 portrait *Lord Russell of Killowen* both depicted these legal figures in their ceremonial robes – even though Richmond combined his position as Lord Provost of Glasgow with a leading role in business and might therefore have been otherwise attired.<sup>71</sup> In marked contrast, Sir George, whose legal practice involved him in matters concerning even the Prince of Wales, is shown wearing a coat with a heavy

<sup>69</sup> Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E., *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> *Sir George Lewis*, 1896 (Private collection), Oil on Canvas, 80 x 59.6 cm.,

<sup>71</sup> *Sir David Richmond*, 1899 (Glasgow Museums & Art Gallery) Oil on canvas, 243.6 x 134.6 cm; *Lord Russell of Killowen*, 1902 (National Portrait Gallery, London) Oil on canvas, 85.1 x 71.1 cm.

fur collar and a pearl pin in his tie - nothing marks him out as a lawyer rather than a wealthy businessman. The image has more in common with *Asher Wertheimer* than *Arthur Cohen*.

### 1897 *Mrs Carl Meyer*

His next portrait of a Jewish sitter was that of *Mrs Carl Meyer* (Fig. 16), exhibited in 1897.<sup>72</sup> If *Mrs Lewis* attracted little critical comment or particular attention, *Mrs Carl Meyer* was to prove a very different case.

Although originally catalogued as *Mrs Carl Meyer*, this work includes her two children, Frank and Elsie. This is a frothy confection of a painting, ‘captivating in its Gallic lightness’.<sup>73</sup> The artist seems to revel in the apparent luxury of its setting even though it was in reality a studio portrait, in the sheer opulence of its principal sitter’s dress and in the perhaps exotic appearance of her two children. Elaine Kilmurray has suggested *Madame de Pompadour* by Boucher (1703-1770) as a possible referential antecedent; the sitter is attired in a similar voluminously skirted dress with her tiny feet peeping out from beneath and a discarded book in her lap.<sup>74</sup> It is perhaps an example of what Anne Hollander has referred to as ‘Woman as Dress – a woman wearing an elegant dress, as if the dress had created her’.<sup>75</sup> Status is conferred on Mrs Meyer by her clothes rather than her inherent rank. When luxury is dwelt on for its own sake as it is here, the way is opened for charges of excessive self-indulgence on the part of the

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<sup>72</sup> *Mrs Carl Meyer and her children*, 1896 (Private Collection), Oil on Canvas, 201.4 x 134 cm.

<sup>73</sup> Royal Cortissoz, *Art and Common Sense*, p. 234.

<sup>74</sup> François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1758 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 57. See Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E. *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 81.

<sup>75</sup> *Fabric of Vision*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery London, 2002, p. 165.

sitter. In a period in which one of the arguments mounted by those of an anti-Jewish persuasion concerned excessive wealth, the depiction of such luxury becomes potentially dangerous self-justifying ground for such an attack.

*Vanity Fair*, in its review on 6 May 1897 of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1897, was impressed by the work:

Mr John Singer Sargent literally sweeps the board with a painting [Mrs Meyer], which will probably cause a greater flutter than his Mrs Hammersley, which now hangs temporarily in the Guildhall. This picture will be historical.<sup>76</sup>

The comparison with *Mrs Hammersley*, one of Sargent's successes at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1893, is particularly apposite.<sup>77</sup> The depiction of the wealthy and their wealth was a focus of Sargent's portrait painting in this period – and indeed of many contemporary artists working in England. Such sitters were of course not exclusively or even preponderantly Jewish. *Mrs Hammersley* illustrated similar 'props', perspective, and pose to those used in *Mrs Carl Meyer*, and also seemed to rejoice in the show of wealth of its non-Jewish sitter. In a private letter to John Hay dated 18 October 1893, Henry Adams attacked Sargent and Mrs Hammersley:<sup>78</sup>

Was it in defiance or an insult to our society, or a rendering in good faith of our civilisation, or a conscious snub to French and English art, or an unconscious revelation of the artist's despair of reconciliation with the female gold-bug?<sup>79</sup>

Excessive display of wealth was a trait to be disparaged in general and not exclusively applied in the case of Jews. Interestingly Adams did not express similar feelings in a later letter about *Mrs Carl Meyer*:

<sup>76</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 6 May 1897, p. 306.

<sup>77</sup> *Mrs Hammersley*, 1892/3 (Metropolitan Art Museum, New York) Oil on canvas, , 205.7 x 114.9 cm.

<sup>78</sup> Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Ormond and Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 64

Mrs Meyer is a sprightly Jewess who did us the favour to stand under her portrait on the private opening day to show that she is as good as her picture. Decidedly this time Sargent has done it. The art of portrait painting of Jewesses and their children may be varied but it cannot be further perfected.<sup>80</sup>

Although this letter did not adopt an overtly anti-Semitic stance, there were perhaps covert hints in the manner in which it clearly singled out ‘the Jewess’ as different and, in a sense, outside Society as Adams understood it. This setting apart of ‘the Jew’ was certainly not uncommon in the period. In the introduction to her 1903 work on Sargent, Alice Meynell observed that the artist “had a keen sight for the signs of races” and went on to speak of, for example, “the Spanishness of *El Jalelo*, the ‘subtly English’ quality of *Mrs Charles Hunter*, the “pure French” of *Mme. Gautreau* before observing that “the Hebrew portraits present more obviously, but no less subtly the characters of race”.<sup>81</sup> This positioning ‘as a *race* apart’ was antithetical to the aims of the Anglo-Jewish discourse discussed in earlier chapters. It was in line with the thinking behind what Brian Cheyette has referred to as “the contradictions and ambivalences within Edwardian liberalism” to be found in the writings of Belloc and Chesterton, which in their turn were the step before the overt and egregious anti-Semitism to be found in some of the literature of this period.<sup>82</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle*, usually sensitive to and vigilant in its detection of anti-Semitism, observed nothing of this nature in the portrait. Its 7 May exhibition review concentrated on Jewish exhibitors but ended “it is Mr Sargent’s year” and praised the painting:<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Letter by Henry Adams, 2 May 1897 quoted in Mount, *John Singer Sargent*, p.185. For Adams, see Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Alice Meynell, *The work of John S Sargent*, William Heinemann, London 1903, unpaginated introduction.

<sup>82</sup> Cheyette, *Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English literature and society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.150.

<sup>83</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 May 1893, p. 12.

... “Mrs Carl Meyer” is, without doubt, the best portrait, which has been produced in this country during the last decade, and belongs to the very quintessence of art. Painted in the grand style it captivates by its Velasquez-like veracity, its strength and its harmony of colour.... we commend this masterpiece to the earnest study of our Jewish artists .<sup>84</sup>

The ‘Velasquez-like veracity’ of the work is significant in the search for the qualities that make up ‘Sargentness’. Comparisons between the artists and in particular on their insistence on veracity are a recurring theme encountered in many reviews.

Henry Strachey in *The Spectator* of 22 May 1893 clearly disliked both the work and its subjects and, prompted by the overindulgence to which I referred earlier, wrote:

Mr John Singer Sargent has had recourse again to his ‘Empire’ sofa of which it is possible to get a little wearied, especially as it is always slipping down the floor in acute perspective. Mrs Carl Meyer and her children all dressed in great splendour and with an air of haute finance are no doubt happy with this kind of furniture. Even Mr John Singer Sargent’s skill has not succeeded in making attractive these over civilised European Orientals. We feel that these people must go to bed in satin and live upon ices and wafer biscuits.<sup>85</sup>

Sargent’s sofa and the extreme perspective he employed had been lampooned in a *Punch* cartoon on 8 May 1897 with the tag line “The Perils of Steep Perspective. ‘Hold up Mother; it’s only like the switchback’”.<sup>86</sup> They also served this critic with a platform from which to launch an almost visceral invective against the over-pampered rich. Use of the term “haute finance” sets up a double negative of disapprobation – finance as a route to wealth is implicitly contrasted with wealth through inherited land and the use of French implies the foreignness of the subjects albeit actually of German origin.<sup>87</sup> This is reinforced by the term ‘European Orientals’, which may have been a euphemistic way of saying ‘East European’ – thereby conflating wealthy West-end

<sup>84</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 May 1893, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 22 May 1893, p. 732.

<sup>86</sup> *Punch*, 8 May 1897, p. 227. Ormond and Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 109.

<sup>87</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 22 May 1893, p. 732.



Jews from West European with the immigrant poor, who were by then so much in evidence in London's East-end.<sup>88</sup> The use of the adjective 'European', mistakenly omitted in Downes' original transcription of the review and its subsequent re-quotation, does little to attenuate the tone.<sup>89</sup> The implication of 'otherness' and the phrase "these people" are clearly exclusionary in terms of entry into English Society;<sup>90</sup> luxurious overindulgence contravenes the reserve expected of the well-bred English.

Similar furniture and signs of the pampered rich were just as evident in Sargent's *Mrs Cazalet and her children* (Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 1901) and in *Mrs Knowles and her children* of 1902.<sup>91</sup> Neither of these later works, however, elicited the same negative reaction to their depiction of wealth. Spielmann in *The Magazine of Art*, May 1901 concentrated on the painterly aspects of *Mrs Cazalet*:

... a much larger and more showy work, full of original invention – and that perhaps not of the most felicitous. The lady is beautiful and beautifully rendered.<sup>92</sup>

The critic of *The Graphic*, 18 May 1901, was disappointed with what it dismissed as "a frank inspiration from Lawrence and in so far uninteresting".<sup>93</sup> In *The Spectator*, 25 May 1901, Henry Strachey was more positive about the painting but even he ended on a low note remarking that the portrait and is maybe an example of the failure of bravura to which is referred to earlier:

... shows this artist in his bravura style once more. It is very wonderful and perhaps no one else could have done it, but at the same time it leaves one cold.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 22 May 1893, p. 732.

<sup>89</sup> This adjective is omitted between the original text and the Downes source used by Adler. Adler, in Nochlin and Garb, p. 86 & p. 313.

<sup>90</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 22 May 1893, p. 732.

<sup>91</sup> *Mrs Cazalet & her children*, c.1900 (Private collection) Oil on canvas, , 254 x 165; *Mrs Knowles & her children*, 1902 (Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio) Oil on canvas, 182.9 x 151.1.

<sup>92</sup> Spielmann, *The Magazine of Art*, May 1901, p. 390.

<sup>93</sup> *The Graphic*, 18 May 1901, p. 274. Sir Thomas Lawrence R.A., 1769-1830.

<sup>94</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 25 May 1901, p. 768.

1898 *Mr Asher Wertheimer; Mrs Asher (Flora) Wertheimer; Mr Arthur Cohen*

In 1898 Sargent exhibited the first two in the series of the Wertheimer family, the individual portraits of Asher and his wife Flora, commissioned to celebrate their twenty fifth wedding anniversary.

The portrait *Mrs Asher Wertheimer* (Fig. 17) elicited little critical comment.<sup>95</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle's* critic's review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1898 dated 6 May 1898 in somewhat self-contradictory mode felt that, compared with her husband, Mrs Wertheimer had:

... evidently been a more difficult model as a certain lack of spontaneity betrays. Mrs Wertheimer is represented standing clad in white satin trimmed with old lace – how well Mr Sargent paints old lace – and wearing her well-known pearls. It is a fine portrait and full of life.<sup>96</sup>

Even Robert Ross in his largely hagiographic review of the Wertheimer series in the *Art Journal*, January 1911 could manage nothing more positive than the comment that the portrait “lacks not the character of the sitter but of the artist”.<sup>97</sup>

The portrait *Mr Asher Wertheimer* (Fig. 18) evoked far more reaction – both good and bad.<sup>98</sup> Next to the judgement of *The Athenaeum's* critic, “Happy is the man, whose portrait has been painted thus”, one might set Henry Adams' comment: “Sargent has just completed another Jew. Wertheimer, a worse crucifixion than history

<sup>95</sup> *Mrs Flora Wertheimer*, 1898 (New Orleans Museum of Art) Oil on canvas, 147.5 x 95.2.

<sup>96</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1898, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Ross, *Art Journal*, January 1911, p.1, ff.

<sup>98</sup> *Mr Asher Wertheimer*, 1898 (Tate Britain, London) Oil on canvas, 147.5 x 97.8.

tells us of'.<sup>99</sup> Of note, however, is the fact that the latter remark, made in a private letter rather than published in any contemporary journal, would seem to have been a personal reaction and not a reasoned critique.

*Vanity Fair's* review dated 5 May 1898 was limited to the enigmatic and cryptic comment 'a very type of Judaism, startling in truth'.<sup>100</sup> The writer was perhaps using this quasi-shorthand to invite readers to draw on their personal repositories of visual images of Jews, in order to understand what the portrait was seeking to reveal in its 'startling truth'. These, I would suggest, might have been negative stereotypes. If this is correct, this note comes closest – albeit covertly and in a coded form – to an anti-Semitic reading of the work in the contemporary press.

In *The Jewish Chronicle's* review, quoted above, its critic perceptively drew attention to Sargent's unwillingness to compromise in the face of a difficult subject:

It cannot be described as an attractive picture, but as a work of art it may be said to be the finest male portrait painted during the last twenty years... The impression the picture conveys is that the painter has painted what he saw with unyielding force and truth to life. It is certainly the most important picture in the present exhibition and the more it is studied the more nearly it is found to approach Velasquez at his best.<sup>101</sup>

In *The Spectator* dated 7 May 1898, Henry Strachey, so critical of *Mrs Carl Meyer* as a painting and a subject two years earlier and of *Lady Faudel-Phillips* in this Exhibition, was more restrained in his language and perhaps more favourably inclined to the artist and his sitter:

More astonishing by its cleverness though not so beautiful or so dignified is Mr John Singer Sargent's portrait of Mr Asher Wertheimer Esq. With a

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<sup>99</sup> Henry Adams, letter to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 28 November 1897, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, vol. IV, ed. J.C. Levenson et. al., Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 497. *Athenaeum*, 11 June 1898, p. 762.

<sup>100</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 5 May 1898, p. 290.

<sup>101</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1898, p. 10.

palette as restricted and as moderate a scale of light and shade as in the picture just described, Mr John Singer Sargent scores a success as great, though of a totally different kind. Instead of old age enthroned in its high backed armchair, the man of the world stands, cigar in hand, about to make acute remarks on man and things. The actual painting is of a kind which might be described as witty and in the poodle dog, whose head just comes over the frame, Mr Sargent has allowed himself the amusement of illusion, for the pink tongue seems to palpitate.<sup>102</sup>

One must be aware of the class and social undertones that underlie this, and must not overlook the writer's allusions to a lesser dignity and the socially less desirable 'man of the worldliness' quality of Mr Wertheimer when compared with academic renown of Francis Penrose, the other subject referred to by Strachey.<sup>103</sup> One might also query whether the epithet of "cleverness" applied to Sargent as the painter of this portrait was double-edged, being applied in a negative sense not just to the artist but to the sitter who owed his wealth to being a 'clever' and astute art dealer.<sup>104</sup>

In her comments on these Wertheimer portraits, Adler selects certain specific features which seem to influence both her reading of this particular image and thereafter of the three others in the group with which she engages.<sup>105</sup> In the light of the reviews already quoted – in particular the details picked out by Strachey - and of other commentaries referred to by Adler, it is appropriate to review her comments in some depth.

Contemporary photographs of Asher Wertheimer would seem to indicate that he was quite short and had strongly defined facial features.<sup>106</sup> In a preliminary sketch for the portrait (Fig. 19), Sargent largely ignores these. He foregrounds his subject and

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<sup>102</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 7 May 1898. The comparisons in this extract are with the portrait of Penrose, which was Strachey's immediate prior focus.

<sup>103</sup> *Francis Penrose*, 1897 (RIBA, London), Oil on canvas, 143.5.1 x 95.3. Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 7 May 1898.

<sup>105</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

cuts the image off just below the waist. Wertheimer looks directly at the viewer. His cigar and dog are absent and the position of his right hand is unclear. In the final version the subject has been moved slightly backwards and to the right and the portrait extended below his knees, thus perhaps visually compensating for actual physical shortness. This repositioning leaves a void in the lower left quadrant. The introduction of Noble, the family dog, into this space may, in part, have been a response to this compositional necessity.

In contrast to a traditional art-historical interpretation of the iconography of dog as a symbol of fidelity, Adler talks of the displacement of Jewish sexuality on to the animal and continues by discussing concepts of control, constraint as evidenced, inter alia, by its clipping and pedigree associated with this particular breed.<sup>107</sup> This would seem to be somewhat internally contradictory – the (unbridled) lust of the (socially marginal) Jew is linked with selective interbreeding and control and restraint. A canine encyclopaedia of that time asserted that the Poodle “... is commonly acknowledged to be the most wisely intelligent of all members of the canine race. He is a scholar and a gentleman.”<sup>108</sup> The “slavering tongue” which seems to trouble Adler as being “suggestive of passion and sexuality”, could be both the simple reflection of canine physiology and a response to another pictorial need.<sup>109</sup> Against the sombre

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<sup>106</sup> *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, Jewish Museum, New York, p. 10 and p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> According to the Kennel Club, to which I am indebted, the poodle was used as a hunting dog in its native France. Clipping, which was then and always had been a feature of the grooming of the breed, may have originated to assist the animal to move more easily in rough terrain and water while keeping joints, heart and lungs protected from cold. In England at this time clipping was much less severe than on the Continent. The bow in the hair both kept the animal's vision clear and, by the use of different colours, identified one hunter's dog from another's.

<sup>108</sup> L. Crouch, *Cassell's New Book of the Dog*, The Waverly Book Company, London, 1907, vol. 1, p. 128.

<sup>109</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

background of the work, a black dog would disappear almost completely without the colour provided by his tongue, which also balanced pictorially with the flesh tones of Asher's hand and face. I am not suggesting that either Wertheimer or Sargent were necessarily aware of or motivated by all or indeed any of this information. It does, however, suggest the potential for neutral or even positive readings of Noble's inclusion to set against the negative reading proposed by Adler.

The inclusion of Noble and of a variety of other animals, who, as we will see, appeared in other portraits in this series, was perhaps a record of a pet-loving household and may have been no more than a measure of relaxed familiarity between sitters and painter. Received opinion suggests that there was a warm relationship between Sargent and the Wertheimer family – especially Asher and his daughter, Ena. Whatever the terms of any financial agreement, regular social visits to Connaught Place and the Wertheimer country residence at Temple near Henley were clearly no burden on Sargent who continued to paint the family even after his 1907 declaration 'I hate doing Paughtraits [sic].'<sup>110</sup> If the Adler reading of Noble were correct, one wonders how to interpret the presence of a pink beribboned poodle slumped at the feet of Graham Robertson in Sargent's portrait of the young author, illustrator and dandy – especially given the artist's insistence on his inclusion.<sup>111</sup>

As both the *Jewish Chronicle's*<sup>112</sup> reviewer specifically and Holmes in *The Burlington*<sup>113</sup> implied as a generality, Sargent did not shy away from difficulties in his

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Mount, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 243.

<sup>111</sup> Robertson indicated his pet, Mouton, was included at Sargent's behest: *Time Was: The reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson*, p. 233.

<sup>112</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1898, p. 10.

<sup>113</sup> C.J. Holmes, 'Notes on some recently exhibited pictures of the British School', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. VII, April to September 1905, p. 324.

pictures. The inclusion of elements of what, from the photographic evidence available, would seem to have been features of Asher Wertheimer's physiognomy may have been more a reflection of such basic integrity, rather than, as Adler has proposed, the incorporation of "many of the elements beloved of anti-Semitic caricature".<sup>114</sup> The subject is not, as in the preliminary sketch, looking directly at the viewer but slightly to one side. Adler suggests that this "hints at furtiveness";<sup>115</sup> I would propose that one might in fact discern more than a hint of a smile on his features. This is a much warmer portrayal than that foreshadowed by the earlier sketch.

In 1894 George du Maurier published *Trilby* introducing Svengali, the *non plus ultra* of the Jewish gaze.<sup>116</sup> It was "one of the most widely read of all anti-Semitic representations in the Victorian period", "is generally considered the greatest best seller of the century", and was serialised in *Harpers* from January to July 1894 accompanied by 112 illustrations by the author.<sup>117</sup> Although I have no direct evidence as to whether Sargent actually read it, it seems unlikely that he was unaware of this fictional figure and probably had seen how the author visualised Svengali's mesmeric stare. Faced with the challenge of depicting a small, bearded Jew, Sargent may have felt it appropriate to find a solution to the problem of depicting the 'Jewish gaze' by averting Wertheimer's stare and so circumnavigating a Svengali-like reading. This averting of the gaze was perhaps the only concession that Sargent made to an otherwise very uncompromising portrait. One of the earliest reviews of the work in *The Times* dated 30 April 1898 referred to Sargent as "a painter as Cromwell would have loved, a painter after the heart of the man, who roughly ordered Samuel Cooper

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<sup>114</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>115</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>116</sup> George du Maurier, *Trilby*, Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1894.

<sup>117</sup> Daniel Pick, 'Svengali and the Fin de Siècle', in *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, eds

to paint him as he was disguising nothing”.<sup>118</sup> Robert Ross, in his 1911 *Art Journal* retrospective, regarded it as “the only modern picture which challenges the Doria Velasquez in Rome”.<sup>119</sup> This evaluation did not just place Sargent at the peak of European portraiture but also emphasised the character revealing nature of the work. The portrait of *Innocent X*, 1655, regarded as one of the examples of great portraiture does not conceal the physical appearance of one whose face was described by a contemporary observer as “the most deformed ever born among men”.<sup>120</sup> Even the Pope himself is reputed to have said that this portrait was “troppo vero”, a comment, which might equally have been applied to that of Asher Wertheimer.<sup>121</sup>

Sargent’s tendency towards caricature in some of his work, particularly in the earlier period, has already been mentioned and, although Asher Wertheimer may have escaped this fate at the hands of Sargent, he was the subject of a *Punch* cartoon on 7 May 1898 which replaces his cigar with coins and emphasises his Jewishness and his wealth.<sup>122</sup> The caption reads: “What only this monish for that shplendid dog. My tear, it is ridic’lush.” On the same page, Sargent’s portraits of Sir Thomas Sutherland and Francis Penrose were also satirised – the latter gowned as if in a barber’s chair requesting “Not too much of the whiskers, please”.<sup>123</sup> Contrasting Sargent’s *Asher Wertheimer* with his contemporaneous *Colonel Ian Hamilton*, Adler notes that the former comes “perilously close to caricature” whilst the latter “focuses on his

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Cheyette and Marcus, p. 106.

<sup>118</sup> *The Times*, 30 April 1898, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Ross, *Art Journal*, London, January 1911, pp. 1 ff.

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<sup>122</sup> *Punch*, 7 May 1898, p.205.

<sup>123</sup> *Punch*, 7 May 1898, p.205. Ormond and Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 132.



dignified stance and profile”.<sup>124</sup> Hamilton, however, was also caricatured three years later by Spy in *Vanity Fair*, striking a somewhat similar pose, albeit with a highly complimentary accompanying commentary.<sup>125</sup> Some contemporary reviewers wrote positively of the Hamilton:

The nervous energy of the sitter has seemingly stimulated the ‘eye’ of the artist. The tall, lithe, sinewy, alert figure of the officer springs tense from the grey background. His nervous hands almost twist on his sword hilt. The contours of his head and face are eloquent with the quick intelligence and sensitive vitality beneath. The execution matches and reveals this insight.<sup>126</sup>

I would, however, argue that in contrast to the character-full portrait of Wertheimer, the portrait of Hamilton with its concentration on ‘the details of his uniform’ is, by comparison, somewhat lifeless. To adapt Hollander it might be classed as ‘Man as Uniform’ - a device that, as Adler had noted earlier, though in other terms, Sargent used for several of his portraits of leading Englishmen who sat to him. As with Hamilton, Sargent’s portrait of Lord Ribblesdale identified its subject in terms of a ‘uniform’ - his hunting suit complete with his riding top hat being worn indoors. Unlike Sargent’s study of Coventry Patmore (1823–1896) or indeed Asher Wertheimer which were character-based, in these works it was the Uniform that defined the man. Other examples of the importance of Uniform as the signifier of the subject within Sargent’s oeuvre of this period are the all enveloping coat that defined the dandy in *W Graham Robertson* and the uniform and colonial paraphernalia with which the artist signified the status of the subject in *Sir Frank Swettenham* (1850-1946), a portrait painted at the end of the latter’s tenure as Governor of the

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<sup>124</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb. *Colonel Ian Hamilton*, Oil on canvas, 1898, 138.4 x 78.7, (Tate Britain, London).

<sup>125</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 2 May 1901, p. 309.

<sup>126</sup> H.T.P. *Boston Transcript*, quoted in Mount, details p. 436

Straits Settlements (1901-1904).<sup>127</sup> Other options were in each case open both to subject and painter but the choice was made to use the Uniform.

Adler argues that “His [Wertheimer’s] cigar indicates not only wealth but also vulgarity and sexuality”.<sup>128</sup> Avoiding a Freudian discussion of the psychological implications of cigar smoking at the turn of the century, smoking (particularly of cigars), although frowned upon by Queen Victoria, was fashionable at the very highest levels of English Society. Asher Wertheimer and his brother Charles not only shared this habit with the Prince of Wales who is reputed to have said at the end of the first State Banquet after his accession ‘Gentlemen, you may smoke’, but, like their father Samson, purchased their cigars from the same merchant as the future King.<sup>129</sup> Numerous photographs, cartoons and sketches of the period depict persons, from Prince Edward downwards, smoking.<sup>130</sup> Although smoking was less evident in more formal oil portraits, the National Portrait Gallery’s collection has portraits by Tissot (1836-1902) and Wortley (1849-1905) in which the subjects, respectively the soldier, Burnaby and the writers, Besant and Rice are smoking cigarettes, and a portrait by Louis Kolitz (1845-1914) of the art historian and diplomat Sir Joseph Crowe

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<sup>127</sup> *W. Graham Robertson*, 1894 (Tate Britain, London) Oil on canvas, 230.5 x 118.7; *Sir Frank Swettenham*, 1904 (Singapore History Museum) Oil on canvas, 258 x 142.5.

Robertson’s memoirs indicate that John Singer Sargent insisted on the use of the coat in this picture: *Time Was: the reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson*, p. 233 ff. For a discussion of the ‘paraphernalia’ of office in the Swettenham portrait see Kilmurray and Ormond *John Singer Sargent*, Tate Gallery Catalogue, pp. 167.

<sup>128</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>129</sup> The ledgers of J.J. Fox and Robert Lewis, now of St James, London, for the period 1880 to 1905 list as customers not only The Prince of Wales (with three more of Queen Victoria’s children) and Asher Wertheimer but also large numbers of the aristocracy and leading members of Society (including John St Loe Strachey of *The Spectator*), the principal London Gentleman’s Clubs and many of the Regimental Messes.

<sup>130</sup> The National Portrait Gallery’s collection includes *inter alia* illustrations by Harry Furniss of Baron Burnham, the newspaper magnate, Sir William Agnew, the art dealer and Sir Henry Irving the actor all smoking cigars.

(1825-1896) holding a partially smoked cigar.<sup>131</sup> The 1908 Orpen portrait of Charles Wertheimer showed him looking obliquely away from the viewer with a lit cigar in his right hand. Sargent was also a cigar smoker and was photographed smoking as he worked. The inclusion of a cigar in the Asher Wertheimer portrait may therefore have simply been acknowledgement of a pleasure shared not just by sitter and painter, but also by many in the upper echelons of society. It is also possible that it was an intentionally audacious move on the part of the artist displaying the commonly accepted, though perhaps still somewhat overtly frowned upon, habit of cigar smoking as a reference back to Gilbert Stuart's socially transgressive depiction of Sir Joshua Reynolds snuff box in hand in 1784, at a time when that habit was not to be openly portrayed.<sup>132</sup>

The evidence I have presented in relation to *Asher Wertheimer* and the arguments I have based upon it are not posited as an outright rejection of Adler's reading.<sup>133</sup> They are intended to demonstrate the breadth and, in many cases, positive reactions to the work among contemporary critics and from this to suggest that a more nuanced reading of this and, as I will show below, of other Sargent portraits of Jewish sitters is more appropriate – especially within the context of their own time-frame.

Adler quotes the comment by Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861-1942) on Sargent's portrait of Asher Wertheimer as “the father whom Rembrandt would have

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<sup>131</sup> Louis Kollitz, *Sir Joseph Crowe*, 1877 (National Portrait Gallery, London) Oil on canvas, 78.1 x 66 cm,.

<sup>132</sup> Gilbert Stuart, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Oil on canvas, 1784. See Richard Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998, pp. 40-1.

<sup>133</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

painted with a turban”.<sup>134</sup> Such a comment merits attention since according to Heather McPherson, “Blanche’s multifaceted, overlapping activities as portraitist, critic and chronicler placed him at the epicentre of fin-de-siècle cultural production”.<sup>135</sup> In a sense Rembrandt had done just this in his self-portrait *The Artist in Oriental Costume with a Poodle*, which may have been a point of reference for the Asher Wertheimer portrait.<sup>136</sup> Awareness of this could have been available not just to the painter but to his sitter who dealt in Rembrandt’s works.

The transaction between any artist and any sitter involves an element of the theatrical; posing is a deliberate act of scene setting. For Sargent there were occasions when theatricality was not simply just part of such a transaction but a positive element of the work. It was part of the ‘Sargentness’ of Sargent. Comparing, for example, the images of Flora and Asher Wertheimer, this emerges quite clearly. The portrait of Flora Wertheimer is a head on image with the light coming from the left hand side. The positioning and lighting of Asher Wertheimer is much more overtly theatrical. The viewer is looking up at the subject whose face is captured as if by a spotlight; Noble might be peering out not just of the canvas as Strachey suggested, but as if over stage footlights. The work has a dynamic and dramatic quality which is missing from the portrayal of Flora.

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<sup>134</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb, p. 91.

<sup>135</sup> H McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 145.

<sup>136</sup> Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist in Oriental Costume with Poodle*, 1631 (Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris) Oil on panel, 66.5 x 52 cm.

In the same year Sargent also produced a portrait of Arthur Cohen, exhibited at the New Gallery.<sup>137</sup> This would seem to be one of the only portraits of a Jewish male subject – other than a Wertheimer – painted in and exhibited in London during this period. In a family memoir Cohen's daughter indicated concern that her father's portrait would look dull by comparison with *Asher Wertheimer*, whose portrait she asserts was "intensely clever and withal entertaining", but concluded by noting that 'it [the portrait of her father] is one of the portraits of Sargent that presents no quality that one would not wish to be presented.'<sup>138</sup> Sargent was clearly not dangerous for all of his sitters and on this occasion showed his subject as an elegant and distinguished Victorian with little to indicate that he was of the Mosaic persuasion. Albeit using a negative verbal formulation, there is a sense of relief in his daughter's final evaluation of the work that it was not "clever" and presented her father in a positive light.<sup>139</sup>

1901 *The Daughters of A Wertheimer; Hylde Wertheimer*

If Sargent's portrait of Asher Wertheimer is for Adler a quintessential example of the problems of Jewish male identity in this period, the portrait of *Ena and Betty Wertheimer*, Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1901 (Fig. 20), is Adler's starting point for an examination of the issues associated specifically with 'the Jewess', which is extended to two other works in the Wertheimer series.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Mr Arthur Cohen, 1897 (Private collection) Oil on canvas, 75 x 63.5. For Cohen, see Biographical note App. 1.

<sup>138</sup> L Cohen, *Arthur Cohen: A Memoir by His Daughter for his Descendants*, London, 1919, p. 149, quoted in Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E., *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 130.

<sup>139</sup> Cohen, L., *Arthur Cohen: A Memoir by His Daughter for his Descendants*, London 1919, pp. 149, quoted in Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E., *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 130.

<sup>140</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb. *The Daughters of Mr Asher Wertheimer*, 1901 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 190.5 x 130.8 cm.,.

*The Graphic* of 1897 (quoted above) suggested the work of Sir Thomas Lawrence as an antecedent to Sargent's *Mrs Cazalet and her children*. It is possible that the latter's portrait of the *Daughters of Colonel Thomas Cartaret Hardy* (Fig. 21) was a reference for Sargent's portrait of the Wertheimer Sisters.<sup>141</sup> Although held in private collections, the Lawrence double portrait of the Hardy Sisters was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1888 and at Agnew's in 1897, and featured in contemporary literature on the artist, thus providing Sargent with opportunities to have seen it.<sup>142</sup> In the Lawrence portrait the sisters are posed in close proximity, with similar physical contact between them as in the later Sargent depiction of the Wertheimer sisters. The right-hand, taller figure is also dressed in white, in contrast to the darker red colouring of her sister's dress. The sitters in both works have 'off the face' hairstyles and wear little jewellery. If this were indeed the precedent, although the pose is different, it would seem that Sargent may consciously have been placing the Wertheimer sisters within an English tradition. It would provide a link for both Sargent's picture and his sitters into a shared history of the kind espoused in the Anglo-Jewish discourse.

As Adler remarks, the Sargent portrait picture is notable for its almost overpowering "vivacity" – a quality that struck a strong chord among contemporary reviewers.<sup>143</sup> There may have been an element of perhaps tongue in cheek criticism in *Vanity Fair's* comment on 9 May 1901:

... the Daughters of Mr Asher Wertheimer is the most remarkable and the most startling. It is full of marvellous vitality. Indeed Mr John Singer Sargent's pictures ought to have a room to themselves for they effectively eclipse anything put near them, other portraits look like simpering dolls by their side ... Mr Wertheimer's daughters seem to live before one.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Thomas Lawrence, *The Daughters of Colonel Thomas Cartaret Hardy*, 1801 (Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio) Oil on canvas, 161 x 135 cm. Charlotte (1782-1850 latterly Mrs Ralph Price) and Sarah (1780-1808 latterly Mrs Daniel Lysons) were daughters of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Carteret-Hardy of the York Fusiliers. I am indebted to the Cleveland Museum for this and the succeeding information on this Lawrence double portrait.

<sup>142</sup> The picture passed from family ownership (Daniel Lysons) in 1887 to Mr Camillo Roth. Exhibited at Royal Academy, *Exhibition of the Works of the Old Masters* (No 21), 1888 Agnew's, London, 20 *Masterpieces of the English School*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series (No 9) 1897. Mentioned in: Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, *Sir Thomas Lawrence*, London, 1900, p. 135. T. Cole and J. C. van Dyck, *Old English Masters*, New York, 1902, woodcut by Cole, facing p. 167.

<sup>143</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>144</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 9 May 1901, p. 299.

*The Athenaeum*'s review, 11 May 1901, although positive in general, was not without a note of implied criticism in its appraisal of the portrayal of Ena:

This is in its way a masterpiece. The poses of the figures are full of spontaneity and verve and the contrast between the leaning figure of the younger girl and the almost exaggerated robustness of her sister is entirely felicitous.<sup>145</sup>

“Almost exaggerated robustness” would seem to imply that Sargent was himself teetering on the brink of excess and ‘robust’, though perhaps appropriate for Ena, was hardly an adjective normally applied to Society ladies.<sup>146</sup>

*The Graphic*, in its review of 18 May 1901, similarly remarked on the ‘life’ in the picture:

In vigorous contrast [to Sargent's portrait of Mrs Charles Russell, shown at the same time] stands *The Daughters of Mr Asher Wertheimer*. It is perhaps the artist's most brilliant work of his career – original in grouping, incisive in character and sharply compared, as the girls stand in close contact intensely – almost preternaturally – alive.<sup>147</sup>

But it noted – referring to exhibits by Alma Tadema, Dicksee (1853-1928) and Fildes (1844-1927) – that:

It is almost a relief to turn from the oppression of this astonishing ability, from the inevitable unrest of the bravura performance to the quiet dignity of purely English painting.<sup>148</sup>

There is a double bind in interpreting such comments on Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters. One needs to be conscious of overt reactions to perceived excesses in the painter's style and the possibility of implied excesses in his subjects. Although it is probable that it is the artist's “bravura performance” that is being contrasted with the “quiet dignity” of English painting, one cannot escape the possibility that the remarks might also be being applied in coded form to the contrast between the overpowering

<sup>145</sup> *The Athenaeum*, 11 May 1901, p. 601.

<sup>146</sup> *The Athenaeum*, 11 May 1901, p. 601.

<sup>147</sup> *The Graphic*, 18 May 1901.

<sup>148</sup> *The Graphic*, 18 May 1901, p. 674.

Wertheimer sisters and the polite restraint of other English sitters.<sup>149</sup> D. S. MacColl reflected this in his *Saturday Review* article, 18 May 1901:

I should say that rarely in the history of paintings have its engines discharged a portrait so emphatically, so undistractedly contrived. The woman is there, with vitality hardly matched since Rubens, the race, the social type, the person.<sup>150</sup>

He was alluding overtly, though without any further comment, to the social standing and race – rather than religious affiliation – of the sitter and marking her out as different.

The sometimes negatively inclined Henry Strachey writing in *The Spectator* on 25 May 1901 praised the work, although one senses an undertone of ‘Sargent is too clever/too good by half’ in the review:

The portrait of the Daughters of A. Wertheimer is the picture which is the most obviously clever of the seven sent in by Mr Sargent. It is a marvellous tour de force of execution. The artist seems to have felt it was expected of him that he should astonish and he has done so. There is a suspicion of humorous appreciation in the picture and the skill is extraordinary.<sup>151</sup>

Spielmann, writing for *The Magazine of Art* in May, was more negative than others, suggesting that the vivacity of the sitters was so overpowering and their depiction so stripped to essentials that Sargent had in fact lost both a quality of decorative illusion, and that ‘surface’, which enables an artist to reveal true character:

The vivacity – especially in the case of the two young ladies – is almost painful. Frankly- now that Mr & Mrs Wertheimer and both their daughters have been painted by the young master – what is the cumulative result? For my part, I should not like to live in a room with these four living, almost breathing faces looking at me from the walls, interesting as they are. It was not thus that Titian painted, not thus Velasquez. They stopped short of a degree of illusion that almost annihilates the fine decorative quality of the canvases. The background in the “Daughters” is a creation – in invention, taste and appropriateness; yet we have eyes for nothing but the defiant vivacity of the ladies. The picture is original in its grouping, admirable in colour, daring in its line, while the faces appear tell tale of the characters of the sitters Ah! - but the *real* characters – are they given here? Surely it is too

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<sup>149</sup> *The Graphic*, 18 May 1901, p. 674.

<sup>150</sup> D. S. MacColl, *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1901, p. 632. MacColl’s use of ‘contrived’ probably did not have the negative connotation it bears today. Its likely meanings at that time were ‘well thought out’ and also ‘arranged as a composition’. OED.

<sup>151</sup> Henry Strachey, *The Spectator*, 25 May 1901, p. 767.



obvious for that. The artist seems to have removed the glazing of Nature and left his picture “skinned”.<sup>152</sup>

Spielmann felt that by stripping his subjects down, as we might say today, to their ‘bare bones’ and concentrating on just their major character lines, Sargent had lost those nuances that serve to define the whole and the true.

In the same review Spielmann contrasted this with Sargent’s portrait of *Mrs Charles Russell*:

..though low in tone and in parts not in the painter’s happiest colour, [it] speaks to us in a truer note. Mr Sargent has looked much deeper here, and what he tells us of this pathetic face is very interesting and very sad.<sup>153</sup>

The lower keys – emotional and painterly – of the latter seem to respond more to Spielmann’s view of the role of this portrait as almost an internal revelation of character in contrast to the far bolder, brash double portrait. As McColl remarked in the *Saturday Review* article referred to above ‘..[the Wertheimers} come forward almost romping...[while] the other is all retreat’.<sup>154</sup>

The more detailed review in the *Art Journal* of June 1901 was perhaps the clearest statement of just how far Sargent and, perhaps by implication his sitters, had pushed the conventionally accepted boundaries of portraiture:

None will arouse so much discussion as Mr John Singer Sargent’s group in the central gallery. It represents the two daughters of Mr A Wertheimer, standing against a wall in shadow. Interest centres in the taller of the two sisters, for she to the left, in low dress of red velvet, is relatively, and mark one says relatively, inanimate. In the portrayal of the second figure characterisation has been carried with a furore of intent to the utmost limit. It is as if Mr John Singer Sargent had determined that not a thought, not an emotion, not an experience should pass unrevealed. With right arm around the waist of her sister, left resting on a large oriental vase, head thrown slightly back, lips parted, she stands as though hurling defiance at the world. Every stroke of the brush in this overwhelmingly vital figure challenges the academic proprieties; almost every square inch, whether in the dress, the jet-black hair, the face and neck and bust, is searchingly analytical. The picture, so far as this figure is concerned, grips the spectator as in a vice; whether or not he will acquiesce, one is compelled to return to it again and

<sup>152</sup> Spielmann, *The Magazine of Art*, May, p 385.

<sup>153</sup> Spielmann, *The Magazine of Art*, May, p. 390. *Mrs Charles Russell*, 1900 (Private collection) Oil on canvas, 104.8 x 73.7 cm.

<sup>154</sup> D. S. MacColl, *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1901, p. 632.

again, if only to dispel, were that possible, the oppressiveness of forceful characterisation. To say that the work is pleasant.....this would be uncritical.<sup>155</sup>

In its focus on Ena, the *Art Journal* was careful though perhaps overly insistent, to underline that the challenge to propriety was to academic rather than social standards.<sup>156</sup> He seems, however, to use his own words, to have been driven into a “furore”.<sup>157</sup> Dismissing the portrayal of Betty as “relatively, and mark one says relatively inanimate” he describes Ena in highly charged, emotive terms, as if in fact her pose “head thrown slightly back, lips parted ...hurling defiance at the world” spoke as much of overt sexual license as of free spirit.<sup>158</sup> In this context, one wonders what some of these critics might have made of Sargent’s daring portrait of *Mrs Ralph Curtis* (Fig. 22), painted as a wedding present for the couple. Even the artist’s friend Henry James disapproved of it: “I didn’t like the portrait of Mrs Ralph *at all!* and don’t take it as worthy of anyone concerned”.<sup>159</sup>

The contravention of the convention that a lady was never depicted showing her teeth seems to have been a starting point for this critic’s outpourings on the excesses of the depiction of Ena who was not, however, the only one of Sargent’s female sitters to be shown in this way.<sup>160</sup> However, one must admit that Ena’s facial

<sup>155</sup> *Art Journal*, June 1901, pp. 99-100.

<sup>156</sup> *Art Journal*, June 1901, pp. 99-100.

<sup>157</sup> *Art Journal*, June 1901, pp. 99-100.

<sup>158</sup> *Art Journal*, June 1901, pp. 99-100.

<sup>159</sup> *Mrs Ralph Curtis*, 1898 (Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio), Oil on canvas, 219/3 x 104.8 cm,. See also Ormond and Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p.143.

<sup>160</sup> Others included *Isabella Stewart Gardner*, 1888 (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass), Oil on canvas, 189.9 x 81.3; *Ada Rehan*, 1894/5 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) Oil on canvas, 236.2 x 127.3; *Countess Clary Aldringen*, 1896, Oil on canvas, 228.5 x 122.; *Mr & Mrs Phelps Stokes*, 1897, (Hirschl & Adler Galleries, New York) Oil on canvas, 214.6 x 103, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *The Acheson Sisters*, 1902 (Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth) Oil on canvas, 269.2 x 198.1; *Duchess of Portland*, (Private Collection 1902), Oil on canvas, 228.6 x 113.

expression is closer to that of Mrs George Batten, painted by Sargent in the act of singing, rather than to the more genteel half smiles of some of those cited above.<sup>161</sup>

Earlier, in reviewing *Mrs Carl Meyer*, I referred to Hollander's concept of 'Woman as Dress' and her discussion of "women's nude bodies as if they had been formed by modish clothing".<sup>162</sup> Betty's body is concealed beneath the heavy fabric of her dark dress. The drapery of Ena's dress, however, hints overtly at the body beneath – particularly her right thigh; a fold in the fabric at waist level breaks at the knee behind which Betty's left hand is tucked. It was perhaps this combination of signals, consciously observed or not, that fuelled the *Art Journal's* reaction.

Adler comments that the two sitters were "daringly dressed" in contrast to the covered up style with an abundance of trimmings, the fashion of the time.<sup>163</sup> The *Duchess of Portland's* dress, in an almost contemporaneous portrait, was indeed somewhat less décolleté – though the wearer was a married lady of rank and therefore perhaps socially obliged to be more conservative. One should, however, also observe that the titled English lady was wearing considerably more jewellery than the supposedly ostentatious, wealthy young socialites.

Adler also refers to cleaning that has revealed repositioning of a strap on Betty's dress thus invoking Sargent's most notorious portraits, that of *Madame X*.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *Mrs George Batten*, 1897 (Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove), Oil on canvas, 88.9 x 43.2.

<sup>162</sup> *Fabric of Vision*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery London, 2002, p.165.

<sup>163</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>164</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb. *Mme X (Mme Pierre Gautreau)*, 1883/4 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) Oil on canvas, 208.6 x 109.9.

Jacqueline Ridge and Joyce Townsend referred to a contemporary observation of changes to the portrait:

Sargent's Wertheimer girls are all changed, both appear to have been painted all over since I saw them in the studio. He has painted out a marble slab, put in a large vase and lightened parts here and there.<sup>165</sup>

This indicates that the shoulder strap over-painting was only part of more extensive alterations to a then unfinished studio version. It would be unfair to accuse even the painter, let alone the sitters, of exceeding the bounds of public taste on the basis of a subsequently reworked canvas. After the furore surrounding the *Madame Gautreau* portrait and whatever the state of the painting at this early stage, it seems unlikely that Sargent would have again courted public opprobrium or the disapproval of a major client by repeating at another exhibition the same shoulder strap *faux pas* in final version of this earlier work.

Ridge and Townsend's reference originates in a letter by the American, William Cushing Loring (1879–1959) studying in Paris at the time.<sup>166</sup> It was preceded by a report on an earlier studio visit:<sup>167</sup>

...opposite me on an easel was the finest painting of two girls I ever saw. Wertheimer's daughters, it is the strongest and most beautiful arrangement I have ever seen. The picture dealer Wertheimer has ordered portraits of all of his children – ten in all.<sup>168</sup> One portrait of a young man – a Wertheimer – was a noble piece of construction. Sargent talked a bit then abruptly said, looking

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<sup>165</sup> 'John Singer Sargent's later portraits', *Apollo*, September 1998, p. 25.

<sup>166</sup> The Loring family were Boston based friends of Sargent. His 1890 portrait *Mrs Augustus Peabody Loring* was exhibited at the artist's one man show at the Copley Society in 1899 – see Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E., *John Singer Sargent; Portraits of the 1890s*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven & London, 2002, p. 47, painted and his portraits of members of the family.

<sup>167</sup> The 'report' was dated 10 February 1901 and the letter 29 May 1901. These dates would tie in with a studio visit prior to the 1901 Royal Academy Exhibition. *Archives of American Art Journal* vol. XXIV, 1984, p. 18. Loring's correspondence can be found in the Smithsonian Institution Archives. Reference za371a6d2 John Singer Sargent .

<sup>168</sup> Asher and Flora Wertheimer had twelve children, two of whom Sarah (born in 1872) and Lizzie (born 1886) died in infancy.

at the painting of the two girls, “What do you think of it? Isn’t it stunning of the taller girl? Don’t you think she is handsome?”<sup>169</sup>

If Loring’s information was correct, as early as 1901, Wertheimer and Sargent had agreed to embark on this most ambitious cycle of family portraits.

In the same year John Singer Sargent also painted a portrait of Hylda Wertheimer, the sixth of Asher and Flora’s children.<sup>170</sup> This does not appear to have been publicly exhibited during this period; it was, however, part of the Wertheimer Bequest. As I shall discuss again later, Hylda may have considered herself or been considered by the family less suited as a subject for such public display than some of her sisters. She may have been shyer by nature; in both this and a later triple portrait her gaze is averted from the viewer and there is a sense of discomfort, as if the sitter is ill at ease with the process of being painted or displayed.

The picture indicates perhaps even more clearly than that of her two elder sisters, the wealth of the family and the luxury of their home. Hylda’s dress, like Ena’s, was worn with both shoulders fully revealed. In this case, however, the dress was not modelled by the body beneath it – it concealed rather than revealed. This contrast is significant in the context of comments made by some contemporary critics, by Adler about the daring dress styles of Betty and Ena and the implications of sexuality allied to the concept of the *belle Juive*. I would suggest that female sexuality was explored – sometimes more obviously - in other portraits by Sargent of this period, aside from the notorious *Madame Gautreau* and the daring *Mrs Ralph Curtis*, to which reference has

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<sup>169</sup> Sargent’s use of the word ‘handsome’ may strike a dissonant, perhaps masculine, chord to twenty first century ears as a description of a lady. It had, however, the more positive connotations at this time. In this context and particularly when referring to a lady of Ena’s height, it might be the present day equivalent of ‘fine looking’. OED.

<sup>170</sup> *Hylda Wertheimer*, 1901 (Tate Britain, London) Oil on canvas, 214.6 x 143.5,.

already been made. *Lady Agnew* is at first glance the very essence of the young, demure, aristocratic wife, furthermore she was convalescing when painted by Sargent.<sup>171</sup> Closer inspection, however, obliges the viewer to accept the artist's insistence on corporeality; on the body under the dress – directly revealed by her upper arm through the gauze of her sleeve, the brushwork and colour accent, which emphasise her thigh and knee, the pendant nestled between her breasts and the flower held in her lap. The positioning of her left arm, which hints at an arching of the body, the suggestion of a smile, and her direct gaze make this a far more sexual enigmatic portrayal than one might at first suspect. Similar characteristics of the body revealed beneath the dress are to be found in the *Wyndham Sisters*.<sup>172</sup> Although contemporary critics may not have mentioned – nor perhaps noticed – such allusions in these works, the fact that they run as a common thread in portraits of both Jewish and non-Jewish sitters would suggest that for John Singer Sargent the revelation of concealed female sexuality was not a specifically Jewish issue but another of the features of the 'Sargentness' of Sargent. Perhaps it was again an example of the veracity, which has already been suggested as a characteristic of his best work.

1902 *Mr Alfred Wertheimer; The Children of Asher Wertheimer; Mr Edward Wertheimer; Mrs Leopold Hirsch*

The portrait of a young man to which Loring referred was almost certainly that of *Alfred Wertheimer*, (Fig. 23) shown at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition,

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<sup>171</sup> *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw*, 1892/3 (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh), Oil on canvas, 125.7 x 100.3.

<sup>172</sup> *The Wyndham Sisters*, 1899 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Oil on canvas, 292.1 x 213.7.

1902.<sup>173</sup> Alfred, the Wertheimer's fourth child, died in South Africa in the same year that the picture was executed. Even by his own standards, 1902 was an outstanding year in terms of the works Sargent exhibited; in addition to *Alfred Wertheimer*, *Lord Ribblesdale*, *The Acheson Sisters* and *The Duchess of Portland* to which references have already been made, his contribution included, *The Misses Hunter* and *Mrs Leopold Hirsch*.<sup>174</sup> He also exhibited his triple portrait of *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (Fig. 24) in London's New Gallery.<sup>175</sup>

The *Art Journal's* review of the New Gallery Exhibition of 1902 focused on what its critic perceived as the orientalism of the triple portrait:

Decoratively it is a triumph; it satisfies, too, as a revelation of the several characters...Mr John Singer Sargent has never painted a child [Essie], perhaps we should hardly say more winsome, but instead, more bewitching. In her is concentrated that mysterious orientalism which inspires the beauty of the group.<sup>176</sup>

Strachey in the *Spectator* put it even more strongly: 'The moral atmosphere of an opulent and exotic society has been seized and put before us.'<sup>177</sup> He seems to have been inviting his readers to substitute the seraglio for the sitting room in which this group of adolescents whose portrait with their family pets would appear to have more in common with the mood of Sargent's earlier *Misses Vickers*.<sup>178</sup> The subjects in question were, at the time of the painting, only twenty two, fourteen and thirteen years old respectively and the artist had by then been a friend of the family for more than four years. They were, therefore, perhaps not the most obvious starting points for an examination of Oriental morals. However, in the light of this and other comments

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<sup>173</sup> *Mr Alfred Wertheimer*, 1901 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 163.2 x 114.9.

<sup>174</sup> *Mrs Leopold Hirsch*, 1902, (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 144.8 x 92.7; *The Misses Hunter*, 1902 (Tate Britain, London) Oil on canvas, 229.2 x 229.9.

<sup>175</sup> *Essie, Ruby & Ferdinand, The Children of Asher Wertheimer*, 1902 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 161 x 193.7.

<sup>176</sup> Review of the New Gallery Exhibition, *Art Journal*, 1902.

<sup>177</sup> Strachey, *Spectator*, 1902.

about this painting and about Sargent's later portrait of Almina Wertheimer, one must keep an open mind as to the underlying thrust of this comment and the possible intentions of the artist. Perhaps Strachey was struck by the similarity between the portrayals of Frank Meyer and Ferdinand Wertheimer and transferred his negativity about the former portrait to this later work.

The portrait of *Mrs Leopold Hirsch* (née Frances Mathilde Seligman) was felt by *Vanity Fair* to be "a somewhat exotic presentation".<sup>179</sup> Although her dress was an elaborate ensemble in pink with a deep lace collar and insets, this is perhaps a questionable reading, at least from a twenty first century standpoint, of one who seems timidly to be avoiding eye contact with the viewer. In 1905 Sargent was to paint *Mrs Adolph Hirsch* (née Georgette Seligman), thus demonstrating his links with other parts of the Hirsch family and with the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy.

In contrast to the potentially exclusionary comments made about the triple portrait of the younger children, the reviewers placed the picture of *Alfred Wertheimer* unequivocally into an English world alongside one of the key works in Sargent's oeuvre of this period - *Lord Ribblesdale* - thus making him a part of a shared present.

Strachey in the *Spectator*, 3 May 1902, was restrained but without a negative note:

.....Much more interesting is the same painter's portrait of A Wertheimer with the thoughtful face and sombre colouring. There is something very attractive about this picture; the dreamy quality of the head is so admirably carried out.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *The Misses Vickers*, 1884 (Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield) Oil on canvas, 137.2 x 182.9.

<sup>179</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 8 May 1902, p. 325.

<sup>180</sup> *Spectator*, 3 May 1902, p.637



Given that this and the portrait of *Mrs Hirsch* were the sixth and seventh portraits of Jewish sitters to be exhibited at the Royal Academy by Sargent since his Jewish debut with *Mrs Carl Meyer* and one of the third group in the Wertheimer sequence, there can have been no question as to awareness of Alfred's heredity, religion or social standing. Nevertheless, when *The Graphic*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Magazine of Art* each judged the Alfred Wertheimer portrait against that of Lord Ribblesdale, in none of them does the former come off the poorer for the comparison:

...Mr Sargent's portrait of young Mr A Wertheimer, a scientific student apparently, and a veritable masterpiece of character painting. Yet it is almost surpassed by the wonderful full length of Lord Ribblesdale – at the opposite corner – where the ex-Master of the Horse stands with the quaint old worldliness of him caught and realised in surprising fashion.<sup>181</sup>

To my thinking, however, by far his best work is in the portraits of Mr Alfred Wertheimer Esq. and Lord Ribblesdale..... there is character in every line of the first from the intelligent, thoughtful face to the thin hand pressing on a pile of manuscripts – no accessories distract the eye. So too in the case of Lord Ribblesdale – a quite remarkable performance. He seems to be alive before you, his clothes and his hat sharing in his vitality.<sup>182</sup>

..and two superb male portraits...the one thoughtful and full of character A Wertheimer Esq. and the other of the Lord Ribblesdale infused with that quaint old-world spirit in dress and manner which informs the noble lord.<sup>183</sup>

In spite of a social gap that would have been unbridgeable by almost any of Anglo-Jewry's luminaries, let alone the son of a first generation art dealer whose own portrait by Sargent had been negatively received by some, the portrait of Alfred received nothing but accolades without a hint of anti-Semitism creeping into the reviews of the time.

The problems of post 1923 readings, to which I referred earlier, are clearly demonstrated in a two-sided comment by Hamilton Minchin published in 1925:

...tenderness is exceedingly rare. It is present, however, in the beautiful portrait of Alfred Wertheimer, the scientist, who died young; his relation to

<sup>181</sup> *The Graphic*, 3 May 1902, p. 595.

<sup>182</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 8 May 1902, p. 325.

<sup>183</sup> *The Magazine of Art*, May 1902, p. 356.

Wertheimer père is one of those mysteries of heredity, like Shelley and his father, which surprise us sometimes.<sup>184</sup>

In 1902 Sargent also started a portrait of the Wertheimer's eldest son, Edward, but due to the sitter's death that year it was never completed.<sup>185</sup> It was, however, part of the subsequent Wertheimer Bequest. Its size and the right facing pose of the subject would suggest that it may have been intended as a companion piece to the left facing, identically sized portrait of Alfred.

#### 1904 *Mrs Asher Wertheimer*

In 1904 Sargent exhibited a second portrait of *Mrs Asher Wertheimer* at the Royal Academy (Fig. 25).<sup>186</sup> Whether, as suggested by Lapine, this was prompted by dissatisfaction with the 1898 portrait or whether, after the deaths of her sons, Alfred and Edward, a more formal portrait was felt appropriate is not documented.<sup>187</sup> Although six years separate the two pictures, the sitter's appearance has changed from early to mature middle age. This picture is characterised by a sense of dignity. Unlike Lady Faudel Phillips, whose bare arms and excessive jewellery seem an attempt to defy or disguise the reality of her own age, Mrs Wertheimer is a figure of restraint. Her pose is controlled as she leans slightly forward looking directly at the viewer. The style of her dress and her jewellery seems entirely appropriate to her position, age and personal situation.

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<sup>184</sup> Hamilton Minchin, *Some early recollections of John Singer Sargent*, Garden City Press, Letchworth, 1925.

<sup>185</sup> *Mr Edward Wertheimer*, 1902 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 163.2 x 114.9.

<sup>186</sup> *Mrs Flora Wertheimer*, 1904 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 163.2 x 107.9.

<sup>187</sup> Lapine, 'Mixing business with Pleasure', in *John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, ed. Norman Kleeblatt, The Jewish Museum, New York: 1999, p.53 Endnote 20. The earlier portrait was not included in the Wertheimer Bequest of 1922, suggesting that the later version was the preferred choice of the family.

If the comment in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 6 May 1902 had been made just a few years later, one might suspect the writer or Wertheimer or both of attempting press manipulation, so prescient is it of the final outcome for the series:

Mrs Asher Wertheimer forms one of that celebrated series of family portraits that Mr John Singer Sargent has executed for the great connoisseur, Mr Wertheimer, a series any art gallery in the world might be proud to possess. Assuredly Velasquez painted as fine, but no better, a portrait than this beautiful lady in her black dress adorned by a necklace of wonderful pearls seated in an armchair.<sup>188</sup>

In its review, *The Jewish World*, 6 May 1904, although admiring the work, took advantage of the occasion to cast an unflattering backward glance at an earlier work:

Mr Sargent's clever portrait of Mrs Wertheimer claims first notice for the reason that it is not too clever like some of Mr John Singer Sargent's work, notably his portrait some years ago of Mr Wertheimer.<sup>189</sup>

*The Athenaeum*, perhaps emboldened by Sargent's fall from grace in 1903, was positive in its appreciation of the portrait in its review dated 21 May 1904, but also occupied itself with a critical, backward assessment of what it now saw as his earlier failings:

Mrs Wertheimer is a more searching study of character and is an admirably sober and discreet arrangement. Mr Sargent is not by any means a great colourist, but he has shown of late a very wise preference for those low toned and indefinite schemes, in which at least an agreeable harmony is within reach, and has avoided the brilliant and startling reflected lights with unpleasant greenish half tones in the flesh, which he used to affect.<sup>190</sup>

1905 *Mrs Ernest Raphael*;<sup>191</sup> *Hylda, Almina and Conway, Children of Asher Wertheimer; A Vele Gonfie*

<sup>188</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 May 1902.

<sup>189</sup> *The Jewish World*, 6 May 1904, p.119.

<sup>190</sup> *The Athenaeum*, 21 May 1904, p. 662.

<sup>191</sup> *Mrs Ernest Raphael*, 1905 (Private Collection) Oil on canvas, 163.8 cms x 114.3 cms.

Sargent's 1905 portrait of Mrs Ernest Raphael (née Flora Cecilia Sassoon), exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, was one of three paintings of the wives of the Raphael family which the artist undertook between 1900 and 1906.<sup>192</sup> At its showing in the New Gallery in May 1905, *Mrs Ernest Raphael* prompted *The Graphic* to write:

... but it [*Sir Frank Swettenham*] yields in perfection to the wonderful Mrs Ernest Raphael, a lady in black décolleté [sic] decked with pearls and seated beside a cabinet all of which, alike in arrangement, force, quality and life, is amazingly fine.<sup>193</sup>

The Raphael family, although not of English stock, were also not recent arrivals. The three cousins, descendants of the founder of the London branch of the eponymous family bank in 1787, each married members of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy.

The significance of both of these series of the Raphael and Hirsch family paintings and the earlier portrait of Mrs Carl Meyer in relation to the concerns of this study is manifold. The families concerned were highly placed within Anglo-Jewry and the Raphaels could trace 'English' ancestry back for one hundred years or more. They did not need Sargent to assist in the process of confirming their places within the Jewish haute bourgeoisie or the financial world. If, however, they went to Sargent to acquire the substance or at least the veneer of that social acceptability which came naturally and as of right to those such as Ribblesdale and Hamilton, they chose an unusual course of action. With the exceptions of, for example, the male Wertheimers, Mr Arthur Cohen, the musician Sir George Henschel (1850-1934) who sat to him in 1889, and Sir George Lewis, Sargent painted few portraits of the leading Jewish men of his day in England.<sup>194</sup> The Sargent representations of the Meyer, Hirsch and Raphael families were all of their womenfolk. Perhaps this was, in part, a preference on the part of the artist – Rothenstein claimed Sargent "admired and thoroughly enjoyed painting the energetic features of the women of the Semitic race".<sup>195</sup> It may have been a decision taken by their husbands who either shied away from portraiture altogether or chose others who they might have regarded as less flamboyant,

<sup>192</sup> The others being: *Mrs Louis Raphael* [née Henriette Goldschmidt] and *Mrs William George Raphael* [née Margherita Goldsmid].

<sup>193</sup> *The Graphic*, 6 May 1905, p.534.

<sup>194</sup> *Sir George Henschel*, 1899 (Private Collection), Oil on canvas, 65.3 x 53.3. The work is inscribed (upper right) 'to my friend Henschel'.

<sup>195</sup> William Rothenstein, 'When to be young was heaven', *Atlantic*, Boston, March 1931, p.

controversial or expensive for their own portraits. Sargent may have established a reputation as the 'painter of the Jews' by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, but it was Solomon J. Solomon, who was painting many of its leading male figures; including as we have seen in the previous chapter some of the husbands or relatives of those ladies, who sat to Sargent. Indeed Sir Samuel Montagu, although a patron of Solomon J. Solomon, had his portrait executed in 1904 by William Orchardson (1832/5-1910). These decisions by potential patrons, ran counter to the commission pattern that emerges from an analysis of the range of Sargent's portraiture. Although Sargent's popular reputation is as a painter of society ladies, the SIRIS index identifies almost as many portraits of males by Sargent (379) as it does of females (440).<sup>196</sup> The English aristocracy, including many of the husbands of ladies who sat to Sargent, many of its military High Command (some during or after the First World War) and its intelligentsia sat to Sargent, but the men of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy who sought by a variety of other means to assure integration into English Society for themselves and their co-religionists, abjured this particular route.

*Hylde, Almina and Conway, Children of Asher Wertheimer*<sup>197</sup>

This group portrait was painted as if outside the family home – the view of the background perhaps indicating nearby Hyde Park or Temple at Henley (Fig. 26). The composition has less of the ensemble feel of the 1902 work of the younger children and is in many ways the most pedestrian of the series, lacking both in that degree of character analysis and insight and in places the finish of Sargent's best work.

The bespectacled Hylde, whose light perhaps springtime attire seems at odds with the general autumnal mood, is again portrayed looking away from the painter/viewer. Even in this informal setting, cradling a pet dog, she seems as ill at

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<sup>196</sup> Smithsonian Institution Research Information System.

<sup>197</sup> *Hylde, Almina & Conway, Children of A. Wertheimer*, 1905 (Tate Britain), London, Oil on canvas, 188 x 133, 4.

ease as in the earlier formal portrait. Although the senior of the siblings in this picture, she is compositionally positioned at the base of the family triangle. In contrast to the poses of her brother and sister, which suggest action, Hylda is caught in a contemplative, still moment, uncomfortable with the process of being painted.

Conway, who, following the deaths of two of his brothers in 1902, was the older of the surviving Wertheimer sons, is positioned at the apex of the triangle. He is portrayed in casual attire perhaps out walking another of the family dogs. Although he at first seems to be looking back at the viewer, closer inspection suggests a marginal deflection of vision, in some ways reminiscent of his father's gaze in the earlier Sargent portrait.

Although Almina was a slighter figure than her older sister Ena, the way in which she looks directly at the viewer, her high colouring and her riding attire suggest that she may have shared the same active, high-spirited attitude. She is the dominant figure in this composition. Portraits of Ena and Almina were exhibited together in 1910 at the International Society's *Fair Women* Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery, London.

### *A vele gonfie*<sup>198</sup>

Reflecting on how viewers 100 years later might view Sargent's portrait of the *Duke of Marlborough and his Family*,<sup>199</sup> A.R. Carter's review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1905 added about *A vele gonfie*: "Or to rejoice again in the

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<sup>198</sup> *A vele gonfie*, 1905 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 163.2 x 107.9.

elusive grace of the hoyden in full sail”.<sup>200</sup> *A vele gonfie* was in many ways the most interesting of Sargent’s Wertheimer family portraits (Fig. 27). Carter’s juxtaposition of comments on this portrait of Ena with those on Duke of Marlborough may have been flattering to the former, but his description of her as a “hoyden”, while perhaps accurate of her effusive personality and physically commanding presence, was certainly no way to describe an English lady.<sup>201</sup> Perhaps both painter and subject were less concerned with such social niceties and more concerned with capturing a moment. Visiting Sargent, Ena swept into his studio and he was immediately attracted by her cloak billowing about her which he sought to record. Some commentators have suggested that her outfit was composed of studio props, perhaps left behind by a previous male sitter. Basing her proposition on such family evidence, Adler suggests that the outfit was that of a male soldier and a broomstick was used as a prop.<sup>202</sup> This opens the way for her reading of the work as one of male/female role transgression and for her to raise issues of witchcraft linked with Jewish female identity. Adler, however, also points out that it was subsequently a wedding gift to Ena’s husband, which, despite Adler’s reservations as to its appropriateness, would suggest that the family did not see it in such a light.<sup>203</sup>

Given such readings of the work, it is perhaps surprising that it was not an object of comment by many of the reviewers of the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1905 or those who reviewed it at the 1910 International Society’s Fair Women

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<sup>199</sup> *Duke of Marlborough Family*, 1905 (Duke of Marlborough Private Collection, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire), Oil on canvas, 332.7 cms x 238.8 cms.

<sup>200</sup> A.R. Carter, *Art Journal*, 1905, p. 168.

<sup>201</sup> A.R. Carter, *Art Journal*, 1905, p. 168.

<sup>202</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>203</sup> K Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’, in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

Exhibition.<sup>204</sup> Critical acclaim was not, however, totally wanting. John Collier in his contemporaneous *The Art of Portrait Painting* referred to it as:

...one of the chief ornaments of the Academy of 1905. The sweep of the drapery, the swing of the figure, and the extraordinary animation of the expression make this portrait one of Mr John Singer Sargent's masterpieces. Its vitality is astounding.<sup>205</sup>

Once again vitality is the key feature in an assessment of a portrait of Ena. Robert Ross provided an interesting line for interpretation in his 1911 survey of Sargent's Wertheimer portraits:<sup>206</sup>

... this harmony in black, white grey and gold was painted when Mr Sargent was at work on his portrait of Lord Londonderry, some of whose belongings have been utilised, I imagine, for the only fantastic and in many ways the most inspired of all the Wertheimer Sargents.<sup>207</sup>

The key word seems to be "fantastic" This is a work of fantasy in which the painter has tried to 'freeze frame' movement in an intensely theatrical style. The points of focus are not the swirling cloak but the arm, upper chest and face of the subject. These features, painted almost entirely in white against the sombre colour of the cloak, are caught as in a theatre spotlight. This work owes a debt to Sargent's earlier *El Jalelo* with its vivid gestures and frozen motion.<sup>208</sup> As a formal portrait of a Society beauty, it breaks all of the accepted codes – indeed my theatrical hypothesis with its Spanish dancer linkage only exacerbates such ruptures. As an attempt to capture the energy and spirit of its subject, it may indeed have been the most 'inspired' of the series.

### 1907 *Lady Sassoon*

<sup>204</sup> The work was exhibited in 1910 at the *International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers Third Fair Women Exhibition*, Grafton Gallery, London, 26 May to 31 July 1910.

<sup>205</sup> The Hon. John Collier, *The Art of Portrait Painting*, Cassell, London, Paris, New York and Melbourne, 1905, p. 75.

<sup>206</sup> Robert Ross, *Wertheimer's John Singer Sargents*, January 1911, p. 1 ff.

<sup>207</sup> The reference to Lord Londonderry, although linked with the family memoirs cited by Adler, seems somewhat out of time, since the latter portrait was dated 1902-04.

<sup>208</sup> *El Jalelo*, 1882 (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass), Oil on canvas, 237 x 352.



The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1907 included Sargent's portrait of Lady Sassoon (Fig. 28).<sup>209</sup> This late work is significant because of the sitter's social position. The marriage of Aline, daughter of Baron Gustave de Rothschild, to Sir Edward Sassoon united the most powerful with one of the most anglicised families in Anglo-Jewry. Lady Sassoon was a very influential society hostess and part of the 'Jewish court' of Edward, Prince of Wales.

Perhaps influenced as much by the importance of the sitter as by the quality of the painting, the *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 May 1907, claimed that:

The outstanding picture of the Academy is Mr Sargent's masterly Lady Sassoon....one of the great pictures of the world. Velasquez never did anything better.<sup>210</sup>

The *Jewish World*, 17 May 1907, felt it was

.. a wonderful work, wonderful as a likeness, wonderful in its vivacity and life, in arrangement, colour and brushwork, brimful of the genius of brilliancy.<sup>211</sup>

Spielmann in *The Graphic*, 25 May 1907, wrote:

To say that Mr Sargent's portrait of Lady Sassoon is masterly is to employ an inadequate term to express the quality of this superb picture. All the old bravura is here in this rendering of the refined, aristocratic Jewish lady ...perhaps the most brilliant and at the same time one of the soundest things that ever came from Sargent's brush.<sup>212</sup>

This flattering appraisal of a Rothschild/Sassoon is in marked contrast to the earlier comments made of Mrs Carl Meyer, notwithstanding that the wealth of all three families was derived from the same world of 'haute finance'; by 1907 the former families had achieved social standing that had not been reached by the Meyers a decade earlier. Perhaps one of the more amusing and illuminating comments and an

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<sup>209</sup> *Lady Aline Sassoon*, 1907 (Private collection) Oil on canvas, 161.3 x 105.4.

<sup>210</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 May 1907.

<sup>211</sup> *Jewish World*, 17 May 1907.

<sup>212</sup> *The Graphic*, 25 May 1907.

apparent source of Sargent's reputation as a painter of Jews is to found in a note on this Sassoon portrait in the diary of Wilfrid Blunt:

The ladies he paints, according to Meynell, generally bore him so that he is obliged to retire every now and then behind a screen and refresh himself by putting his tongue out at them. He has made an exception, however, to this practice in the case of Mrs [sic] Sassoon... He paints nothing but Jews and Jewesses now and says he prefers them as they have more life and movement than our English women.<sup>213</sup>

This reputed preference for Jewish subjects it is not borne out by the mix of his portraits of this period or even by those he publicly exhibited. It was perhaps rather a reflection of a xenophobic attitude on the part of certain reviewers.

### 1908 *Betty Wertheimer; Almina Wertheimer*

In 1908 John Singer Sargent concluded his series of formal oil portraits of the Wertheimer family with individual pictures of Betty and Almina.

#### *Betty Wertheimer*<sup>214</sup>

The portrait of Betty, possibly posed on a balcony, is, by the standards of the best of Sargent's Wertheimer series, a disappointing piece. The *Art Journal's* review of the double portrait of Betty and Ena said that relative to that of Ena the figure of Betty lacked animation. Measured against the excitement generated in *A vele gonfie*, this too is a somewhat inanimate portrait. The oblique angle of the sitter's head emphasising her nose is less complimentary than the full-face perspective of the earlier picture. This work was neither displayed at the time of its execution nor did it form

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<sup>213</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries*, p. 585.

<sup>214</sup> *Betty Wertheimer*, 1908 (National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington), Oil on canvas, 128.9 x 100.1 Oval.

part of the subsequent Wertheimer Bequest and from Ross' review it would appear that it hung apart from the others in the family home.<sup>215</sup>

*Almina Wertheimer*<sup>216</sup>

Sargent's 1908 portrait of the then twenty two year old Almina Wertheimer (Fig. 29) returns to the territory of the dangerous Mr. Sargent. As a portrayal of a young, would be Society lady, it transgressed generally accepted codes and norms to an even greater degree than *A vele gonfie*. Adler has argued that *Almina Wertheimer* "plays to notions of excess and deviance (for it is a man's costume that she wears)", and that the portrait "embraces the stereotype of the 'beautiful Jewess'", a stereotype that places Jewish women with other mid-Eastern Orientals "but never of course with 'English women'".<sup>217</sup> These arguments provide excellent starting points from which to unpick some of the key elements of this work and its reception.

My research indicates that the costume may have been a female outfit from Anatolia.<sup>218</sup> The authentic, original version would have comprised an outer dress (*entari*), an under dress (*gomlek*) and loose fitting trousers (*salvar*). Nancy Micklewright indicates that although this outfit underwent stylistic changes between

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<sup>215</sup> 'Wertheimer's John Singer Sargents', *Art Journal*, January 1911, p. 1 ff.

<sup>216</sup> This work was also exhibited in 1910 at the *International Society's Third Fair Women Exhibition* with *A vele gonfie*.

<sup>217</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>218</sup> I am indebted to Tim Stanley, Curator, Middle East Section, Asian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum for his guidance. The source for detailed comments is Nancy Micklewright, 'Islamic Art § VI, 3(v)(b): Dress c. 1500 and after: Anatolia and the Balkans', *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 16, New York: Grove Dictionaries Inc, 1996, pp. 461 and 462.

the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, its basic composition remained the same.<sup>219</sup> Almina's outfit, especially the headdress, was in all probability a composite of studio props. If correct, this would suggest that Sargent was at pains to attenuate some of the more extreme potentials of the real outfit. In, for example, Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in their Apartments*, two of the three principal subjects are wearing what might be *entaris* without the under-dress concealing their blouse tops and their trousers.<sup>220</sup> In Ingres' *Odalisque with Slave*, suggested by Kilmurray as possible reference for the Sargent portrait, the servant girl, playing a stringed instrument for her mistress, is wearing a version of the same costume, but her *entari* is so arranged that her breast is uncovered.<sup>221</sup> Sargent also reduced the coded sexual symbolism of the musical instrument, which should be held and played in a near vertical position as in the Ingres referred to above, by angling it below the horizontal in the sitter's lap. In the context of depictions of females playing stringed instruments, it is possible that Sargent and/or Asher Wertheimer may also have had in mind paintings by Terborch; Asher Wertheimer had been involved in the earlier sale of that artist's *A Lesson on the Theorbo* to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.<sup>222</sup> Only the melon by her feet serves openly, as Adler has pointed out, to remind us of the sitter's burgeoning sexuality.<sup>223</sup>

The portrayal of a lady attired in an Oriental costume was certainly an unusual choice in early 20<sup>th</sup> century England and was an even more dangerous gambit if the

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<sup>219</sup> Nancy Micklewright, 'Islamic Art § VI, 3(v)(b): Dress c. 1500 and after: Anatolia and the Balkans', *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 16, New York: Grove Dictionaries Inc, 1996, pp. 461 and 462.

<sup>220</sup> Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in their Apartments*, 1834 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), Oil on canvas, 180 x 229.

<sup>221</sup> Kilmurray and Ormond, *John Singer Sargent*, Tate Gallery Catalogue, 1998, p. 169.

<sup>222</sup> Lapine, 'Mixing business with Pleasure', in *John Singer John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, p.52. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Archive confirms this purchase as being arranged – with two other paintings by Rembrandt – through Colnaghi and Wertheimer in 1898.

sitter was a Jewess since it would play to those very prejudices about foreignness which were present in English society and which, as we have seen, occurred in some reviews of Sargent's portraits. The image of Almina has been linked to that of *Lady Shirley* by Van Dyck; this, however, does little to integrate Almina into English society because Lady Shirley was in fact Circassian.<sup>224</sup> Kilmurray has suggested that Sargent might also have been influenced by the Charles Jervas (1675-1739) portrait of *Lady Wortley Montagu* (1689-1962) in Turkish costume.<sup>225</sup> This precedent is not particularly helpful in limiting the transgressive potentiality of the Sargent portrait, since the costume she is wearing is by no means as 'native' as that worn by Almina, the subject with her Ambassador husband had travelled in and had often written about Turkey. The portrait of Almina was a private commission and was not initially publicly exhibited. Thus, its appropriateness or otherwise, was a personal/family matter and not for open debate. There would seem to be no evidence to suggest that the Wertheimers had qualms in accepting the work, subsequently including it for public display or in making it a part of the eventual bequest to the Nation.

Surprisingly, in the light of Adler's readings, when the work was included in the International Society's 3<sup>rd</sup> Fair Women Exhibition with *A vele gonfie* (catalogued as *Mrs Robert Mathias*), neither elicited any particular comment. *The Athenaeum's* review concentrated on Sargent's overall stylistic development. Sargent's other exhibits at the 1910 Exhibition were formal portraits of *Lady Ian Hamilton* and *Lady Eden* and I have no found evidence of disapproving shock on the part of these sitters or the critics at such juxtapositions.

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<sup>223</sup> K Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family', in *The Jew in the Text*, eds Nochlin and Garb.

<sup>224</sup> For reference to Lady Shirley, see *The Swagger Portrait*, p.202.

### Towards a re-positioning of Sargent

The period covered by Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters corresponds, as we shall see in somewhat more detail in the next chapter, almost exactly to the time during which publicly expressed concerns about the flood of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia were reaching their peak. The investigations of the Royal Commission which led to the passage of the Aliens Act, formed one part of the social and legislative background to many of these portraits. Throughout this time Sargent continued to include figures from the Anglo-Jewish world among his annual submissions both to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions and at other London venues. Sitters from the same milieu were a major part of the publicly exhibited oeuvre of Solomon J. Solomon. In these circumstances what is surprising is not that there were the occasional, usually covert or coded, remarks or articles which read these images in a negative, anti-Semitic light, but that in fact there were so few such examples. Looking back over the comments quoted in this chapter, one is struck by the number of times in which a Sargent painting of a Jewish sitter was singled out for special praise and attention, was described for example as the best work of the Exhibition, a masterpiece, a work for all time, was held up favourably to Velasquez and others, or was cited as a model for other artists.

What does, however, emerge is an accumulation of references to difference and excess, which whilst not as overt as the anti-Semitic tone of some of the allusions

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<sup>225</sup> Charles Jervas, *Lady Wortley-Montague*, 1720s (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), Oil on canvas, 210 x 127cm.

of the period, does indicate the presence of an undercurrent of feeling into which some critics on occasions tapped. Within the context of the study, G.K.Chesterton's *Art Journal* review of the 1908 Royal Academy Exhibition is one of the most interesting contemporary readings of Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters; one made all the more intriguing because 1908 was one of the few years after his 'Jewish debut' of 1897, in which Sargent did not include a Jewish sitter among his exhibits.<sup>226</sup> It would seem that Chesterton took this opportunity to expose his feelings – even though they had no direct relevance to the Sargent output in that year. Chesterton's initial focus on Sargent in 1908 was the portrait of Balfour.<sup>227</sup> He started by discussing Sargent as a satirist – but of a special kind:

It is often said of Mr Sargent that he sees only evil in everybody; but even when this is so, he does not see the evil which everybody sees... Mr. Sargent sometimes discovers strange sins in his sitters, which even their enemies have not discovered.<sup>228</sup>

This leads into his comments on other of Sargent's paintings in which the writer appeared to ascribe to the painter his own feelings:

For instance, Mr Sargent has painted several pictures which might serve M.Drumont as posters and cartoons of anti-Semitism. But the weakness which he satirises in the Jew is not that of the common theatrical caricature of him; it is not mere avarice or mere cunning; the eye that glitters at the sight of gold, the miserly hand that clutches it. Jews are seldom purely avaricious, and hardly ever misers. The weak spot Mr Sargent picks out is what the European can only describe as the shamelessness of the Oriental; the tropical stare, the offensive and familiar gestures, the lavish way with money and compliments, the insolence of dress or undress, as in some glaring Paradise of Mahomet. In a word he spots the lack of *verecundia*, of reticence and half-tones, of reverence and modesty.<sup>229</sup>

Chesterton took for granted that his readers would recognise avarice, cunning and greed as character traits of the Jew. He pointed out that Sargent's special talent had been to pick out the "lack of modesty" which Chesterton found so unacceptable. In the same review, turning his attention to Solomon J. Solomon's *Birth of Venus*, which was

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<sup>226</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161.

<sup>227</sup> *Arthur Balfour*, 1908 (National Portrait Gallery, London) Oil on canvas, 256.5 x 147.3.

<sup>228</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161.

<sup>229</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161. For Drumont, see Biographical note App. 2

exhibited that year, Chesterton, while praising the picture, used his commentary to pick out what he believed was another failing in Jews:

And yet there is something in the treatment of the whole thing that seems unsatisfactory in being so satisfactory. For a long time I thought that nothing could express this subconscious something, which is not a fault in Mr Solomon but is simply an absence in him, an absence which could never become apparent but for his striking and triumphant talent in every other respect. I suddenly realised what I had missed in him when my eye fell on Mr Waterhouse's Apollo and Daphne. It was that indescribable thing that was the Middle Ages; the gothic which mixed the saintly with the grotesque, the coloured windows which depend on the light beyond, the double meaning of things, the irony of the Universe. The great Jews of the Middle Ages were outside this quaintness and complexity with the full weight of their excellent intellects they despised it; Renan, who admired them, speaks of 'positivisme Juive'.... I have remarked that Jews are never misers and when I come to think of it the reason they are never misers is because they are never mystics.<sup>230</sup>

Jews, Chesterton felt, were too much "of this world" and lacked an understanding of the mystical and the spiritual.<sup>231</sup>

Adopting this stance, it is indeed possible to construct an argument for readings that support the existence of an anti-Semitic strand in some of Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters. The excessive luxury of *Mrs Carl Meyer*, the over indulgence of *Lady Faudel Phillips*, the sly man of the worldliness of *Asher Wertheimer* and the transgressive nature of the portrayals of Ena and Almina Wertheimer might all be said to reveal characteristics of painter and subject cited by Chesterton. Even Strachey, however, who was ready to point out 'Jewish' traits where he found them, did not create such a continuous line through all of Sargent's portraits of Jewish sitters in this period. Against these Chestertonian faults, one must set the grace of *Alfred Wertheimer*, the dignity of the 1904 portrait *Mrs Wertheimer*, the aristocratic bearing of *Lady Sassoon*.

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<sup>230</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161. For Drumont, see Biographical note App. 2

<sup>231</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161. For Drumont, see Biographical note App. 2



The danger of such an over-simplified approach is demonstrated by the way in which if one were seeking to establish an Anglophobic strand in Sargent's work, one could claim that the portraits of for example Sir Ian Hamilton, Lord Dalhousie, Lord Ribblesdale and Sir Frank Swettenham all shared a sense of self-assured superiority and swaggering self-confidence – as if the subjects are almost sneering at those who do not share their 'assumed' importance and position. This is not to say that such a strand actually existed in Sargent's work or indeed that any or all of the sitters harboured such sentiments, but rather to demonstrate that some of Sargent's work – often the more considered and carefully constructed images – leave themselves open to such interpretations. The anti-Semitic line chosen by Chesterton to support his own feelings was, I would suggest, only one such option.

Sargent was himself in many ways the perennial outsider. His American parentage, European education, Paris, London and Boston domiciles and his probable – though undeclared – homosexuality may have contributed to a feeling of not belonging, of being different, however much he was lionised as a painter and as a result accepted into the higher echelons of society. At its most extreme, one might therefore argue that even if Sargent viewed his Anglo-Jewish sitters as 'other' to the mainstream, this was not necessarily an exclusionary strategy on his part, but acceptance of what might have seemed to him a self-evident fact. A less radical interpretation of the allo-semitic positioning mentioned earlier in this chapter might suggest that in many cases the Jewishness of his sitters was less relevant to Sargent than it was to some of his critics. When, however, he encountered a subject, whose Jewishness was an incontrovertible part of his/her identity and/or character, without resorting to caricature or stereotype, the artist would not shrink from recording those facts as he saw them. In his 1923 review of Sargent's Wertheimer portraits, Fry argued

that contrary to his own earlier opinions there was no trace of irony in Sargent's work: "he is too detached, too much without *parti pris* for that."<sup>232</sup> Fairbrother, however, adopted a contrary position with his comment on *Asher Wertheimer*:

*Asher Wertheimer* is one of Wertheimer's finest portraits, because, like *Madame X*, the artist did not hedge his attraction to the personality. Wertheimer's Jewishness, masculine self confidence, entrepreneurial power and sensuousness all radiate from the picture. It is arguable whether Sargent's likeness consciously or unconsciously projects the prevailing stereotypes of Jewish features and behaviour. The artist did not hide his fascination with Wertheimer's barrelling, rather sexy swagger, which argues for admiring response rather than a cruel caricature....if one looks closely at the face in the picture, the tender expression in the eyes and the mouth shows the warmth of deep friendship between artist and sitter.<sup>233</sup>

As I have suggested, the same was indeed true of his paintings of other, non-Jewish sitters whose differences or individuality struck a chord with Sargent.

If one reviews the totality of Sargent's oeuvre in this period, one can understand why, despite the wealth and acclaim they brought him, he tired of painting 'Paughtraits' and why Beerbohm's cartoon of his Tite Street studio was so penetrating.<sup>234</sup> Wealthy ladies, and gentlemen, flocked to him. Although some of their pictures are outstanding examples of the portraiture of the period, there is an inescapable feeling, when viewing them *en masse*, that some are almost interchangeable with others. There is a feeling of a production line – albeit of high quality – of ladies in white dresses. The images that stand out are often those in which Sargent adopts a setting apart stance. Such a strategy does not only apply to his Jewish sitters. In most examples of its use, however, it is a high risk strategy, involving the sort of danger to which Graham Robertson referred in the opening quote and to which he himself was subject in his portrait by Sargent.

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<sup>232</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Wertheimer Portraits', *The New Statesman*, 13 January 1923, pp. 429-30.

<sup>233</sup> Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer John Singer Sargent. The Sensualist*, p. 83.

Trevor Fairbrother has suggested that: ‘The staging of a portrait often may have been more of a creative challenge for Sargent than the execution’.<sup>235</sup> This concern with the *mis-en-scene* of his work reveals the importance of theatricality – in the positive sense – in his portraiture – an attribute which we have traced throughout this chapter. This applies not only to the obvious *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth*, but also to other of his works of this period.<sup>236</sup> The first portrait exhibited by Sargent at a Royal Academy Summer Exhibition was *Dr Pozzi at Home* (Fig. 30) in 1882.<sup>237</sup> On close inspection, one of the striking aspects of this work is not simply the wonderfully rich robe worn by the subject, but the exaggerated hand gestures, the manner in which the light is concentrated on his face and the drawn back curtain in the upper left background – Dr Pozzi is ‘on stage’. One might draw parallels between this and the 1882 portrait of *The Children of Edward Darley Boit*.<sup>238</sup> This is an extraordinarily complex work which defied the conventions of child portraiture. Within the context of this discussion, one of its most interesting characteristics is its potential to be read theatrically with the two younger children ‘on stage’ and their older sisters lurking upstage, perhaps about to make their entry.

Moving from these early works to those that have been reviewed in the previous section, one can find use of similar theatrical approach. This was not confined to his Jewish sitters, Sargent used it to reveal the patrician natures of Lord Dalhousie’s *jeunesse d’orée* and Lord Ribblesdale’s *noblesse oblige*. The colonial

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<sup>235</sup> Trevor Frairbrother, *John Singer John Singer Sargent. The Sensualist*, p. 81.

<sup>236</sup> *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth*, 1889 (Tate Britain, London), Oil on canvas, 221 x 114.3,.

<sup>237</sup> *Dr Pozzi at home*, 1881 (The Armand Hammer Museum UCLA, Los Angeles), Oil on canvas, 202.9 x 102.2. Although the subject (Exhibit 239) was unidentified in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Catalogue of that year, Kilmurray states that it was Dr Pozzi. See Ormond, F. and Kilmurray, E. *John Singer Sargent*, vol. 1, p. 96.

<sup>238</sup> *The Children of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882 (Museum of Fine Art, Boston) Oil on canvas, 221.9 x 222.6 cm.

paraphernalia surrounding Sir Frank Swettenham provided a theatrical background to his portrait. Sargent also found theatricality in the pose of Mrs Carl Meyer, in the lighting of Mr Asher Wertheimer, in the vivacity of the Ena and Betty, in the ‘frozen’ energy of Ena in *A vele gonfie*, and the oriental world of Almina. What perhaps distinguished his oeuvre of Jewish sitters was the number of occasions on which he was able to use such an approach for them and the willingness on their part to let him portray them in such fashion. Chesterton would have argued that this willingness derived precisely from their lack of *verecundia*. The same would, however, clearly not have been true in his eyes of those English sitters who permitted themselves to be portrayed and revealed in a similar way. Theatricality was not, I would suggest, a function of a lack of modesty or reserve but the product of confidence – a confidence that was shared, albeit for different reasons, by the patrician English and the successful Anglo-Jew.

Chesterton suggested that the Jews lacked mysticism.<sup>239</sup> One could not argue with this on the evidence of Sargent’s work in this period – or as has already been noted in the work of Solomon J. Solomon. Contemporaneously with Sargent’s later portraits, however, Rothenstein was working in the East End of London on a series of works that examined spirituality in the world of the immigrant Jew. Sargent was aware of this and even offered advice to the younger painter:

Oddly enough when later I [Rothenstein] was painting Jews in the East End he [Sargent] thought I was aiming at too abstract a representation and wanted me to paint scenes in Petticoat Lane or the interiors of tailors shops, as showing the more intimate side of Jewish life.<sup>240</sup>

Despite Sargent’s own visits to Palestine and the Middle East and his awareness of Rothenstein’s work in the East End which will be analysed in depth later,

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<sup>239</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Art Journal*, June 1908, p.161.

he never actually joined him there “Sargent wanted to join me in Whitechapel, but he never found time”, thus perhaps losing an opportunity to find and portray that mysticism and spirituality that Chesterton was to claim was missing among Jews.<sup>241</sup>

Aside from the pressures of work, Sargent’s decision may in part have been prompted by financial considerations. Notwithstanding his own boredom at painting ‘paughtraits’, uncommissioned work of this kind would have been unlikely to provide the same income. Furthermore, had he painted the Jews of the East End, it would have devalued his reputation as a society painter – especially among the wealthy Anglo-Jews, seeking to distance themselves from these co-religionists. Painting the aristocracy could only enhance his value as a social arbiter, painting Arabs or others in far off lands was an exotic and perhaps interesting exercise. Painting the poor Jews of Whitechapel was too close to hand and uncomfortable for the salons of Mayfair and Marble Arch.

Although starting from a different position to that of Solomon J. Solomon and occupying a higher position within social and artistic spheres, Sargent assisted in the process of creating a shared present for his Jewish sitters by bringing them into the world of the English aristocracy. For Sargent, Jewish sitters were different in an allo-semitic way. He felt no compunction at recording such differences in his pictures because this was not a judgemental process of better or worse. Jewish sitters provided him with opportunities to exercise his talents for true portrayal to the full, because it would seem they were less inclined to hide behind that mask of reserve which Chesterton and like minded others prized as an English virtue. It is a positive reflection on the time that this reading of contemporary reactions reveals that so few fell into the

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<sup>240</sup> Rothenstein, ‘When to be young was Heaven’, *Atlantic*, March 1931, p. 324.

<sup>241</sup> Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, vol. 2, Faber & Faber, London, pp. 35-6.

trap of misinterpreting Sargent's celebration of difference for a revelation of anti-Semitism.

**PART II**

**AN OFFER OF INTEGRATION**

## CHAPTER 5

**The Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906  
An Anglo Jewish U turn**

*Identity only becomes an issue when it is  
in crisis*<sup>1</sup>.

Introduction

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1905, after two decades of public pressure and parliamentary investigation and debate, the Aliens Act became Law with effect from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906 and hitherto unrestricted immigration came to an end. This law had, as intended by some of the new legislation's most active promoters, particularly marked consequences for Jewish migration from Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup>.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906 the *Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition* opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the very heart of London's East End, the epicentre of Jewish immigration and the contested territory of the Aliens Act. Unless one were to be satisfied with a reading of this Exhibition as an isolated cultural event, it is essential to understand the background to this apparently paradoxical juxtaposition of events.<sup>3</sup>

The terms of reference of the Royal Commission, which preceded the Act, were to investigate, inter alia, 'the character and extent of the evils which are attributed to the unrestricted immigration of Aliens especially in the Metropolis', which, as one

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<sup>1</sup> Kobena Mercer, "Welcome to the Jungle", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* ed. J. Rutherford, London: Lawrence & Wishart 1990.

<sup>2</sup> 5 EDW.7 [Ch.13].

<sup>3</sup> Juliet Steyn has written the key texts for an examination of the 1906 Exhibition in the context of its Jewish content. I have used the version of her argument 'Cutting the suit to fit the cloth: assimilation in the 1906 Whitechapel Gallery exhibition', in her book *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*. For more general background to the period see A. Kushner and K. Lunn, *The Politics of Marginality*; A. Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage in British History*; C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*. For specific treatment of the Radical Movement see W. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875 – 1914*.



of its early observations relating to its own period of investigation remarked, 'may be said to have begun about 1880 and is drawn mainly from the Jewish inhabitants of Eastern Europe' – thus making a prima facie link between these two negative phenomena.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that the leadership of Anglo-Jewry might have had some ability to influence the outcome in other directions, it accepted the Act without serious opposition. Although Lord Rothschild, a member of the Commission, entered a minority dissenting opinion – (asserting that there was no need for legislation and that overcrowding could 'be remedied...by less drastic measures'), he had also, in 1900, supported the parliamentary candidacy of Evans-Gordon, one of the legislation's prime movers, and, together with Sir Francis Montefiore, that of Dewar, who defeated the Liberal Straus, a Jewish candidate, for the seat of St George's-in-the-Field.<sup>5</sup> Other Jewish MPs - Samuel (Limehouse), Sinclair (Romford) and Cohen (Islington) - also voted in favour of the legislation.<sup>6</sup> Among the factors that may have influenced this attitude, two reasons stand out. On the positive side the Act seemed to accord with stated Anglo-Jewish aims for immigrants. It permitted entry to the persecuted, both political as well as religious, while banning the economic migrant. Some of the provisions of the Act had the potential to be harsh in their application; thus the creation

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<sup>4</sup> *Royal Commission on Alien Immigration (Royal Commission)*, His Majesty's Government, London 1903, vol. 1, pp. 1 and 3, par. 20.

<sup>5</sup> For Lord Rothschild and Evans-Gordon, see Biographical Notes. App.2; Minority Opinion: *Royal Commission* p. 52; see Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals* p. 90. Although Evans Gordon is cast as a supporter of the anti-alien movement, he was not unsympathetic to the plight of the Jews in Russia, which he saw at first hand and about which he gave evidence to the Royal Commission. Chaim Weitzmann subsequently wrote 'our people were rather hard on him [Evans Gordon]... The Aliens Bill in England, and the movement which grew up around it were natural phenomena ... though my views on immigration naturally were in sharp conflict with his, we discussed these problems in a quite objective and even friendly way.' *Trial and Error*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949 pp. 90-91.

<sup>6</sup> Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogue*, p. 5.

of a power to issue Expulsion Orders for certain classes for felony, dependence on a set level of parochial relief, vagrancy or 'living under unsanitary conditions due to overcrowding' (a provision that could in theory have emptied much of Stepney of its immigrant population). Yet in practice such powers were not used and the final version of the Act was less draconian than some of the recommendations of the Commission. On a more negative note, Anglo-Jewry's leadership had its own concerns about unfettered immigration, because of the effect that it might have on attitudes towards all Jews or more particularly Anglo-Jewry itself.

Recent historical writings on the 1880 to 1914 period have abandoned the older view that characterised England as largely liberal, benign and accepting of the Jews, and have introduced research which indicates the presence of a overt as well as covert anti-semitism pervasive at many different levels of English society.<sup>7</sup> It is not the intention of this chapter, which will primarily focus on the 1906 Exhibition, to enter into those debates, but rather to highlight some of their key features, so as better to inform the subsequent reading of that Exhibition. This contextualisation will look at the immigrants, the actions and reactions of Anglo-Jewry and the opposition within English Society that led to the passage of the 1905 Aliens Act.

In their simplest form, discussions about the position of Jewry in England during the thirty five year period from the start of the 'immigrant waves' in 1880-1, through the passage of the Aliens Act to the outbreak of World War I, can be reduced to descriptions of attempts by Anglo-Jewry (taken as an homogenous ruling body), to deal with the Immigrant Jews (taken as another homogenous group) in the face of

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<sup>7</sup> See n. 3.

varying degrees of anti-alien or anti-semitic feeling and action by the English (taken as a third homogenous group). Although this approach clarifies some of the central issues, by ignoring the heterogeneity of the main participants, it conceals many of the complexities of the developing situation.

### The Growth of the Jewish Population - Immigrants, Transmigrants and Transients

Reliable statistics on the Jewish population of England are difficult to obtain, in the absence of officially gathered information by religious affiliation. The Population Data Table set out in Appendix 3 summarises some of the key figures. The national population grew by more than 18% between 1881 and 1901 – of whom 135,640 or 0.4% were classified as “aliens” at the earlier date and 286,925 or 0.7% by 1901 – a growth of 111%. Between 1877 and 1914 the Jewish population of the United Kingdom increased, based on the highest estimates I have found, from 68,300 (of whom 53,900 were in London) to 270,000 (of whom 160,000 lived in London). This suggests a population increase of 200,000, largely made up of immigrants, numbering up to three times the ‘indigenous base’.<sup>8</sup> Although the quadrupling of the Jewish population far outstripped population growth rates achieved nationally, within London as a whole or even for the overall classification of Aliens, its minimal starting point in absolute numbers meant that, even after such explosive growth, Jews remained a very small proportion of the whole - even within Inner London, the area of their greatest

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<sup>8</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 June 1878; *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, London: Methuen & Co., 1914; Israel Cohen, *Jewish Life in Modern Times*, excerpts can be found on the website [www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/Book/Cohen/icohen.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/Book/Cohen/icohen.html). Israel Cohen’s estimate, as set out in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, was explained thus: ‘This estimate is arrived at by adding together the figures of the Jewish population in all the towns of the United Kingdom, as given in the *Jewish Year-Book* for 1914, multiplying the number of families (where the population is so stated) by 5, and assuming a minimum population of 30 for towns with a synagogue for which no figure

concentration, they accounted for around 1.5% of the population in 1880 and perhaps no more than 3.3% by 1900. Between 1881 and 1901 the total population of Inner London grew by 706,000 and it is plausible to suggest that a very large proportion of the increase of 100,000 in the Jewish population was concentrated in that area. Thus, it may have been that as many as one in every seven 'new' Inner Londoners was a new Jewish immigrant. This increase occurred in an area of high and increasing population density. By 1901 the population density of Inner London had, in twenty years, grown by 18% to reach 38,476 inhabitants per square mile - almost ten times the figure of 3,912 recorded for the outer London suburbs. Although the total population of Stepney, the centre of Jewish immigrant concentration, only grew by 13,500 from 1891 to 1901 – an increase of 4.7% versus an increase of 16.8% for London as a whole – the population density of this area increased from 103,578 to 108,581 inhabitants per square mile – more than two and a half times the Inner London average. In 1887 Arnold White, a leading supporter of anti-alien and anti-semitic causes, wrote:

The pressure caused by the immigration of foreign Jews, especially into Whitechapel, Spitalfields and St Georges in the East is another cause of overcrowding...it would not be surprising to witness a jüdenhetze in the heart of London. Temperate in his habits, and with a low standard of comfort, the poor foreigner evades all taxation in England in the struggle for existence ...why England should remain content to act as rubbish-heap ... passes all understanding ... England will cease to be, if our rulers do not show that they love the English more than the frugal, unlovable foreigner<sup>9</sup>.

Even more research-based rather than overtly biased comment could not ignore this problem. The Royal Commission indicated that by 1901 'overcrowding' (defined as 'more than two persons living night and day in one room') had reached on average 33.3% in Stepney, within this 55.1% in the district of Whitechapel and within 13 of

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is given. The Jewish population of London is estimated at 160,000' (the estimate of Joseph Jacobs for 1902 was 150,000, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. viii. p.174).

<sup>9</sup> Arnold White, *Problems of a Great City*, London: Remington And Co, 1887, pp. 142 ff.

the sub-districts of that area was as high as 85.5%<sup>10</sup>. Among the pictures accompanying an article by Evans Gordon on the Aliens Bill and Jewish immigration to the East End in the *Illustrated London News* of 30 April 1904 was one by H.H Flere which graphically illustrates the twin evils of overcrowding and sweated labour; in the popular press, perception may have outstripped reality, but the evidence would suggest the gap was not so wide.

This almost literally cheek by jowl existence was bound to exacerbate the potential for negative reactions to new arrivals – particularly when such arrivals were perceived as so different from the large sections of the indigenous population among whom they settled. This was rendered even more serious because of the pressures they exerted on the labour market and the housing stock. In the labour market, they were prepared to work for lower wages. Housing stock was being diminished locally by railway building and slum clearance; and the immigrants were prepared to buy into this diminishing housing stock through the use of ‘key money’. Although the census returns do not classify the population by religion, the classification for Russians and Poles was, however, taken to mean primarily Jews by the Royal Commission; a device that has been followed by many of the subsequent historians of this period. In 1901, almost 80% of London’s Russians and Poles lived in Stepney, where they accounted for almost one in seven of its inhabitants. Given that the district was already heavily inhabited with Jews prior to 1880, this Jewish presence must have seemed overwhelming to the non-Jewish population. If one further sharpens the focus of this investigation to an examination of individual neighbourhoods in the East End, the Jewish population in certain areas was or rapidly became numerically dominant. This

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<sup>10</sup> *Royal Commission* par. 154-160, pp. 24-5.

is most graphically demonstrated by the *Map of Jewish East London* based on data gathered in 1899 by C. Russell and H.S. Lewis and published in *The Jew in London* in 1901.<sup>11</sup>

The phenomenon of overcrowding brought with it the attendant, real or perceived, potential danger to public health – an issue that was raised in evidence to the Royal Commission. Their final report was in fact quite positive about the medical condition of the immigrants and about their general cleanliness both on arrival and in situ – given the conditions under which they had had to travel and relative to the standards of the areas in which they lived.<sup>12</sup> This did not, however, stop anti-alienists like Evans Gordon from claiming

Small pox and scarlet fever have unquestionably been introduced by aliens ...and trachoma, a contagious disease ...and favus..... have been and are being introduced by these aliens.<sup>13</sup>

It was not, however, simply the net increase in the size of the Jewish community nor its location, but also the nature of the immigrant waves and the manner in which the Jewish population was ‘churned’ by the effects of transmigration, which was of significance. Research by Nicholas Evans demonstrates that whereas the total Jewish population may have increased by about 100,000 over the twenty five year period to 1902, the number of migrants and transmigrants arriving and leaving from all

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<sup>11</sup> C. Russell and H. S. Lewis, *The Jew In London: a study of racial character and present-day conditions*, being two essays prepared for the Toynbee Trustees; with an introduction by Canon Barnett and a preface by The Right Hon. James Bryce, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901.

<sup>12</sup> *Royal Commission* par. 67-73, pp. 10-1. In his evidence to the Commission Dr Williams made an exception to a generally favourable report when dealing with immigrants from Libau – par. 73.

<sup>13</sup> *Hansard* 2 May 1905.

ports was perhaps fifteen to twenty times that number.<sup>14</sup> Wherever possible in Evans' data, transmigrants are classified as those arriving with prior onward destination documents as opposed to migrants, who despite their subsequent intentions or actions had no such documents. This methodology has one critical problem; in the returns for the Port of London, the classification was managed much less accurately than elsewhere, thus making this distinction far more difficult to track. Grimsby and Hull, the primary points for arrival and transmigration, handled over one million such persons during the 27 year period to 1905. The figures for the Port of London classified all arrivals as migrants. Over the same period, the numbers arriving totalled almost 400,000. Given that the total Jewish population only increased by a fraction of that number, it is clear that most of these were, in fact, immediate or eventual transmigrants. Commentators, whether or not of an anti-alien, anti-semitic bent, were justified in remarking on the sheer scale of this movement. Arrival at one place and departure from another made it a viable presentational strategy for those so minded to focus negatively on the inflows and conveniently ignore the largely simultaneous outflows. This was a particularly critical problem in relation to London, where as we have seen migrant flows were very high – right on the doorstep of Parliament and the London press.

Almost immediately after the passage of the 1905 Act, the numbers of migrants into the Port of London collapsed in the latter part of 1906 – dropping from 41,577 in 1905 to 6,143 in 1907 and thereafter hovering at below 5000. With the more accurate recording of transmigrant movement into and out of the Port of London, the

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<sup>14</sup> All data on migration statistics used in this section of this chapter are derived from Nicholas Evans' Ph.D. thesis *Aliens en route. European transmigration through Britain, 1836-1914*, University of Hull, in progress, and from discussions with the author.

figures rose from the incorrectly recorded levels of no more than several hundred per year to between 8,000 and 10,000 after 1906 and until 1914. At Hull and Grimsby, transmigrants continued to flow through England in largely unabated numbers – varying between 80,000 and 120,000 per year between the two ports until the War.

Contrasting perceptions, opposing realities – a mosaic of the Mosaic persuasion

Popular culture's retrospective image of the immigrant alien as a poverty stricken, deeply religious and traditional figure driven with his fellow Jews from their tiny rural village (shtetl) by the pogroms of religious persecution has some grounding in historical reality, but it only applies to a part of the emigrant population. Although pauperization was certainly common to most of the emigrants, in many other ways they were at least as heterogeneous as the indigenous populations into which they moved. Many were from towns or even cities into which some had been born before legislation confined Jews to rural communities. Most were literate, albeit on arrival only in their native tongues of Russian and/or Yiddish. As Sarah Stein has noted of Russian Jews in Russia at the turn of the century

Jewish rates of literacy, in Yiddish, Russian and, to a lesser extent Hebrew, were high. According to the Russian census of 1897, 97% of the Jews in the empire declared Yiddish their mother-tongue, and nearly sixty five percent of Jewish men and over 35% of Jewish women over the age of ten were literate in a non-Russian language (which meant, in almost every case, Yiddish)<sup>15</sup>.

Not all were religious and not all without some skills that could be used in an urban environment.

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah Stein, "Divining the Secular in the Yiddish Popular Press", paper presented at the *Sacred Stories* Conference, University of Illinois, February 2002. Forthcoming as 'Divining



Initial perceptions of the immigrants were not aided by their location in the East End of London, an area that was, long before their arrival, associated with extreme poverty and high crime rates. Even though projects of urban renewal and improvement had removed some of the most deprived and criminal locales, the reputation survived and was only fuelled by, as the most extreme event, incidents such as the murders by Jack the Ripper of 1888.

Those among Anglo-Jewry who concerned themselves with the fate of the Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe emphasised the pogroms and the religious persecution as being the main reason behind the outflow from these areas. This was both a positive strategy in the battle to garner the widest possible public support and a concealing strategy to shift the focus away from the much larger flows of economic migrants, who were less desirable per se and whose pauperisation could make onward transmigration more difficult to achieve; such migrants would be no more welcome in other ports of entry than they were in England. While one should not ignore the push factors of persecution, the post 1880 pogroms and harsh legislation, many of the emigrants were from regions whose economies were chronically depressed.<sup>16</sup> Many, who were unable or unwilling to survive such conditions, were drawn by a pull factor to the *Goldene Medina*, the perceived prosperity of America, to South Africa and to the countries of Western Europe. Within this pattern, Great Britain was for long the key, first destination for such movement, because of the hold its shipping companies had and for many years maintained over the Baltic and Atlantic shipping routes. These factors set up three by no means mutually exclusive groups among the new Jewish

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the Secular in the Russian Yiddish popular press,' in *Sacred Stories: Religion and Culture in Imperial Russia*, eds Heather Coleman and Mark Steinberg.

<sup>16</sup> A fact not lost on the *Royal Commission* see par. 23, p. 4.

population – economic migrants, those fleeing religious persecution and a smaller but, as we shall see, from both host nation and Anglo-Jewish standpoints even less desirable group – politically radical refugees.

Many of the economic migrants, having left behind conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation, were prepared to make whatever sacrifices were necessary to achieve a better life in their new home. This and the fact that they were already accustomed to extremely harsh circumstances may account for their, albeit reluctant, willingness to work harder, under more difficult conditions, for lower wages than their indigenous counterparts, as they sought to establish and then improve their economic and social positions. Those within this group whose religious and social ties to Judaism were already weak in their places of origin, were less bound by the need for or demands of a religious infrastructure, and thus demonstrated a propensity for social and geographic mobility, as and when their economic circumstances permitted.

Those seeking freedom from religious persecution needed to recreate the religious institutions around which their lives were based. This meant that their geographic mobility was far more limited, being circumscribed by ease of access to such an infrastructure. This was another phenomenon that was highlighted by the Royal Commission, which investigated allegations of the immigrant Jews failing to assimilate and intermarry and so forming ‘a solid and distinct colony.’<sup>17</sup> For such Jews it was not simply a question of being resistant to change, but of actually being confrontational in support of their beliefs. Perhaps the best example of this is to be found in the early history of the Machzike Hadass, the largest single Jewish

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<sup>17</sup> *Royal Commission* par. 37 (9), p. 6.

congregation in the East End. The community which spawned the Machzike Hadass had from the outset been a centre of opposition to that version of Jewish Orthodoxy that prevailed among Anglo-Jewry in England at the turn of the century. In 1891, the community, then under the leadership of Rabbi Werner, broke with the Chief Rabbi, Herman Adler (1839-1911), over the standards of slaughtering and sale of kosher meat.<sup>18</sup> Adler (thereby tacitly admitting his own weakness) was obliged to make an appeal to an outside authority, Rabbi Spektor of Kovno, in an attempt to bring the Machzike Hadass into line.<sup>19</sup> In 1896, the Machzike Hadass took over a former Huguenot Chapel in Brick Lane in London's East End, where in 1898 Rabbi Werner officiated at the opening of the Machzike Hadass Synagogue. In its observance of East European Orthodox rituals, its use of Yiddish as the language of religious instruction and, as already noted, its insistence on its own arrangements for such matters as kosher slaughtering, it was an overt challenge to the religious authority of the Chief Rabbi and by extension to the integrationist projects of Anglo-Jewry.

Formal recognition of this other, largely East European version, of Jewish Orthodoxy came in October/November 1887, when, under the leadership of Samuel Montagu, a key figure in the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy and then MP for Whitechapel, the Federation of Minor Synagogues was created with fourteen founding member

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<sup>18</sup> Ostensibly this argument may have appeared to be doctrinally based, but it also had a significant financial dimension. The Board of Shechita, established by the United Synagogue to oversee kosher slaughtering, was supported by a levy on Synagogues and communities, which was then shared back amongst them. The fact that this argument between Adler and the Machzike Hadass was not solely doctrinal in no way lessens the importance of the challenge it posed to the former's authority. For Werner, see Biographical Note App. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920*, p. 204. It is a measure of the difference between English and the East European perceptions of the rabbinate within their versions of Orthodox Judaism that the titular Chief Rabbi of England was appealing to one who was nominally only Rabbi of Kovno and owed his eminence to his religious learning. For Spektor, see Biographical Note App. 2.

organisations.<sup>20</sup> Montagu, himself a deeply religious man and a member of the United Synagogue, recognized the particular religious needs of the immigrant community. His initiative was intended simultaneously to cater for those needs and to provide an organizational structure that, although it was (and remains today) outside the ambit of the United Synagogue, served to prevent a schismatic splintering of religious practice within English Judaism. Significantly, in 1905 the Machzike Hadass became a member of the Federation, thus bringing it within the wider compass and Anglo-Jewish control.

One of the popular views of the new immigrants is their alleged wide-spread adherence to religion and specifically to their imported versions of Orthodox Judaism. But the spectrum of immigrant subcultures reached from strict orthodoxy to complete secularism. In 1902-3 Richard Mudie-Smith completed a census of religious worship, in order to quantify the problem of 'missing worshippers' in London.<sup>21</sup> This census, primarily geared at the various Christian denominations, revealed that on his census days (a series of Sundays from November 1902 to November 1903) 1,003,361 people in London attended one or more religious services of one denomination or another – after deduction of 'twicers', Mudie Smith calculated net attendees at 825,051, 18 % of the total population of the County of London<sup>22</sup>. A further series of deductions from the total population, to eliminate those in institutions, too young, too old, too sick or too busy (sic) to attend, allowed Mudie Smith to suggest that those actually attending accounted for one third of those who might have attended.

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<sup>20</sup> For Montagu, see Biographical Note App. 2. The original federation actually included six institutions which predated the immigrant arrivals, and eight of post 1881 origin.

<sup>21</sup> R. Mudie Smith, *The Religious Life of London*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 271.

Jewish attendance was measured on one single census day – the first day of Passover 1903, which coincided with Easter Sunday. The number of Jews attending services was 26,612 or only just under 18% of the Jewish population. Among the facts emerging from the detailed data about Jewish participation and worship, two seem of special relevance. On the one hand, in terms of individual synagogues, attendance was highest in the East End at the Machzike Hadass – where it was 60% greater than its nearest rival<sup>23</sup>. Analysis of the overall results, however, indicates that attendance in those Synagogues visited in Stepney (excluding the Hambro, one of the founding members of the United Synagogue) was marginally less than that in the United Synagogues and in the other institutions of English Judaism in the rest of London – 12,298 versus 14,314. Although due to the semi-formal nature and semi-private location of some of the smaller East End congregations, this survey may not have been fully comprehensive, the size of such missing congregations would not significantly have altered the results. If one relates these figures to guesstimates of the sub sets of the Jewish populations from which the two groups of worshippers were drawn – perhaps 130,000 in the East End – principally in Stepney - and less than 30,000 elsewhere in London, a much lower percentage (10%) of the Stepney Jewish community attended services on the census day than that derived from the balance of the London Jewish community (perhaps as high as 50%). That is to say, Eastern European Jews in the East End were less likely to attend synagogue than their West End Anglo-Jewish counterparts! It is open to conjectural discussion or further, far more specific research to determine how application of Mudie-Smith's factors for non-attendance should be applied to the two communities and whether this lower proportion was just the result of economic circumstances or a combination of that and other social factors. It is also

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 265.

possible that attendance on an ordinary Sabbath, as opposed to a specific holiday, might have been relatively higher in the East End than in the rest of London. Nevertheless, however one modifies these data, the gap is so wide as to leave the belief that religious observance was stronger among the immigrants than among English Jews open to serious question. Indeed, two years earlier Russell and Lewis had already noted:

It is generally recognised that the foreigners themselves are less strict observers of their religion than was the case ten years ago<sup>24</sup>

Alderman has argued that

In all, the Federation at that time [1911] represented about 6,500 male members. It had, therefore, overtaken the United Synagogue (which then had about 5,200 male seatholders in membership) and could claim to be the largest synagogal body in the United Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

Once again if one applies the same approximate sizes of community, this would seem to indicate that no more than 5% of the East End population, were via male membership, associated with a Synagogue, whereas for the remainder of the London Jewish population the equivalent figure may have been 17%. This too may have been the result of economic circumstances - the ability to pay synagogue dues. Whatever the statistical balance based on membership, it must also be remembered that the early survival of the Federation movement remained heavily dependent on the continued financial support of Anglo-Jewry acting directly and through the United Synagogue.

The mode of Jewish orthodoxy practiced in Federation Synagogues emphasised and preserved the particularity of its Russo-Polish origins at a time when the drive of the various strands of Anglo-Jewish policies was to eliminate this. The

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<sup>24</sup> C. Russell and H.S. Lewis, *The Jew in London*, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogues*, p. 25.

tendency of subgroups of immigrants to form their own places of worship, *Chevrot* or religious associations, based on previous geographic affiliations,<sup>26</sup> or on self help or religious purposes or aims<sup>27</sup> – exacerbated this by retaining the importance of sometimes very localised foreign identities and loyalties instead of an all subsuming English identity.<sup>28</sup> These chevrot were not simply places of worship but venues for religious study and instruction, general meeting places and bases for dispensation of help and support. In their preservation of an immigrant culture they cut across the grain of those who sought integration for these new segments of the Jewish population.

### The Yiddish culture of the *Ostjuden*

What did unite many of the strands of difference on which I have so far focussed was the emergence in the East End of a Yiddish culture, based on the traditions and values of the *Ostjuden* who now lived there, and which was largely expressed in their lingua franca, Yiddish. Emphasis on the nature and origin of this largely new phenomenon within English Jewry is necessary in order to provide a degree of precision in the understanding of the term Yiddish and to avoid the potential for circularity of thought that would come from simply translating it as meaning Jewish – a confusion which was of great concern to Anglo-Jewry. Yiddish as a language was the means of communication between immigrants from all the regions of East Europe and Russia and its use in fact long survived the anglicising educational programmes which will be discussed later - only really disappearing from daily use with the demise of the generation which brought it over. Yiddish was simultaneously

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<sup>26</sup> Grodno (Spital St.) and Kovno (Catherine Wheel Alley) are examples.

<sup>27</sup> Covenant Friendly Society (Hope St) or the Society of the Community of the Pious (Old Monatgu St) are examples.

<sup>28</sup> Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogues*, p. 12.

the language of the immigrant community's most binding institutions; it was employed in religious instruction and I will discuss below its use in social, political and art cultural contexts. Yiddish attracted fierce opposition from those seeking to integrate this new and rapidly overwhelming segment of the Jewish population.

Although Yiddish culture had taken root in the East End from the early 1880s, the *Jewish Chronicle* steadfastly ignored its manifestations until the end of the decade and then treated it with contempt.<sup>29</sup>

Such action could have been defended on the grounds that Yiddish culture was of no relevance to the readership of that bastion of English Jewry, the *Jewish Chronicle*; however the paper was gradually obliged to alter this position. Perhaps three of the more important reasons behind this opposition were: the connection between Yiddish and the Alien; the linkage of Yiddish culture with elements of radical politics on the one hand or the Zionist alternative on the other (to which we shall return below) – neither of which accorded with the integrationist agendas of Anglo-Jewry's leaders; and the perception that Yiddish culture was retrograde and debased. But a romantic recovery set in too. Paradoxically just as the shtetl began, from the late 1880s, to wane as a reality in Jewish life in Eastern Europe, so the views of many Western Jews began to swing in the other direction and to valorise Ostjudentum and its traditions as being the authentic wellsprings of true Jewish life and Judaism. When in 1901, as part of the official census procedure, Yiddish was recognised by the Government as a language of explanation for immigrant voters, the *Jewish Chronicle* finally had to 'admit it was fighting a losing battle'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841–1991*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841–1991*, p. 78.



## The Yiddish Press

Although, as Leonard Prager has shown, there were Yiddish newspapers in London prior to the immigrant arrivals in the 1880s, after that date their growth was explosive.<sup>31</sup> Of more than 100 titles listed by Prager as appearing during the period of this study, some lasted little more than a year, virtually all were published in London, though there were titles in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, and many were political – communist, socialist, anarchist or Zionist – in nature. Among the longer lasting publications were *Der poylisher yidl*, which later became *Tsukunft*, whose founders included Morris Winchevsky, the socialist poet, and *Der Arbayter Fraynd*, whose central figure was Rudolf Rocker, a Yiddish speaking, German Catholic.<sup>32</sup> In addition to its main publication, *Der Arbayter Fraynd* produced a weekly literary supplement and also a special younger persons' edition. Other leading publishers/promoters with multiple titles to their names included Morris Myer (*Di tsayt, Ovend noyes*) and Moishe Brill (*Hashulmis, Dos noye yidishe tageblat*). The politicisation of immigrants through the Yiddish press, which was now about class, raised serious problem for the integrationist aspirations of Anglo-Jewry's leaders who belonged to the upper middle or upper classes. Political agitation and action drew attention to the Jews of the East End at a time when Anglo-Jewry was seeking to make them less visible. Their own predecessors' high profile struggles to achieve political emancipation half a century earlier were conveniently forgotten.

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<sup>31</sup> Leonard Prager, 'A Bibliography of Yiddish Periodicals in Great Britain 1867 – 1967', *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, vol. IX, Spring 1969, No 1.

<sup>32</sup> For Winchevsky, see Biographical Note App. 2. For Rocker, see Biographical Note App. 2.

Politicisation also took on another form that was, if anything, potentially even more damaging to the integrationist aspirations of Anglo-Jewry – Zionism. Whether in its political form, which espoused the creation of a Jewish homeland, or its religious or cultural forms, Zionism could be interpreted as playing into the hands of those who, for very different and negative reasons, were also emphasising Jewish difference and the need for Jews to be domiciled elsewhere. With the support of Israel Zangwill, Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Zionism, spoke in the East End in 1896 as part of his Zionist campaign. In August 1900 the 4<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress was held in London, having been specifically moved from Basle, the site of its predecessors, to garner support from this quarter. Zionism offered a new political alternative to immigrant Jews – both in practical and ideological terms – but was simultaneously seemingly proof of the anti-semitic/alienist views that Jews indeed owed their allegiance elsewhere.

Not all of the Yiddish press was, however, political in tone. There were several titles of more general appeal – news, sciences, humour and literature. A review of Prager's work would suggest that, rather than being backward looking and concerned with retrospective yearning for the lost world of the *shtetl* or exclusively concerned with radical politics, some of these publications dealt with current issues related to daily living in London – or the provincial centres in which they were published. Thus, although politicisation through the Yiddish press may have raised problems for Anglo-Jewry, the emergence of the Yiddish press was also indicative of a modernity in immigrant attitudes, which is sometimes overlooked.

## The Yiddish Arts

Another example of this emerging Yiddish culture is to be found in the Yiddish Theatre. Imported by the immigrants from Poland and Russia, initially in the form of amateur performances, the start of the professional Yiddish Theatre in the East End can be dated to the arrival in 1883 of Jacob Adler, doyen of the Yiddish actors, with his company, and the short lived Hebrew Dramatic Club, which was opened in 1886 but destroyed by fire six months later.<sup>33</sup> At least three other theatres featured Yiddish performances in the pre World War I era – including the Standard and the Pavillion, two of London's largest theatres of that time. As a contemporary cartoon illustration indicates, performances in the working men's clubs were not uncommon. Productions included both works by Yiddish authors and translations of English classics, including Shakespeare. Although the Yiddish theatre was originally rooted in Eastern European traditions both in content and style, in an interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*, Jacob Adler said about the preferences of his audiences that they demanded works

...bringing before them vividly the past glories of our people, or plays dealing with every-day life – the latter by preference. It would seem that the tendency is more towards realism<sup>34</sup>.

At the same time as this hybrid example of Yiddish culture was emerging in the East End, there is evidence to suggest that that community was interested in and receptive to initiatives that fostered and enhanced a burgeoning sense of belonging to the English community and these will be examined as Anglo-Jewish projects in the following section.

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<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the Yiddish Theatre, see David Mazower *Yiddish Theatre in London*, London: The Jewish Museum of the East End, 1987.

<sup>34</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 August 1906, p. 29.

The detailed focus on the 1906 Exhibition and on the work of William Rothenstein and Alfred Wolmark, which comprises the latter half of this chapter and the next two chapters, provide an opportunity to examine in detail the extent to which Englishness and Yiddishness was represented in the visual imagery of Jewish subjects in this period.

### The role of Anglo-Jewry

Although the heads of those intermarried Jewish families who constituted the Cousinhood and its immediate circle directed the affairs of English Jewry certainly up to the outbreak of the War in 1914, it is important to re-emphasise the manner in which such control was exercised. In contrast to the externally imposed and legislatively classified framework that characterised relations between the State and its Jews in, for example, Germany and France, Anglo-Jewry ‘ruled’ through a combination of a few legally recognised bodies, a network of self-elected institutions of governance, Jewish charitable and educational initiatives and a large measure of Victorian paternalism. Thus whereas the Board of Deputies of British Jews could trace its origins back to the mid eighteenth century, the United Synagogue, its key religious body, was only established by the Jewish Synagogues Act of 1870. To talk, therefore, in terms of actions by or policies of Anglo-Jewry, as if there was a single, formally identifiable and organised entity belies the true situation. But because the number of those at the apogee of English Jewry in this period was very small, many of the institutions that dealt with Jewish affairs were composed of different combinations of the same

individuals or their families. Thus broad consensus on major issues was often reached as much by a process of social osmosis as in formal meetings.

During this period Anglo-Jewry not only had to manage the perception problems for English Jewry exacerbated by the Jewish immigrants, but had to confront continued opposition to their own integrationist aspirations from within the upper classes. This was not an exclusively Anglo-Jewish problem. The old landed aristocracy was fighting a rear guard action to defend its position of power and influence in the face of declining economic status and the encroachment of the newly moneyed, whose wealth was industry or trade based. Anglo-Jewry was identified as part of this problem. Indeed Anglo-Jews were perceived as being among the most extreme examples of the problem – *nouveaux riches*, who could be viewed as different, foreign and Jewish. Even the Rothschilds were not exempt from such attitudes. Contemporary writers such as Escott in the *Fortnightly Review* referred to their property purchases as ‘...the Israelitish annexation of Buckinghamshire’ and Surtees rechristened the Vale of Aylesbury ‘Jewdea’.<sup>35</sup> Although numerically those families who comprised Anglo-Jewry’s leadership were small in number, their financial muscle and their high visibility at the Court of the Prince of Wales, latterly King Edward VII, and among the upper echelons of English Society often engendered resentment rather than approval.

English society, once ruled by an aristocracy is now dominated by a plutocracy. And this plutocracy is to large extent Hebraic in composition.<sup>36</sup>

Notwithstanding such opposition, the reality was that ‘new money’ in the hands of Jews or others gradually found its way into the social bastions of the old aristocracy.

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> T. Escott, *ibid.*

Estates were acquired from the old aristocracy, membership to such clubs as Whites and the Carlton were granted and intermarriages were made.

William Rubinstein's research into the number of estates in excess of £100,000 left in the period between 1809 and 1909 indicates that from a mere 4 left by Jews (or those who were possibly Jews – as defined by Rubinstein) out of a total of 217 in the first decade, in the final decade of his period that number had risen to a possible 136 out of 2728 or almost 5%.<sup>37</sup> Rubinstein enters the significant caveat that the capital value of land was excluded, thereby exaggerating Jewish wealth as a percentage of the total. By the turn of the century, the value of land had fallen, and some of the new wealthy – Jewish and gentile alike – had themselves become significant landowners. Even if such calculations reduce by some measure Jewish participation in the ranks of the rich, it is still astonishing to recognize that its proportion was achieved from a segment of the population that in its entirety accounted for less than 0.5% of the total.

At the same time, Anglo-Jewry also had to cope with the effects of an influx of immigrants, whose easily identifiable differences and overwhelming numbers threatened from below to destroy the delicate balance that had been created. Anglo-Jewry's programmes of Anglification may, in the eyes of the host English community, have achieved exactly the opposite result to that desired. Rather than clarify differences, it may have emphasised linkages and raised the spectre of specious distinctions and special pleading for the recognition of what in the eyes of the host community were merely shadings within a largely homogeneous whole. These problems were recognized in a *Jewish Chronicle* article as early as 1881:

Our fair fame and fortune is bound up with theirs; the outside world is not capable of making minute distinctions between Jew and Jew, and forms its opinion of Jews in general as much, if not more, from them than from the Anglicized portion of the community.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, to the extent that action succeeded in establishing any acceptance of difference, it would have had the consequence of justifying and exacerbating anti-Jewish/alien feeling by provoking the question “If their own people reject them, why should we accept them”? So Anglo-Jewry’s leaders set about a series of projects with a common aim:

It is tolerably clear what we wish to do with our foreign poor. We may not be able to make them rich; but we may hope to render them English in feeling and conduct.<sup>39</sup>

While emphasising once again the absence of a truly centralised body that might be defined as Anglo-Jewry and the degree to which what are sometimes referred to as general policies were in fact initiatives by individuals or small groups, certain actions and strategies emerged, which on an ex post facto basis may conveniently be described as constituting the Anglo-Jewish response to the Jewish immigrant question. Overall Anglo-Jewry sought to make as large a portion of the immigrants effectively “disappear” as quickly as possible. This started at the very points of departure, where at the instigation of for example the Jewish Board of Guardians advertisements appeared, which sought to discourage emigration to England before the would-be migrant had left home.<sup>40</sup> On arrival, tactical decisions were taken to discourage immigrants from staying by encouraging them to return to their native lands or to move on elsewhere. This was achieved for example by withholding financial aid when

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<sup>37</sup> W. D. Rubinstein, ‘Jewish Top Wealth Holders in Britain 1809-1909’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, vol. 37, 2002, pp. 133 ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* 12 August 1881. Quoted in Cesarani p. 76, which sets out a detailed argument concerning Anglo-Jewry’s attitudes towards the immigrant Jewish community.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Royal Commission*, Par. 64 p. 19.

it might most be needed – in the first six months after arrival.<sup>41</sup> Attempts were made to disperse them from the high visibility of London's East End to the provinces, where it was hoped they would attract less attention and, in their smaller numbers, be less conspicuous. Research into the Jewish population of Leeds indicates that between 1881 and 1901 their numbers grew more than fourfold to reach 13,858 – out of a total population of 428,968 – 3.2 %.<sup>42</sup> But their tendency to congregate in the quasi-ghettos of Leylands and then Chapeltown in Leeds (and Red Bank and Strangeways then Cheetham in Manchester), where small indigenous Jewish populations were already growing as a result of direct immigration, rendered at least the latter part of this tactic less than successful.

By far the most productive tactic was that of Anglification. The primary locus for such Anglification was to be found in the education programmes, which turned immigrant Jewish children into young English men and women – and created pressure by example for their parents to attend night school programmes.<sup>43</sup> The bulk of Jewish children were educated at ordinary Board schools. According to the Jewish Encyclopaedia of the time, in London some 8000 were educated in Jewish schools. By far the most important of these was the Jews Free School in Stepney, with some three and a half thousand pupils (making it the largest educational institution in the British Empire), which was highly praised in all quarters for the quality of its teaching.

Samuel Montagu, whose actions on the religious front in the East End have already been noted, was also active among the working men of the area, creating as

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Murray Freedman, *Leeds Jews in the 1901 Census*, Leeds 2002.



early as 1874 the Jewish Working Men's Club modelled on and closely allied to The Working Men's Club and Institute Union and in 1881 founding the Jewish Tailors' Machinists Society. In the former case, Montagu used a Victorian template to define the activities of his model and in the latter case it would seem he probably used a similar stratagem as he had employed with the Federation of Synagogues, in his attempt to head off a more aggressive manifestation of Union activity. In 1895 Colonel A. Goldsmid founded the Jewish Lad's Brigade, again drawing on a secular model from the host community, with the stated aim 'to instil into the rising generation from their earliest years habits of orderliness, cleanliness, and honor (sic), so that in learning to respect themselves they will do credit to their community.'<sup>44</sup> Both of these examples demonstrate the ways in which, in managing the immigrants, the leaders of Anglo-Jewry employed existing English forms. The success and popularity of these and other similar institutions is an indication of the degree to which the immigrant community was ready to accept these new mores.

### The Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906

Those responsible for the conduct of Whitechapel Art Gallery have hit upon a capital idea for the Exhibition, which opens in a few days. Jewish art and antiquities must have a special appeal for thousands in the East End and Mr Campbell Ross has secured the co-operation of a number of influential artists collectors, scholars and divines.<sup>45</sup>

### Introduction

When it staged the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall in 1887, Anglo-Jewry may have felt able to direct it towards the host English

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<sup>43</sup> 'Free evening classes organised for that purpose by the Russo-Jewish Committee appear to be increasingly effective. In 1896/7 there were 57,864 individual attendances'. *The Jew in London*, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1906.

<sup>45</sup> *Art Journal*, November 1906, p. 350.

community, and in making a bid for acceptance as an established part of English society, they were able to ignore the presence of its immigrant co-religionists in the East End. By 1905/6, however, this was no longer an option either for external reasons relating to the host community or for internal reasons relating to changes within the English, Jewish community. Anglo-Jewry was obliged to turn its attention eastwards and to focus on the immigrant community, now in mass numbers in London's East End.

My arguments in Chapter 2 suggest that the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 could be characterised as being cut by one hand from whole cloth. This product of Anglo-Jewry was aimed at the upper levels of English society and was informed by an Anglo-Jewish discourse, which, in order to assure a future place for acculturated Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion, sought to prove a shared past and present.

In contrast to the possibility of a unified reading of the 1887 Exhibition, even a cursory inspection of the 1906 Exhibition catalogue indicates that it was created by several hands in a piecemeal fashion. The two decades and the symbolic as well as geographic distance that separate the earlier exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall on the south-western edge of Hyde Park from its 1906 successor at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the very heart of the Jewish East End were, as I have outlined, characterised by radical changes in the size, nature and culture of Jewry in England. With the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905 changes similarly crystallised in the legislative framework within which Jews in England operated. The 1906 Exhibition bore the marks of at least two groups of organisers and was an amalgam of two or arguably

three separate Exhibitions brought together in one place and time. The Whitechapel Art Gallery evidently played the major role in general selection, Anglo-Jewry re-presented parts of the 1887 Exhibition, and it seems that a small group from the Jewish art world had a *de facto* curatorial role in respect of selections of works by Jewish artists.

The major difference between the 1906 Exhibition and its 1887 predecessor was their respective target audiences. Although the 1906 Exhibition was in part informed by the same Anglo-Jewish discourse as that of the 1887 Exhibition, I contend that in 1906 Anglo-Jewry turned its focus 180 degrees, in order to present its vision of the place of the Jew in English society as an assured *fait accompli* not westwards to the upper echelons of the indigenous English Gentile population but eastwards as an offer to the immigrant Jewish community. This *volte face* offered a recontextualisation of objects displayed and an opportunity to interpret them in a different light. Dr Juliet Steyn, in her closely argued analysis of this Exhibition, has argued that the 1906 Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition presented a view of Jewishness purged of its Yiddish element.<sup>46</sup> The arguments I set out in Chapter 3 on the formation and longevity of the Anglo-Jewish discourse indicate that in broad terms I am in agreement with some of Steyn's position. The devil is, however, in the detail. A closer examination of what was actually presented and the nature of this new target audience suggests that it is correct to look at a more nuanced reading of this "purging of Yiddish".

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<sup>46</sup> Steyn, 'Cutting the suit to fit the cloth', in *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, pp. 79-97.

Twenty years earlier the focus of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition had been westwards to the English Society and its discourse evolved around a presentation of sharing not with other Jews but with the English. It was the result of an integrated, single vision of the place of the Jew. The Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906 did not work from a similar starting point. It should be interpreted as hybrid, combining separate elements brought together to satisfy the aspirations of the various parties involved in the presentation. The Anglo-Jewish offer within this Exhibition was not, this time, a two-way process through which the presenters were seeking, as in 1887, to prove their place among those to whom it was presented. In 1906 what was on offer was a one-way opportunity. The Anglo-Jewish offer was for the immigrant audience to accept their vision of Jewry's place in England. Shifting the target audience for an exhibition and part of its underlying premise has, however, the potential to recontextualise the objects displayed and thereby their interpretation. This, I will argue, was one of the consequences of the re-presentation of those parts of the 1887 Exhibition that were used in 1906. The addition of other related or fresh material, of course, requires its own analysis. Michael Baxendall has suggested that 'Arts are positional games and each time an artist is influenced he rewrites his art's history a little.'<sup>47</sup> So I believe it was with the 1906 Exhibition. Although influenced and informed by its 1887 predecessor, it must be seen in its own terms. It is the changes in the whole rather than just the inclusion of a number of new items of more or less direct relevance to the Ostjuden, the Yiddish community of the East End of London, which provides the opportunity and necessity to re-assess the Yiddishness of the 1906 presentation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Baxendall, *Patterns of Intention*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> These included a view of Dachau (Cat. Item 8), an engraving of Polish Jewish children, (Cat. item 206), a Pentateuch in Yiddish (Cat. item 908) and a gold cap worn by Jewish women in Poland (Cat. item 1340a – lent by Alfred Wolmark).

### The planning of the 1906 Exhibition

The idea for what was eventually to emerge as the Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906 was first discussed in 1905 by ‘various Jewish literary societies, the Maccabeans and the Jewish Historical Society – at the instigation of the founder of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Canon Barnett.’<sup>49</sup> It was originally envisaged that a Committee formed from those organisations would use the Whitechapel Art Gallery as the venue to present

... a cosmopolitan and representative Show which would be on the same lines as the memorable Anglo-Jewish Exhibition held at the Albert Hall in 1887.<sup>50</sup>

The evidence, however, would suggest that date clashes made this first scheme impossible and there was then discussion surrounding the staging of a much larger event in central London.<sup>51</sup> This project too was put to one side and in the event the Exhibition was moved on to 1906 and back to the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Notwithstanding disclaimers about the scope of the final presentation that ‘it will be a very much smaller exhibition than held, for our space is very limited’,<sup>52</sup> it was a major undertaking of almost 1700 catalogue entries with around 2000 items displayed. The organisers were certainly not reticent about the expected quality of the items displayed: ‘in some respects it will be a better show...In pictures we shall be very strong’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 September 1906, and *Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition Supplement*, 9 November 1906, p. iii.

<sup>50</sup> *Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* and interview with Campbell Ross, *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 September 1906, p. XX.

<sup>52</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 September 1906.

The final version of the 1906 Exhibition was run under the auspices of the Whitechapel Art Gallery and in particular its Secretary, Mr Campbell Ross.<sup>54</sup> It was supported by an Advisory Committee, which included among its members Sir Isidore Spielmann, whose role in the conception of the 1887 Exhibition had been so central, his brother Marion Spielmann, who in 1906 was the President of the Maccabeans and Lucien Wolf, who was one of the two key organisers of the earlier event. Solomon J. Solomon, who was elected to full Royal Academy membership in 1906, was also on this Advisory Committee and played a significant part in the art selection for this Exhibition, as did Marion Spielmann, who wrote one of the Introductions, and William Rothenstein (although he was not on the Advisory Committee).<sup>55</sup> The Committee numbered among its members many key religious figures and leading lay representatives of the Jewish community.<sup>56</sup>

### Revisiting the 1906 Exhibition

For the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 the precise title was, as I have argued, a vital element in understanding what was on offer. The emphasis was on *Anglo-Jewishness and History*, which accorded with an aim of demonstrating a shared past with the host community. In 1906, the emphasis was switched to *Jewish Art and Antiquities*. The hyphenated view of the past was replaced by a presentation of a far more specific segment of artistic practice. Within this seemingly restricted

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Apart from Campbell Ross, the Whitechapel Art Gallery was represented by Canon and Mrs Barnett, Mr Howard Batten, Mr Henry Ward and Mr Charles Aitken (the Gallery Director). *Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities*.

<sup>55</sup> 'Among those who have given valuable help may be named Mr Solomon J Solomon (RA elect), Mr Will Rothenstein, whose masterly studies of the Chosen People in the Whitechapel neighbourhood have bought fame to him.' *Art Journal*, November 1906, p. 350.

classification, there was, however, room for much diversity of subject and aim. The 1906 Exhibition Catalogue presented 1698 entries – about half the number of its 1887 predecessor. It divided the exhibits under four main headings: Synagogue Appurtenances, Manuscripts and Books, Portraits and Prints relating to the History of the Jewish community in England, and works of Art by Jewish Artists.<sup>57</sup>

Assuming the ordering of the catalogue reflected the ordering of the Exhibition, the actual presentation was far more intermingled. It started with a selection of some sixty engravings, which included images by Jews about Jews, *The Maker of Phylacteries* (Catalogue item 34) by Alphonse Levy, or about Old Testament Biblical subjects, *Woodcuts from the Books of Ruth and Esther* (Cat. item 4) by Lucien Pissarro, and images by Jews of non-Jewish subjects, *Echo and Narcissus* (Cat. item 25) by Solomon J. Solomon, *The Fisherwoman* (Cat. item 45) by Josef Israels. This was not just the random selection of available images that it may at first seem to be. It demonstrated a West European breadth of vision that was to characterise many of the other visual art sub-sections.

The exhibition then focussed on its re-presentation of the themes and some of the actual material and the texts used in 1887 for its depiction of the history of the English Jewish community. The selection repeated either directly or with similar images many of the items presented in the portrait and associated sections of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition. The same leading rabbinical figures featured once again – this time supplemented by images of similarly positioned figures from

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<sup>56</sup> Including inter alia the Chief Rabbi, the Haham of the Sephardi congregation, The Rev Professor Gollancz, The Rev A. A. Green, Walter Rothschild and David Sassoon.

<sup>57</sup> *Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities*, pp. 1-2.

within the Dutch, French and German communities.<sup>58</sup> Thereafter, the Exhibition alternated between a range of items broadly grouped as Ecclesiastical Art and an even wider range of visual images of historical or artistic interest. So far as Ecclesiastical Art was concerned, Campbell Ross had few doubts about the quality of what would be on offer.

We shall have a great many things that were exhibited there [the Albert Hall in 1887]... though it [Jewish ecclesiastical art] will be on a smaller scale it may be arranged to give as much information.<sup>59</sup>

It is in this part of the 1906 Exhibition that the issue of recontextualisation emerges most significantly. As we have already seen, one of the ways in which Ecclesiastical Art was to be read and was therefore presented in the 1887 Exhibition was in a didactic manner to eliminate doubt or misconceptions about such items for a viewer unfamiliar with their use and significance. This would clearly not have been the case for the immigrant Jews visiting the 1906 Exhibition. While the didactic texts survived - perhaps to educate the unfamiliar visitor or maybe just from convenience, I would suggest a new motive was present in 1906 – an attempt to demonstrate to the immigrant community that Judaism in England was not so far removed from that which they practised. Although there may have been differences in details of style between West and East European Judaïca, detectable to the expert, I would suggest that to the Jewish viewer there was a marked level of potential recognition of the objects with which he or she was presented. While those from pauperised rural or semi-rural environments may not have seen Judaïca of this quality, those from the cities, who may have attended services in the larger synagogues, could well have been

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<sup>58</sup> With little apparent logic for inclusion in such a section, two engravings of Rabbis from works by the Czech/Austro-Hungarian artist, Norbert Grund (1717-1767), were displayed – perhaps because they might have been of more appeal to the Immigrant Jewish visitor, than some of the other exhibits. Cat. item 115, *The Discussion of the Rabbis* and Cat. item 116, *Rabbis reflecting*.



familiar with such objects. Although this strategy may not have been sufficient to sway the opinions of attendees from the Machzike Hadass or other ultra-orthodox *Chevrot* of an acceptable degree of similarity, it may have been enough to convince the less involved but still practising Jew that the differences were perhaps not as great as may have been thought. By presenting a wide range of familiar religious artefacts to this target audience, Anglo-Jewry was at least posing a question about and injecting doubt into any debate about differences between English and East European Judaism and an *ex post facto* assertion that the Exhibition was purged of its Yiddishness rests – somewhat more precariously – on a narrow definition of that term.

One might also fairly enquire from where the organisers might have been able to borrow East European Judaica for their Exhibition. All the loans that comprised the Exhibition came from collections within the United Kingdom. Given the opposition that still characterised relations between the United Synagogue and the Federation, loans from the latter source to an Exhibition that involved the former were unlikely to have been forthcoming. In addition, to Eastern European Orthodox Jews such items were of daily religious use rather than artistic importance. Having almost certainly struggled to bring them from their homeland, the religious leaders of these communities were hardly likely to lend them to an art exhibition - especially in a Gallery closely associated with a leading Christian cleric, Canon Barnett. There is indeed evidence to suggest that William Rothenstein was refused even the loan of synagogal silver from the Machzike Hadass for use in his depictions of Jews in the series of pictures that will be analysed in the following chapter.

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<sup>59</sup> Mr Campbell Ross, in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 September 1906.

There were some seven hundred pictorial items in various media in the 1906 Exhibition – thus justifying Campbell Ross’ pre-opening assertion that ‘In pictures we shall be very strong’.<sup>60</sup> The catalogue, reflecting the physical organization of the Exhibition, made no attempt to classify and discuss all of these under one heading, save for the watercolours and pastels in the Small Gallery and so-called Jewish Art, in the Upper Gallery – a total of 184 works. The remaining 500 items were a mixture of those items included within an historical context and items included for their artistic significance – with some cross over between the two.<sup>61</sup> We will return to some of these latter items in the discussion of the visual art content of the exhibition, which follows. On the historical side, we once again find ourselves confronted with a re-presentation of and additions to the material seen in the 1887 Exhibition - from the Rabbinical figures mentioned earlier and others, to Jewish civil worthies, scholars and even the actors and one of the boxers (Mendoza). We also find ourselves confronted with figures from the wider Western European context, the most famous of whom were Mendelsohn and Spinoza (Cat. items 405 and 408). The intention in this section would seem to have followed the trajectory of the 1887 Exhibition – that of presenting Jewish life in England as interwoven into that history and not a strand apart – and added a Western European dimension.

The section entitled Jewish Art, hung in the Upper Gallery, was preceded in the Catalogue by Marion Spielmann’s introduction, a short but wide ranging piece, which in fact had relevance to some of the art elsewhere in the Exhibition<sup>62</sup>. Although

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> In terms of the catalogue the first and one of the most striking of the cross over items embracing art and history and relating to a wider European context was Catag. item 123, an engraving by Blotelingh of van Ruysdael’s (sic) (1628-1682) painting of the *Jewish Cemetery near Amsterdam*(sic) 1665/60. The original is now in the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

<sup>62</sup> *Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities*, pp. 84-5.

Spielmann started by denying the relevance of the Second Commandment to the practice of art by Jews, his text went on to use this and ‘ever existent harrying and persecution’ as explanations for the paucity of art by Jews before the nineteenth century. After touching on very early Jewish painters and craftsmen, Spielmann mentioned, in a little more detail, the three key Jewish painters in English Art in the early and mid nineteenth century – Solomon Hart, Abraham Solomon and his younger brother, Simeon Solomon.

Hart’s work was praised by Spielmann, who, interestingly for one so linked to the Anglo-Jewish community, talked of Hart’s most powerful works as being those that dealt in ‘essentially Jewish subjects’ from which the writer selected *Elevation of the Law* (Cat. item 210) as an example.<sup>63</sup> This image would have been viewed with few if any problems of interpretation by an immigrant Jewish audience – albeit that its setting may have been somewhat grander than the Polish Synagogues to which they were accustomed.

Both Abraham Solomon (1824-1862) and his sister Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886) were featured in a section of their own (as well as elsewhere in the body of the exhibition), which contained 28 of their works (or engravings thereof) – almost all of which would seem to have been genre images with no Jewish content.

Immediately after his death in penury in 1905, Simeon Solomon was the subject of a major retrospective at Baillie’s Gallery and was also prominently featured

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<sup>63</sup> This would seem to have been an engraving of a work by Hart originally given to the National Gallery by Robert Vernon in 1847. By 1906 this had been transferred to the Tate collection, where it is now held. Pictorial reference for the original picture. App 1 Ch 5.

in the following year at the Royal Academy.<sup>64</sup> Spielmann's positive appraisal of his work as being 'of infinitely greater merit' marked another phase in the posthumous rehabilitation of one whose career had been blighted by his arrest on charges of public homosexuality in 1873. The presentation of his work included in the 1906 Exhibition is interesting for many reasons. The loan list indicates that a wide range of owners held works by Simeon Solomon, despite the lengthy period during which he was publicly shunned. The selection comprised a number of works with Jewish or Old Testament themes such as *Hosanna* (Cat. item 962), *A Rabbi* (Cat. item 964) and *Isaac and Rebecca* (Cat. item 975) as well as some of his erotic works, *Love Bound and Wounded* (Cat. item 970), his mystical paintings such as *The Sleepers and One that Keeps Watch* (Cat. item 973) and even some of his works based on the New Testament *The Prodigal Son* (Cat. item 978). For an exhibition with a focus on Jewish Art, perhaps surprisingly, it did not include any of the series of illustrations of Jewish Customs reproduced in the *Leisure Hour* (1866) and other similar publications, which had, as noted earlier, been part of the 1887 Exhibition.

After a passing but highly acclamatory reference to Josef Israels, Spielmann continued with his discussion of what he referred to as the British School, within which overall category he also covered 'a number of examples by foreign artists ... in order that the some idea may be conveyed of the activity existing among Jewish artists abroad'.<sup>65</sup> Spielmann's contention was that, although the full range of artistic practice 'from the "Victorian" painter to the ultra-impressionist' was represented and although 'some of the figure-painters may choose to infuse racial passion into their work by the

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<sup>64</sup> 122 of his works were included in the retrospective exhibition at Baillie's. 16 of his works were included in the 37<sup>th</sup> Winter Exhibition of Works of Old Masters and Deceased masters of the British School at the Royal Academy.

<sup>65</sup> *Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities*, pp. 84-5.

treatment of essentially Jewish subjects ... the majority, identifying themselves entirely with their adopted country ... show no trace of distinctive thought or differentiation' and he ended by referring to future development which he felt would lead to 'continual assimilation, with the single object, in this country, of advancing the honour and glory of the British school'.<sup>66</sup> This assertion, covering as it did such a wide range of exhibits with relevance, resonance and appeal to a wide audience, was a clear statement of the integrationist aims of the Anglo-Jewish discourse.

The *Jewish Chronicle's* Supplement of 9 November 1906, which concentrated on what it termed 'Modern Art', explored the visual art content of the Exhibition under the headings of 'Foreign Artists', 'Religious Worship and Study', 'The Judenschmerz', 'Portraiture', 'Deceased Artists' and 'Miscellanea'. In the discussion that follows I will examine the extent to which some of the works included under these headings were purged of or informed by a sense of Yiddishness and if so how that term might be defined.

The *Jewish Chronicle's* review of 'Foreign Artists' was preceded by an explanation of the 'insuperable' difficulties for this Exhibition of funding loans from overseas, which resulted in the absence of works by artists it went on to list: perhaps the most important of whom from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective were the painter Moritz Oppenheimer (sic)(1800-1882) and the sculptor Marc Antakolsky (1843-1902); and the most significant omissions Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879) and Isidore Kaufmann (1853-1921), the absence of neither of whom was deemed worthy of mention. The *Jewish Chronicle* concentrated its attention in this section on the work of Josef Israels

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

(1824-1911), the best known and most prolifically exhibited of the foreign artists at the 1906 Exhibition (who together with Solomon J. Solomon was made a Royal Academician in that year) – although it only identified two out of seventeen images as being Jewish in theme. The water colour *In the ghetto* (Cat. item 11), which the *Jewish Chronicle* referred to as being designated *The old clothes shop* by the artist, depicts a poor Jewish merchant, seated with his son in front of his meagre display of goods – a scene that would have been familiar to anyone who knew London's East End or the poor quarters of the towns and cities of Eastern Europe.<sup>67</sup> The other Josef Israels painting directly of a Jewish subject was *The Jewish Wedding*.<sup>68</sup> As the *Jewish Chronicle* observed, although painted quite recently, it depicted an earlier marriage practice of covering the bridal couple with a *tallith* rather than a canopy. Once again, this was an image with which any Jew visiting the Exhibition might have been familiar; in an interview with the *Jewish Chronicle* some two years earlier, Israels himself had referred back to Oppenheim's use of the *tallith* as a bridal canopy in his Pictures of Jewish Life series.<sup>69</sup>

Other 'foreign' artists mentioned under this heading included Camille (1830-1903) and Lucien Pissarro (1863-1944) – despite the fact that Lucien had lived in England since 1890; Leo Mielzner (1869-1935) – possibly for his subjects (Zangwill and Herzl); Leopold Pillichowski (1866-1933), also now established in England. The latter was singled out in this section for *Holiday*, even though this work,

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<sup>67</sup> The work was in fact probably a water colour variously entitled *The old curiosity shop/Son of an Ancient People* believed to have been executed around 1888 and sold in that year by Goupil to J.C.J. Drucker – the owner of record in the 1906 Catalogue. It was an earlier version of an oil of the latter name painted in 1889. *Josef Israels* Groningen Museum and Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam, 1999, p. 326. Pictorial reference App. 2 Ch. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Josef Israels, *Son of the Chosen People*, Watercolour, 1888, 56 x 43, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Josef Israels, *Jewish Wedding*, Oil on canvas, 1903, 137 x 148, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam on loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

which depicted a man studying the *lulav* used in the Succoth ceremony, could have featured in the section of ‘Religious Worship and Study’ with others by the same artist. The work of Max Lieberman (1837–1945) was given no more than passing acknowledgement and the French artist Edouard Brandon (1831-1897) was not included in this commentary, even though all three examples of his work on display depicted Jewish themes and one was a loan from the Chief Rabbi.

In its coverage of works depicting Religious Worship and Study, the *Jewish Chronicle* review opened with a critique of the works of Rothenstein and Wolmark, whose works in this and other contexts will be separately examined in depth in the next two chapters. Rothenstein was represented here by a selection of his series depicting Jewish worship and study at the Machzike Hadass, and Wolmark, a Polish born and East End raised young artist, by works executed either there or during contemporaneous visits to Poland. These works were grounded in the area and reflective of its religious practice. In both cases there is every reason to suppose that the images would have been familiar to the 1906 immigrant audience – some of whom might even have recognised the sitters used by the artists. Although, as I shall analyse in the next two chapters, there were differences in approach between the two artists one cannot ignore the very obvious Yiddish content of these portrayals. Isaac Snowman (1863-1947) was mentioned in this context by the *Jewish Chronicle*’s reviewer for four of his works. *A difficult passage of the Talmud* (Cat. item 788), *Morning Devotions* (Cat. item 1398) and *Purim in the Chevra* (Cat. item 1402) each depicted scenes of which almost all of his East End Jewish viewers would have been aware, in locations that were or represented their places of worship, and *The Wailing*

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<sup>69</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 May 1903, p. 11.

*Wall, Jerusalem* (Cat. item 69/Upper Gallery) was a representation of one of the most archetypal moments of aspirational worship.<sup>70</sup> Although not singled out in this review, I would draw attention to *Silver Candlesticks* by Lily Delissa Joseph (1863-1940), which I believe may be a painting now known as *Self Portrait with Candles* (Catag. Item 26/Upper Gallery) – a depiction of the artist as a young lady carrying candles, perhaps to the Sabbath table (now Ben Uri Gallery). The works of Rothenstein and Wolmark, those of Snowman and Delissa Joseph and images by Mark Zangwill and Louis Conrad, also mentioned in the *Jewish Chronicle* review, call into doubt the assertion that the 1906 Exhibition was devoid of Yiddish references. Indeed the *Jewish Chronicle* reviewer went out of his way to assert that those artists (excluding Delissa Joseph in his commentary)

...may be regarded as the founders of a new Jewish school in this country. They all treat the same subject – the alien at worship and study – and treat it from the same point of view. Their pictures are intensely Jewish, revealing the Jewish soul at its finest and best.<sup>71</sup>

Although as late as 1906, the paper could apparently still not bring itself to dispense with the distinction between English Jews and the alien, given its record of resistance to matters Yiddish, it is important to underline how it praised the intensity of the Jewishness as an expression of all that is ‘finest and best’ in the Jewish soul and saw this revealed in pictures of the alien at prayer. The shift in opinion from one which regarded the Ostjude in a purely negative light to that which had begun to look to Eastern Europe as the font of true Judaism had, it would seem, influenced the writer’s thoughts and position.

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<sup>70</sup> *A difficult Passage of the Talmud* and *The Wailing Wall* were both reproduced in the *Illustrated London News*, 26 March 1898; see Anne and Roger Cowen, *Victorian Jews through British Eyes* pp. 189-190.

<sup>71</sup> Supplement, 9 November, p. iv.



If the *Jewish Chronicle* and visitors to the 1906 Exhibition were able to find resonance of Yiddish culture in works defined as belonging to the previous grouping, how much more was this the case in the classification Judenschmerz, which ‘treated of the sorrows of modern Israel.’<sup>72</sup> Although the reviewer found much to praise in the work of Samuel Samuel, Amy Drucker (1873-1951) and John Amschwitz (1882-1942), he reserved his highest accolades for the paintings of Moses Maimon (1860- 1924) and Leopold Pillichowski. The former, a Russian born artist, was singled out for *Homecoming from War* (Cat. item 72 Upper Gallery) a narrative painting which dealt with both the conscription of young Jews into the Russian Army and the results of a pogrom. The experienced, or reported, awareness of such events would have been chillingly familiar to many of those looking at this picture. The same would also have been true of the other work by Maimon singled out for praise *Wohin?* (Cat. item 114 Upper Gallery), which the reviewer regarded as the best of the several ‘wandering Jew’ paintings on display, and Pillichowski’s, nearly as highly praised, *On the way of Exile* (Catag. item 12 /Upper Gallery). These images, offering representations of the life left behind by the immigrants, stand in direct contrast to the assimilating offer of Anglo-Jewry of that time and to later insistence on the absence of Yiddish culture or influence in the 1906 Exhibition.

Inevitably the portraiture section was far more heavily biased to representations of Anglo-Jewry’s leaders or their Western European counterparts. The image of *Lord Rothschild being sworn in as a member of the House of Lords* (by Marks - Cat. item 787), when taken with an earlier lithograph (by Richardson - Cat. item 229) of his father Baron Lionel being accepted in the House of Commons as the

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

first Jewish MP without swearing ‘on his true faith of a Christian’, encapsulated the aspirations and success of Anglo-Jewry in its struggle for full political emancipation. Sir George Faudel-Phillips, who had, as we have seen, been portrayed by Solomon J. Solomon, during his Lord Mayoralty, lent an earlier portrait of his father as Lord Mayor (Cat. item 195) (by an unnamed artist), thus underling the shared past project, to which reference has been made earlier. Solomon J. Solomon’s portraits included one of the Chief Rabbi (Cat. item 196) and another of Hermann Graetz (Cat. item 197), the German-Jewish historian, who had given a keynote speech at the 1887 Exhibition. Perhaps the reviewer’s most interesting comment in the context of this dissertation was the reference to Solomon’s portrait of Mr Ellis Franklin (Cat. item 87/Upper Gallery) as a ‘perfectly satisfying picture of a benevolent English gentleman’.<sup>73</sup> This was, of course, a faultless expression of the integrationist nature of the Anglo-Jewish discourse.

Other contemporary Anglo-Jewish notables highlighted in this section were Professor Gollancz painted by Wolmark (Cat. item 48/Upper Gallery), the Reverend Simeon Singer by Flora Marks (Cat. item 24/Upper Gallery), Mme Darmestester’s portrait of her father, Professor Hartog (Cat. item 44/Upper Gallery) and Pillichowski’s rendition of Zadoc Kahn (Cat. item 194). Taken as a whole, this section of Anglo-Jewish portraits provides the obverse of the images informed by Yiddish culture, which were discussed earlier. They were offered to the immigrant community as the embodiment of the success of the integrationist project on offer in 1906.

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<sup>73</sup> Supplement, 9 November, p. iv.

The 1906 Exhibition was not a re-run of the 1887 Exhibition, in which the immigrant Jew was neither targeted as a potential viewer nor a subject for representation or discussion. For the organisers from the Whitechapel Art Gallery, the 1906 Exhibition had a more artistic and less didactic remit. For Anglo-Jewry it offered the opportunity to present its discourse to another audience of now far more immediate importance than that at which the 1887 Exhibition had been aimed. By retargeting the audience for its display of Judaica, the 1906 Exhibition offered the potential for a re-interpretation of the balance between English and East European Judaism. The inclusion of an albeit limited range of objects and pictures of direct relevance to the immigrant strengthened the argument for a more inclusive view of the gap between Anglo, English and Yiddish Judaism and Jewish life. While the Anglo-Jewish discourse of 1887 informed much of what was selected and how it was presented, the 1906 Exhibition cannot be regarded as stripped of a Yiddish nature. This time the immigrant, his culture and his aspirations formed a presence acknowledged. In contrast to the minimal numbers who attended the 1887 Exhibition, the reported audience of 150,000 visiting the 1906 Exhibition bear ample testimony to its appeal.<sup>74</sup> Given the location of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the centre of the Jewish East End, it seems reasonable to propose that the immigrant community must have comprised a very large proportion of those visitors. However large the allowance one were to make for attendance by visitors from outside the East End, or from other East End communities, this success would almost certainly have been the result of the appeal that the Exhibition clearly had for the immigrant Jewish community. Those of extreme religious or perhaps social views might not have been attracted to or convinced by what was on offer. The assertion, however, that the 1906 Exhibition was so stripped of

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<sup>74</sup> *Trustees Report*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 1906, p. 9, quoted in Juliet Steyn *The*

a Yiddish element as to be of no interest or relevance to the immigrant community does not seem to accord with either its own content, context or intention or with the realities of East End life as it was being lived by immigrant Jews in 1906. Although some immigrants may have sought to equate Yiddish culture solely with a set of traditional religious and social values and practices imported from elsewhere for preservation in a quasi-time warp in a new land, this ignores the inevitable changes undergone when such a culture is subject to new forces and influences in a new environment. Yiddish culture in England was a vibrant and changing phenomenon not simply shaping but shaped by the experiences of new generations. The very act of leaving the shtetl, in both the geographic and symbolic sense, would inexorably lead to a re-assessment of its value system and would open the way for new interpretations. I would contend that the Yiddish culture that was being lived and enjoyed by the majority of those visiting the 1906 Exhibition was different from that which had arrived with the first immigrant Jewish waves some 25 years earlier. While I am not positing perfect synchronicity between a new sense of Yiddishness on the part of the immigrant community and a possibly modified understanding of what it meant to be Jewish at the turn of the century by the Anglo-Jewish community, the presentation of and reception for the 1906 Exhibition suggests that the gap was less wide than might be acknowledged. This time the immigrants, their aspirations and their culture were no longer a presence denied.

## CHAPTER 6

## The lachrymose Mr Rothenstein

..the defining moment of alterity is visual. It comes in the exchange of looks from face to face, from artist to spectator that creates a movement in which the passive observer is forced to make a choice and becomes a witness.  
N. Mirzoeff<sup>1</sup>

A Chance Encounter in the East End

William Rothenstein's autobiography *Men and Memories*, published 1931/2, contains a passage relating to the genesis of a series of eight works of Jewish subjects which were executed first in Whitechapel and then in his Hampstead studio between approximately 1904 and 1908.<sup>2</sup> Although this series occupies only a very small place within Rothenstein's oeuvre, it and the circumstances of its production are central to this study.

Having business in the city with a solicitor, a brother of Solomon J. Solomon, and on his asking whether I chanced to know the Spitalfields Synagogue in Brick Lane (a curious sight he assured me, well worth seeing), I accompanied him there. My surprise was great to find the place crowded with Jews draped in prayer shawls; while in a dark-panelled room sat old bearded men with strange side-locks, bending over great books and rocking their bodies as they read; others stood, muttering Hebrew prayers, their faces to the walls, enveloped from head to foot in black bordered shawls. Here were subjects Rembrandt would have painted – had indeed, painted – the like of which I never thought to have seen in London. I was very much excited; why had no-one told me of this wonderful place? Somehow I must arrange to work here. But to draw in a synagogue, I was told, was out of the question, was against the Law. The Jews here, I saw, were suspicious of strangers; they had lately come from the ghettos of Russia and Galicia, and were fanatically strict; so strict that

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to Levinas on alterity: Nicholas Mirzoff 'Pissarro's Passage', in *Diaspora and Visual Culture*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Men and Memories*, London: Faber & Faber, 1931-2.

they rejected the authority of the Chief Rabbi who, in their eyes, was unorthodox. I was suspected, since I was ignorant alike of Hebrew and of ceremonial, of being a missionary from a society for the conversion of the Jews. They believed that if I painted them, I would sell the pictures to churches. Now and then a few good-for-nothing rogues were converted for a handsome price, I was told. The simple but narrow-minded Russian and Galician Jews could not be tempted to leave what was almost a ghetto, for the ghetto is almost as much a Jewish as a Gentile arrangement. Determined not to waste a subject so precious, I took a room close by in Spital Square, where at last I persuaded 3 or 4 men to sit. Here I worked for two years, painting eight pictures in all.

Whitechapel has a vigorous life of its own. I haunted the Jewish quarter, where one observes astonishing types of men and women. The orthodox Jews from Russia and Galicia never shave, and some of the younger men put me in mind of portraits of Titian; for beards give breadth and radiance to a face. The old gray-bearded men, noble in mien if ignoble in dress, wear the pathetic look of Rembrandt's rabbis. It was the time of the Russian *Pogroms* and my heart went out to these men of a despised race, from which I too had sprung, though regarded as a stranger among them. The men, who sat to me, emigrants from Russian ghettos, were rigidly orthodox, extremely poor and feckless; but their children would, belike, get on in the world, for they in no wise follow the ways of their fathers. Though the men were small, some of their daughters were magnificent creatures. No wonder Sargent admired the women of the race; though when Sargent went to Palestine he was little impressed, a decadent generation he thought. But this was before the Zionist Colonies. Sargent wanted to join me in Whitechapel, but he never found time.<sup>3</sup>

*Men and Memories* was published some 25 years after the completion of the series of paintings that are the subject of this chapter. So it may not be a reliable record of the artist's reactions at the earlier time. We may, however, fairly assume that it is an accurate reflection of the context within which the painter, looking back from this later date, wanted his readers to view these works. This chapter will be devoted to an examination of the series within the contexts of the changing circumstances of English Jewry at the turn of the century and the 1906 *Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition* discussed in the previous Chapter. Before embarking on such analysis, I start with a brief catalogue of the works and an examination of the artist's background up to the time of their execution.

Although the main purpose of this listing is descriptive, in order to assist in the later discussion, I draw attention to two threads of analysis. The first is the distinction between works that may be characterised as people centred, with the primary emphasis on the individual subjects, and those that I would suggest are ritual centred where the focus is on a religious ritual/performance being enacted more than those performing it – accepting that almost all of the works have elements of both. The second is the almost hermetically sealed environment in which the subjects are enclosed. It is only in the last of the pictures that a visible source of outside light obtrudes. This I believe is a reflection of the artist's sense of penetrating another world, a subject to which I shall return.

*In the Spitalfields Synagogue* (Fig. ) of 1904 would seem to be the earliest works in this series.<sup>4</sup> A (presumably earlier) pastel study entitled *Praying Jews* depicts two elderly figures (Fig. ).<sup>5</sup> The foreground figure, turning sharply to his side, is slightly hunched. His bare forearm protrudes well below the cuff of his evidently too small jacket and his bushy beard verges on the unkempt. His companion slumps forward, his chin on his hands. Neither figure looks at the other, as they ponder or perhaps talk, during what could be a break during a service. In the later oil, Rothenstein placed two more figures in a deeper background, which pushes the original pair closer to the viewer. The main figure seems now more comfortably seated. His clothes, though still worn, are perhaps less shabby, better fitting. His colleague seems more alert and attentive. The rear pair (probably the same models), mirroring the ninety-degree configuration of those in the foreground, is sterner of

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<sup>3</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 2 pp. 35/6.

<sup>4</sup> 1904, Hugh Lane Municipal Museum of Art, Dublin.

<sup>5</sup> National Gallery of Canada, Ontario.

mien. Rothenstein declares the Jewish religious practice of his subjects by their Tallithot (prayer shawls) and Kippot (skullcaps). Their Peyot (side curls) have been tucked behind their ears or blended into their beards. As we shall see later, this minimisation of specific items of Judaïca or Jewish religious practice was a deliberate strategy on the part of the artist.

This is clearly a people centred work. Notwithstanding the pastel study's title, the positioning of the two sets of figures would seem to deny that this a moment of prayer. Neither is there any evidence to suggest it is one of study – a subject treated by Rothenstein elsewhere in this series. Chapter 5 discussed the role of some East End Synagogues as centres for the community. Perhaps the subject of this early work is a depiction of the Synagogue as a place for discussion and rest - albeit a more restrained and respectful one than that described by Rothenstein's friend Israel Zangwill in *Children of the Ghetto*:

This synagogue was all of the luxury many of its Sons could boast. It was their salon and their lecture-hall. It supplied them not only with their religion, but their art and letters, their politics and their public amusements. It was their home as well as the Almighty's and on occasions they were familiar, and even a little vulgar with Him.<sup>6</sup>

The change of title from the pastel to the oil, if it were Rothenstein's choice or made with his agreement, would offer some validation for this suggested reading.

*An Exposition of the Talmud* (Fig. ) of 1904 continues in the same vein of close observation and study of character that typified several of the early Rothenstein works in Whitechapel.<sup>7</sup> It was possibly the first in the series to explore Talmudic

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<sup>6</sup> Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto*, 1892, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



study, ‘...the quintessential performance of Jewish maleness.’<sup>8</sup> The picture moves from prayer to study – another of the functions of the Machzike Hadass and its Talmud Torah - but it too is people-centred. It is not what is being studied nor is the performance of the act of teaching the subject of this work, it is rather those who are studying, who are Rothenstein’s focus. Four listening figures face a teacher. Their forward leaning postures emphasise their close attention to his exposition. Although light permeates from the right, there is, I would argue, a sense of observing a private world.

*In the Corner of the Talmud School* (Fig. ), also of 1904, seems to reflect this sense of intimacy and privacy even more strongly.<sup>9</sup> Light from an unseen source falls on the book held by the foreground figure and on the Tallit enshrouded face of a second figure. This is a closed world. The eye is drawn inexorably ‘over the shoulder’ to the space created by the triangle of the prayer shawl and the edges of the book, an area, which encompasses the key element of the work – Talmudic learning. Although the subjects are placed in the middle ground and the work still contains elements of character study, I would posit that this work veers more towards being ritual/performance oriented rather than people centred.

In *Aliens at Prayer* (Fig. ) of 1905, the soft, side-light and warm palette of *In the Spitalfields Synagogue* of 1904 have been replaced by a cooler light and the palette has moved towards blues and greys.<sup>10</sup> The figures press close to the front of the composition, their poverty more obvious than in earlier paintings – the clothes seem

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, pp. 143/4.

<sup>9</sup> Gallery Oldham.

<sup>10</sup> National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

shabbier, their Tallitot more soiled, their faces more care worn and lined and their beards (most notably that of the standing figure) more unkempt. The contrast is especially noticeable in the central figure in this work, the same model used in the first 1904 work. The pictorial composition obliges the viewer to confront each of the subjects individually. The face of central figure is anchored at the intersection of an axis; the left to right line running down the picture along the edges of his Tallit and that of the standing figure; the other running left to right is formed by the Yarmulke, the left shoulder and upper arm of the seated figure. Although not apparently actively involved in prayer, this central figure is paying intense and, I would suggest, devout attention to something/one slightly to his right. This is reflected in his posture and in the way in which his hands are not simply resting on the book, but grasp it firmly. The face of the other seated figure is framed between his splayed fingers and his forearm. His focus and concentration follow that of his seated colleague. The face of the standing figure (the same model as this second seated figure) is framed the Tallit draped over his head. The deep shadows cast by this cowl effect render his face cadaverously gaunt. His focus is directly ahead rather than to his right, unlike that of his companions. He is perhaps involved in his own order of prayers – a possibility that is not uncommon in Jewish practice. Although it would be fair to surmise that the subjects are following some part of a service, Rothenstein provides us with no sight of what that might be. *Aliens at Prayer* shares with *In the Spitalfields Synagogue* the common feature of being people rather than ritual centred.

*The Talmud School* (Fig. ) of 1904/5 a four figure composition – involving at its centre the same model (this time bespectacled), who faced the viewer from *In the Corner of the Talmud School* - makes use of similar devices its depiction of Talmud

study.<sup>11</sup> Candle light illuminates the subjects as they study different books. The placing of the subjects and the texts they are studying in the upper half of the composition and the positioning of those texts creates a sense of exclusion and of penetrating a private domain. This is reinforced by the pose of the left hand figure, facing away from the viewer, that of the right hand figure with his shoulder turned towards the viewer and the cowl of the Tallit over the head of the central figure. Although three books are being studied, only one is angled so as to permit it to be seen by the outside viewer. The two right hand figures in the composition are so posed as to make any reading of them as individual characters impossible. This picture falls into my suggested category of being ritual/performance rather than people centred. As with *In the Corner of the Talmud School* there is, I would suggest, this sense of privacy is reinforced by the absence of any external source of light. The use of candle light and the absolute verticality of the flames suggest a room that has no direct access to the outside world.

*Jews Mourning in a Synagogue* (Fig. ) 1906 is, I would suggest, a key work in this series in relation to issues of a centring that is based on people as opposed to ritual/performance.<sup>12</sup> The work reveals its studio execution more obviously than other images in the series – the brocade curtain and the edge of a picture on the background wall would have been out of place in the Machzike Hadass Synagogue. What I believe to be a preliminary sketch shows a group of seven men face on rather than at the angle of the final image.<sup>13</sup> Although this is static in composition and unresolved, had some version of this treatment been adopted for the final work, it might have

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<sup>11</sup> Sternberg Centre, London.

<sup>12</sup> Tate Gallery, London.

allowed the artist more scope to continue with that detailed examination of his subjects that characterised *In the Spitalfields Synagogue* and *Aliens at Prayer*. Instead, Rothenstein opted for a diagonal placement of the seven figures – with an eighth figure hinted at by a part of a Tallit to the extreme right hand edge of the canvas. This treatment sacrifices some exploration of character for examination of ritual – the act of prayer.

Although each of the individual figures is motionless, the jagged peaks and troughs of their heads, which is echoed (in a more rhythmically, regular fashion) at their feet by the draping of their Tallitot, create a sense of movement within the composition.<sup>14</sup> The prayer shawls, which served as signifiers of Jewishness in the earlier works, also become the central means for the creation of this rhythm, which typifies the Jew at prayer as he sways and bends. Four of the figures in this composition create cowls by covering their heads with a prayer shawl enabling the artist further to emphasise these peaks and troughs of assumed motion.

In *Reading the Book of Esther* (Fig. ), the scene has been shifted from congregants at prayer or studying to those officiating – in this instance ‘reading’ must be understood as referring to a public reading during the service rather than reading as in a moment of study.<sup>15</sup> The work is closely foregrounded by the compositional tactic of cutting off the lectern and the figures surrounding it at waist height. In a preliminary sketch, the three figures are located in the middle ground, reading from

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<sup>13</sup> *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, Charcoal on paper, 1906, 43.2 x 50.8 cm, Cartwright Hall, Bradford.

<sup>14</sup> This picture may have been a seminal work for Jacob Kramer’s *The Day of Atonement*, Oil on canvas, 99 cms x 121.9 cms, 1919, Leeds City Art Gallery.

<sup>15</sup> Manchester City Art Gallery.

the text placed on a lectern which is indicated as extending down to mid-calf.<sup>16</sup> The work concentrates on a small number of figures rather than taking the opportunity of including the congregation in front of whom this reading was presumably meant to be taking place.

In two of the early works in which study is depicted, the texts being read were partially revealed to the viewer. In *Reading the Book of Esther* the text is concealed. The artist/viewer is cut off by the draped front of the lectern on which the scroll is placed and by the edges of the prayer shawls of the outer figures. This is presented as a ritual for Jews and entry for the viewer/outsider precluded. The upward tilt of the lectern and the cave like shelter created by the three cowed figures create an area inside which the text being studied is open to them. (One would suggest that the lectern he used was a studio prop, probably of secular origin, since that used in a Synagogue is normally much wider and larger) As a result the text is hidden and perhaps protected from the viewer, who can only to observe the ritual and those who involved it. The absence of an obvious light source, when combined with the tightness of the composition, emphasise the closed nature of this observed world.

Unlike the 1905 works, in which consideration of ritual entailed some sacrifice of the examination of the individual (such as *The Talmud School*), *Reading the Book Esther*, however, returns to that close study of the participants that characterized the earliest works – thus combining elements of both a people and a ritual/performance centred work. In this case, however, the observation of poverty that was one of the key

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<sup>16</sup> Tate Gallery Ref T 290. Catalogued as *Jews in Mourning*, however given its subject and similarity with the oil of *Reading the Book of Esther* this is almost certainly a mistitling.

features of the earlier works ceded place to an examination of tropes of age, wisdom and handed down traditions.

There is an interesting contrast in accuracy, which perhaps indicates some of the problems which Rothenstein encountered, when trying to depict scenes from a Synagogue within his own studio. Within Jewish religious practice readings from the Old Testament are normally made from a parchment scroll mounted on two staves. There are, however, five biblical extracts or Megilloth – Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and the Song of Songs, each read in conjunction with the service on a particular Jewish holiday. The parchment of each Megillah is customarily either simply rolled and kept in a cylinder or is mounted on a single stave. When *Reading the Book Esther* was originally shown at NEAC in 1907, it was called *Reading the Megillah* a more accurate and, I would argue, more revealing title. Not only did Rothenstein render this accurately in the picture, he also used a correct Hebraic title, when presenting the work in a secular public Exhibition to an almost totally non-Jewish audience. Whether this Hebrew knowledge was acquired from his upbringing or from those with whom he worked at the Machzike Hadass, is less significant, than the decision to use the Hebrew title for the work. It is a marked shift from one, whose stated awareness of and allegiance to Judaism was so marginal, when he first happened upon the Machzike Hadass..

The final work in this series, *Carrying the Law* (Fig. ) of 1908, would seem within the context of my suggested categorisation to be a totally ritual centred work<sup>17</sup>. It represents a moment when the Scroll of the Law is carried around and among the

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<sup>17</sup> Johannesburg Art Gallery.

worshippers. The stripes of the Tallitot act as a visual fence, which makes the viewer an observer of a private domain. Simultaneously, they are a focussing device, forcing us to look at veneration of the Scroll, the subject of the work. The left hand side figures together with the candle and the main column form vertical axes. The sixth figure on that side inclines inwards towards the centre. The columns of the building define the vertical axes to the right. The stripes of Tallitot on the figures at this side incline inward towards the act of devotion. Those of the two central figures sweep upwards to meet at the hand of the congregant, who touches the Scroll as bending he kisses it. The enclosed sense of the work is reinforced by the horizontals of the balcony and the overhead candelabra. For the first time in this series there is an obvious source of light - from the windows in the right background. One might suggest that this, however, provides for light to come in rather than, at the same time, to provide access to the outside. The feeling that one is located within a closed environment remains.

Artistic influences are discussed at some length later in this chapter, however, at this juncture it is apposite to compare this work with Solomon Hart's 1850 *The Feast of the Rejoicing of the Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn* (Fig. ).<sup>18</sup> Drawing on Sephardi ritual in Italy this is more orientalist and exotic in its treatment than the Rothenstein. Although Hart's the principal subjects are also distanced, the viewer has open ground to negotiate as a would-be participant in this joyful parade. An earlier Rothenstein oil study – presumably for this work since it bears the same title – depicts a procession of three figures carrying a Scroll (Fig. ).<sup>19</sup> The setting is somewhat vague – it is probably not in a Synagogue and is perhaps simply a studio study. The figures would seem to

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<sup>18</sup> Jewish Museum, New York.

be of a higher social standing than those depicted in earlier works. In particular the middle figure, who in such a procession could be the Rabbi is wearing a frock coat and tie, which might more usually associate him with cleric from an Anglo-Jewish or Reform Synagogue rather than the Rabbi of a poor, ultra-orthodox Jewish community. Although this work was almost certainly executed in London as part of the Whitechapel series, one wonders whether it harks back to Strauss and the Bradford's Reform Synagogue, which as we shall see, were influences in Rothenstein's early life. Another preliminary work *Study of Jewish Rabbis carrying the "Law"* combines the leading figure of the Bradford oil with the figure kissing the scroll in the final version in a study that had the potential to be far more people centred and 'spiritual' in feeling.<sup>20</sup>

To what extent was Rothenstein quite the surprised visitor to the East End and its Jewish community that he implied in 1903? Earlier in his autobiography Rothenstein wrote of connections with that area as early as 1888/9, of links with some of the East End's key figures and institutions and in terms, which demonstrate a mind-set, which paralleled his description of his reaction to this later discovery of the Spitalfields Synagogue of the Machzike Hadass community.

I went often to Toynbee Hall, where I was welcomed by Canon Barnett.<sup>21</sup> ... The Barnetts were also beginning to organise exhibitions of paintings with the warm support of Watts [1817-1904], Burne-Jones [1833-1898] and Holman Hunt [1827-1910]. ... I also spent an evening each week in a boys club in Leman Street, the Whittington Club, where I taught drawing and

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<sup>19</sup> Cartwright Hall, Bradford.

<sup>20</sup> William Rothenstein, *Two Jewish Rabbis carrying the "Law"*, Chalk on blue paper, 1907, 36.5 x 23.5 cm, City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

<sup>21</sup> Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial Street, E1 opened in 1884. It was a radical response to the problems of dealing with the poverty there. It was the first University settlement and became a model for those that followed. The young University élite (initially from Wadham and Balliol Colleges [the alma mater of Arnold Toynbee (1852-1881), the Oxford historian and campaigner for education for the working classes]) lived and worked there and paid for the privilege. For Samuel Barnett, see Biographical Note App 1.



modelling.<sup>22</sup> To become a worker in Whitechapel seemed an adventure, the East End was a part of London remote and of ill repute, which needed missionaries it appeared and it flattered my self esteem to be one of these<sup>23</sup>.

This earlier link with and work in the East End, although pre-dating the opening of the Machzike Hadass Synagogue, placed Rothenstein in the heart of an area of high Jewish concentration on a regular basis just as the immigrants were arriving in substantial numbers. Rothenstein clearly wanted to regard himself and have others see him as one of these young elite missionaries bringing relief to the poor. This was, however, certainly not part of the ethos of selfless service, which Barnett and his co-founders were seeking to promote. His characterization of himself as a missionary in this early encounter duplicates his use of the same term, when describing the reaction of the members of the Spitalfields Synagogue to him at the later date – perhaps as much a projection of his own earlier self image as an attempt to understand their feelings.

His observations on the remoteness of the area, in which he was working, as we have already seen, echoed generally held opinions. Many Victorian and early twentieth century Londoners (regardless of their religious affiliation), regarded the East End almost as another country. The underclass living there was held by some to be no part of English society; it was as if it was physically located elsewhere. Jack

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<sup>22</sup> The Post Office Directory lists a Whittington Club at 86, Leman Street in 1886 under the management of a Mr William Tourell. Tourell also managed the East London (Blue) Shoeblock Society there. Prior to that date the premises were listed as housing the East London Certified Industrial School. There was an earlier Whittington Club formed in 1846, in the Holborn area until 1873. This would not, however, appear to have any link the Whittington Club in Leman Street. See Christopher Kent, 'The Whittington Club; A Bohemian experiment in middle class social reform', *Victorian Studies*, vol. XIX, September 1974, pp. 31ff.

<sup>23</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 pp. 29/30.

London in *People of the Abyss*, published in 1902 just before Rothenstein started to paint, referred famously to the ‘unknown’ East End;

O Thomas Cook & Son ..... unhesitatingly and instantly, with ease and celerity, could you send me to Darkest Africa or Innermost Thibet (sic), but to the East End of London, barely a stone’s throw distant from Ludgate circus, you know not the way! <sup>24</sup>

The reference to “darkest Africa” is telling. The titles of several of the contemporary works on the East End and on the poor in general use the same or similar epithets.<sup>25</sup>

The arrival of the immigrant Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe in the final two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could only have served to exacerbate this pre-existing perception of the whole area as an outsider community, adding as it did dimensions of a genuinely different culture and language in part now populated by some, who were unwilling to accept English ways. It is easy to understand why visiting the Jewish community in the East End could indeed have been seen as a voyage to another country; why the immigrants’ foreignness might be interpreted as backwardness. This perception of this community as different, unmannered and unsophisticated was a significant element in Rothenstein’s work.

Even without his early direct contacts with the East End, it would have been difficult for Rothenstein to sustain a professed lack of awareness of its existence and of its Jewish community. In various forms they had featured both as subjects for literature such as Dickens *Oliver Twist* of 1838 and as objects of scientific study from Mayhew’s seminal *London Labour and the London Poor* of 1861

... indeed the Jews of London as a congregated body, have been, from the times when their numbers were sufficient to institute a ‘settlement’

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<sup>24</sup> Jack London, *People of the Abyss*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> William C. Preston, *The bitter cry of outcast London. An inquiry into the condition of the abject poor*, London: J. Clarke, 1883; John Law, *In darkest London*, London 1890; General Booth, *In darkest England, and the way out*, London: Salvation Army, [1890].

or ‘colony,’ peculiar to themselves, always resident in the eastern quarter of the metropolis.<sup>26</sup>

to the later work of Charles Booth just before the turn of the century.

Rothenstein also had a personal acquaintanceship from as early as the early 1890s with Israel Zangwill, who sat to him in 1894. Correspondence between them confirms his awareness of the latter’s book, *Children of the Ghetto*, which was based in Whitechapel and described, as we have already seen, scenes similar to those Rothenstein was to encounter some ten years later. (Zangwill’s book indeed made the same argument about the rejection of the authority of the Chief Rabbi)<sup>27</sup>. By that time, however, alleged distinctions between the world of the East End and that of Anglo-Jewry were a matter of open public discussion.

The life depicted in Zangwill’s novels is not properly speaking Anglo-Jewish life and the characters appear as exotic to Jews, who have been here for one or two generations, as to Christian Englishmen<sup>28</sup>.

The chronologically earlier extract from his own autobiography and his concurrent relationship with Zangwill would seem to prove beyond doubt that Rothenstein was familiar with the East End and its Jewish community well before his purported first encounter with the Machzike Hadass Synagogue in 1903. Rothenstein may have seen what he might have described as ‘these Rembrandtian old men’ on the streets of the East End, if not in their places of worship, before 1903 and may indeed have already painted them. In 1900, Rothenstein exhibited *Head of a Rabbi* at the Society of Portrait

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<sup>26</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor – Jewish Labour and Jewish poor 1851*, Anglo-Jewish Miscellanies, Jeffrey Maynard, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> *Children of the Ghetto*, published 1892. Rothenstein refers to *Children of the Ghetto* in *Men and Memories*, vol.1 p. 204. Contemporary correspondence between the two may be found inter alia under bMS Eng 1148 (1657) Houghton Library, Harvard University Libraries.

<sup>28</sup> *Jewish World*, July 1897 quoted in Finestein, *Jewish Society in Victorian England*, p. 184.

Painters. This indicates at least some prior interest in Jewish subject matter.<sup>29</sup> One commentator observed:

The people here are different. Some of the men wear long gabardines and black hats, have long beards and ringlets of greased hair hanging over their ears.<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen, in the previous Chapter, the Royal Commission, perhaps reflecting more widely held views, recorded the immigrants tendency to group together. This may have been a mark of their desire to retain their difference – perhaps as an exclusionary tactic. It may have been a defensive strategy in the face of hostile reactions. It may also have been a result of genuine religious necessity.

### A childhood in Bradford

I have never known anyone whose own childhood so manifestly and so decisively shaped his character.<sup>31</sup>

William's father Moritz Rothenstein was born in Grohnde near Hamelin in 1836 and worked as an apprentice in the textile industry in Hildesheim, near Hannover.<sup>32</sup> In 1859, he moved to England to work in the Bradford woollen trade. In

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<sup>29</sup> Second Exhibition 1900 New Gallery, London. No further details of the work are available. This may have been a portrait commission, although the lack of identified subject belies this. Archive the Society of Portrait Painters. London Metropolitan Archives Acc 3489 – 212/3/4/5.

<sup>30</sup> J. White, *Rothschild Buildings*, pp. 2/3.

<sup>31</sup> Sir John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, 1976 ed., p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> Son of Daniel and Fanny Rothenstein, born 1 December 1836, died 5 December 1914. See Bradford Jewish Cemetery Records and Bradford Archives, Ref 24/D00 and *Sir William Rothenstein; Centenary Exhibition Catalogue Notes*.

June 1865, he married Bertha Dux, daughter of a Hildesheim merchant and financier, William Dux.<sup>33</sup> In 1867, Moritz became a naturalised British citizen.<sup>34</sup>

Although there were Jewish families in Bradford in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, before 1873 there were no Jewish institutions or a formal congregation.<sup>35</sup> Such Jewish people as lived there were at best apathetic to the initial efforts of the Chief Rabbi to establish religious Jewish practice in Bradford. In 1873, however, with the approval of the Chief Rabbi, the Bradford Jewish community appointed Joseph Strauss, a German born and educated, Reform Rabbi, who subsequently played major roles both in Bradford's religious life and in the Yorkshire intellectual/academic community.<sup>36</sup> The first Synagogue in Bradford was opened in Bowland Street in 1881; the inaugural address was given by Rabbi Lowry of the West London Synagogue (confirming its links with the Reform movement despite the initial urging of the Orthodox Chief Rabbi for its creation).<sup>37</sup>

Robert Speaight's biography of William Rothenstein states that, although throughout her life his mother retained her Jewish religious beliefs, Moritz converted to Unitarianism.<sup>38</sup> The records of the principal Bradford Unitarian Chapel for this period do not list Moritz as applying for adult baptism. It is possible that he was a

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<sup>33</sup> Daughter of William and Henrietta (nee Ellrock) Dux, born 5 May 1844; died 15 July 1912. See Bradford Jewish Cemetery Records; Bradford Archives Ref 24/D00; Hildesheim Archives Best. 102 Nr 322.

<sup>34</sup> *Sir William Rothenstein; Centenary Exhibition Catalogue Notes.*

<sup>35</sup> Endelmann, *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, p. 65. Prior to the opening of the Synagogue, services, notably for the main Jewish festivals, were held by visiting Rabbis in Church Halls (the Unitarian Channing Hall was one such location, possibly a principal one) or the Connaught Rooms. Bradford Synagogue Records at Bradford Archives Ref 24/D00.

<sup>36</sup> Bradford Synagogue Records at Bradford Archives Ref 24/D00. Biographical Note App. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Bradford Synagogue Records at Bradford Archive Ref 24/D00.

<sup>38</sup> Speaight, *William Rothenstein. The Portrait of an Artist in his time*, p. 5.

member of the Unitarian community without undergoing conversion and while retaining his Jewish religious affiliations. Bradford Jewry certainly did have close practical associations with the Bradford Unitarian movement. Prior to the opening of the Bowland Street Synagogue, the Unitarian movement was one of the organizations which provided the nascent Jewish community with places of worship. John Rothenstein, one of William's sons, presented a lithograph of Moritz Rothenstein to the Bradford Unitarian Chapel in recognition of this early assistance.

It is possible that Moritz Rothenstein had links with and allegiances to the Unitarian movement that were prompted by other than religious motives. According to Todd Endelmann, Unitarianism was the example of choice for the German Jewish immigrant community which settled in this part of England around this time.<sup>39</sup> As a member of the émigré German community, Moritz Rothenstein could possibly have found personal and commercial associates among the Unitarian community, which may have led to a close personal affiliation and a motive for some form of quasi-secular membership as opposed to religious conversion.

There is substantial evidence of very active involvement in Jewish religious and institutional life by both of William's parents.<sup>40</sup> The 1898 marriage of Blanche,

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<sup>39</sup> Endelmann *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, p. 67: 'The elite to whom the recent arrivals from Germany looked for guidance in matters of deportment and style and with whom they sought to merge was Unitarian and industrial-mercantile, not Anglican and landed.'

<sup>40</sup> The records of the Anglo-Jewish Association for 1886 and 1887 show that Moritz Rothenstein was a subscriber to its Bradford branch. Mocatta Archive, University of Southampton Library. MS126/AJ/95/150/9. The Synagogue Report of 1912 states "We sincerely feel the loss of Mrs Rothenstein one of our oldest and esteemed members" and that for 1914 states "...but regret to announce ...the sudden demise of one of the founders of our congregation, a true supporter Mr Rothenstein offering our sincerest condolences to the bereaved family". The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet of the formation of the Synagogue noted

William's sister, was in accordance with Jewish practice.<sup>41</sup> Bertha, characterized by Speaight as the bastion of Jewish religious influence in the Rothenstein family, predeceased Moritz. Her ashes were interred in the Bradford Jewish Cemetery in 1912, and in 1914 Moritz was also cremated and his ashes interred next to hers.<sup>42</sup> It might have been possible from a Unitarian standpoint for Moritz Rothenstein, as a member, to have retained his Jewish affiliations and played a continuing role in the administrative affairs of the Bradford Synagogue. However, it would have stretched the tolerance of both religious institutions for him to be as actively involved in the Synagogue and in Jewish practice as these records suggest, while simultaneously demonstrating any meaningful allegiance as an actual convert to a new faith. It would seem that both William's parents and not just Bertha were conscious of and involved in Judaism and the affairs of the Bradford Jewish community.

William was born into this comfortably middle-class, provincial and seemingly Jewish environment in 1872, just off Manningham Lane, within a few hundred yards of where the new Synagogue was subsequently built. Perhaps as a child's act of rebellion, William, according to Speaight, was baptised on the beach by a young Oxford evangelist during a summer holiday in Scarborough. However seriously the young child may have taken this, at the age of 13 he was barmitzvah. He was educated at Bradford Grammar School and lived at home until he left for London some three years later in 1888.

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that in 1883, Moritz Rothenstein was appointed one of five trustees for the Burial Ground. Bradford Synagogue Records at Bradford Archive Ref 24/D000.

<sup>41</sup> The officiating Minister at Blanche's marriage to Max Schwabe was Rabbi Strauss. See *The Bradford Observer*, 30 April 1908.

<sup>42</sup> The Bradford Jewish Synagogue Archive records both of their interments. Bradford Archive Ref 24/D000. Since there is no request for a Jewish burial in Moritz' will, one could reasonably assume that burial in a Jewish cemetery was either his wish and/or that of his

## The Education of an Artist

He had always been serious, always industrious, but in the course of the early nineteenth hundreds he became increasingly ruled by an extra-ordinary earnestness and seriousness.<sup>43</sup>

From the Spring of 1888 to the Autumn of 1889, Rothenstein studied at the Slade School of Art in London under Alphonse Legros, a significant figure both in his early artistic life and in the wider art world of the time.<sup>44</sup> In 1889, William Rothenstein met Solomon J. Solomon, who urged him to study in Paris,

[... as] he was all for French methods and thought little of the teaching they gave at the Slade.<sup>45</sup>

Solomon wrote to William's father to ensure that this happened. For the next four years, until 1893, Rothenstein worked in Paris, first studying at the Académie Julian. Although Rothenstein boasted that the Julian was 'after the Beaux Arts the largest and most renowned of the Paris Schools,'<sup>46</sup> he also expressed the view that its tuition methods and faculty were less than optimal:

I went to Paris, and worked at Julian's, virtually under no one, as none of the Professors there appealed to my undisciplined imagination<sup>47</sup>.

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surviving family and in any case the natural course of events for a member of a Jewish congregation. The will, dated 1870, is in Bradford Archive Ref 10D76/2/46/21/46.

<sup>43</sup> Sir John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, 1976 ed., p. 127.

<sup>44</sup> Biographical Note App. 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 35. Although I have been unable to trace this item of correspondence, the fact that Solomon was aware of and perhaps involved in William's plans for Paris is evidenced by his letter of 25 February 1889: 'I am glad to see your father assents to your going to Paris'; it goes on to discuss the Académie Julian. Rothenstein Archive, Houghton Library, Harvard University Libraries, Ref bMS Eng 1148 (1393).

<sup>46</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to Roger Fry (30 September 1909), quoted in Lago, *Max and Will*, p 9. At the time Rothenstein was at the Julian, its leading teacher was Bougereau (1825– 1905), and among his teachers were Jules Lefebvre (1836-1912), Benjamin Constant (1846-1902) and Lucien Doucet (1856- 1895).



Rothenstein may have been disparaging about the Julian, but its distinguished list of alumni must have formed one of the bases for the network of contacts and friendships that he established during his time in Paris.<sup>48</sup>

Rothenstein's first public exhibition was held in 1892 in Paris - jointly with Charles Conder (1868-1909).<sup>49</sup> His work

... attracted considerable attention in the press and brought Rothenstein to the attention of Camille Pissarro, to whom he was introduced at the exhibition by Camille's son, Lucien. Degas... sent word that Rothenstein should call on him.<sup>50</sup>

During this time and on subsequent visits to Paris, he came to know many of the leading avant-garde writers, cultural figures and painters of his day.<sup>51</sup> Far from being a provincial, parochial English painter working in some relative backwater and absorbing, at best second hand, the new trends that were emerging at this time, 'few painters can have known so deeply the great France of that decade.'<sup>52</sup>

In 1894, shortly after his return to England, Rothenstein held his first London exhibition at the Dutch Gallery with Shannon (1863-1937). He became a member of the New English Art Club (NEAC) in 1895 and was a founding member of the

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<sup>48</sup> Among those who studied at the Académie in the period shortly before and around Rothenstein's time there were Jules Adler (1865-1962), (Sir) George Clausen (1852-1944), Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), Maurice Denis (1870-1943), Alphone Mucha (1860-1939), Henri Matisse (1869-1954).

<sup>49</sup> March 1892 at Père Thomas, 13 rue Malesherbes. Toulouse Lautrec (1864-1901) played a role in persuading the dealer to mount this exhibition.— *Post Impressionism. Cross currents in European Painting* p. ?

<sup>50</sup> *Post-Impressionism; Cross currents in European painting*, eds House, John; Stevens, Mary Anne, London: Royal Academy of Art, 1979 p.

<sup>51</sup> Including, according to his autobiography and some extant correspondence, among many others Zola (1840-1902), Verlaine (1844-1896), Wilde (1854-1900), Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), Puvis de Chavannes (1824 -1898) and Vuillard (1868-1940): *Men and Memories* passim.

<sup>52</sup> John Russell, in *The Studio*, vol. 129, 1945, p. 50.

Fitzroy Street Group that formed around Sickert (1860-1942) in 1907.<sup>53</sup> Some of his NEAC and Fitzroy colleagues were featured in his group portraits *McColl, Furse, Berbohm, Wilson Steer and Sickert* of 1894 and *Sargent, Wilson Steer and Tonks* of 1903. His wide circle of friends and acquaintances put him at the very centre of events and ideas. His lifelong friend Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) satirised Rothenstein and his circle in an 1895 cartoon, and at the start of *Enoch Soames* (written in 1914/15, but looking back to earlier times), he describes the impact of the arrival of Rothenstein on Oxford, when the latter arrived to paint his series of *Oxford Portraits* (1896) for John Lane.

In the Summer Term of '93 a bolt from the blue flashed down on Oxford. It drove itself deep in the soil. Dons and undergraduates stood around, rather pale, discussing nothing but it. Whence came it, this meteorite? From Paris. Its name? William Rothenstein.....He was a wit. He was brimful of ideas. He knew Whistler. He knew Edmond de Goncourt. He knew everyone in Paris. He knew them all by heart. He was Paris in Oxford.<sup>54</sup>

While Beerbohm was certainly indulging in his own brand of ironic exaggeration – he had done used a very similar introduction to describe the entrance of Zuleika Dobson (in his eponymous 1911 novel) – other accounts of the young Rothenstein and his own correspondence indicate that there is also a good deal of truth in the passage. He did have a very wide network of contacts and friendships in Paris as well as London. In 1896, John Lane published *Oxford Characters*, the portfolio of sketches of Oxford academics and other notables, the purpose of the Oxford visit to which Beerbohm referred; at that time Rothenstein was only 24. Four years later, his painting *A Doll's*

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<sup>53</sup> NEAC was founded in 1886; its initial members included John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), Phillip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), George Clausen (1852-1942), John Lavery (1856-1941), Fred Brown (1851-1941), Solomon J Solomon (1860-1927) and Theodore Roussel (1847-1926). Other leading members of the Fitzroy Street Group were Lucien Pissarro (1863-1944) Spencer Gore (1878-1914) Walter Russell (1867-1949) and Harold Gilman (1876-1919).

<sup>54</sup> Beerbohm Biographical Note App. 1. Quoted in David Cecil, *Max*, p. 64.

*House* was selected as part of the English exhibition at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris.<sup>55</sup>

### Investigating the Whitechapel Paintings

In the extended passage quoted at the outset of this chapter, Rothenstein described the Jews he encountered in the East End. He spoke of the ‘Titian’ like possibilities of some of the young men he saw. He praised some of the younger women as ‘magnificent creatures’ and spoke of their suitability as subjects for Sargent. But Rothenstein chose to depict the old men of the Machzike Hadass congregation.<sup>56</sup> One needs therefore to unpick the strands of this choice and to respond to the questions it poses.

Exactly what and who did Rothenstein encounter in the Machzike Hadass in 1903? Rothenstein’s own comments would suggest that he felt he had come face to face with a throwback to the past, to forms of Jewish practice which he regarded as having remained largely unchanged for generations. But was this actually the case? Both William Fishman and Michael Silber have argued that ultra-orthodoxy emerged in Eastern Europe and Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century as one among a number of responses to the attempts to drive them out or turn them away from their

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<sup>55</sup> Tate Gallery, London.

<sup>56</sup> By working within the Machzike Hadass community, Rothenstein would have ruled out almost any possibility of depicting women. Even though women could participate in synagogue worship, they comprised less than 5% of the Passover congregation in the Machzike Hadass Synagogue on the Mudie-Smith census day to which reference was made in the previous chapter.

existing practices.<sup>57</sup> Silber contends that in Hungary, Ultra-Orthodoxy began to emerge in the 1840s in the face of a rising tide of nationalism that would only accept Judaism within an overarching Hungarian framework. Fishman suggests that in Russia, because of a series of measures enacted during the reign of Czar Nicolas 1<sup>st</sup> aimed at emptying Russia of its Jews, ‘the result was a consolidation of Jewish identity by way of rigid adherence to orthodoxy.’<sup>58</sup> Such reactions were not confined to the poor and supposedly ignorant in times of oppression and in far off lands. As shown earlier in Chapter 2, Sir Moses Montefiore’s limited support for Jewish political emancipation in England was in measure prompted by his concern for its potential to diminish rabbinical authority and Jewish identity. Thus it might be argued that what Rothenstein encountered was

... not an unchanged and unchanging remnant of pre-modern, traditional society but as much a child of modernity and change as any of its “modern” rivals.<sup>59</sup>

In order to understand some of the influences that may have informed Rothenstein’s approach to the series of paintings, one needs to look a little more closely at his attitudes towards Judaism and Jews at this time. The sixty year old Rothenstein of *Men & Memories* would seem by that time to have moved far away in religious and social terms from his Jewish upbringing. In 1899 he married a Christian actress, Alice Knewstub, and their children were raised as Christians.<sup>60</sup> In 1945, William was buried at St. Bartholomews, Oakridge in Gloucestershire, close to where he had had a home from 1912.

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<sup>57</sup> Fishman, *East End Radicals*; Silber, ‘The Emergence of Ultra Orthodoxy – The Invention of a Tradition’ in Wertheimer ed., *The Uses of Tradition*.

<sup>58</sup> Fishman, *East End Radicals*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Silber, ‘The Emergence of Ultra Orthodoxy’, p. 24.

<sup>60</sup> Knewstub worked under the stage name of Alice Kingsley. Her father Walter had been a pupil of Ruskin (1819-1900) and Rossetti (1828-1882). Tate Gallery Archive Notes on William Rothenstein.

By 1903, the young Rothenstein had forged for himself a place within English society and the international art world. When confronted, almost on his own doorstep, with a radically Orthodox version of the faith in the Reform version of which he had been raised, but which he had by then left behind, Rothenstein in his autobiography described it as almost totally foreign to him. He suggested that, particularly since he spoke neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, those he was seeking to paint must have seen him as an outsider – perhaps even a missionary. In this situation, Rothenstein may indeed have regarded himself in a similar light – as Other; not vis-à-vis the English world of which he felt he was a part, but vis-à-vis this Jewish world, which, albeit in a much less fundamental version, had informed his past. Although his own religious upbringing within the Reform German Jewish community of Bradford was very different from the Machzike Hadass, he may have perhaps been exaggerating his own lack of knowledge of the ceremonies he witnessed (possibly deliberately distancing himself from his Jewish ancestry). While Orthodox Jewish synagogue ritual may have been strange to him and memories of religious occasions of his youth only hazily recalled, I would argue that Rothenstein's general awareness of Judaism was an important informing source. Like the recontextualisation of Judaica in the 1906 Exhibition, specifics may have been different but generalities were not.

Although Rothenstein had clearly moved away from the Judaism and Jewishness of his childhood, we need to examine how far along this path he had progressed by this time. Although there is nothing in his writing about joining the Machzike Hadass, a *Jewish Chronicle* article of 15 June 1906 described Rothenstein

as ‘a member of the Machzike Hadass Synagogue.’<sup>61</sup> Given his Reform Jewish upbringing and his marriage to a gentile, religious adoption of and by an extreme Orthodox sect at this juncture would seem to be totally out of character – for both parties. It may have been, as perhaps with his father’s association with Unitarianism, that William was obliged to become a member of the Machzike Hadass to gain access to the Synagogue and the Talmud Torah for his work.

Rothenstein may have sought to distance himself from his own Jewish past and from those he was painting in Whitechapel, but others still clearly regarded him as a Jew. Once again Beerbohm seems to have delighted in satirising his Jewish friend during the Whitechapel period:

Will arrived on his bicycle but sternly refused to cross the threshold – probably because of some Jewish feast or fast, the threshold was unleavened or there ought to have been blood on the lintel or something of that kind, anyhow Will would not come in.<sup>62</sup>

There is a certain irony in Rothenstein’s apparent pleasure in recording in his autobiography a comment by Sickert ‘Degas asked affectionately after you... even though it was followed by ‘..in spite of his Judenhetze monomania.’<sup>63</sup> Lytton Strachey was even more direct in his characterisation, remarking in a letter:

The dinner was remarkable chiefly because Rothenstein and his wife were there. It was *the* Rothenstein – very Jewish and small and monkey-like.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> P. 34. The records of that institution for this period are no longer available for verification. While Rothenstein used the same article to refute the idea that his decision not to exhibit at the Royal Academy implied any quarrel, there is no evidence suggesting he made any pre- or post- publication effort to alter the reference to his membership of the Machzike Hadass.

<sup>62</sup> Beerbohm to Alice Rothenstein, October 1905. Lago, *Max and Will*, p. 51 n.

<sup>63</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 341.

<sup>64</sup> Letter to Duncan Grant, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1907 quoted in Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* p. 166.

One might also ask why Rothenstein chose to work within tropes of representation that conflated the religious Jew with the old and with the poor – the lachrymose view of Judaism. The historical age of the Jewish religion and references thereto makes its juxtaposition with older rather than younger subjects apposite. It would, however, seem that if the trope existed within the realm of visual representation, it may have come more from the artist and from representations within a pre-existing canon, as for example Doré's *Mendiant Juif a Londres*, than from the actuality of everyday depictions<sup>65</sup>.

Anne and Roger Cowen's *Victorian Jews through British Eyes* presents images of Jews from some of the period's leading illustrated magazines, whose readers were of course overwhelmingly non-Jews and who were far more likely to encounter Jews on those pages than to meet them in their everyday lives. Thus one cannot underestimate their importance in providing a visual (and in the accompanying texts a written) repertoire of representations of the Jew for the host community. Although there may be editorial bias in the Cowens' selection, there is absence of anti-Semitic images. The overall selection is therefore a valuable point of reference and departure for an appreciation of how the popular press depicted Jews in this period.

The conflation of Jew equals old and poor is often evident in their selection. While these were obviously influential in creating the visual repertory of the Jew in the eyes of their readers, one must also look for other pictorial evidence. That section of illustrations dealing with the Jewish elite draws on material that reports current

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<sup>65</sup> From Gustave Doré (1832-1883) and Blanchard Jerrold (1826-1884)'s *London: a*

events – visits by/with Royalty, society weddings, Synagogue inaugurations – and should *prima facie* be more concerned with representing actual participants rather than selecting images that matched an illustrator's or writer's personal predilections or prejudices. Broadly speaking this seems to have been the case. There is little evidence of a deliberate conflation that equate Jews with old age.

Even when one reviews those sections which concentrate on the indigent immigrant, either in an English setting or in reports from abroad on other Jewish migrants, there is little evidence of an unbalanced focus on the old. This is not to say that the old did not form a segment of those depicted, but simply that the existence of a trope equating Jews with old men, drawn from the contemporary popular press, cannot be substantiated.

Rothenstein's choice of older rather than younger subjects may have been a personal preference. An autobiographical mention of his childhood refers to an occasion when he saw Ernest Sichel (1862-1941), a Bradford artist, painting Sir Jacob Berhens (1806 to 1889), the Bradford textile magnate. He wrote 'I longed to paint old men, youth excited me much less.'<sup>66</sup> This attraction to the old may have been nurtured during his time at the Slade under Legros, whose portrayals of old men such as *Study of a head*, *Head of an Old Man* and *St. Jerome* are particularly evocative<sup>67</sup>. In the *Oxford Portraits*, referred to above, the older subjects are full of character, whereas the young blades seem bland and anodyne by comparison, as

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*Pilgrimage*, London: Grant & Co, 1872.

<sup>66</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 20. Find Notes re Sichel and Behrens.

<sup>67</sup> Alphonse Legros, *Study of a head*, Oil on canvas laid down on panel, C1879, 58.3 x 45.2, Manchester City Art Gallery; Alphonse Legros, *Head of an Old Man*, Oil on canvas, 1881, 61.3 x 50.7, Manchester City Art Gallery; Alphonse Legros, *St Jerome*, Oil on canvas, 1881, 176.4 x 107.6, Manchester City Art Gallery.



Zangwill remarked to Rothenstein in a letter '...I think your old men are better than your young.'<sup>68</sup>

The poor also seemed to hold a fascination for him. Some 10 years before he embarked on the Whitechapel paintings, Rothenstein travelled in Morocco and Spain. This trip led to an interest in Goya, about whom he wrote a book, published in 1900. He produced paintings of Spanish dancing in Seville.<sup>69</sup> His comments on the latter are revealing:

... we saw there chulas dancing, not in the regulation mantilla and bright swinging skirt, such as Carmencita wore, but in shabby old gowns, ill made and ill fitting. They looked heavy and dull to my eyes as they sat round the room, but the moment they rose to begin their dance, they shed their ennui in a flash and their dress was forgotten.<sup>70</sup>

There are two aspects to this quote which are relevant to the Whitechapel works. The first is the way in which the old and the poor were not only of interest as subjects to the young artist, but also provided him with an opportunity to imbue them with higher qualities. This is perfectly expressed in his 1913 picture *Eli The Thatcher*.<sup>71</sup> The subject, a country artisan, dominates the composition and while one would never misunderstand his position within the society of his time, there is nevertheless also no mistaking the respect the artist accords to him.

It is my conviction that the Yorkshire landscape, its dour smoke blackened buildings, yes and the stubborn unsmiling people, strong in their frankness, and in the conscious rectitude, nurtured the most fruitful as well as the most enduring element in his work.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Zangwill to Rothenstein, letter dated 14 July 1894, in Speaight Notes vol. III pp. 121/2, National Art Library Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>69</sup> *Goya*, London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1900. For example Rothenstein's *Hablant Espagnol*, Oil on canvas, 1895, 81.3 x 45.7, Private collection.

<sup>70</sup> *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 223, quoted in the Catalogue of the Barbican Art Gallery Exhibition *Impressionism in Britain*, 1995. *La Carmencita*, John Singer Sargent's portrait of a Spanish dancer, was shown at the 1892 Paris Salon, during Rothenstein's time there and before his trip to Spain (Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France).

<sup>71</sup> Manchester City Art Gallery.

<sup>72</sup> John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, p. 122.

I would argue that in the old men of Whitechapel, William found a similar sincerity and uncompromising rectitude.

The autobiographical passage also reveals the manner in which Rothenstein felt a quintessential act – in this earlier case dancing – transformed these subjects. Similar factors may have been at work in the Whitechapel paintings. Rothenstein chose to represent the shabby, old and poor male congregants of a Jewish community, but to suggest a revelation of their dignity in transforming moments of prayer and religious study.

In all but the last in the series, Rothenstein deliberately simplified or omitted almost all of the ritual and liturgical trappings which might have added an exotic dimension and picturesque appeal to the works. In a contemporaneous interview published by the *Jewish Chronicle*, he said:

People have asked me why I have not painted a particular service, or a scene in the synagogue. Those persons, I am afraid, do not understand my purpose. It is not the picturesque possibilities of Tallisim (sic) and phylacteries that appeal to me. I have even left them out where I should have painted them. What appeals to me is the devotion of the Jew. It is that that I have endeavoured to put on canvas – the spirit of Israel that animates the worshippers, not the outward trappings of the ritual.<sup>73</sup>

The most obviously important point in this quote is the statement of his aim: depicting the spirit rather than merely looking for the picturesque. Religious devotion was to be the key attribute of his portrayals of these old Jews. Not only did Rothenstein strip the trappings of religious practice down to a bare minimum, he also

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<sup>73</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15<sup>h</sup> June 1906. It must be recalled that in part this decision may have been forced on him by the refusal of the Machzike Hadass to lend him any of its Judaïca for use in this project – see Chapter 5.

avoided almost any other obvious visual references. In his discussion on the emergence of the ultra-orthodox Hungarian communities, to which reference was made above, Silber argues that such items of everyday Jewish life as dress (typically including the fur hat and the long coat), custom and speech were invested with a religious value in their own right. Although similar clothing, similarly invested with religious value, might also have been worn by some members of the Machzike Hadass, no such visual clues (of identity, religion or origin) are in evidence in Rothenstein's painting. This strategy sometimes results in a masking of potential readings. The elision of religious appurtenances in *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue* makes it difficult to decipher from the image why they are in fact in mourning.

It is not over-reading this text to suggest that there is also a possible implication that he knew – perhaps from his own past and not just from first time observation or the comments of others – what ought to have been included for a factually accurate rendition. He tended to use only prayershawls and skullcaps as his primary markers of Jewishness. Furthermore, the prayershawls were almost always the full-length, all-enveloping type, in contrast to the perhaps more discrete, smaller ones worn by some in the more anglicised Jewish communities.<sup>74</sup> If the markers were to be minimised in number, they would at least be unmistakable.

By identifying his Jewish subjects as old, poor and possibly downtrodden – within a lachrymose tradition of representation – was Rothenstein adopting a 'colonial' stance; one of dominance and assumed superiority over a less sophisticated folk, whose strange customs were to be depicted before they were consigned to

oblivion by Anglicification? If one takes as the starting point the *Men and Memories* text, such an interpretation is possible. Although the text is peppered with epithets that speak of superiority ('men of a despised race ... A curious sight ... simple but narrow minded ... ignoble in dress ... extremely poor and feckless'), the actual images speak more of an inherent dignity within their poverty, which belies such a colonial stance in their execution.

The encounter with the Jews of the East End was, I would postulate, a defining moment of alterity for the young Rothenstein; one which posed a challenge that he was ultimately to refuse. As a young man seeking to integrate himself into what he regarded as a higher niche in society, Rothenstein would appear to have simultaneously rejected and embraced his past.<sup>75</sup> In 1902, when visiting an exhibition of his own work at the Schulte Gallery in Berlin, Rothenstein travelled to Hildesheim and completed at least three works there.<sup>76</sup> His account mentions meetings with the painters Max Liebermann (1847-1935) and Adolf von Menzel (1815-1905) and with the writer Gerhard Hauptmann (1862-1946). Liebermann introduced him to the Dutch painter Josef Israels (1824-1911), whose work including *The Old Rabbi* (which will be discussed later) was concurrently being exhibited by Paul Cassirer (1871-1926) who was then a leading figure in the Berlin art world. The excursion to his family's place of origin was not, however, mentioned.<sup>77</sup> This elision of facts that do not fit in with or add to the image of the English artist and intellectual, moving easily among

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<sup>74</sup> See for example *The Feast of Tabernacles*, in Anne and Roger Cowen, *Victorian Jews through British eyes*, p. 112.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Braude, 'The Heine-Disraeli Syndrome among the Palgraves of Victorian England', in Endelmann ed., *Jewish Apostasy in the modern world* pp 110 ff.

<sup>76</sup> *The Old Houses, The Golden Angel in Hildesheim* (Cartwright Hall, Inaugural Exhibition 1904. Bradford City Art Galleries Archive) and *Street in Hildesheim*, Manchester City Art Gallery.

the cultural elite of Europe, seems typical of the representation of himself that Rothenstein constructs throughout his autobiography. It accords with the patterns of behaviour in other aspects of his life at this time. Rothenstein, the quasi-apostate Jew, attended dinners given by the Maccabeans, but never formally joined.<sup>78</sup> He was briefly a member of the Jewish Territorial Organization during the period of Zangwill's Presidency of the British Branch.<sup>79</sup> He actively assisted in the work on the Jewish Educational Aid Society (championing in particular the young Mark Gertler), but moved away from depicting Jewish subjects in his work.

As the Whitechapel series progressed one can suggest a way in which the painter (and viewer) retreats from the role of close observer/quasi-participant to that of uninvolved spectator. The composition of *In the Spitalfields Synagogue*, and the open area of seating on the bench in particular, invites the viewer to participate in the discussion of the foreground pair. Although *Aliens at Prayer* offers no such direct participation, the frontality of this and the earlier work make it hard for the viewer to remain uninvolved. The subjects are very strongly foregrounded and there is little or nothing to deny the viewer visual/physical access to them. This physical closeness and intimacy suggests the possibility of rapport between painter/viewer and subject. In *Exposition of the Talmud*, the viewer is placed almost on the shoulder of the foreground figure and one's eye inexorably follows the participants' towards the highlighted figure of the teacher.

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<sup>77</sup> *Men and Memories* vol. 2 pp. 12 ff. This was in fact his second trip to Hildesheim. He visited his cousin there in 1884, see *Speaight* p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> On 12 May 1903, Rothenstein attended a Maccabean dinner in honour of Josef Israels. Lago, *Max and Will*, p, 49. Although there was a standing invitation for him to join, he never did so (Speech by Solomon J. Solomon at the Maccabeans Dinner reported in *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 May 1903)

<sup>79</sup> 7 November 1905 to 30 January 1906, *Speaight Notes*, vol. III pp. 121/2 National Art Library Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum

By contrast, in *The Talmud School* one observes the first indications of physical retreat. The figures are set into the background of the composition, and the cloth, rather than inviting quasi-participation at the free end of a table, presents a barrier – one may observe but not participate. The same is broadly true of *In the corner of the Talmud School*. Although, as I have suggested earlier, the viewer has clear sight of the main subject (the text and its study), the bulk of the body of the inward facing foreground figure, like the cloth in the previous work, act as a barrier. If, in this light, one compares *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue* with *Aliens at Prayer*, the intimate contact of the latter has been replaced by a more distanced and perhaps cooler observation. *Reading the Book of Esther* uses a similar device – this time the embroidered cloth over the top of the pulpit – as in *The Talmud School*. This cloth creates a visual barrier between viewer and subjects in a composition, which invites observation but not participation.

The final version of *Carrying the Law* is exclusionary rather than inclusive; the viewer is positioned as observer. There is movement away from possible identification (by the artist and for the viewer) with the subjects towards observation of an event from the edge as an outsider. This is not merely a physical distancing but a psychological one on the part of the artist. His ambivalence towards Judaism and Jewishness is resolved not by acceptance but by rejection – the potential participant becomes the spectator.

But it is not just participation that is missing from this work. In what was in fact and may at the time have been intended to be the final work in the series, the

spirituality that had imbued the earlier works is far less in evidence. The empathy that Rothenstein felt towards his earlier subjects seems missing. Rothenstein replaces personal identification with his subjects with ecclesiastical trappings. There is more of the paraphernalia of Jewish worship openly in evidence in this work than in any of the others. As noted earlier, the work is quite clearly to be read as being located in a recognizable Synagogue. Rothenstein provides the viewer with a cleverly constructed work that brings together the themes of the earlier works, but the simple spirituality of those earlier works is missing. Perhaps this is the result of his more overt use of a moment of transformation. In *Aliens at Prayer* or *An Exposition of the Talmud*, the source of this transformation is internalised within the subjects – and perhaps the imagination of the viewer. If there is a significant religious moment in the former, it is happening in the sight of the subjects but not of the viewer. In this final work, the externalisation of that moment – the actual depiction of the congregant kissing the Scroll – diminishes rather than augments its impact.

*Aliens at Prayer* opens up the debate about the meaning of the word Alien in this period. This is a picture of three poor, old men praying or watching someone else praying. Without their tallithot and kippot, they could be praying in accordance with almost any ritual, in any place that admitted the poor, and almost at any time. There is little to mark them out as immigrant Aliens.<sup>80</sup> For one who might in some ways have been anxious to distance himself from such foreigners, Rothenstein simultaneously seems to have been at pains to do exactly the opposite, to emphasise similarities

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<sup>80</sup> Even their shabbiness does not evoke the greasy filth associated with the infamous *foetor Judaicus*, an important marker in the image of the Jew. See Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self*

rather than differences. Did his title for the work then perhaps have undertones of the question – *Aliens(?) at prayer?* Was there a note of irony in the title of the painting? Referring to the investigations of the Royal Commission, Juliet Steyn has argued that at this time and in this context the words “destitute Alien” meant Jew.<sup>81</sup> The title and the understatement of the religious identifiers might be read as an a priori challenge to such a codification of the term Alien that automatically equalled Jew.

Why was the work titled *Aliens* rather than *Jews at Prayer*? Rothenstein never denied the essential Jewishness of his subjects. The simplest explanation could be based on attributing to Rothenstein a desire to be in tune with the mood of the times. This work was executed two years after the publication of Sir William Evans-Gordon’s *The Alien Immigrant* and in the same year as the debate, which was to lead up to the passing of the Aliens Bill. It was a time when many in the by then would-be indigenous, established Anglo-Jewish community in London were seeking to emphasise the differences between themselves and their impoverished immigrant co-religionists. So perhaps this was what Rothenstein understood by the term.

Could Rothenstein’s use of the word ‘Alien’ have been a shorthand formulation of “Jew but different from me/us”? This leads to the discussion about assumed homogeneity. The formulation of this distinction, applied to the whole immigrant community, would imply a tacit assumption that all immigrant Jews shared the same version of Judaism/Jewishness, which as we have already seen, was not the case. The Machzike Hadass congregation represented one, but not the only strand of

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*hatred* p. 175. For a fuller examination of the interpretations of the physicality of the Jew, see Gilman *The Jew’s Body*.

<sup>81</sup> Steyn, *The Jew. Assumptions of Identity*, p. 35.



ultra-orthodoxy in the East End at this time. Nor was ultra-orthodoxy the only strand of Jewish religious practice within the Jewish East End. There were those whose Jewishness was based on more mainstream versions of East European practice. Indeed, as the Mudie-Smith data quoted in Chapter 5 indicate, the majority, although nominally Jewish, did not actively participate in religious practice.

Although it can be expected that the immigrant Jews of Rothschild Buildings were generally more observant than London Jewry as a whole, there can be little doubt that only a minority of men went frequently and regularly to *shul*. Similarly, it was a minority of families, who observed the whole range of Jewish religious ritual.<sup>82</sup>

The same also holds true for factions within the quasi-indigenous, host English Jewish community, whose sub-groups brought different nuances of Jewish practice, and within these, coalescing or splitting groups represented every shade of observance from devout to nominal. In his introduction to *Jewries at the Frontier*, Sander Gilman discusses the concept of the ‘centring’ of Judaism. Notwithstanding the contemporaneous, early activities of the Zionist movement, in Rothenstein’s time, Judaism for English Jews was still located around an imagined, textually based centre – ‘Torah as the symbolic topography of the missing center.’<sup>83</sup>

In the simplest formulation of this very complex situation, for Anglo-Jewry in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century England/Englishness (however defined) had been the desired centre, and Jews (again however defined) were on the periphery, striving to approach this centre by eliminating any connotation of being alien. Some 50 years later, when faced with this new group of Jews in their perhaps self-imposed ghetto denying the power of the Chief Rabbi, whom they regarded as a religious leader of less than unchallenged authority imposed on them from outside, and following their own ways and customs,

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<sup>82</sup> White, *Rothschild Buildings*, p. 86.

surely Rothenstein must have felt himself the outsider, the Alien straying into others' land.

The term Alien becomes even more problematic, when viewed from the English community standpoint. The key question in this context is not "does Alien equal Jew" but rather "does Jew equal Alien"? For Anglo-Jewry, the establishment and maintenance of a negative answer to this latter formulation was the bedrock of their policy, which sought simultaneously to maintain a distinction between themselves and the immigrant Jews until their strategies of Anglicification would render the immigrants invisible and the problem academic. A picture which purports to represent Aliens has to negotiate all of these cross currents. But if this is the case, we need to ask: how are we or were Rothenstein's contemporary viewers to know that these were indeed Aliens and/or Jews? Rothenstein made use of none of the stereotypical signifiers of Jewishness in terms of exaggerated physical attributes. His friend Beerbohm, however, pointed out exactly what Rothenstein had avoided in his 1907 cartoon at the same time as homing in on its underlying intention (Fig. ).<sup>84</sup> In the caricature, Rothenstein's figures have been 'given back' the exaggerated semitic features that the painter had avoided.

Interpreting *Aliens at Prayer* not in isolation, but within the context and as representative of some of the principal lines of the Whitechapel series, it is more helpful to leave these ambivalences open rather than to seek a single resolution. The painter, the Jewish community (including the immigrant segment) and English society

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<sup>83</sup> Gilman, *Jewries at the Frontier*, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>84</sup> Max Beerbohm, *A quiet morning in the Tate Gallery*, Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 1907, 37 x 32, Tate Gallery London.

were in a state of flux during the period immediately before the World War One, and the co-existence of potentially antithetical positions within a series of paintings such as this reflects that.

*Jews Mourning in a Synagogue* is, I would suggest, a key work in this series in relation to issues of a centring that is based on people as opposed to ritual. There is in fact little evidence to indicate why this particular group is in mourning. The absence of *Tefillin* (phylacteries) would suggest it was not part of a normal morning service, when these would be worn, nor obviously in the Memorial segment of a High Holiday service, when even the most religious would have the appropriate prayer books to hand. The combination of Rothenstein's customary minimisation of Judaïca and the inclusion of studio elements, to which earlier reference has been made, obliges the viewer to rely on the title alone. Perhaps this was caused by the artist's desire to move more towards ritual in his search for the 'spirit of Israel'. Certainly Max Beerbohm seems to have been aware of this in his 1907 cartoon (Fig. ):<sup>85</sup>

A quiet morning in the Tate Gallery. The Curator trying to expound to one of the Trustees the spiritual fineness of Mr William Rothenstein's 'Jews Morning in a Synagogue'.

The comic satire – the non Jewish curator, D. S. MacColl, expounding on a Jewish subject to a Jewish Trustee, Lord Alfred de Rothschild (1842-1918) –and the contradictions inherent in the Beerbohm version of the Rothenstein painting and in his text, serve to bring out two points.<sup>86</sup> On the one hand, the cartoon representation of the painting, relying as it did for its comic impact on stereotypes, showed precisely the opposite types of figures to those depicted by the painter. Beerbohm's Jews –

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<sup>85</sup> See previous note.

<sup>86</sup> For D. S. MacColl, see Biographical reference App. 1.

including Rothschild – all have exaggeratedly large, protuberant noses and some have fleshy lips. This deliberate cartoonist's device or any more painterly version thereof was eschewed by Rothenstein. On the other hand, the cartoon's text homes in unerringly, albeit ironically, on the essential theme of this picture and indeed of all the paintings in this series – the “spiritual fineness” of the subjects.

There is little of early 20<sup>th</sup> century England in this work by Rothenstein; indeed the seated figure at the rear of the picture could have come directly from a Bible scene by Rembrandt. By shrouding all of the figures from head to toe in tallithot and by deliberately blurring any clues as to a specific site for this scene, Rothenstein has replaced a temporal or geographical locus with an allusion to the continuity of Judaism and to Jewish elders at prayer at any time and in any place.

### Artistic influences

Although for many in the English Art World, first hand experience of the innovations of Post Impressionism was not obtained until the groundbreaking 1910 and 1912 Post-Impressionist Exhibitions mounted by Roger Fry (1866-1934), Rothenstein had worked in Paris and been exposed to these works earlier and in greater depth.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, his work in this period attracted attention because of its stylistic innovation.<sup>88</sup> Given the range of his contacts in the art world, Rothenstein

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<sup>87</sup> *Manet and the Post Impressionists*, Grafton Galleries, November 1910 to January 1911, and *Second Post Impressionist Exhibition*, Grafton Galleries, October 1912.

<sup>88</sup> In her commentary on Rothenstein's *Parting at Morning* (Pastel, chalk and paint on board, 1891, 127 x 48, Rothenstein family collection) in the Exhibition catalogue *Post Impressionism; Cross currents in European Painting*, Anna Grutzner Robins states: ‘Degas, who must have been intrigued by the unusual combination of chalk and gold paint as well as the rhythmic linearity of the draughtsmanship and the flat, simplified form of the figure, sent word that Rothenstein should call on him.’

could have drawn from an unusually wide range of potential sources. Yet when confronted with this particular set of subjects, only a small number of possible sources seem of central importance. As we shall see, the most significant may have been historical rather than contemporary.

In the extended extract autobiographical Rothenstein twice mentioned Rembrandt's paintings of Jews as being a key reference. In a 1909 letter to Fry, Rothenstein, referring to his own work of 1898/9, said:

I believe at the time I was perhaps more under the influence of Rembrandt than Goya – you remember there was a great exhibition of his work in Amsterdam a little before, but I expect Spain was still fresh in my mind.<sup>89</sup>

Rembrandt's works had been included in exhibitions at the British Institution throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at Royal Academy Exhibitions in the latter half. There were also Exhibitions, which included his work at the Burlington, as noted below at the Guildhall and in several major cities in the provinces. In 1898, during the inauguration of Queen Wilhelmina, the City of Amsterdam mounted a major exhibition of Rembrandt's work at the Stedelijk Museum – the first solely devoted to him or indeed to any old master – ever to be held in Holland.<sup>90</sup> This exhibition included 123 paintings, as well as drawings and lithographs. Three points of particular interest to this study emerge from the Dutch exhibition catalogue. Although this was an exhibition of a Dutch painter in Holland, 41 paintings came from collections in the United Kingdom – indicating the high degree of interest here in Rembrandt. Five of the paintings were catalogued with specifically Jewish titles.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> 30 September 1909.

<sup>90</sup> P. J. van Thiel, *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, vol. 40, 1992, p. 123.

<sup>91</sup> *Toilet of a young girl; called the Jewish Fiancee*, 1632; *The Rabbi*, 1635 (Earl of Derby's Collection); *The Rabbi with a white turban*, 1636 (Duke of Devonshire's collection); *The Rabbi in black*, 1642; *The Jewish Bride*, 1665.

Rothenstein was listed as lending (a) drawing(s) to the exhibition. A version of this exhibition with 102 paintings was presented at the Royal Academy in 1899 with, unsurprisingly, an even larger proportion of works from British collections (although Rothenstein's Rembrandt drawing was not included). Between 1890 and 1903, five exhibitions were mounted at the Guildhall in which Dutch Art was either the main focus or one of the main areas examined, and in which the work of Rembrandt was featured.<sup>92</sup> In 1904, the Whitechapel Gallery held an exhibition of Dutch Art to which Rothenstein was a lender.

The two public institutions easiest of access for him – the National Gallery and the British Museum – both had holdings of Rembrandt, some of which were reproduced in books on Rembrandt that were published before or around this time.<sup>93</sup> Rothenstein had ample opportunity to study Rembrandt, and on the evidence of his personal collection he had a personal interest in the Dutch master well before 1903.

At the time of the Rembrandt tercentenary celebrations in Holland, an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 15 July 1906 made three observations which could equally have been applied to Rothenstein's Whitechapel paintings.<sup>94</sup> Commenting on Rembrandt's treatment of biblical subjects, the author Dr Grunwald argued: 'He divests them of their traditional glory and converts them into the humanly natural.' He continued by noting that it was accepted that Rembrandt's Jewish Brides were not,

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<sup>92</sup> Flemish and Dutch Art, 1890; Flemish, Dutch, Italian and British Art, 1892; Dutch and British Art, 1894; Dutch Art, 1895; Dutch Art, 1903.

<sup>93</sup> These included Joseph Cundall, *Rembrandt's Etchings*, London, 1867; Charles Blanc, *L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt*, Paris, 1873; Charles Curtis, *Rembrandt's Etchings*, London, 1889; *The Original Works of Rembrandt van Rijn*, London: Deprez and Gutekunst, 1892; Malcom Bell, *Rembrandt van Rijn and his work*, London, 1899; August Breal, *Rembrandt, a critical essay*, trans. Clementine Black, London, 1902; Wilhelm Bode, *The complete works of Rembrandt*, in 8 vols, the last of which appeared in 1906.

in fact, Jewish, and therefore that within this part of his oeuvre ‘the female type is entirely lacking.’ Finally, he focused on what he suggested was Rembrandt’s preference for older subjects: ‘His twelve ‘Rabbis’ with their extremely expressive features equally demonstrate this partiality for aged types.’

As awareness of Rembrandt gathered pace in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Rothenstein would have been exposed to even more of his work and this may have further coloured his later recollections and writings. However, on the evidence presented here it is clear that Rothenstein, when working in the East End, was already very familiar with Rembrandt’s paintings of Jewish sitters as they were understood at the time. By citing Rembrandt and the specific part of the latter’s oeuvre which purportedly dealt with Jewish subjects, Rothenstein was doing several things. He was acknowledging a stylistic debt, evident in some of the earlier works of the Whitechapel series. He was also acknowledging thematic debts. In the 1906 *Jewish Chronicle* interview, quoted earlier, the artist emphasised his aim of depicting ‘the spirit of Israel’. In discussing Rembrandt’s work and the attitudes of Dutch Protestant/Calvinist culture, Simon Schama notes a parallel sensibility:

It was also a matter of what got stripped away: icons, attributes, legends – the entire ancient theological clutter of Catholic representation.<sup>95</sup>

I would suggest that Rothenstein found in Rembrandt both the spirituality he was seeking to convey and also a simplification that legitimised his break from the more exoticised renderings of Jews by other artists. Finally, by citing Rembrandt, Rothenstein was seeking to elevate his own work by inviting comparison with that master and to establish art historical precedent for his own choice of subject.

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<sup>94</sup> Dr Max Grunwald, ‘Rembrandt’s Neighbours’, p. 38.

Although unacknowledged as a source by Rothenstein, I suggest that Josef Israels was also a significant influence. Israels enjoyed enormous popularity and acclaim not just in his native Holland, but internationally. Around the turn of the century, he was known as the ‘Jewish Rembrandt’ – a title that owed more to his religion than his choice of subject - Jews and Jewish subjects formed only a tiny proportion of his output. Israels’ work was regularly exhibited outside his native Holland from the early 1850s onwards, both in private galleries and as a part of loan exhibitions of Dutch Art. Rothenstein might have seen Israels’ work in major exhibitions in Paris during his period there – Israels also had two works in the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, at which Rothenstein was also an exhibitor.<sup>96</sup> Israels was the artist with the most works exhibited at the Guildhall 1903 Dutch Art Exhibition. Among the 24 of his works on display were *The Old Rabbi*, *Son of the Chosen People* and *A Jewish Wedding*, the last two of which were, as mentioned in the previous Chapter, also exhibited in the 1906 Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition.<sup>97</sup> At the Whitechapel Dutch Art Exhibition in 1904, Israels was represented, too. Two of the major collectors of Israels’ works at this time, James Staats Forbes (1823-1904) and J. C. J. Drucker (1862-1940), lived in England and did much to promote and display his work publicly. Israels’ works were also widely

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<sup>95</sup> S. Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, p. 273

<sup>96</sup> The Universal Exhibition of 1889, the Salons of 1890, 1891, 1892 and 1893. Dekkers, *Jozef Israels*, pp. 375/6.

<sup>97</sup> Josef Israels, *The Old Rabbi*, Watercolour, 1883, 50 x 34, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Josef Israels, *Son of the Chosen People*, Watercolour, 1888, 56 x 43, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Josef Israels, *Jewish Wedding*, Oil on canvas, 1903, 137 x 148, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam on loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. The dimension of the work exhibited at The Guildhall are the same as the work known as *The Curiosity Shop* and subsequently as *Son of the Ancient People* or *Son of the Chosen People*. This is thought to have preceded the major larger oil painting of the same title (see Dekkers, *Jozef Israels*, p. 326). The title variation in this catalogue is not believed to be of significance.



circulated in a variety of reproduction media. Rothenstein therefore had many opportunities to familiarise himself with it during his own pre-Whitechapel period.

Israels' paintings of Jewish subjects may also have been seminal works both for Rothenstein and Wolmark, who is the subject of the next chapter, depicting as they did themes and tropes which both of the younger artists were to deploy in their own work. Israels' paintings of Jewish subjects concentrated on the old and the poor and were principally of male subjects.<sup>98</sup> Even in the *Jewish Wedding*, the young bride is marrying a considerably older man and to her right stands an elderly male figure leaning on a walking stick. This is in marked contrast to the rest of his oeuvre, which showed a more balanced mix, including the young and the female. In his treatment of Jewish subjects, Israels also adopted what I have suggested was the lachrymose standpoint that characterised Rothenstein's Whitechapel paintings. The early works in the Whitechapel Series are reminiscent of Israels' *Son of an Ancient People*. The poses of Rothenstein's seated figures, their shabby clothes, their careworn faces and lined hands are physical features they share with the protagonists of Israel's paintings on Jewish themes. There is also a similar sense of pathos. However, Israels places his subject at a slight distance for the viewer to contemplate and perhaps to pity. By contrast, Rothenstein's search for the 'spirit of Israel', his use of what I have suggested was the transforming nature of the act of prayer and devotion, and his compositional strategy of almost aggressively foregrounding his subjects (in the early Whitechapel paintings) might be interpreted as lifting them from objects for sympathy into figures of dignity and gravitas.

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<sup>98</sup> In addition to the works already mentioned, one might also cite examples such as Josef Israels, *The Philosopher*, Oil on canvas, 1894, 65 x 54.6, National Gallery, London; and Josef

Stylistically, in the use of chiaroscuro, in the foregrounding of his subjects – particularly in the *Jewish Wedding* – and in the subdued palette, there are very strong echoes of Israels in Rothenstein's works of a year or so later. The problem with such stylistic arguments is unravelling Rembrandt as an influence on Israels from Israels as an influence on Rothenstein; for example, in a note on *The Curiosity Shop/Son of an Ancient People*, Rivka Weiss-Block has suggested a link between Israels' image and *Jacob and Benjamin* by Rembrandt.<sup>99</sup>

Rothenstein's exploration of religious spirituality among the poor – in his case the immigrant Jews of London's East End – was a theme common to many artists in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Breton Women at prayer had been used as subjects for such representations by Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and the Realist Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929) – with both of whom Rothenstein claimed direct or indirect contact.<sup>100</sup> There is a meaningful parallel between their discoveries among the supposedly unsophisticated peasantry of rural France and his discoveries among the supposedly backward immigrant communities of the darkest East End. Notwithstanding the obvious differences of geography, in both cases urban sophistication apparently encountered traditional religiosity and ritual piety.

The examination of the socio-economic environment of Brittany in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton and Michael

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Israels, *The Jewish Scribe*, Oil on canvas, 1902, 108 x 151, Kroller-Müller Museum, Oterloo.

<sup>99</sup> Dekkers, *Jozef Israels*, p. 326. Rembrandt, *Jacob and Benjamin*, c1637, Etching and drypoint, 11.6cm x 8.9 cm, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam.

<sup>100</sup> For Gauguin, see *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 69; for Dagnan-Bouveret, see *Men and Memories*, vol. 1 p. 42

Orwicz's examination of conflicting contemporary critical receptions of works on the same theme by Dagnan-Bouveret, discussed below, provide wider contexts within which to understand what was actually being depicted.<sup>101</sup> Investigation of the region's economic development and in particular its tourist status demonstrates another dimension in the paintings: the extent to which such images in this rural community were not simply the recording of factual reality but also a product of a manufactured illusion (in which both artist and subject may have colluded).

Rothenstein was aware of this part of Gauguin's oeuvre and of his fellow artists in Pont-Aven, and had probably seen *The Vision after the Sermon*.<sup>102</sup> Although this might have provided a thematic influence, the Whitechapel series was clearly uninfluenced by the quasi-folk painting artistic language of Pont Aven.

Indeed, as Debora Silverman has postulated, the search for religiosity was to be found as a recurring theme in not just Gauguin's Breton paintings but before during and after his period of collaboration with Van Gogh in Arles:

At the heart of the analysis – an art story more than a personal story – are two contending approaches to pictorial practice with a paradoxical shared goal: to achieve spiritual ends through the plastic means of pigment, canvas, and primer. Van Gogh ...reclaims in Arles the challenges of a mid-nineteenth-century Dutch "modern theology" that placed special emphasis on the arts as evocative forms of an immanent divinity. Gauguin, by contrast, is presented as an ambivalent *pénitent*, or penitent sensualist, who turns to painting as a new site to pose and interrogate the fundamental and irresolvable question of the Catholic catechism – "Why are we here on earth?" – and explores, in 1888 and after, a dialectic of visionary ascent and carnal affliction.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Pollock and Orton, 'Les Donnees Bretonnantes', *Art History*, September 1980. Orwicz, 'Criticism and Representations of Brittany in the Early Third Republic', *Art Journal*, Winter 1987.

<sup>102</sup> 1888, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

In 1889, Rothenstein met Dagnan-Bouveret, whose images of Breton Women were enjoying success both critically and financially.<sup>104</sup> Here again it was Rothenstein's thematic repertoire rather than his stylistic approach that may have been extended by and called upon at a later date by his probable familiarity with such works as *The Pardon in Brittany* and *Les Bretonnes au Pardon*.<sup>105</sup> There is no hint of the almost photographic realism of Dagnan-Bouveret in Rothenstein's Whitechapel paintings, but there is a similar examination of religiosity, spirituality and traditional ritual.

The search for a combination of style and content among Rothenstein's near contemporaries might also lead to *The Calvary* by his teacher, Legros, which like Dagnan-Bouveret dealt with the theme of religious spirituality in some seemingly remote region of France, but in a style that was closer to that to be deployed later by Rothenstein.<sup>106</sup> It is also possible that Rothenstein saw *At the Sermon* by Ribot (1823-1891), exhibited at the Salon of 1890.<sup>107</sup> Although not mentioned in Rothenstein's autobiography, Ribot was a founder with Legros of the Salon du Champs de Mars and so Rothenstein's attention might have been drawn to the work through this mutual link. The use of chiaroscuro by Ribot is stylistically closer to Rembrandt's earlier and Rothenstein's later images than the almost photographic realism of Dagnan-Bouveret. Both Ribot and Dagnan-Bouveret foregrounded their subjects in a way that seems to have been subsequently employed by Rothenstein. Legros, Dagnan-Bouveret and Ribot (and indeed Gauguin), however, all depicted

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<sup>103</sup> Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin; The Search for Sacred Art*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000, Introduction.

<sup>104</sup> According to the *New York Times* 18 May 1889: 'Dagnan Bouveret's Salon success, *Bretonnes au Pardon*, has been sold ... for \$6,000'.

<sup>105</sup> Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, *The Pardon in Brittany*, Oil on canvas, 1886, 114.6 x 84.8, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, *Les Bretonnes au Pardon*, Oil on canvas, 1887, 125 x 141, Museu Calouste Gulbenkenian, Lisbon.

<sup>106</sup> Alphonse Legros, *The Calvary*, Oil on canvas, 1874, 91.5 x 72.8, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

women at prayer either exclusively or predominantly, a precedent Rothenstein did not follow in the East End.

Earlier analysis of what I characterised in the Whitechapel series as a shift from people centred to ritual centred work was discussed by Roger Fry in an article in *The Nation* (11 June 1910) in somewhat different terms, concentrating on stylistic issues:

Mr Rothenstein's Jew pictures began as studies of character, seen in chiaroscuro, but as he went on, he found that what he wanted to say, the particular view of life he wanted to express, the effect of what is enduring, monumental and resistant in common things, needed a clearer, more linear presentment of form, a greater purity and a more intellectual appreciation of colour than chiaroscuro allowed.<sup>108</sup>

Fry suggested Giotto (1267-1337) as a potential general influence, and his Bardi Chapel *Trial by Fire* might have been a possible example for the final *Carrying of the Law*. Rothenstein's composition is rather friezelike and there is a resonance with the Giotto image in the way in which the drapery in the *Trial by Fire* and the tallithim in *Carrying the Law* are used to create both focus and motion. A more contemporary reference may have been found by Rothenstein in the work of Simeon Solomon (1840-1905). In 1865 Solomon produced *Coptic Baptismal Procession*, which employs the same frieze-like style; once again the device of the falling drapery draws attention to the central figure.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Théodule Ribot, *At the Sermon*, Oil on canvas, 1890, 55.5 x 46.5, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

<sup>108</sup> *The Nation* p. Quoted in Speaight, p. 163

<sup>109</sup> [Watercolour, Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford, which served for the illustrations of Lady Duff Gordon's *Letters from Egypt*, 1865. As the Bedford gallery description points out, the coptic procession was preceded by *Carrying the Scrolls of the Law* from the *Jewish Ceremonies Series*, 1862, published as photographs by Coundall, Downes & Co; see R. Burman (ed.), *From Prodigy to Outcast Simeon Solomon – Pre Raphaelite Artist*, 2001, p.19, repr.p.18]. This I believe was the model for Solomon's subsequent *Reading the Laws*, one of his series of illustrations of Jewish ecclesiastical themes, which appeared in 1866 in the

### Public reception at home and overseas

Despite their limited number and Rothenstein's disinclination to follow up the Whitechapel series with a larger corpus of work on the subject, these paintings were generally well received and rapidly found their way into major collections.

In the previous chapter, reference was made to those works by Rothenstein that were included in the 1906 Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition: *An Exposition of the Talmud, The Talmud School* and *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*.<sup>110</sup> Before discussing their individual histories and contemporary receptions, it is appropriate to see how they were viewed in that particular setting. The *Jewish Chronicle* in its 1906 review of the artist, quoted earlier, had said:

There is no living painter of whom as a community we may be more proud than Will Rothenstein ... his reputation ... has been gained through the medium of Jewish paintings ... works which have prompted those capable of pronouncing judgement to declare that Rothenstein has dared to challenge comparison with Rembrandt ... and has emerged from the ordeal with something more than a claim to respect.

For a journal that espoused the cause of Anglo-Jewry, it is perhaps somewhat surprising to find it championing so ardently the idea of Jewish paintings – especially when the term was applied to works which were evidently of Ostjuden. Given this standpoint it is therefore hardly surprising that its review of his works at the Jewish

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magazine *The Leisure Hour*. This was then further adapted to include the paraphernalia of Succot and renamed *Carrying the Scrolls of the Law in the Synagogue at Genoa* dated 1871.  
<sup>110</sup> The *Talmud School* was exhibited at NEAC in the Summer Exhibitions of 1904 and 1905. Shortly after that, it was bought by Redcliffe and Nina Salaman, friends of Rothenstein, and it remained in their family. *An Exposition of the Law* was exhibited at NEAC in the Winter Exhibition of 1905 and at the Bury Public Art Gallery in 1907. It remained within Rothenstein's family until it was donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1950.

Arts and Antiquities Exhibition five months later should have been equally positive. Listing them under the general heading of 'Religious Work and Study', the reviewer observed:

They are fine types of men that he has chosen; picturesque figures with nothing whatever of the commonplace about them; their attitude is one of rapt attention, when they are at prayer, their faces alight with Socratic intelligence, as they argue together some knotty point of Talmud.<sup>111</sup>

This may perhaps be interpreted as evidence of the reconciliation between the paper and Yiddish culture to which reference was made in the previous Chapter. The paintings themselves, and the review, might be regarded as attempting to bridge the gap between the aspirations of Anglo-Jewry in presenting the Exhibition as part of the Anglo-Jewish discourse, and the immigrant community. Figures from the *Machzike Hadass* were contextualised by the reviewer so as to make them simultaneously part of acceptable English Jewry and its imaginary. Although Rothenstein denied the use of the epithet 'picturesque' in reference to his aims, he would have had no quarrel with terms of 'rapt devotion' and even 'Socratic intelligence'; these accorded with the search for the underlying 'spirit of Israel' which he declared was his aim for the series.

As early as 1904, *In the Spitalfields Synagogue* was acquired by Hugh Lane and in 1908 became part of the collection of the newly opened Municipal Gallery of Art in Dublin.<sup>112</sup> This work seems to have been selected in preference to Rothenstein's own *The Browning Readers*, which had been on display as part of the

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*Jews Mourning in the Synagogue* was exhibited in the NEAC Exhibition of 1906 and was subsequently donated to the National Gallery in 1907.

<sup>111</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 November 1906, Supplement p. iv.

<sup>112</sup> Biographical note App. 1.

initial loan collection of the newly formed Bradford Art Gallery at Cartwright Hall.<sup>113</sup> Lane's decision was in all probability a personal one rather than prompted by any pressure or assistance from Ireland's Jews. Even after some spill over immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe (via England) in and after the 1880s, the Jewish population of Ireland has been estimated at 3,000 out of a total of 3.2 million in 1901.

*Aliens at Prayer* was generally well received by the critics in England, when exhibited at Agnews.<sup>114</sup> The critic of the *Art Journal* referring to it thus:

Among the pictures of real importance were Mr Will Rothenstein's deeply sought 'Aliens at Prayer' the best thing he has given us.<sup>115</sup>

The *Athenaeum* critic responded in several ways exactly as Rothenstein (at least the Rothenstein of *Men and Memories*) would have wanted. Unlike the critic of the *Jewish Chronicle*, he recognized that the artist was seeking to avoid '... a picturesque corner ...' and drew the Rembrandt connections.

'Aliens at Prayer' by Mr Rothenstein, who surely has here surpassed all former efforts. This is not a clever study of praying Jews by someone interested from the outside in a picturesque corner of actual life. The artist has sunk himself in his subject as Rembrandt did and the actual theme suggests that master; but Mr Rothenstein proves his affinity not by reproducing a Rembrandtesque effect of light or texture of pigment but by his sincere and serious interpretation of what he sees. The design has dignity, the drawing character and emphasis without a single forced note.<sup>116</sup>

In 1906, having been turned down for acquisition by the Tate via the Chantrey Bequest, this work was acquired through the Felton Bequest for the National Gallery

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<sup>113</sup> The Browning Readers was exhibited at NEAC in the Summer of 1903. On 31 October 1904, Rothenstein wrote to Butler-Wood, Director of the Gallery, requesting that *The Browning Readers* (subsequently presented to Cartwright Hall in 1911 by Moritz Rothenstein) be sent to Dublin for consideration as an acquisition; on 2 November 1904 he cancelled that instruction, as another of his works had been purchased. Bradford- Archive Ref 68/D88/6/7e.

<sup>114</sup> *Some Examples of the Independent Art of Today*, Agnews, London 1906.

<sup>115</sup> *Art Journal*, 1906, p. 118.

<sup>116</sup> *Athenaeum*, 17 February 1906.



of Victoria in Melbourne by Clausen, its overseas adviser for that year.<sup>117</sup> The Museum archives contain no information about any specific policy guidance or rationale for this particular acquisition. It may have been an extension of an earlier policy of acquiring Victorian works of art.<sup>118</sup> Although Clausen, perhaps, saw it as a way of compensating Rothenstein for the earlier adverse decision of the Tate, in all probability it may simply have been a case of availability of a work, well regarded by contemporary London critics and being available for the right price (£300) at the right time.<sup>119</sup> Frank Gibson, in a generally favourable review of all Clausen choices for the Felton in 1906, said:

William Rothenstein is one of the strongest figure painters in the New English Art Club, and after some heroic struggles, always in the right direction, has undoubtedly found his true avocation, his figure piece *Aliens at Prayer*, which was painted in the east end of London, is a genuine success – a national (sic) composition full of fine drawing and character painting.<sup>120</sup>

In sharp contrast, however, Blamire Young (1862-1935), an artist and art critic, in an article that damned Clausen and almost all of his Felton selections for 1906, felt otherwise:

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<sup>117</sup> Allegedly by [(Sir) Edward] Poynter (1836– 919) on the grounds that the index finger of the right hand was ‘carelessly executed’; Rothenstein argued that was in fact missing: *Men and Memories*, vol. 2 p. 91. The Chantrey Bequest was left by Sir Francis Chantrey on his death in 1841 ‘for the encouragement of British Fine Art in Painting and Sculpture only’. The Chantrey collection was a major part of the Tate Gallery collection when it opened in 1897 and was used to ‘champion Victorian values far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century’. Lambourne, *Victorian Painting*, p. 41. The Felton Bequest was established in 1904 for the benefit of the National Gallery of Victoria by the Will of Arthur Felton (1831-1904) “for the purchase of works of art ancient or modern or antiquities”. A committee of five and an overseas adviser could authorise purchases “that shall be considered to have artistic and educational value and be calculated to raise or improve public taste”. The Bequest was subsequently been used to acquire works both Old and Modern Masters.

<sup>118</sup> Julian Treuherz (ed.), *Hard Times. Social realism in Victorian Art*, London: Lund Humphries in association with Manchester City Art Gallery, 1987, p. 12: ‘The list of social realist paintings acquired early by galleries and museums in Australia is remarkably long.’

<sup>119</sup> Clausen, 6 June 1906: Speaight, *Manuscript Notes – Material for a life of William Rothenstein*, vol. III pp. 121/2 National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>120</sup> For Gibson, see Biographical reference App. 1. *The Melbourne Argus* 13 October 1906. This and all of the following extracts from the *Melbourne Argus* are from *Newspaper*

But the picture by Will Rothenstein, called *Aliens at Prayer* I will write down with all seriousness as quite the worst picture in our gallery, and that is saying a good deal. There are number of students in the life classes that can paint better figures than these. The picture contains three figures, but so tired was the artist, that he painted them from two models. Positively I cannot find a single good word to say of it. It is bad in design, bad in drawing, and in tone and colour beneath contempt. It contains not one single brush stroke to redeem it from this charge of utter worthlessness. Away with it! We will not find houseroom for this kind of pot-boiler, even if it be presented to us for nothing.<sup>121</sup>

The controversy over the entire matter of the Clausen selection continued in letters to the paper for several weeks. The Editor came out among those criticising the selections and a meeting of the Trustees convened to discuss the public dissatisfaction that Clausen was made to shoulder.<sup>122</sup>

What was the situation of Jews in Australia at this time? Jews had been among the first convicts sent to Australia in 1788.<sup>123</sup> In that early period, the place of Other was occupied by the indigenous and easily distinguishable Aborigines. Australia's early Jewish population was regarded as part of the white community. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the question of the Other turned around the threat posed by the influx of cheap Chinese labour – again another easily identified group. This influx however came to an abrupt end with the passing of Immigration Laws in 1901. Having thus been a part of the first white settlers, Jews were not initially regarded in the same light as their co-religionists elsewhere [in England, for example, where their racial identity was called into question at this time], and their participation in the

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*cuttings relating to the Public Library, Museum and National Gallery of Victoria* vol. 5, Melbourne, Library Council of Victoria, 1987 Ref LTM 92.

<sup>121</sup> *Melbourne Argus*, 1 December 1906, *Newspaper cuttings*. vol. 5 p. 173

<sup>122</sup> *Melbourne Argus*, 7 December 1906, *Newspaper cuttings*. vol. 5 p. 175, and 18 December 1906 p. 176.

<sup>123</sup> According to Paul Bartrop, 'Living within the Frontier', in Gilman and Shain eds, *Jews at the Frontier*, p. 91, the first convict ships to arrive in Australia included at least 8 Jews.

population around 1901 – as few as 15,000 out of a total of 3.2 million meant they were statistically insignificant. However, it has been suggested that

During the nineteenth century there was an undertow of everyday anti-Jewish feeling feeding on European stereotypes of Jews.<sup>124</sup>

Certainly in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Jewish immigrants began to arrive from Eastern Europe and Russia, this feeling intensified. Even the rumour that Baron de Hirsch had a plan to settle 500,000 Russian Jews in Australia caused an uproar among both non Jewish and Jewish Australians – the latter presumably fearing for the same loss of position and merging of identity as their Anglo-Jewish counterparts in England in the same period.<sup>125</sup> A cartoon from the Australian magazine *The Bulletin* of 1891 encapsulates these cross currents, satirising the negative reaction to the news by two Jewish Australians, who themselves bear all the hallmarks of the negative stereotypes so often used in anti-Semitic cartoon depictions. It is, however, significant to observe that the attention of the Policeman behind the protagonists has been drawn to a Chinese immigrant in a coolie hat – suggesting that he, rather than the Jews, was still the “Other” of greater concern.

Following its exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1906, at the instigation of Canon Barnett, Jacob Moser, a leading member of the Bradford community, presented *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue* to the National Gallery in 1907.<sup>126</sup> Given Rothenstein’s ambivalence about both his Jewishness and, albeit to a lesser extent, about his provincial origins, it is ironic that it should be one of his Whitechapel

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<sup>124</sup> Jon Stratton, ‘Jews, Race and the White Australian Policy’, in Gilman and Shain eds, *Jews at the Frontier*, p. 319.

<sup>125</sup> For de Hirsch, see Biographical Note App. 1. Stratton, *ibid.* p. 320.

<sup>126</sup> For Moser, Biographical Note App. 1. The picture was accepted by the National Gallery following a formal offer from Cannon Barnett dated 17 February 1907.

paintings and his Bradford Jewish connections that won him the distinction of being the first member of NEAC to have a work in the National collection.

*Reading the Book of Esther* stayed within the Rothenstein family until it was donated to the Manchester City Art Gallery as part of the Charles Rutherford Gift of 1925.

In 1910, *Carrying the Law* was acquired by Sir Lionel Phillips, probably with the help of Sir Hugh Lane, for the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Phillips was one of the Randlords who played a major part in founding the Gallery in the formation of its 1910 foundation core collection.

As a percentage of the total white South African population, Jews were a small minority: 38,101 out of a total of 1,116, 806 in 1904.<sup>127</sup> It was less their presence as an immigrant minority, and more the perceived power and influence wielded by those at the very apogee of the community, that sparked resentment. Milton Shain quotes Hobson, Manchester Guardian correspondent in Johannesburg, whose frequent opinion forming articles focused on the inordinate power and influence of the Johannesburg Jews.

The entire mining industry, with the partial exception of Consolidated Gold Fields, is in their hands, the Dynamite Monopoly, the illicit liquor trade are theirs, they and Rhodes own or control the press, manipulate the stock market, and run the chief commercial business in Johannesburg and Pretoria.<sup>128</sup>

Shain goes on to argue:

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<sup>127</sup> A. A. Dubb, *The Jewish Population of South Africa: The 1991 Sociodemographic Survey* (Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research), Capetown: UCT, 1994, p. 7.

By the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in October 1899, a decidedly ambivalent image of the Jew had been constructed on the diamond fields, the hinterland and on the Witwatersrand. On the one hand, Jews were praised for their loyalty, initiative and enterprise; on the other hand, Jewish fortune-seekers and traders were depicted as exploitative and dishonest. ... an even more sinister image was that of the South African Jew as part of a network of international finance.<sup>129</sup>

Within the first few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both Daniel. C. Boonzaier (1865-1950) with the character Hoggenheimer, and Heinrich Egsdorfer (1853-1915) with his semitically featured “Goldbugs” viciously satirised Jewish financiers in *The Owl*, a weekly magazine, and virulently attacked the arrival of Jewish immigrants.

My previous analysis has highlighted possible readings of Rothenstein’s Whitechapel series, which emphasise the spirituality and dignity of the subjects. In Rothenstein’s writings and interviews his attitude towards Judaism was ambivalent. Even in the 1906 *Jewish Chronicle* interview, there were hints of detachment, of a reluctance to identify himself as being at one with his subjects. But Rothenstein was a painter rather than a writer and it is in this former area that we should be looking for evidence. On the one hand, in these paintings – and just for this brief period –, when confronted with the actuality of deeply held Jewish convictions he found a pictorial language that enabled him not only to express the dignity of those beliefs but to avoid the trap of either sentimentality or stereotype. On the other hand, by ignoring or suppressing many of the supposed visual, racial characteristics of the Jew - the hooked nose, the fleshy lips – and minimising the social or religious dress code, Rothenstein may have been indulging in his own version of Anglicisation. At one and

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<sup>128</sup> ‘Imperialist Judaism in Africa’ The Anglo-Boer War and the image of the Jew in South Africa’, *Jewish Affairs*, Johannesburg, Spring 1999 vol. 54 No 3.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

the same time he acknowledged the difference of his subjects but de-emphasised their alleged distinctiveness. He may have been attempting to depict Englishmen, albeit very poor Englishmen, of the Mosaic persuasion.

Rothenstein's Whitechapel series sought to resolve several conflicting positions. Perhaps the most important was the attempt to invest a specific minority religion – Judaism – with a universal spirituality to combat the inherent hostility of Christianity towards it. The series also attempted to present the distinctive Jewish ritual in a way that would be neither picturesque nor orientalist, with the possible effect that such representation might minimise the charges of alienism levelled against Jews in England at this time. Rothenstein tried to merge specificity of place – the East End of London – with a geographic universalism and the specificity of the period within which he was working with the timelessness of Judaism. It is the inherent tension created by trying to resolve these many polarities that makes this set of images so important in an investigation of the representation of “the Jew”.

**Chapter 7**  
**Mr Wolmark, The Painter of the Ghetto**

The first major British artist to emerge  
from the migrant Jewish community.

*Charles Spencer*<sup>1</sup>

At the height of his fame – in the early part of the twentieth century – Alfred Wolmark was a leading figure of the English avant-garde.

By 1912, when he held his second one man show at the Goupil Gallery, Alfred Wolmark's work was as advanced as that of any painter in England, with this difference that he could already show a surprisingly large body of work astonishing both in the audacity of its colour and the diversity of its execution.<sup>2</sup>

By the time of his death some fifty years later in 1961, his early work was seen as less significant and his creative powers were deemed by critics to have lessened significantly. His output in the first decade of the twentieth century is, however, of particular importance to this study. For Rothenstein the Jewish East End, the locus and inspiration for his Whitechapel paintings, was external and foreign to his everyday life and his beliefs. For the young Wolmark it was his home and its inhabitants were not just subjects for his art, but were his neighbours. This chapter will argue that Wolmark was an 'insider' and that his understanding of and approach to his subjects was radically different to that of Rothenstein. Both Wolmark's early life and his trips as a young man to Cracow combined to provide him with a unique perspective on East End Jewry. As we have seen in Chapter 6, at the turn of the century the so-called Jewish East End was heterogeneous in its composition. The immigrant community was confined within a small, densely populated area. This made it easy for immigrants from different regions of Eastern Europe and Russia to regroup and live together. In socio-religious terms one might suggest that the parts of

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<sup>1</sup> C. Spencer, in S. Tumarkin Goodman ed., *The Immigrant Generations*, p. 48.

the environment within which Wolmark lived as a teenager may not have been that different from that which he encountered on his two extended trips to Cracow. The similarities may have been as important as the differences.

Alfred Aaron Wolmark came to England as a young child and subsequently spent several years in the East End – hence his positioning by Spenser and others as the forerunner of the pre-First World War group of Jewish immigrant (or first generation) artists, who were subsequently to emerge from that part of London. Wolmark and these successors shared and were influenced by some or all of a series of common traits in their early childhood and education. They were either born in Eastern Europe/Russia, where they spent their early infancy, or in England to recently arrived immigrant parents. They were educated in schools, where Anglicisation through education was the order of the day. They were in varying degrees affected by the clash between socio-religious values, brought from Eastern Europe and Russia and subsequently retained by their parents, and the different value systems of both the indigenous Jewish community and the host English community.

#### From Eastern Europe to the East End and back again

I am very much a product of this country.<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding Wolmark's views on his Englishness as he looked back from old age, his early life seems to have been as much marked by his East European background. Wolmark was born in Warsaw in December 1876.<sup>4</sup> His autobiographical

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<sup>2</sup> A. D'Offay, *Alfred Wolmark*, Fine Art Society Catalogue, London, 26 October - 13 November 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Wolmark, *The Times*, (1961).

<sup>4</sup> For some of the background information contained in this section I am indebted to the research undertaken for his unpublished MSS on Wolmark by Peter Risdon (henceforth



remarks indicate that in 1883 his family moved to England and settled somewhere in Devon.<sup>5</sup> Most Jewish immigrants arriving in London in the post-1880 period settled at least initially in the East End. Those who arrived at the Northern ports and did not make their way to London tended to settle along the corridor from Hull/Grimsby – the main ports of entry – to Liverpool – the main port for transmigration to America. The Wolmarks' decision to settle in the South West of England, though unusual in terms of these wider settlement patterns, was not totally aberrant. There had been a recorded Jewish presence in that area for more than one hundred and fifty years.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the social, economic and/or personal motives for the Wolmark family's move from Poland to South West England, it would seem possible that Alfred's father, who is reputed to have been a religious man, would have found a Synagogue environment within which to worship that might have been broadly familiar to him.

There is no definitive evidence pinpointing the date of the family's subsequent move to the East End of London. At the latest it must have been in 1894, when the family address is known to have been 65 Hanbury Street in the heart of London's Jewish East End.<sup>7</sup> Between 1894 and 1900 Alfred and his family seem to have led

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Risdon), with whom I worked and shared information for the period to 1914. [The latest exhibition, planned by the author, *Rediscovering Wolmark: a pioneer of British Modernism*, Ben Uri Gallery and Hull, Ferens Art Gallery, 2004, includes a catalogue of most of the works discussed here, and colour illustrations of the most important ones. (the supervisor)]

<sup>5</sup> Wolmark, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> The Plymouth Synagogue, which opened in 1762, is the oldest, still functioning Ashkenazi Synagogue in England. (There are records referring to the establishment of a Jewish Burial Ground as early as 1744). Other Synagogues were opened in Exeter (1763), Falmouth (1766) and Penzance (1768). Further fully-fledged synagogues or smaller places of worship emerged and flourished in some of these towns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cemetery records – including those relating to one discovered in Truro – corroborate the indications provided by Plymouth of a Jewish presence in the South West certainly dating back at least to the early decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The records of these Synagogues reveal that many of the leading Ministers and officials of these congregations were of German or Polish origin. Evelyn Friedlander, *The Jews of Devon and Cornwall*, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Peyton Skipworth, *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) pp. 1100/1101.

that somewhat nomadic existence in the area that was typical of many immigrants: they are recorded living at four different addresses.<sup>8</sup> Between 1899 and 1900 Alfred moved to Kilburn in North West London, returning in 1900 to live with his family in Tredegar Square, Bow, a somewhat more affluent neighbourhood outside the area of mass concentration of immigrant Jews. By 1903 Alfred was again working from a studio in Kilburn.<sup>9</sup> In July of that year he went to Cracow, where he remained until March 1905.<sup>10</sup> On his return he moved into Claremont Studios, Paddington, the address quoted for his Royal Academy exhibits for that and subsequent years to 1908. He made a second trip to Poland from October 1905 to February 1906.<sup>11</sup>

What emerges from this information is the relatively short time that Wolmark may actually have spent in the East End – perhaps as little as six years (based on known addresses) and no more than sixteen years (assuming the move from Devon came a year after the family’s arrival there). This evidence is presented not to refute the potentially important influence that the East End – as a particular cultural environment/moment – had on his work, but rather to indicate for how long and from what geographic vantage point Alfred was directly a part of it. It was not just the length of time he may have spent in the East End but the combination of that with his Polish background and, as we will examine later, his return there that provided the *ostjüdisch* background which Wolmark was to mine so effectively in his early work.

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<sup>8</sup> It would seem, that the Wolmark family resided at 3 Fisher’s Alley from July 1895 (Royal Academy Schools Archives; Record no 1062) and then from 1896 to 1899 at 63 Leman St (according to a Whitechapel Library ticket – Risdon). In 1900, the family moved to 7 Tredegar Square, Bow. In Russell and Lewis’ map of *Jewish East London* of 1899, Tredegar Square was only just within the area surveyed, positioned well to the north east of the area of mass concentration. It was classified as having a Jewish population of between 5% and 25%.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Brondesbury Villas, Willesden. Royal Academy Exhibition records.

<sup>10</sup> Risdon.

One of the most significant events in this early period of Wolmark's life was his meeting in 1898 with Anna Wilmersdoerffer, a wealthy German émigrée, whose patronage and friendship he enjoyed until 1910/1911.<sup>12</sup> Born in Augsburg in 1859, Anna came with her younger brothers and sister to join their father in England in 1878. Although she spent more than thirty years in England, she was never naturalised and in 1915 she and her sister chose to be repatriated.

Anna Wilmersdoerffer was Alfred's early mentor. She provided him with funds, commissions and sales, assisted in his education, was probably involved in his first move from the East End to Kilburn, arranged his first one man exhibition at the Bruton Gallery in 1905 and on his return from Poland provided him with his Paddington studio, very close to where she lived with her sister. She also promoted his work and reputation by writing 'articles for journals in praise of him, both in German and English'.<sup>13</sup> One of these was an extended and illustrated article in October 1908, *Ost und West*.<sup>14</sup> This was of particular significance because of the importance of the journal in which it appeared. The editorial policy of *Ost und West* was to

reverse Jewish "assimilation" in Western and central Europe by constructing an ethnic-national identity that included East European or Eastern forms of Jewishness.<sup>15</sup>

In order to achieve this, much of its effort – especially in its early years – was directed at presenting a counterbalancing positive image of Ostjuden and

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<sup>11</sup> Risdon.

<sup>12</sup> 'A Memory of Anna Wilmersdoerffer', in *Alfred Wolmark 1877-1961*, (Kingston upon Hull: Ferens Art Gallery, 1975), unpaginated. This article was unsigned but it is believed to have been written by her nephew, Joseph (Risdon).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The magazine *Ost und West, illustrierte Monatschrift für modernes Judentum* was published in Germany between 1901 and 1923.

prior to Buber's translations of Hasidic tales, *Ost und West* was the largest transmitter of Eastern Jewish literature, art, folklore and folk song to the Western Jewish public.<sup>16</sup>

The early editions included features on specific Jewish artists – Ury (1861-1931) in February, Lilien (1874-1925) in July and Kichienewsky in August 1901. In February 1902 Martin Buber and Lesser Ury wrote on the question 'Is a Jewish art possible today'. In 1904 Georg Herman reviewed the work of Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) illustrated with works from the Cassirer Gallery in Berlin, Herman Struck's (1876-1944) work was reviewed in September and that of Isaac Snowman in October. In the winter of 1905 Ilya Gunzburg discussed Jewish National Art. In December 1907 Alfred Nossig's catalogue introduction to the *Ausstellung jüdischer Künstler* was reproduced in *Ost und West* together with 22 illustrations of works from the Exhibition.<sup>17</sup> In the January 1908 edition of *Ost und West* Kutna reviewed this Exhibition at length – with a further 13 illustrations. His piece was followed by extracts from reviews in the German (primarily Berlin) press. The exhibition was, according to its organizers, an attempt to answer the perennial question about the specificity of Jewish art – a question it sought to elucidate by bringing together one hundred and forty-seven paintings by sixty Jewish painters (all but seven of whom of whom were alive and working at the time of the exhibition).<sup>18</sup> The organizers stressed that their aim was not to suggest a difference based on religious but rather on ethnographic and historical-cultural grounds.<sup>19</sup> The range of artists included some, for

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<sup>15</sup> D. Brenner, *Marketing Identities*, p. 15. This work contains a full discussion of the history of *Ost und West* and its role in the promotion of an alternative view of Ostjuden.

<sup>16</sup> Brenner, *Marketing Identities*, p. 45. Martin Buber (1878-1965) Jewish philosopher and theologian, was editor of *Die Welt*, the paper of the Zionist Organization and co-founder of the Jüdischer Verlag publishing house.

<sup>17</sup> Galerie für alte und neue Kunst. Berlin November-December 1907.

<sup>18</sup> 'Oder keimt vielleicht hier oder dort, bewusst oder unbewusst, eine spezifisch jüdische Kunst?' *Ausstellung jüdischer Künstler*, 1907, p. vi.

<sup>19</sup> G. Kutna, *Ost und West*, (January 1908), p. 19.

example Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), whose Jewish origins appeared to have had little or no impact on their work, and others, such Moritz Oppenheim (to whom we shall be returning in more detail later), for whom Jewish themes were a central part of their total oeuvre. Forty-five of the artists represented were listed as being based in Western Europe and fifteen in Eastern Europe (if one includes Vienna in that rubric and Jerusalem as it was at the time the home of the Polish born Samuel Hirszenberg [1866-1908]). Extreme caution needs to be exercised if one seeks to use such a simple and perforce crude geographic classification to shed light on underlying differences between the representations of the Jew in western Jewish culture when compared with representations within an ostjüdisch culture. In his seminal article 'In Quest of the Jewish Style in the Era of the Russian Revolution', Avram Kampf discusses the issue of a Jewish style within Russian artistic practice in the latter half of the nineteenth century and some of these arguments may be applied in some measure to the early work of Wolmark.<sup>20</sup> Kampf's article also outlines the very important role played by Stasov in positively encouraging Jewish art around that time and details the importance of the ethnographic and similar expeditions in focussing attention on folk art and especially Jewish folk art in the early twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Kampf argues for the importance of Jewish themes in the work of some of the younger Russian artists and although evidence of the use of Jewish themes and Jewish folklore motifs may not be sufficient to permit us to talk of a Jewish school, it is strong enough to point to the emergence of some common traits and subjects shared by some ostjüdisch painters of this period. One must, however, be careful to avoid interpreting nostalgia for a past tradition and a quasi-folkloric treatment of

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<sup>20</sup> *Journal of Jewish Art*, vol. 5 (1978) pp. 48-75.

<sup>21</sup> Biographical Note App. 2.

subjects as being exclusively part of an ostjüdisch discourse. Alphonse Lévy (1845-1918), the French Jewish painter and illustrator, who

... made his reputation and it was a considerable one in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a purveyor of Jewish customs and folklore... [Lévy] was best known for his lithographs and illustrations of Jewish family life and religious practice in Alsace, scenes already old-fashioned and replete with nostalgia when he made them.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, looking for a distinction between west and east based on style or treatment/mood needs to be handled with extreme caution. For every pair of contrasts between say the emotion laden *Hear O Israel* by the Polish Pilichowski and the much more restrained work of the English Rothenstein, there are pairings, where the differences are far less obvious – for example *Jewish Heder* by the French artist Edouard Brandon (1831-1897) and *In the Beth Hamidrash* by the Viennese artist Isidor Kaufmann, whose works on Ostjuden are discussed below.<sup>23</sup> However, we can usefully theorise in terms of a westjüdisch – acculturated, acculturating, inclusive – discourse (as exemplified by the Anglicisation projects of Anglo-Jewry) and an ostjüdisch – traditional, unassimilated, exclusive – discourse. By using the different vantage points offered by these two positions when reading the works of different artists one can obtain further insight into their location within the cultural spectrum of the period. An appreciation of this potential distinction between Eastern and Western European Jewish artists is important to the reception of Wolmark's depiction of Jews in the first decade of the twentieth century. I would propose that his representations – whether they depicted Polish Jews painted during his extended stays in that country or immigrant Jews in London's East End – are more readily comprehensible with an understanding of this ostjüdisch discourse than if one relies

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<sup>22</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Starting with the Self', in L. Nochlin and T. Garb eds, *The Jew in the Text*, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Pictorial references App.1 Ch. 7.

solely on the Anglo-Jewish discourse that seems appropriate for Rothenstein. Although Wolmark came from Warsaw and not some tiny village within the hinterland of Eastern Europe, he and his family might legitimately be classified as Ostjuden, when compared with the Anglo-German background of the Rothensteins. This would therefore have been a very potent point of reference for the young artist and one which must have been reinforced by – if not indeed as some commentators have suggested have been the motive for – his visits to Poland.<sup>24</sup> This point was perceptively picked up by the art critic of the *Jewish World* when he said that Wolmark's *The Disputation* represented 'a mixed atmosphere of Poland, the Pale and Whitechapel.'<sup>25</sup>

In 1908 Anna Wilmersdoerffer wrote an extended, illustrated article on Alfred Wolmark for *Ost und West* under the pseudonym A. May and it was she who said of him and his work that 'he is one of the soul prophets of the ghetto'.<sup>26</sup> This hagiographic piece took as its starting point the 1906 Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition and then ranged over much of the artist's oeuvre up to and beyond that date. Given the place of this journal at this time within the realms of European Jewish culture, such an article could only have enhanced the reputation of her protégé just as his career was taking off. One must, however, remember to contextualise this exposure within the editorial policy of the journal and its Germanophone readership; it was outside the mainstream of the Anglo-Jewish discourse.

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<sup>24</sup> 'He returned to Poland in 1903 and lived there for three years *to steep himself still further in the old ways*'. (This writer's emphasis). Charles Spenser, Vivian Lipmann and Muriel Emanuel, in S. Tumarkin Goodman ed., *The Immigrant Generations*, p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> *Jewish World* (10 May 1907) p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> 'Er gehört zu den Seelenkündern des Ghettos.' *Ost und West*, 8th year of publication, Issue 10, pp. 599-606. Risdon's research confirms that Anna Wilmersdoerffer was the writer of this piece.

Although the relationship between Alfred and Anna foundered in 1910, around the time that Alfred met and married Bessie Tapper, there would appear to be no evidence to suggest that the two events were connected. The breakdown was attributed to differences of opinion as to his artistic direction and a need for Alfred, who was by then in his early thirties, to establish his independence.<sup>27</sup> In order to ensure that her family continued in their support, Anna kept any word of the breakdown with Alfred from them and it would seem she kept in contact with him and his wife at least until her departure from England in 1915.<sup>28</sup>

Wolmark's initial artistic training could not have been further removed from the 'foreign' influences of his early life. The records of the Royal Academy Schools indicate that he enrolled in July 1895 at the age of 17 and left in July 1900.<sup>29</sup> In 1896 he won a Silver Medal First Prize (in the section 'drawing of a statue or group').<sup>30</sup> At this time the Royal Academy, presided over by Lord Leighton (1830-1896), was the centre of high Victorianism in art with many of the Holland Park set playing an active role in the teaching there. When Leighton died in 1896 he was succeeded first by Sir John Everett Millais (1829-1896) and then on the latter's death a few months later in the same year by Sir Edward Poynter (1836-1919). Alfred's early formal artistic training was overseen by many of the leading figures from that era. The Professor of Painting during his time at the Schools was Sir William Richmond (1842-1921), best known for his portraiture and for his mosaics for the ceiling of St Paul's Cathedral. Among the Visitors (short term teachers) listed in the Annual

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<sup>27</sup> 'A Memory of Anna Wilmersdoerffer' op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Anna Wilmersdoerffer died in Munich in March 1919.

<sup>29</sup> Record no 1062, Royal Academy Schools Archives.



Reports of the Keeper of the Schools during the period of Wolmark's studentship were some of the key names of the Victorian art establishment.<sup>31</sup> Solomon J Solomon, who as we have seen in the previous chapter was an early mentor to William Rothenstein, was a Visitor in 1896, the year in which he was elected as an ARA, and William Rothenstein's friend Charles Shannon (1863-1937) was a Visitor in 1898 and 1899.

In looking for artistic resources that had a bearing on Wolmark's early output, both contemporary critics and the artist himself towards the end of his life talked of the importance of Rembrandt.

His youthful pictures were dark in tone and influenced by Rembrandt, the only painter he remarked who ever had influenced him.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst Wolmark did not, like Rothenstein, have a personal collection of Rembrandt's works, he would have had access to the same public collections and books on the Dutch Master as were discussed in the previous chapter. There is evidence indicating that he went to Amsterdam in 1898 to view the Rembrandt Exhibition with funds provided the Wilmersdoerffer family.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most important work in Wolmark's early oeuvre to demonstrate this link with Rembrandt was *The Rabbis/Waiting for the Tenth* (Fig. 43) painted in 1900 and exhibited (No 663) at the Royal Academy in 1903.<sup>34</sup> *The Rabbis* depicts a group of nine, mainly elderly, Jews gathered around a table. An empty chair with a tallith draped across it

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<sup>30</sup> The record indicates that the award was made to Aaron Wolmark. The young artist had not yet adopted Alfred as his preferred first name.

<sup>31</sup> William Orchardon (1832-1910), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), Val Prinsep (1838-1904, succeeded Richmond as Professor of Painting in 1900), Marcus Stone (1840-1921), Luke Fildes (1844-1927), Andrew Gow (1848-1920) and John Waterhouse (1849-1917).

<sup>32</sup> Wolmark, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> 'A Memory of Anna Wilmersdoerffer', op.cit.

<sup>34</sup> Pictorial reference App. 2 Ch. 7.

might indicate that a tenth person had left or was awaited – hence the sub-title sometimes attached to the work *Waiting for the Tenth* (ten being the required number in Jewish practice to make up a formal congregation for prayers). *The Jewish Chronicle*, reviewing this work as part of its critique of the *Jewish Arts and Antiquities Exhibition* of 1906, interpreted it thus:

It shows the interior of a Beth Hamidrash. A number of Rabbis are seated round a table, some poring over Talmudic tones, others discussing some difficult question of Jewish law. The faces of these devoted, old-fashioned students are typical, their figures are drawn with force and distinction. They are habited in Polish gabardines. The red tallis (sic) bags lying about on the table and the tallis thrown over one of the chairs, suggest that the morning service has been concluded. On the raised reading desk at the far end of the hall the lights are still burning.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the narrative explanation for the use of the device of the missing participant, it does give a sense of tension to the work. Notwithstanding the main title and the *Jewish Chronicle*'s comment, there is no reason why all of the subjects would have been rabbis – indeed it would be rare for this to have been the case. (In reality, of course, the subjects were almost certainly poor Jews from the East End, who were paid to dress in Jewish religious attire). Inspection suggests that there may have been no more than five models used in the group. (The seated figure on the left, who anchors the composition, also reappears fifth from left in a different pose. The same model was also used in a single figure composition entitled *The Rabbi* which was one of the featured illustrations in a 1911 short review of Wolmark's work in *Ost und West*.<sup>36</sup> Although all the figures are bearded, four of them – possibly all the same model – are much younger than the others. Wolmark was not, even in this

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<sup>35</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, (9 November 1906) Supplement p. iv.

<sup>36</sup> There are possibly three versions of work by Wolmark with this title – one of these was illustrated in *Ost und West*, (June 1911) p. 525. The dating on the painting is unclear and could be read as '99 or '09. The earlier date would place the depictions of the same figure in the two different paintings close in time. However, if it were the 1909 version that might tie

somewhat traditional work with its heavy emphasis on study and the written word, tied to the linkage 'Jews at prayer equals old men'. Unlike some of Wolmark's later works from this period, which will be reviewed below, this work is, like the paintings by Rothenstein discussed in the previous chapter, located within the closed environment of a Synagogue. The overall composition, the treatment of the individual subjects and its tonal values are all suggestive of a Rembrandtian influence. The work was well received by the *Magazine of Art* in its May review of that year's Royal Academy Exhibition.

In this category [religious painting] should be named the large work called the Rabbis by Mr Alfred Wolmark. It is a great group of foreign Jewish worshippers imbued with such religious fervour as to carry conviction and realised with as skill so strong in character, drawing and composition as to ensure attention in the future<sup>37</sup>.

Both this and the *Jewish Chronicle* review quoted earlier make references to the foreign-ness of the subjects. Since this work pre-dated Wolmark's visits to Poland, these comments would seem to be based on a West End perception of East End Jews. Wolmark was seen as having depicted subjects, who were different from 'us', the Anglo-Jews.

Wolmark denied any other major influences apart from Rembrandt (indeed going so far as to claim in the 1961 *Times* article that his own 'discovery' of colour around 1910 owed nothing to Paris or the Fry exhibitions). There are, however, both stylistic and thematic traits in his work that point to another 'related' artist as an early influence. The presence and importance in the turn of the century world of Jewish culture and art of Josef Israels was discussed in the previous chapter. Wolmark as a

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in with the reference in the article to 'a recent exhibition of Wolmark's work in a Berlin art gallery'.

<sup>37</sup> *Magazine of Art*, (May 1903) p. 387.

young student and then practising artist would have had ample opportunity to visit the exhibitions in London at which the latter's work was displayed. He may also have seen it during his time in Europe and especially during his visit to Amsterdam in 1898. As I indicated in the previous chapter, it is difficult to distinguish between the direct influences of Rembrandt, those of Rembrandt via Israels and those of Israels himself. However, there is one pair of paintings comparison of which demonstrates the possibility of this linkage and might establish the argument not just in this specific case but in the wider context. In 1883 Josef Israels painted *When One Grows Old*.<sup>38</sup> Despite initial negative reception in some quarters, it became one of his most widely exhibited and discussed works. Probably between 1903 and 1905 Wolmark also painted *Reading the Talmud* (Fig. 44).<sup>39</sup> The poses of the figures in the two works, their placement in front of a fire framed by the right hand upright and high over-mantel of the fireplace, the disposition of articles around that fireplace, the stone floors, with a cloth rag under the feet of the woman and the rug under the foot of the Rabbi, and the palette used in both works are all features which could lead one to suggest that the young English painter may have aware of this Dutch piece as he created his own. Although the woman in Israels' work is warming her hands over a low fire and the Rabbi in the Wolmark is holding his hands over what may be a book of study or prayer, there is also a commonality of feeling about the two pieces and the sympathetic examination of the physical frailty of old age. There is also a very human note in the Wolmark – close inspection suggests that the Rabbi may not be

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<sup>38</sup> Pictorial reference App.1 Ch. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Pictorial reference App. 1 Ch.7.

This title was quoted by Barry Fealdman, art critic of the *Jewish Chronicle*, in an article on the discovery of five 'lost' Wolmarks in the *Jewish Chronicle* (June 18<sup>th</sup> 1982). It is possible that this work was in fact *A Rabbi Reading* exhibited in the Whitechapel Jewish Art and Antiquities Exhibition of 1906 on loan from Ernest Wilmers of the Wilmersdoerfer family. A work with this latter title had been exhibited earlier at Wolmark's one man show at the Bruton Gallery in 1905, which presented works 'recently executed in Krakow (sic)'.

reading, but may have fallen asleep. This almost gently humorous touch recurs in other of Wolmark's works and is a point of contrast with the earnest intensity of Rothenstein. It seems to demonstrate the degree to which Wolmark felt at one with his subjects, in contrast to the outsider position that imbues Rothenstein's works. This familiarity with and comfort in the milieu is a key quality in Wolmark's work to which we shall return in the analyses that follow. Although the palette remains resolutely Rembrandtian, unlike *The Rabbis*, which was set within a closed area, the light source for this work is a small window located in the extreme upper right hand corner. The use of clearly defined sources of light from windows and by implication links to the outside world is another feature of Wolmark's handling, which distinguishes it from Rothenstein's use of the closed environment and which we will follow in the subsequent analysis.

Wolmark's English art training was counter-balanced by his two extended trips to Poland. The first of these began in 1903 when Alfred went not to Warsaw, the city of his birth, but to Cracow, at that time perhaps the leading art centre in Poland. The records of the Cracow School of Fine Art do not list Wolmark as attending during this time, which would seem to indicate he regarded himself not as a student in need of further formal training but as a practising artist. In the light of his early upbringing in the East End of London and his two visits to Cracow, I would argue that Wolmark's oeuvre in this early period is better understood with an *ostjüdisch* rather than a purely Anglo-Jewish perspective.

Cracow, just after the turn of the century, provided the young artist with a complex socio-religious environment as well as exposure to artistic resources outside

the range of his previous Royal Academy training or the Western European resources we have discussed. There had been Jews in Cracow and the then neighbouring town of Kazimierz from as early as the twelfth century. Although in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Church regulations required the absolute separation of Jewish and Christian dwellings, the Jews of Cracow were not forced into a formal ghetto. At the end of the fifteenth century, the Jews of Cracow were made to move to Kazimierz, where, domiciled within the historical Jewish quarter, they then comprised more than 20% of the total population. Notwithstanding this enforced move a few Jews remained in Cracow and the enlarged Jewish community of Kazimierz retained very close trading links with that city. In 1800 Kazimierz was incorporated into Cracow and gradually the restrictions on Jewish places of dwelling were relaxed, culminating in 1867 with the granting of equal civil rights to the Jews by the then ruling Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Thus, although the old Jewish quarter of Kazimierz was still the centre of Jewish life in Cracow, by the time Wolmark arrived just after the turn of the century he could have encountered and lived among Jews in other areas.<sup>40</sup>

In religious terms, the Jews of Cracow were not formed into one single community all practising the same version of Orthodoxy. In the nineteenth century Jewish observance there was influenced by the conflicting trends of the Hassidic and the Reform movements. Of the seven principal Synagogues functioning in Cracow at the turn of the twentieth century the longest established was the Old Synagogue, erected in Kazimierz at the beginning of the fifteenth century and the most recent the

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<sup>40</sup> Risdon's research, based on Wolmark's correspondence with Anna Wilmersdoerffer indicates that on his arrival Wolmark stayed in Kazimierz (10 Starowiślna) for about nine months. He then moved to 9 Rynek (in the City centre) and subsequently to ulica

Reform Synagogue, which was inaugurated in 1862. There were also numerous smaller prayer houses dotted around the city.

It has been suggested that Wolmark 'returned to Poland in 1903 and lived there for three years to steep himself still further in the old ways'.<sup>41</sup> If this was indeed his motivation, he undertook it in the sophisticated, urban environment of a University city, whose heterogeneous Jewish population was already partially integrated. This was not a return to the *shtetl* of popular tradition.

In looking for artistic resources that Wolmark might have discovered as a result of his time in Cracow and which may have had a bearing on his subsequent output, I would suggest three main areas merit investigation – Jewish folk art, Jan Matejko and his immediate successors at the Cracow School of Fine Art and the works of Moritz Oppenheim, Isidor Kaufmann and Maurycy Gottlieb.

In 1912 the Russian writer Shloime AnSki (1863-1920) organised the first Jewish ethnographic expedition into the towns and villages of Volhynia and Podolia. In 1916, spurred on by AnSki's successful discoveries and financed by the Jewish Ethnographic Society, the Jewish artists Isaac Ryback (1897-1935) and El Lissitzky (1890-1941) started to explore synagogue art and architecture along the Dnieper River, again returning with evidence of a major treasure trove of folk art. Neither AnSki's work nor that of Ryback and Lissitzky could themselves have been an influence on the early Wolmark, as he had completed the Jewish subject period of his

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Mikołajska. On his second visit he stayed first on the South side of the city (19 Wolska) before moving back over the Vistula (23 Studencka).

output and was back in England long before AnSki even left on his first trip. However, what is important is that they had uncovered, for a wider public, evidence of pre-existing artistic activity among the ostjüdisch *shtetl* communities. This would of course have been known to those Jews who had family links with such areas, were raised there or had visited them. There are no records to indicate that the Warsaw-born Alfred Wolmark ventured into the isolated areas to the East visited by AnSki or his followers. His Bruton Gallery Exhibition of 1905 included seven works noted as being linked with the Tatras, which indicates the possibility of a visit to that region to the south of Cracow. His correspondence with Anna Wilmersdoerffer, however, makes no allusions to such a trip. Nevertheless, it is possible that during his time in Cracow Wolmark may have been exposed to work similar to that uncovered by AnSki and others and that such work may have become, during his 1903-06 period in Poland, part of his personal artistic heritage.

Jan Matejko (1838-1893) was one of the most influential artists working in Poland in the latter half of the nineteenth century. After his initial art training at the Cracow School of Fine Arts, Matejko spent two years in Munich and Vienna before returning to spend the rest of his life based in Cracow. In 1873 he was appointed Director of the School, a post which he held until his death twenty years later. Despite this long term residence in Cracow, Matejko received recognition and awards across Europe throughout his life. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that the part of his oeuvre for which he was most famous concentrated on historical paintings that sought to glorify his native Poland through the depiction of key moments in her past. Typical of such works are *The Prussian Tribute* and

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<sup>41</sup> Muriel Emanuel, in S. Turkman Goodman ed., *The Immigrant Generations* (New York: The Jewish Museum) p 48.



*Kościuszko at Racławice* both of which were in the possession of the National Gallery of Cracow before Wolmark's arrival.<sup>42</sup> Painted on a very large scale these multi-figure compositions were intended to create and reinforce a feeling of Polish identity and nationality. Matejko was a major influence on the generations of Polish artists who were his contemporaries and successors.

Gottlieb's biographers all concur that the turning point in the young artist's career was his encounter with the works of Matejko in 1873.<sup>43</sup>

Gottlieb forms part of an artistic trio of potential influence on the young Wolmark, which also included the German Moritz Oppenheim and the Austrian Isidor Kaufmann. I am not suggesting that these three should be viewed as representing any sort of artistic continuum, but rather that they may be taken as points of reference in the development of a lineage of Jewish painters in nineteenth-century Europe. Their works may have impacted in different ways on the artistic development of Alfred Wolmark and it seems likely that he would have had more opportunity for exposure to them from the vantage point of turn-of-the-century Cracow than from London.

Moritz Oppenheim, who was born in the Judengasse in Hannau in 1800 and died in 1882, is sometimes referred to as the 'first Jewish painter'. Both as a painter of scenes from the Old Testament and as a portraitist he revealed an interest in Jewish subjects. He painted many of the leading Jewish figures of his day including the poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), and two of the main protagonists for Jewish emancipation in Germany, Ludwig Börne (1786-1837) and Dr Gabriel Riesser (1806-1863). As a portraitist he is, however, best known as a painter of the

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<sup>42</sup> Pictorial references App. 1 Ch. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Jerzy Malinowski, 'Maurycy Gottlieb: A Polish Perspective', in Nehama Guralnik (ed), *In the Flower of Youth*, (Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1991), p. 95.

Rothschilds. He also acted as an art adviser and dealer to various members of the family – from 1855 to 1863 he subordinated his own artistic production to that role.<sup>44</sup> For the young Jewish artists who followed, the Oppenheim/Rothschild link demonstrated the possibility of finding financial stability and artistic support from within the Jewish community.

Oppenheim's reputation as the 'first Jewish painter' rests, however, not on these biblical scenes or portraits, but on his Jewish genre paintings brought together in his magnum opus, his *Bilder aus dem altjüdischen Familienleben*. This series of illustrations was first produced as a set of six in 1866. The artist added to these in successive editions, so that in its final 1882 state it comprised twenty plates. These publications enjoyed great popularity and the images they contained were very widely promulgated both in the artist's lifetime and thereafter in a wide variety of media ranging from single sheets to post cards and as decorations on china plates and similar objects. It is this very popularity and easy availability that make it possible that the young Wolmark became familiar with at least this part of Oppenheim's oeuvre during his time in Poland.

The representation of Jewish ritual was by no means an innovation created by Oppenheim and Heinrich Keller, the Frankfurt publisher who originally suggested the project. Earlier examples include Calmet's *Dictionary of the Bible* (London, 1732), Paul Christian Kirchner's *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1734), and

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<sup>44</sup> Annette Weber, 'Moritz Daniel Oppenheim and the Rothschilds', in Georg Heuberger and Anton Merck (eds), *Moritz Daniel Oppenheim. Die Entdeckung des jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins in der Kunst*, (Frankfurt: Jüdisches Museum, 2000), p. 173.

Bodenschatz' *Kirchliche Verfassung der Juden*, (Erlangen, 1748).<sup>45</sup> Many of the earlier series were executed by non-Jewish artists and presented Jewish rituals in the context of depictions of 'other' religions that deviated from an assumed norm of Christianity. In contrast the Oppenheim works form an autonomous series created by a Jew and accompanied by an explanatory text by Leopold Stein, a former Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt. Andreas Gotzmann has argued that the series should not be taken as 'a more or less realistic portrayal of Jewish life ... a nostalgic glorification of the past' but rather as 'part of an internal search for Jewish identity on the construction of an honourable past as a guarantee for the future'.<sup>46</sup> Taking a lead from Richard Cohen he goes on to suggest that the more limited, but thematically similar, series by the English artist Simeon Solomon may have provided the impetus for the publication of Oppenheim's work.<sup>47</sup> The Solomon series first appeared in the 9 August 1862 edition of *Once a Week* and then again in 1866 (on an individual basis) in *The Leisure Hour*, 'a family journal of instruction and recreation' published by the Religious Tract Society. It is possible that Keller knew of the 1862 publication, but it seems more likely that he was following in the footsteps of some of the earlier examples described above.

What is important about both of these series for Wolmark is not so much the images themselves but the fact that their publication made such subjects legitimate for succeeding Jewish artists. Whereas the almost historical/Biblical figures in some of Rothenstein's works and in early Wolmark images (as we shall see) derive their

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<sup>45</sup> Copies of these illustrations and fuller details are contained in Alfred Rubens' *Jewish Iconography* at the Jewish Museum, London.

<sup>46</sup> Andreas Gotzmann, 'Traditional Jewish Life Revisited: Moritz Daniel Oppenheim's Vision of Modern Jewry', in Georg Heuberger and Anton Merck (eds), *Moritz Daniel Oppenheim. Die Entdeckung des jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins in der Kunst*, (Frankfurt: Jüdisches Museum, 2000), pp. 232 ff.

artistic legitimacy from Rembrandt, it is difficult to conceive of some of the later Wolmark works, which will be discussed further in this section, existing without the examples quoted above.

Isidor Kaufmann (1853-1921) was born in Arad (now in Rumania), and moved to Vienna in 1875. Because of his long-term residence there and his membership of the Wiener Künstlerhaus from 1888 until his death, he is regarded as a Viennese artist. Given the popularity of Kaufmann's work within European Jewish circles Wolmark might well have become acquainted with it during his time in Poland. What makes this more likely is the fact that for several years from 1894 Kaufmann travelled and worked extensively in Eastern Europe and is for example known to have spent time in Cracow in 1896.<sup>47</sup> Many of Kaufmann's portrayals of Eastern European Jews were sanitized, romanticised and sentimentalised representations of the *shtetl* that masked the real poverty and deprivation of so much of real life in such communities. Kaufmann was at times in those very parts of Eastern Europe from which Jews were fleeing in their thousands not simply for politico-religious reasons but to escape from their extreme economic deprivation. Yet little of this appears in Kaufmann's work. The world he depicts often seems to have been inhabited by clean and tidy children (*A Difficult Passage in the Talmud*), expensively clad congregants (*Mourning the Dead*), teachers in well ordered surroundings (*Sabbath Day*).<sup>48</sup> There is little evidence of poverty, disorder and squalor. Kaufmann presented his viewers with an idealised picture of the 'old world', one that could be regarded – from afar – with warm nostalgia and even set up as an example of the virtues of traditional

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<sup>47</sup> Wolmark, *op. cit.*, referring to Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, pp.160-62.

<sup>48</sup> G. Tobias Natter, *Bilder des Wiener Malers. Isidor Kaufmann* (Vienna: Jüdisches Museum, 1995) pp.341 et seq

Jewish practice to be contrasted with westernised, so-called orthodoxy or its even more iconoclastic offspring Reform Judaism. Kaufmann's representations from Eastern Europe fit in precisely with the aims of *Ost und West*, providing models of Jews and Jewish practice to be emulated rather than denigrated.

Kaufmann's works from this period were exhibited in the annual Wiener Künstlerhaus Exhibitions as well as being reproduced in *Ost und West*, in connection with the 1907 *Ausstellung jüdischer Künstler*. Kaufmann's expeditions among the Ostjuden and his sympathetic portrayals provide another resource for Wolmark to incorporate in his own work among the Jews of Cracow during his time there and among the immigrant Ostjuden of the East End to whom he was to return after 1906.

Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879) was born in Drohobycz, Poland (which was also the birthplace of Samuel Hirszenberg (1866-1908) and E. M. Lilien) and received his artistic training in Lemberg, Vienna, Cracow and Munich. One of the main features of his limited output was his concern with Polish and Jewish themes and his desire to link the two. In 1876 he began painting on Jewish themes with *Ahasuerus, Shylock and Jessica* and commenced his illustrations for *Nathan the Wise*, in the following year he painted *Uriel D'Acosta and Judith van Straaten* and in 1878 he executed one of his best known works, *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur*.<sup>50</sup> Alfred Wolmark knew, and indeed painted, Maurycy's younger brother Leopold Gottlieb (1883-1934). This family connection and his own time in Cracow could therefore have provided him with opportunities to become familiar

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<sup>49</sup> Pictorial references App. 1 Ch. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Pictorial references App. 1 Ch. 7.

with Maurycy Gottlieb's work.<sup>51</sup> Although, as we have already observed, the older Wolmark was defiantly proud of his Englishness, his birth, upbringing and return to his Polish roots as a young artist all point to the potential importance of the Polish strain in his self-identification at this time. If this is a correct hypothesis, it is easy to see why the figure of Gottlieb striving to reconcile Polish nationality and Jewish religious and ethnic roots would have been of singular significance to him. Some of Gottlieb's now better-known works historicize their subjects – as for example the D'Acosta paintings – or exoticise them – as for example the illustrations for Nathan the Wise. However, some of the lesser known works (and the sketches for them) – *Jews in the Synagogue*, *Rabbi's Blessing* and *Jews Praying* – could have provided precedents for subsequent images by Wolmark both in terms of their themes and their treatment.<sup>52</sup>

Although Wolmark's second major work, *The Last Days of Rabbi Ben Ezra* (Fig. 45), painted in 1903 in Poland, is indebted to Rembrandt, I would suggest that its conception in Cracow was not simply coincidental.<sup>53</sup> Just as Gottlieb, inspired by Matejko, sought to combine his Polish and Jewish identities, so Wolmark, influenced by the historical canvases of Matejko and the Jewish themes of Gottlieb, may have sought to reconcile his Polishness, his Jewishness and his Englishness in this work. Stylistically, the size and scope of this painting and its use of an historical theme would seem to have echoes of the Polish master. In its treatment of a Jewish subject

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<sup>51</sup> At least two of Maurycy Gottlieb's works – *Ahasuerus* and *Portrait of Ignacy Kuranda* – were already in the collection of the National Museum in Cracow during Wolmark's time there. The Beres family probably the largest of the early patrons of Gottlieb's work were also resident in Cracow at this time.

<sup>52</sup> Pictorial references App. 1 Ch. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Abraham ben Meir Aben (or Ibn) Ezra 1092-1167..

The *Jewish Chronicle* of November 9<sup>th</sup> 1906 contained a picture of the young artist with a caption describing him at work in his studio in Cracow on studies for this work.

it may have been influenced by the works of Gottlieb. By choosing a subject who had been the subject of a major poem by Browning – a quote from which (‘Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last’) was used in the Bruton Gallery 1905 Exhibition of his works – he was also providing an almost contemporary English reference.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps he also knew that the Hebrew sage was believed to have visited England during his travels.

Norman Kleeblatt has discussed this work in terms of its importance as ‘both an act of cultural identity and a defense of his [Wolmark’s] people’ and the significance of the subject, based on a poem by Browning, ‘a well known Hebraicist and champion of Jewish causes’.<sup>55</sup> Kleeblatt refers to the twin themes of Eastern European scholarship and the spiritual generosity of the Jews that are united in this work. The scene which the painting depicts would have taken place in the twelfth century. However, the reference to scholarship in this instance provides a link to the concept of Ostjuden and its positive connotations, among which was the idea (and indeed the reality) that Eastern Europe was the source of traditional Jewish religious wisdom. Despite Wolmark’s insistence on his Englishness, the cultural identity that this picture also declares is that of an Ostjude.

### Wolmark’s Jewish World

Poland, the Pale and Whitechapel  
*The Jewish World*<sup>56</sup>

Although much of Wolmark’s early work on Jewish subjects is believed to be lost or untraced, sufficient has survived to indicate that it is a far more extensive

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<sup>54</sup> Oil Paintings; Recently executed in Krakow by Alfred A Wolmark.

<sup>55</sup> N. Kleeblatt, ‘Master Narratives/Minority Artists’, *Art Journal* Fall, 1998.

body of work than that of Rothenstein. Wolmark's work is characterised by a familiarity and apparent ease with his subject matter. Far from denying his Jewishness in these early works, Wolmark positively rejoiced in it. In an undated but contemporary (to the period of this study) lecture given to the Jewish Association of Arts and Science on *The Jew in Art* Wolmark staked out a position that is diametrically opposite that to which Rothenstein would have laid claim.<sup>57</sup>

I speak as a Jew to Jews. ... I aim to show what the Jew in Art was, is and ought to be. ... If we Jews want to produce great works of art we must do so as Jews not as Englishmen, Frenchmen or any other men. We may become English or French in time if we like but not great men; but we can become great English-men, French-men or any other men if we try to do what we can as Jews; only as Jews can we produce the great. ... I am afraid the Jew has forgotten himself in modern times; he has forgotten to think like a Jew. He has been trying hard for years to be anything but himself and the sad results are only too evident. ... It is not the Jewish picture not the Jewish story that makes Jewish Art. Again it is the Jewishness that is lacking in the work. It is trying to be English, French or German or anything but itself ... to the artists here. You will see that right through my paper I insist on Jewishness in Art. Individuality of your Race expressed in your art.

Whereas Rothenstein strove to anglicise himself and to find a universal spirituality in his representations of the Jew, Wolmark sought to celebrate their essential Jewishness. Because they were working contemporaneously, may have used some of the same models and both exhibited works depicting East End Jews at the 1906 Whitechapel Gallery *Jewish Art and Antiquities Exhibition*, it is appealing to accept the assertion that these two young artists in fact worked together. However, there would seem to be no corroborating evidence to support this. Neither artist mentions the other in letters or other documents and such evidence as there is would indeed seem to pose serious questions as to the possibility of active collaboration.<sup>58</sup> The

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<sup>56</sup> May 10<sup>th</sup> 1907. The critic's review of *The Disputation* (see below) referred to it as being a mixture of Poland, the Pale and Whitechapel.

<sup>57</sup> Tate Gallery Wolmark Archive Records. Probably c1915/6. The JAAS seems to have had a very short existence. Risdon MSS.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Spencer in his notes to *The Immigrant Generations* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1983, p. 29) states that Wolmark and Rothenstein worked together. This is based on his



fundamental differences in philosophy described above would have made them strange studio companions and adds to my scepticism about this co-operation.

*In the Synagogue* (Fig. 46) depicts two Jews probably – given their wearing of tefillin (phylacteries) – at morning prayers.<sup>59</sup> In contrast to images that de-emphasise the Jewishness of the subject, this work presents us with a close and detailed study, which omits nothing. Both of the figures are wearing tefillin, which are shown not just on their heads and hands, but in the case of the foreground figure of the pair with the leather strap along his forearm. There is no attempt to attenuate this part of the liturgy or to conceal it within a project of Anglicisation or as part of a universal spirituality. This is Orthodox Judaism as actually practised. The forearm is a first point of focus, because its flesh colour contrasts with the more muted tones that surround it. The viewer is almost thrust against it physically and obliged to examine the seven fold winding of the strap (signifying the days of the week) and the interlacing across the hand which form  $\Psi$ , the first letter of the Hebrew for Almighty.

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conversations with Wolmark, when the latter was an old man. Whilst there is no reason to doubt that Wolmark himself made such a claim, there would equally seem to be no evidence in the contemporaneous records of either artist to support it. Mary Lago states that Rothenstein ‘asked Alfred Wolmark, one of East London’s first Jewish artists, to arrange for him to paint local types there [in Spitalfields]’ (footnote to a Rothenstein letter of December 7<sup>th</sup> 1903, *Max and Will*, p 51). However, she also produces no documentary corroboration. In the letter to which this note is appended Rothenstein refers only to ‘getting into a new room at Spitalfields, where I am preparing to paint “scenes of Jewish life”’. Similarly in a letter dated January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1902 to Butler-Wood, Director of Cartwright Hall, Bradford, inviting him for a visit, Rothenstein refers to having “a workroom in Spitalfields, where I usually stay while there is daylight” (Bradford Archive Ref 68/D88/6/7e) and makes no allusion to Wolmark sharing or even playing any role in that particular endeavour. By July 1903 Wolmark had left for what was to be almost two years in Poland. Not long after, Rothenstein’s models were coming to him at his Hampstead studios (‘I need no longer bicycle every day for my Jewish models were now willing to come to Hampstead’. W. Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, vol. 2, p. 94). Thus the opportunities for any prolonged, direct artistic contact or actual joint working relationship during the key period of Rothenstein’s work on Jewish subjects seem few indeed.

<sup>59</sup> Pictorial Reference App.2 Ch. 7. The dating of *In the Synagogue* among Wolmark’s early works on Jewish subjects is based on a label attached to the back of the frame from the Ben Uri Gallery, quoting 1897 as its date.

Notwithstanding the title, prayers are not being said in some large synagogue, but in a small room that has been decked out for the purpose – possibly a room in a private home or perhaps the more permanent arrangement of a chevrah. The congregation may be assumed to be crowded together in front of the makeshift pulpit, with a book and two candles, just visible between the two figures. Another version of this scene (reproduced in the 1908 *Ost und West* article on Wolmark) – *Praying Jews* – depicting three figures, shows even more clearly the improvised nature of the room, with a curtain created by a tacked up fabric and the board at the back of the pulpit with a Hebrew inscription.<sup>60</sup>

The main figure in both compositions is a heavy set, early middle-aged man. This is a marked departure from those images which all depicted elderly men – in the tradition of an ancient religion to be represented by the old. This representation owes far more to, say, the example of Simeon Solomon's *A Bearded Rabbi* than it does to the subjects of the Whitechapel series by Rothenstein or even to the gentlemanly figures in the works of Oppenheim.<sup>61</sup> His positioning in both works might be read as suggesting that he is the protector of the more elderly figures, who accompany him; thus identifying an alternative way of presenting the Jew.

This use of young and middle-aged Jews is a frequent occurrence in the work of Wolmark in this period. His *Young Rabbi with a Book* executed in 1898 (Fig. 47), and the somewhat later *Rejoicing in the Law (Simchas Torah)* (1904) both present the viewer with younger, smiling adult figures and in the latter case with a young boy

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<sup>60</sup> *Ost und West*, (October 1908) pp. 620 ff. No details of this work are available.

as a worshipper.<sup>62</sup> These works are a far cry from the depictions of older subjects that typified images in the lachrymose tradition.

Just as Wolmark's *Rejoicing in the Law* presents a very different aspect of and attitude to worship when compared with Rothenstein's work on this theme, so his *Two Rabbis* presents a less formal depiction of Talmud study.<sup>63</sup> The two subjects are seated by a table and face outwards towards what is hinted at as a window, through which light is streaming – thus providing a two way link with the outside world. Although both figures are engrossed in their study the atmosphere is without the intensity which pervades Rothenstein's work on the same subject and there is no sense of enclosure. A stylistically and thematically linked work *The Learned Ones* takes this respectful but non-reverential attitude on the part of the artist a stage further.<sup>64</sup> The picture would seem to be located in the same room as that used for the *Two Rabbis* – the table, brass chandelier and window (more clearly defined) are apparently the same; only a picture hinted at by the edge of a frame in the former work is missing in the latter. In this picture seven male subjects are depicted in study or discussion. All but one of the seven figures face out towards the window to the left of the composition and one is actually slumped asleep on his own outstretched arm – perhaps lulled by the warmth of the sun. The dating of the two works suggests that they may have been painted in and of Cracow – though they were not included in the Bruton Gallery Exhibition of that year. Just as images of Devon, perhaps worked up

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<sup>61</sup> Pictorial reference App.1 Ch. 7.

<sup>62</sup> *Young Rabbi with a Book*. Pictorial reference App.1 Ch. 8. *Rejoicing in the Law*, oil on canvas, dated 1904, dimensions and whereabouts unknown. Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1904 and at the Bruton Gallery Exhibition of Cracow Pictures in 1905. Reproduced in *Ost und West*, 1911, p. 526.

<sup>63</sup> Pictorial reference App. 1 Chap.7.

<sup>64</sup> Reproduced in *Ost und West* (October 1908) p. 617, whereabouts and details unknown. The image is dated 1905.

in a studio from sketches the artist took with him to Cracow, were included in the Bruton Gallery Exhibition, so these images may have been executed in London based on earlier sketches from elsewhere.

Not all of Wolmark's Jewish works share this combination of reverence and warmth. *In a Synagogue* is a far sterner work (Fig. 48).<sup>65</sup> The subject of the work, once again a young man, is isolated, in front of the almost deserted pews of what, judging by the title, the artist wishes the viewer to take as a Synagogue. The four variously disposed figures in the background are not linked to him in any way. The closest, sitting behind what would appear to be a table in front of his pew, is deeply engrossed in prayer or study. The figure behind him, leaning over the pew in a pose reminiscent of that adopted by one of the two foreground figures in Rothenstein's *In the Spitalfields Synagogue*, looks out towards the viewer. To the left of the main subject in an aisle between the seating are two further figures – one a child, judging by his height compared to that of the pews. The summary nature of their technical execution would seem to indicate that they were intended as very much subsidiary to the main figure. The works by Wolmark previously discussed all depict potentially real moments of subjects at prayer or study. Although the subject of this work, in his flowing tallith, might be praying, the absence of a prayer book, his positioning in a quasi-theatrical stage space and his physical attitude are all more suggestive of a study of contemplation and meditation that has been located in a deliberately vague fashion in a place of worship. Although such open space is often to be found in Synagogue layout in front of the pews, it would not be occupied by a single congregant or minister at prayer. The subject seems almost literally to be bearing his

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<sup>65</sup> Oil on canvas, 60.7 cm x 88.3 cm, 1906, Private collection.

own troubles – or perhaps those of his race – on his shoulders. This work falls within the genre described by the *Jewish Chronicle* reviewer of the 1906 Exhibition as a depiction of Judenschmerz.

*The Disputation* was probably intended to depict a location in a Talmud School or a room of a Synagogue.<sup>66</sup> A window to the left of the composition is clearly in evidence – providing not just the source of light but also the link to the world outside. It is a work that combines the depiction of serious religious study with a leavening of humour. A young man would appear to be expounding to or being questioned by his elders on a point of Jewish law or doctrine. The other main protagonist in this debate, the red bearded seated figure, leans on his hand smiling. Notwithstanding the title, this is not presented as an intense religious dispute but rather as a discussion that is not without its lighter side. Wolmark seems to have been at ease in this world and therefore able to depict his subjects in relaxed vein. The composition of the work is very interesting. All of the figures are placed in the middle ground in an area defined at the bottom by the front edge of the table and at the top by a line formed by the shelf to the right and the bottom edge of the framed text in the centre. Within this there is a triangle defined by the same base – the table edge. Its apex is the head of the standing figure at the rear. From this one can define one side as running down over the head of the seated young man to the back of his chair and the other side as running down over the head of the seated figure to the right and along his upper arm. Excluded from this inner triangle is a standing figure to the right. Although there are at least four other open texts, he is the only person

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<sup>66</sup> Oil on canvas, 107.9 cm x 139.7 cm, 1907, Private collection.

actually studying one. As its title implies, perhaps the key to this work is the depiction of disputation, of actual discussion, rather than the study of text.

Judging by the presence of a painting of a cockerel and a miniature portrait on the wall behind the subjects of *The Elders* (or *The Ghetto Conference* as it is sometimes called) it is probably fair to assume that this scene is located outside the main body of a Synagogue or Talmud Torah, where such decoration – and indeed where the smoking of a pipe – would have been inappropriate.<sup>67</sup> There is a similarity of theme between this picture and the earlier *The Disputation*. Once again a discussion is being held between a younger figure and his elders. Although none of the figures are depicted actually speaking, the young man, attired perhaps in street clothes, would seem to be the intended focus of attention for the other three – much older – figures and the viewer. The centre line of the work is clearly defined, running down to the right hand edge of the framed picture and the stem of the pipe in the hands of the figure clad in black. The young man, who occupies all of the fore and middle ground of the left-hand side of the composition is counterposed with the other three and pictorially balanced by the juxtaposition of his light coloured outer garment with the white tallith of the figure to the right of the composition. The book that he holds in his left hand just below his knee might be read as indicating that he has perhaps just made textual comment and now awaits their response. The central, smoking, figure (the style of whose pipe reveals its middle/eastern European origins) studies the younger man intently, whereas the two figures to the right of the composition seem to be more wrapped in thought. This mixing of the young and the old

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<sup>67</sup> Oil on canvas, 105.4 cm x 134.6 cm, 1908, Private collection. Also entitled *The Ghetto Conference*, reproduced in *Ost und West* (October 1908) pp. 601-02.

and the possibility of a location outside the closed walls of the Synagogue stand in marked contrast to the world depicted by Rothenstein.

At the outset of this section I referred to the pivotal position of Wolmark in terms of his position as a link between the previous generation of Anglo-Jewish artists and the so-called immigrant generation. There is however another sense in which Wolmark occupied a pivotal position. Whereas much of Rothenstein's Jewish oeuvre was produced within what might be termed traditional academic practice with debts and references to past masters, Wolmark embraced modernity in his artistic practice within the final phase of his painting of Jewish subjects.

Wolmark's *Sabbath Afternoon* (Fig. 49), which depicts a man and a woman engrossed in study (a mitzvah [blessed act] often carried out in Orthodox Jewish homes on the Sabbath afternoon), presents a series of shifts from the works discussed above.<sup>68</sup> It is far less focussed on an examination of its subjects as individuals. Technically the work has areas of scumbled impasto painting – a practice that was not in evidence in the previous works. The heart of the composition is not its two studying figures but the very brightly coloured passage of painting depicting the outside world. From approximately 1910 (to the mid/late 1920s) Wolmark's oeuvre was characterised by the use of bright and often daring colour. I believe that the

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<sup>68</sup>*Sabbath afternoon*, ca. 1910, Oil on Canvas, 73.6 cm x 61cm, Gitl and Marton Braun. There is uncertainty as to the dating of this work, which was not dated by Wolmark at the time of its execution. A list prepared by the artist describes a work of this composition (size 76.2 cm x 63.5 cm) as having been done in 1900. This may or may not be reliable information given the time lapse. In 1983 a work on the same theme, with the same composition and of very similar size (73.6 cm x 61 cm) was shown at the Jewish Museum of New York in the Immigrant Generations Exhibition and was catalogued as having been painted in 1910. The then owner has subsequently had the work re-stretched and the current dimensions, which are slightly larger than those given above, are quoted in the appendix. The reasons for my attribution to the later date are set out in the main text.

central portion of this composition foreshadows or may indeed be an example of this phase of Wolmark's work. This, and the other changes to which I referred, leads me to suggest that the picture was painted at or towards the end of the decade rather than 1900. This view is reinforced by its stylistic similarities with some of Sickert's work of this time – for example *Mornington Crescent Nude, Contre-Jour* of 1907.<sup>69</sup> The representation of the outside world from the window through which light is flooding into the interior and the use of a scumbled impasto effect is common to both works.

The difference in attitude between Wolmark as the insider and Rothenstein as the outsider is perhaps most vividly illustrated in their depictions of Torah study and religious discussion. Rothenstein's representations were characterized by their gravitas – a quality that imbues all of his Whitechapel works. In contrast, Wolmark's representations of similar scenes are, as we have seen, far more relaxed – sometimes even revealing moments of humour within his compositions. Inspection of *Sabbath Afternoon* reveals the presence of two balls of wool on the floor. In one sense these may be ciphers for the work that cannot be carried out on the Sabbath; however, such is the feeling of relaxation as opposed to intense study, one might almost anticipate the arrival of a family cat.

Portrayals of the Sabbath afternoon, during which families relax together after the morning service in the Synagogue, were executed by at least two Jewish painters, with whose work the young Wolmark may have been familiar. Moritz Oppenheim included such an image, *Sabbath Rest* in his *Bilder aus dem altjüdischen*

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<sup>69</sup> Oil on canvas, 50.8 cm x 61.1 cm, 1907, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.



*Familienleben* series. The Polish born Samuel Hirszenberg (1866-1908) addressed this theme, somewhat more contemporaneously to Wolmark in his monumental *The Sabbath Rest*, a multi-figure composition in which three generations of a family listen to one of their number reading.<sup>71</sup> Although I have been unable to uncover evidence to suggest that Wolmark had seen this work, the similarity between it and Wolmark's composition is not simply thematic. Hirszenberg's work also employs light from large window located almost at its centre and the scene through that window is similar both in the view it presents and the colours. Both pictures also include the presence of women (and in Hirszenberg's case children) to emphasise the familial nature of Judaism within the home.

The figure of a studying woman within the context of art production by or about Jews seems to be found more frequently in the works of ostjüdisch artists than in those of the West. In addition to the work of Hirszenberg cited above, Gottlieb's *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur* includes the female congregants and Kaufmann's *Young Woman in Synagogue* provides the viewer with a radically different viewpoint of the Jewish woman at prayer than for example his more traditional *Friday Evening*.<sup>72</sup> The inclusion of a woman in *Sabbath Afternoon* may therefore be evidence of Wolmark's debt to his excursions to Cracow.

*Succoth*, another undated work, was also probably produced about 1910 (Fig. 50).<sup>73</sup> Although the composition only includes six figures, the manner in which they are depicted as crowding over one another is very suggestive of a Synagogue full of

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<sup>71</sup> Oil on canvas, 151 cm x 208 cm, 1894, Ben Uri Gallery, London.

<sup>72</sup> Pic refs for Gottlieb 1 and Kaufmann 2 Oil on wood, 72.4 cm x 90.2 cm, undated, the Jewish Museum, New York.

congregants attending the particularly joyous festival in the Jewish religious calendar. It depicts a scene during a religious service – a theme similar to that of earlier works – and may even have involved some of the same models, but combines them in a new and original fashion. Although the subject of the painting – a Succoth service in a synagogue – can be easily read from the presence of the lulav, it is almost less important than the overall harmony of colour and texture. The use of bright colour, though hinted at in earlier works, emerges here as a key attribute. The scumbled impasto effect, while not eliminating the readability of the figures represented, suggests that the artist attributed as much importance to surface and pattern. There is an insistence on linearity, as evidenced by the furniture, the stripes of the tallithot, the head pieces of the Torah and the lulav. These are characteristics that have more in common with some of the artistic practices of emerging modernism than with a backward reference to older precedents.

A significant indication of contemporary recognition of his move to the modern is to be found in the fact that Wolmark was the only member of the earlier generation of Jewish artists to be represented in the Epstein/Bomberg selection for the Jewish Section of the Twentieth Century Art Exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1914, which will be examined in detail in the next chapter. The iconoclastic young rebel David Bomberg apparently saw no dissonance in placing Wolmark's work alongside his own and that of Gertler, Meninsky, Rosenberg, his contemporaries in the East End and from the Slade School of Art and Kisling, Nadelman and Modigliani, whose work he had brought back from Paris for this Exhibition. For the

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<sup>73</sup> Oil on canvas, 245 cm x 245 cm, undated, Private collection.

*Jewish Chronicle* reviewer of the Exhibition Wolmark's' work was one of the few highlights.

Mr Wolmark's *Portrait of Himself* deserves considerable credit for the fine vigour and directness of its touch. There is a strength and certainty about the brush work, which would go a long way to make the artist's reputation, even if his work were not so well known and appreciated.<sup>74</sup>

As we shall see when we return to this review in the context of some of the other artists, this was praise indeed.

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<sup>74</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* (15<sup>th</sup> May 1914).

## CHAPTER 8

### Epilogue

#### The Tercentenary Exhibition of 1956

No Englishman could look at it without a certain pride that it was this country, which had offered tolerance and hospitality to a persecuted minority<sup>1</sup>.

In 1956, an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art & History in commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles took place at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and was seen by its promoters as one part of a year-long celebration of that event<sup>2</sup>. The initial impetus for this came from the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, the oldest surviving, formal institution of the Jewish community in England, and that which had been most directly involved in the Resettlement<sup>3</sup>. Implementation moved to the Jewish Historical Society of England and its principal driving forces were the Jewish historian, Cecil Roth, Richard Barnett, Head of the Near Eastern Antiquities Department of the British Museum, who was Chairman of the Exhibition Committee, and Alfred Rubens, who acted as Honorary Secretary<sup>4</sup>. The Exhibition was opened by Viscount Samuel, Chairman of the Tercentenary Committee, who, as the Jewish Chronicle of January 13<sup>th</sup> recorded, was greeted by James Laver, director of the Victoria & Albert Museum with the words 'We welcome Lord Samuel not as a representative of any sectional interest of the community but as a great Englishman'. This would seem to be that positive confirmation of the position of Jews in English society, which the discourse of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition had sought to establish so many years earlier.

Apart from a readily comprehensible desire to celebrate three hundred years of Jewish presence in the United Kingdom, there were other motives underlying this project – coming, as it did, so soon after the then recently concluded Second World War. It was, and is still, open to a reading as a re-confirmation of the freedom from oppression for so long enjoyed by Jews in England. It was, however, also a reminder - to the host community, to the Jewish community as a whole and for yet another, new refugee Jewish community - of the terms under which this freedom had been obtained and maintained. What is therefore significant is to observe how little the terms of reference for this Exhibition and its underlying discourse had changed in the seventy years, since the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition held at the Royal Albert Hall in 1887. The debt to the 1887 Exhibition as its ‘true predecessor’ was overtly and immediately acknowledged in the first page of the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition Catalogue and by the format adopted for the early segments of the Exhibition itself.

Notwithstanding its formal title, the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition in fact began its story not in 1656, but about four hundred years earlier in the period prior to the Expulsion of 1290 – the same starting point chosen for the 1887 Exhibition. The 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition, taking its lead from 1887, cast the Jews of Mediaeval England as *inter alia* the financial instruments of Royalty. In terms of exhibits the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition moved seamlessly from 1290 to 1656 virtually ignoring the issue of any Jewish presence during the period from the Expulsion to Re-admittance. In contrast the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition dwelt, albeit briefly, on aspects of the history of the Jews in England in the intervening 366 years, before moving on to its main periods of interest. Historical research since 1887, some of which was initiated by Lucien Wolf, as we have seen a key figure in

the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, and *inter alia* by subsequent members of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Society made it inaccurate to continue to suggest that there was no such Jewish presence in this period.

A cursory examination of the catalogue reveals acknowledgement of little more than a handful of Exhibits common to both Exhibitions – perhaps the most famous of which would have been the Bodleian Ewer <sup>5</sup>. However, a more detailed investigation indicates that the direct debt of the later Exhibition to its Victorian predecessor was far more pervasive. In terms of visual representation more than fifty items displayed in 1956 had also been exhibited in 1887 and, in addition, the same topic or person was sometimes displayed by use of an alternative image or item <sup>6</sup>. The two Exhibitions were in reality much closer than one might at first suspect. This congruity applied not just to artefacts of historical interest and to the choice of individuals, through whom the Jewish community was historically and visually represented, but more importantly to a common underlying discourse.

Almost inevitably any Exhibition that celebrates the presence of a minority group within a larger host community will be obliged to draw on the same relatively limited repository of leading individuals. The 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition would therefore have been inconceivable without representation of such major figures as, for example, Benjamin Disraeli, Sir Moses Montefiore and members of the Rothschild family. These, however, are less significant as support to my argument than the inclusion of a much wider range of representations that indicate the discourse shared by the two Exhibitions. The deployment, at one end of the spectrum, of leading rabbinical figures from the seventeenth century onwards

revealed a continued use of such tropes as the ancient religion, 'the Jew' as old, the wisdom of the venerable religious leader. Predictably Jewish civic leaders, political and financial, members of the professions and scholars, occupied the middle ground of the presentation. However, interestingly, at what one might characterise as the other end of the spectrum, the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition also displayed the same groups of eighteenth and nineteenth century theatrical stars and boxers, who had also appeared seventy years earlier. During the inter-War period another group of successful Jewish boxers had emerged from the East End as had a similar group of Music Hall and theatrical figures, but, although they might have been better known to a 1956 audience than their earlier counterparts, their existence went unrecorded in the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition. This, I would suggest, indicates that for the organisers of that Exhibition the inclusion of the earlier boxers was linked, once again, to images of 'the Jew' as part of the 'Sporting Life' scene of late eighteenth/early nineteenth century England rather than to any celebration of 'muscular Jewry' or athletic prowess, just as the inclusion of earlier theatrical stars recalled a 'beau-monde' of an earlier era. It might also suggest a perhaps deliberate decision not draw a link between potentially romanticised figures of a distant past and the more prosaic realities of fighters and actors from the impoverished inter-War East End. Finally, the use of these eighteenth and nineteenth century figures also ties in with the concept of the presentation of the Jew as a part of a history shared with the host community, one in which the Jewish population had been actively involved. This view had, however, a strong class bias. As we have seen the sought after interweaving of the Jew into English history had been located almost exclusively at its upper end. The use of contemporary equivalents from lower social strata would not respond to that need. That said within a framework of religious leadership and civic

achievement, the diversity, range and depth of the Jewish contribution to an English heritage was clearly still felt to be an issue worth exploring and celebrating in 1956.

Like its 1887 predecessor, the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition excluded virtually any depiction or discussion of the Jewish poverty – in the medieval past, among the immigrants of the late nineteenth century or the refugees of the inter- and post-War periods. The exclusion by the 1887 Exhibition of the presence and continuing growth of the indigent, immigrant community might perhaps have been excused on the grounds that at that time its full impact was only just occurring and from the writings of Booth and others being documented. By 1956 it was far more a matter of established historical fact. Where the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition did refer to the mass immigration and the manner in which it was managed, it did so in terms that were clearly favourable to the Jewish establishment of that earlier time and in ways that would certainly not have garnered the agreement either of those outside that circle, who were contemporary to the events, or of recent revisionist historians of this period.

The community was thus prepared to meet the new problems, which it gladly shouldered from 1881 onwards, when great numbers of refugees from Tzarist persecution in Russia arrived, strengthening Anglo-Jewry not only numerically but also spiritually and intellectually. The older communities of the country were reinforced and some – eg Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow – which had previously been of little numerical significance, came to be of major importance<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of the immigrant flow as a benign, welcome and mutually strengthening influence ignores the problems of splits and divisions within the community over religious practice, very real concerns over the importation of ‘socialist ideas’ and the manner in which the rise of the provincial communities led to opposition to the power of London and the United Synagogue.



Sensitive to the events of the immediate past and the need to ensure a depiction of a Jewry that was internally unified and externally accepted, the 1956 Tercentenary Exhibition clung to the discourse of an earlier age and, if anything, Roth heightened the rosy hue of its depiction of a trouble free and long established Jewish history in England. This desire to insist on the benign nature of English acceptance might also explain why anti-Jewish cartoons, which the 1887 Committee had felt able to exhibit as, in their eyes, residual examples of a by then almost defunct prejudice, were also conspicuous by their absence. Nothing, save the seven hundred year old caricature of Aaron, Son of the Devil, from the Forest Rolls of Essex was to be allowed to interfere with this discourse of a mutual acceptance guided by the munificent hand of Anglo-Jewry and its exemplary executive bodies. As the Catalogue insisted,

The organization of Anglo-Jewry was *perfected* at this time by the establishment of such institutions as the JEWS COLLEGE for the training of *Ministers of Religion* (1885), of the London JEWISH BOARD OF GUARDIANS which became one of the *most notable of British charitable organizations* (1859); of the *model metropolitan inter-congregational body* the UNITED SYNAGOGUE.<sup>8</sup>

One has little doubt that overall the Jewish members of General Committee of the 1887 Exhibition, many of whom were also active within the aforementioned institutions would have agreed with this evaluation of their works and aims. In 1956 the terms of reference, which guided the behaviour of the Jewish community and which it in turn offered to the immigrants from Nazi persecution, were still defined by those concepts of a shared past and present which had been formed by the Anglo-Jewish discourse of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* January 13<sup>th</sup> 1956

<sup>2</sup> From January 6 to February 29. Other events included an Exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery *Jewish Artists in England 1656-1956*, 8 November to 9 December 1956, and a Tercentenary Banquet held in the Guildhall in the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh, who proposed the toast to the Jewish Community. The Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, also spoke.

<sup>3</sup> The first meeting was held on 29 July 1952 and brought together the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, The Board of Deputies, the Anglo Jewish Association, the Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Museum, the United Synagogue and the Jewish Chronicle

<sup>4</sup> Roth Biographical Note App. 1. The Rubens collection of images relating to the Jewish people was published as *Anglo Jewish Portraits, Jewish Iconography* (1954) and *A History of Jewish Costume* (1967). His collection is held at the Jewish Museum, London.

<sup>5</sup> A bronze Ewer found in Suffolk in 1696. It passed eventually into the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. For a full description, see *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, Item 1. p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> A listing of the principal duplicated items will be found in App. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *1956 Tercentenary Catalogue*, pp. 6 and 7.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* p. 6. The emphasis is mine and intended to draw attention to the anglicised and assimilated roles, which the writer, Cecil Roth, ascribed to these key institutions.

**Adams, Henry 1838 – 1918**

Boston born scion of one of the leading political families in the US ( Both his great grandfather and his grandfather were Presidents and his father was a Congressman) Adams was an academic, a writer (on the administrations of Jefferson and Madison) and an avid traveller.

**Arnold, Matthew (1822-1888)**

Writer, poet and literary critic. Arnold was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and active in the field of education in England

**Baudelaire, Charles 1821- 1867**

French poet, (*Les Fleurs du Mal* 1857) translator (of the works of Edgar Allan Poe), literary and artistic critic. Baudelaire's work and his personal life were full of controversy Until long after his death he was regarded by many as a prime example of the vice and depravity of the period, although he is now regarded as one of the key figures of that avant garde movement.

**Beerbohm, Max 1872-1956**

Writer and caricaturist. Much of Beerbohm's writing was confined to parody (most notably *Zuleika Dobson* 1911) and criticism (he succeeded G.B.Shaw as drama critic of the *Saturday Review* in 1898 and his artistic output was primarily collections of caricatures. Nevertheless, he was at the centre of English cultural society at the turn of the twentieth century, until he left for Italy in 1910. On his return in 1939 he was knighted.

**Barnett, The Revd Samuel Barnett (1844-1913)**

Oxford-trained curate at St Mary's, Bryanston Square, London. In 1873 he was appointed to the parish of St Jude's, Whitechapel, described by its bishop as the worst in the diocese. He and his wife Henrietta believed in education and childcare for the poor, and the benefits of culture. This was the thinking behind Toynbee Hall, earliest of the university settlements which brought young graduates to work in the slums, and behind the Whitechapel Art Gallery in which they were both actively involved. Samuel left St Jude's in 1894 on becoming a canon of Bristol, and later was canon and then sub-dean of Westminster Abbey.

**Besant, Sir Walter 1836- 1901**

1836–1901, English novelist and humanitarian. Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund and a prime mover in the opening of the People's Palace in Mile End, graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, 1859. He taught at the Royal College of Mauritius from 1861 to 1867. After his return to England he devoted himself to writing and to various causes, among them the improvement of the copyright laws. His novels include *The Golden Butterfly* (1876) and *Ready-Money Mortiboy* (1872). Some of Besant's novels dealt with social problems; among them were *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) and *Children of Gibeon* (1886). Besant was one of the most widely read novelists of the late 19th cent. He was knighted in 1895.

**Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen 1840-1922**

English poet and political writer. 1858 entered the British diplomatic service. 1872 retired from the diplomatic service; he began a career of travel (particularly in the

Middle East) and political crusading (he opposed British rule in Egypt and championed home rule for Ireland). His poetry includes *The Love Sonnets of Proteus* (1880) and *The Wind and the Whirlwind* (1883).

**Cohen, Arthur** (1829-1914)

A member of the Montefiore family on his mother's side, Arthur Cohen was the first professing Jew to graduate from Cambridge. He went on to enjoy a highly successful legal career and for seven years from 1880 was MP for Southwark.

**Cromer, Lord; Evelyn Baring** 1841-1917

1858 joined the Royal Artillery. 1872 Private Secretary to his cousin Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India. From 1883 British Agent in Egypt, where he was responsible for the constitutional reform of that country and for the reorganisation of all of its principal instruments of Government. In 1907 on his retirement due to ill health Cromer who by then had been made an Earl was voted £50,000 by the British Parliament in recognition of his 'eminent services' to Egypt.

**Drumont, Edouard** (1844–1917).

French journalist, whose writings in the periodical *La Libre Parole* and in his book *La France Juive* (1886) made him one of the leading anti-Semitic commentators on the Dreyfus Affair.

**Evans Gordon, William Eden** (1857-1913)

Educated at Cheltenham and Sandhurst. Served in the Indian Staff Corps from 1876 to 1897. Conservative MP for the Stepney Division of Tower Hamlets from 1900 to 1907. Author *The Alien Immigrant*. Knighted in 1905.

**Jacobs, Joseph**, (1854–1916).

Jewish writer, historian, and folklorist Born in Australia, Jacobs. lived in England until 1900, when he went to the United States to edit a revision of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. He was later a teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

**Gibson, Frank** (1865-1901)

An Australian born, Slade School trained, artist, writer and curator. From 1908 to 1914 Gibson was adviser to the Felton bequest and at the time of his death was referred to in *The Times* (23/02/1931) as Art Adviser to the Commonwealth of Australia.

**Goldwin Smith** (1823-1910)

Educated at Oxford Goldwin Smith was an educator, historian, and journalist and became a professor of modern history there. In 1868, he moved to the United States as professor of English literature and constitutional history at Cornell University.

**Graetz, Heinrich** 1817-1891.

German –Jewish historian. His 11 volume *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf der Gegenwart* 1856 – 1876 was translated into a condensed (6 vol) English version edition between 1891- 1898

**Hirsch, Baron Maurice de** (1831 – 1896).

German financier and philanthropist, who was a major benefactor to Jewish causes, organiser of the Jewish Colonisation Organization, which established resettlement programmes for Jewish emigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe.

**Lane, (Sir)Hugh, 1877-1915**

A highly successful London based art dealer with an extensive personal art collection. Campaigned for the creation of the Modern Art Gallery in Dublin which opened in 1908. Was also involved in art puchaes on behalf of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

**Legros, Alphonse (1837 – 1911).**

A disciple of Courbet (1819-1877), Legros came to London in 1863 and taught etching at South Kensington. Although not an Impressionist, Legros was invited by Degas (1834-1917) to exhibit at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Impressionist Exhibition (1876) and was a source of Impressionist ideas for London from Paris. In 1876 he was appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art.

**McColl, Dugald S (1859-1948)**

Artist, Author and Art Critic. Art Critic of the Spectator (1890-1895) and Editor of the Architectural Review (1901-1905). Keeper of the Tate Gallery 1906- 1911 and of the Wallace Collection 911-1924. Supporter of the French Impressionists and of several young British painters such as Wilson Steer, Sickert, Bearsdley and John.

**Mendoza, Daniel (1764-1836).**

Born a Sephardi Jew. Though essentially a middleweight, Mendoza worked out a series of techniques which enabled him to take on heavier opponents and became the heavy weight boxing champion of England. His continued successes were noticed by the Prince of Wales, and he was the first boxer to be accorded royal patronage.

**Mocatta, Frederic (1828-1905),**

Head of one of those Sephardi families in England, which could date its arrival to the Cromwell era, was a leading figure of Anglo-Jewry and a noted philanthropist

**Montagu, Sir Samuel 1832-1911**

Educated in Liverpool, Montagu set up in banking and finance in 1852 and became the undisputed leader of the silver market. He was elected to Parliament in 1885 and was created Lord Swaythling in 1907. He was very active in Jewish affairs, founding the Jewish Working Men's Club in 1870 and the Federation of Synagogues in 1887 and was President of the Russo-Jewish Committee from 1896 to 1909. He was created a Baronet by Gladstone in 1894.

**Montefiore, Sir Moses (1784-1885)**

Born in Leghorn, Italy, Montefiore was brought up in London. He became one of the 12 "Jew brokers" in the City of London. In 1812, Montefiore married Judith Cohen, making him Nathan Mayer Rothschild's brother-in-law. He retired from business in 1824 and devoted his time and resources to community and civic affairs. Montefiore was Sheriff of London, 1837-1838, and was knighted by Queen Victoria. He received a baronetcy in 1846 in recognition of his humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Jews. He was president of the British Board of Deputies from 1835-1874, with one brief interruption. Despite his position, he did not play a prominent role in the emancipation struggle, preferring to help oppressed Jewish communities abroad.

**Moser, Jacob (B 1839)**

Born in Kappeln, Schleswig, then part of Denmark, Moser moved to England in 1863 and became a successful businessman. In 1873 he was one of the founders of the Bradford Reform Synagogue. In 1896 he was elected as an Independent candidate for the Manningham Ward of Bradford and in 1910 was elected Lord Mayor.

**Penrose, Francis Cranmer (1817-1903)**

Architect, Archaeologist, designer and Director of the British School in Athens. President of RIBA from 1894 to 1896.

**Rocker, Rudolf (1873-1958)**

Born in Mainz into a Catholic family. Socialist in his youth Rocker moved towards anarchism in the 1890s and became its leading proponent. Settled in England in 1895 and in 1898 edited *Dos Fraye Vort* in Leeds before becoming editor of *Der Arbayer Fraynt* and in 1900 of *Germinal*, London based, Yiddish publications of the anarchist movement. Interned as an alien in 1914 he was deported in 1918 and after some 15 years in Germany emigrated to USA to escape Nazi persecution.

**Rothschild, Lionel de (1808 – 1879)**

Son of Nathan Meyer. Senior partner of Rothschild's London. Elected MP for Tower Hamlets in 1847, a seat he did not occupy until 1858. Leading figure of the Anglo-Jewish community within which he occupied the position of Chairman or President of many of the main institutions – President of the Board of Deputies and of the Great Synagogue.

**Rothschild, Lord Nathaniel Mayer de (1840 – 1915)**

Eldest son of Lionel de Rothschild. Active as a philanthropist in many of the leading institutions of Anglo-Jewry; as a banker, when he took over the senior partnership of the London House of Rothschild in 1879 and as a politician, when he became Liberal MP for Aylesbury in 1865. In 1885 he became the first Jewish peer

**Roth, Cecil (1899-1970)**

Jewish historian. Professor of Jewish Studies at Oxford University. Roth was editor of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and wrote extensively on aspects of Jewish History and Art..

**Simon, Sir John 1818-1897**

Studied at University College, London, Was appointed Serjeant at Law in 1864 and made a QC in 1868, when he also became Liberal MP for Dewsbury. He was a founder member of the Anglo-Jewish Association in 1871. He was knighted in 1886.

**Singer, Simeon (1848-1906)**

Rabbi of the Borough New Synagogue in Heygate St at its opening in 1867. He was subsequently Rabbi at the New West End Synagogue, Bayswater. His version of the daily prayer book became standard usage among United Synagogue congregations for much of the twentieth century.

**Spektor, Isaac Elhanan (1817-1896)**

Born in Rosh, Grodno where his father was a Rabbi. Was Rabbi in a number of towns before being named as Rabbi of Kovno in 1864, a position which he held until his death. He built up a reputation as the foremost rabbinical authority in Russia.

**Spielmann, Sir Isidore (1854 – 1925)**

Honorary Secretary of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Exhibition. Honorary Secretary and Director of the of the British section of the Brussels Exhibition in 1897, of the British fine art section of the Paris Exhibition (1900), the Glasgow Exhibition (1901), and the St. Louis Exposition (1904). In recognition of these services he was knighted in 1905. President of the Jewish Historical Society of England 1902 to 1904

**Strachey, Henry.**

Art critic of the Spectator from 1896 to 1904 and from 1905 to 1910. His elder brother John St Loe Strachey (1860-1927) was owner of the Spectator from 1897 to 1925 and Editor from 1898 (Source; Spectator Archives). They were cousins of Lytton Strachey (1880-1932 ) the author and leading member of the Bloomsbury set.

**Strauss, Joseph (1844-1922)**

Born in Berlichingen in 1844 and educated at Wurzburg and Tubingen, where he obtained a Doctorate in Divinity, Philosophy and Medicine. Rabbi in Heidelberg and Stuttgart before Bradford. Notwithstanding his Reform background, he assisted in the formation of the Orthodox Synagogue in Bradford in 1906. He was a member of the Bradford Athenaeum Club from 1884 and its President in 1921/2. He was Professor of Semitics at the Yorkshire College. Strauss Family Records and Bradford Archives Ref 62D85/1/2 .

**Werner, Abraham (1837-1912)**

Born in Tels, Kovno, where he subsequently succeeded his father as the Rabbi. Became Chief Rabbi of Finland before being elected as Robbi of Machzike Hadass in London. In 1901 he settled in Palestine, where he died.

**Winchevsky, Morris (1856-1932)**

Born Bentsion Novkhovitch in Lithunia. Active from early age in Jewish socialist movement and after he came to London became involved in *Der poylisher yidl*. Emigrated to America in 1894 wjere he remained active in socialism and was a noted Yiddish poet.

**Wolf, Lucien (1857-1930)**

Journalist and diplomat for the Jewish cause. He wrote for a number of publications in the Jewish and national press. He worked as a sub-editor and leader-writer for Jewish World, 1874-1893, and was later Editor there, 1906-1908 Between 1912-1914 he was the editor of "Darkest Russia: a weekly record of the struggle for freedom". This was a propaganda paper directed against the Russian Government and concerned particularly with Jewish rights. He was a leading member of the Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jews.

**Zangwill, Israel (1864-1926)**

East-End born Israel Zangwill was educated at the Jews Free School and subsequently became a teacher there. He turned to writing as his full time occupation in the late 1880s and in 1892 published *Children of the Ghetto* set in the East End. He became a significant literary figure and was active in a wide range of Jewish affairs including as an early champion of Zionism

## Appendix 2

## Pictorial References

This appendix provides details of all works referred to in the text. Those works that are illustrated are indicated by the use of bold print and their reference number within the Chapter in which they appear. Pictures are listed in the order in which they first appear in the main text.

## Chapter 3 Defining an Anglo-Jewish Discourse: The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Size H x W</i>	<i>Location</i>
James MacArdell	Aaron Hart	Mezzotint engraving	1751		Rubens Collection Anglo Jewish Portraits Jewish Museum, London
Engraving by Joshua Lopez After by painting by F.Barlin	Raphael Meldola (1754 -1838)	Oil on canvas	1806		National Portrait Gallery, London
F Barlin	Solomon Hirschell (1761-1842)	Oil on canvas	1808	127 x 101.6	National Portrait Gallery, London
Engraving by W. Holl. After painting by T Phillips	David Ricardo				National Portrait Gallery, London
Engraving by Thomson	Ralph Bernal		1822		National Portrait Gallery, London

## Chapter 4 The importance of being Solomon

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Size H x W</i>	<i>Location</i>
Solomon J Solomon	The family group. Artist's wife and children. Papa painting	Oil on canvas	1905	161 x 175	Tate Britain, London
Solomon J Solomon	In the Field	Oil on canvas	1906	184 x 146	Ben Uri Gallery, London
Solomon J Solomon	Charles 1 demanding the five members at the Guildhall 1641/2	Mural	1897	548 x 366	Royal Exchange, London
Solomon J Solomon	The judgement of Paris	Oil on canvas	1891	Unknown	Unknown
Solomon J	The Birth of Love	Oil on canvas	1896	254 x	Unknown



Solomon				127	
Solomon J Solomon	Eve	Oil on canvas	1908	310 x 142	Ealing Public Library, London
Solomon J Solomon	The Coronation Luncheon given in the Guildhall to their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary	Oil on canvas	1914- 1922	??? x 226	Guildhall. London
Solomon J Solomon	The Rt. Hon. H.H. Asquith, Prime Minister	Oil on canvas	1909	120 x 90	National Liberal Club, London
Solomon J Solomon	Ramsay MacDonald M.P.	Oil on canvas	1910	90.2 x 72.4	National Portrait Gallery, London
Sir John Everett Millais	The Knight Errant	Oil on canvas	1870	184 x 136	Tate Gallery, London
Sir Frank Dicksee	La Belle Dame Sans Merci	Oil on canvas	1902	Xxx xxxx	City of Bristol Art Gallery, Bristol
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 1</b>	<b>Laus deo</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>C 1899</b>	<b>236.5 x 173</b>	<b>Private collection</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 2</b>	<b>St George</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>212.1 x 105.4</b>	<b>Royal Academy</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 3</b>	<b>Your health</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1893</b>	<b>240 x 142.5</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 4</b>	<b>A dinner given by Sir H. Thompson for Mr Ernest Hart</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>No date</b>	<b>71.1 x 102.9</b>	<b>Wellcome Foundation, London</b>
<b>Chevallier Tayler SJS 5</b>	<b>A Summer's dinner party</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1893</b>	<b>120 x 90</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 6</b>	<b>Mr Ernest Hart</b>	<b>Oil on board</b>	<b>No date</b>	<b>35 x 26</b>	<b>Wellcome Foundation, London</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 7</b>	<b>On the threshold of the City 22 June 1897</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>236 x 172</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
Solomon J Solomon	Rev H Adler	Oil on canvas	1906		Unknown
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 8</b>	<b>The election of the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler</b>	<b>Watercolour on paper,</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>30.5 x 37.9</b>	<b>The Jewish Museum, New York.</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 9</b>	<b>High tea in the Sukkah</b>	<b>Ink, graphite and gouache on paper</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>39.6 x 29.2</b>	<b>The Jewish Museum, New York</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 10</b>	<b>The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry</b>	<b>Canvas on plaster</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>442 x 249</b>	<b>Houses of Parliament, London</b>
<b>Solomon J Solomon SJS 11</b>	<b>An allegory</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1904</b>	<b>269 x 150</b>	<b>Harris Museum &amp; Gallery, Preston</b>
Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema	The Roses of Heliogabulus,	Oil on canvas,	1888	132.1 x 213.7	Private collection
Sir Edward	The caves of the	Oil on canvas,	1903	145.9 x	Private collection

Poynter	Storm Nymphs			110.4	

## Chapter 5 The dangerous Mr Sargent

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Size</i> <i>cms</i> <i>H by W</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>Solomon J Solomon III 1</b>	<b>Sir George Faudel Phillips</b>	Oil on canvas	1897	145.0 x 105.5	Private collection
Lawrence Alma-Tadema	Sir Max Waechter	Oil on canvas	1901	91.5 x 116.9	Unknown
<b>John Singer Sargent III 2</b>	<b>Lady Faudel Phillips</b>	Oil on canvas	1898	144.8 x 94	Private Collection
John Singer Sargent	Earl of Cromer	Oil on canvas	1902	146.1 x 96.5	National Portrait Gallery, London
<b>Max Beerbohm III 3</b>	<b>Tite Street</b>				Private collection
John Singer Sargent	Frieze of Prophets	Oil on canvas with central panel relief of gilded plaster and papier-maché	Installed 1895	213 x 673	Boston Public Library
John Singer Sargent	Israel & the Law		Installed 1916		Boston Public Library
<b>John Singer Sargent III 4</b>	<b>Synagogue</b>	Oil on canvas	Installed 1919	164 cms wide	Boston Public Library
John Singer Sargent	Church	Oil and gilded plaster or papier- maché	Installed 1919	164 cms wide	Boston Public Library
<b>John Singer Sargent III 5</b>	<b>Lord Ribblesdale</b>	Oil on canvas	1902	254.2 x 148.6	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Mrs George Lewis	Oil on canvas	1892	136 x 77.5	Private Collection
<b>John Singer Sargent III 6</b>	<b>Sir George Lewis</b>	Oil on Canvas	1896	80 x 59.6	Private collection
John Singer Sargent	Sir David Richmond	Oil on canvas	1899	243.6 x 134.6	Glasgow Museums & Art Gallery
John Singer Sargent	Lord Russell of Killowen	Oil on canvas	1902	85.1 x 71.1	National Portrait Gallery, London
<b>John Singer Sargent III 7</b>	<b>Mrs Carl Meyer</b>	Oil on Canvas	1896	201.4 x 134	Private Collection
François Boucher	Madame de Pompadour	Oil on canvas	1758	72.5 x 57	Victoria and Albert Museum, London
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Hammersley	Oil on canvas	1892/3	205.7 x 114.9	Metropolitan Art Museum, New York
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Cazalet & her children	Oil on canvas	C1900	254 x 165	Private collection
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Knowles & her children	Oil on canvas	1902	182.9 x 151.1	Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio
<b>John Singer Sargent III 8</b>	<b>Mrs Flora Wertheimer</b>	Oil on canvas	1898	147.5 x 95.2	New Orleans Museum of Art
<b>John Singer Sargent III 9</b>	<b>Mr Asher Wertheimer</b>	Oil on canvas	1898	147.5 x 97.8	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Francis Penrose	Oil on canvas	1897	143.5.1 x 95.3	RIBA, London

<b>John Singer Sargent III 10</b>	<b>Asher Wertheimer</b>	<b>Graphite on woven paper</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>24 x 15.1</b>	<b>Fogg Museum, Harvard University Museums, Gift of Mrs Francis Ormond</b>
Diego Velasquez	Innocent X	Oil on canvas	C1650	140 x 120	Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome
John Singer Sargent	Colonel Ian Hamilton	Oil on canvas	1898	138.4 x 78.7	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Coventry Patmore	Oil on canvas	1894	91.4 x 61.0	Unknown
John Singer Sargent	W Graham Robertson	Oil on canvas	1894	230.5 x 118.7	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Sir Frank Swettenham	Oil on canvas	1904	258 x 142.5	Singapore History Museum
Louis Kollitz	Sir Joseph Crowe	Oil on canvas	1877	78.1 x 66	National Portrait Gallery
Gilbert Stuart	Sir Joshua Reynolds	Oil on canvas	1784	/	/
Rembrandt van Rijn	The artist in oriental costume with poodle	Oil on panel	1631	66.5 x 52	Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris
John Singer Sargent	Mr Arthur Cohen	Oil on canvas	1897	75 x 63.5	Private collection
<b>John Singer Sargent III 11</b>	<b>The Daughters of Mr Asher Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>190.5 x 130.8</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
<b>Thomas Lawrence III 12</b>	<b>Daughters of Col. Thomas Cartaret Hardy</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1801</b>	<b>161 x 135</b>	<b>Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio</b>
<b>John Singer Sargent III 13</b>	<b>Mrs Ralph Curtis</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>219/3 x 104.8</b>	<b>Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.</b>
John Singer Sargent	Isabella Stewart Gardner	Oil on canvas	1888	189.9 x 81.3	Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass
John Singer Sargent	Ada Rehan	Oil on canvas	1894/5	236.2 x 127.3	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
John Singer Sargent	Countes Clary Aldringen	Oil on canvas	1896	228.5 x 122	Hirschl & Adler Galleries, New York
John Singer Sargent	Mr & Mrs Phelps Stokes	Oil on canvas	1897	214.6 x 103	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
John Singer Sargent	The Acheson Sisters	Oil on canvas	1902	269.2 x 198.1	Devonshire Coll. Chatsworth.
John Singer Sargent	Duchess of Portland	Oil on canvas	1902	228.6 x 113	Private collection
John Singer Sargent	Mrs George Batten	Oil on canvas	1897	88.9 x 43.2	Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Charles Russell	Oil on canvas	1900	104.8 x 73.7	Private collection
John Singer Sargent	Mme X (Mme Pierre Gautreau)	Oil on canvas	1883/4	208.6 x 109.9	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
John Singer Sargent	Hylde Wertheimer	Oil on canvas	1901	214.6 x 143.5	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Lady Agnew of Lochnaw	Oil on canvas	1892/3	125.7 x 100.3	National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh
John Singer Sargent	The Wyndham Sisters	Oil on canvas	1899	292.1 x 213.7	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
<b>John Singer Sargent III 14</b>	<b>Mr Alfred Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>163.2 x 114.9</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Leopold Hirsch	Oil on canvas	1902	144.8 x 92.7	Tate Britain, London
John Singer	The Misses Hunter	Oil on canvas	1902	229.2 x	Tate Britain, London

Sargent				229.9	
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 15</b>	<b>Essie, Ruby &amp; Ferdinand, the Children of Asher Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1902</b>	<b>161 x 193.7</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
John Singer Sargent	The Misses Vickers	Oil on canvas	1884	137.2 x 182.9	Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield
John Singer Sargent	Mr Edward Wertheimer	Oil on canvas	1902	163.2 x 114.9	Tate Britain, London
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 16</b>	<b>Mrs Flora Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1904</b>	<b>163.2 x 107.9</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
John Singer Sargent	Mrs Leopold Hirsch	Oil on canvas	1902	145 x 90	Tate Britain, London
John Singer Sargent	Mrs William George Raphael	Oil on canvas	1906	142.2 x 104.1	Private Collection
John Singer Sargent	Sir George Henschel	Oil on canvas	1899	65.3 x 53.3	Private Collection
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 17</b>	<b>Hylda, Almina &amp; Conway, Children of A. Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1905</b>	<b>188 x 133,4</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 18</b>	<b>A vele gonfie</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1905</b>	<b>163.2 x 107.9</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
John Singer Sargent	El Jalelo	Oil on canvas	1882	237 x 352	Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass.
John Singer Sargent	Charles Stewart 6 <sup>th</sup> Marquess of Londonderry	Oil on canvas	1902/4	287 x 195.6	Collection of Henry R Kravis
John Singer Sargent	The Duke of Marlborough and his family	Oil on canvas	1905	332.7 x 238.8	Blenheim Palace, London
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 19</b>	<b>Lady Aline Sassoon</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>161.3 x 105.4</b>	<b>Private collection</b>
John Singer Sargent	Betty Wertheimer	Oil on canvas	1908	128.9 x 100.1 oval	National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 20</b>	<b>Almina Wertheimer</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1908</b>	<b>134 x 101</b>	<b>Tate Britain, London</b>
Eugene Delacroix	Women of Algiers in their Apartments	Oil on canvas	1834	180 x 229	Musée du Louvre, Paris
J-A-D Ingres	Odalisque with Slave	Oil on canvas	1839	72 x 100	Fogg Art Museum, Harvard Museums of Art, Cambridge, Mass
A van Dyck	Lady Shirley	Oil on canvas	1622	200 x 133.4	National Trust, Petworth House, Sussex
Charles Jervas	Lady Wortley-Montague	Oil on canvas	1720s	210 x 127	National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin
John Singer Sargent	Arthur Balfour	Oil on canvas	1908	256.5 x 147.3	National Portrait Gallery, London
John Singer Sargent	Lord Dalhousie	Oil on canvas	1900	152.4 x 101.6	Private Collection
John Singer Sargent	Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth	Oil on canvas	1889	221 x 114.3	Tate Britain, London
<b>John Singer Sargent Ill 21</b>	<b>Dr Pozzi at home</b>	<b>Oil on canvas</b>	<b>1881</b>	<b>202.9 x 102.2</b>	<b>The Armand Hammer Museum UCLA, Los Angeles.</b>
John Singer Sargent	The Children of Edward Darley Boit	Oil on canvas	1882	221.9 x 222.6	Museum of Fine Art, Boston, Mass

## Chapter 7 The lachrymose Mr Rothenstein

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Size</i> <i>cms</i> <i>H by W</i>	<i>Location</i>
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 1	In the Spitalfields Synagogue	Oil on canvas	1904	76.2 x 96.5	Hugh Lane Municipal Museum of Art, Dublin
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 2	Praying Jews	Pastel on flock woven paper	1904	24.5 x 29.2	National Gallery of Canada, Ontario
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 3	An exposition of the Talmud	Oil on canvas	1904	114.8 x 145.2	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 4	In the corner of the Talmud School	Oil on canvas	1904	89.5 x 70.5	Gallery, Oldham
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 5	Aliens at Prayer	Oil on canvas	1905	127.4 x 105.5	National Gallery of Victoria. Melbourne
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 6	The Talmud School	Oil on canvas	1904/5	83.8 x 94.9	Sternberg Centre, London
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 7	Jews Mourning in a Synagogue	Oil on canvas	1906	127.5 x 115.5	Tate Gallery, London
William Rothenstein	Jews Mourning in a Synagogue	Charcoal on paper	1906	43.2 x 50.8	Cartwright Hall, Bradford
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 8	Reading the Book of Esther	Oil on canvas	1907	87 x 106	Manchester City Art Gallery
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 9	Carrying the Law	Oil on canvas	1908	160 x 188	Johannesburg Art Gallery
Solomon Hart Ch 7 Ill 10	The Feat of the Rejoicing of the Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn, Italy	Oil on canvas	1850	141.3 x 174.6	The Jewish Museum of new York, under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
William Rothenstein Ch 7 Ill 11	Carrying the Law	Oil on canvas	1907		Cartwright Hall, Bradford
William Rothenstein	Two Jewish Rabbis carrying the "Law"	Chalk on blue paper	1907	36.5 x 23.5	City of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
William Rothenstein	A Dolls House	Oil on canvas	1899/1900	88.9 x 61	Tate Gallery, London
Gustave Doré	Mendiant Juif à Londres	Drawing	C 1869	25,6 x 17.5	Unknown
Alphonse Legros	Study of a head	Oil on canvas laid down on panel	C1879	58.3 x 45.2	Manchester City Art Gallery
Alphonse Legros	Head of an Old Man	Oil on canvas	1881	61.3 x 50.7	Manchester City Art Gallery
Alphonse Legros	St Jerome	Oil on canvas	1881	176.4 x 107.6	Manchester City Art Gallery
William Rothenstein	Hablant Espagnol	Oil on canvas	1895	81.3 x 45.7	Private collection
John Singer	La Carmencita	Oil on canvas	1890	232 x	Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Sargent				142	
William Rothenstein	Eli The Thatcher	Oil on canvas	1913	76.5 x 63.3	Manchester City Art Gallery
William Rothenstein	Street in Hildesheim	Pastel and chalk on grey paper	1902	40 x 27	Manchester City Art Gallery
<b>Max Beerbohm</b> Ch 7 Ill 12	<b>A quiet morning in the Tate Gallery</b>	<b>Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>37 x 32</b>	<b>Tate Gallery London</b>
Alphonse Legros	The Calvary	Oil on canvas	1874	91.5 x 72.8	Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Théodule Ribot	At the Sermon	Oil on canvas	1890	55.5 x 46.5	Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Giotto	Trail by Fire Fresco	Fresco	1315/1320		Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence
<b>Simeon Solomon</b> Ch 7 Ill 13	<b>Coptic Baptismal Procession</b>	<b>Watercolour, Gouache &amp; Gum Arabic</b>	<b>1865</b>	<b>25.9 x 42.4</b>	<b>Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford</b>
William Rothenstein	Parting at Morning	Pastel, chalk and paint on board	1891	127 x 48	Rothenstein family collection
Josef Israels	The Old Rabbi	Watercolour	1883	50 x 34	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Josef Israels	Son of the Chosen People	Watercolour	1888	56 x 43	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Josef Israels	Jewish Wedding	Oil on canvas	1903	137 x 148	Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam on loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Josef Israels	The Philosopher	Oil on canvas	1894	65 x 54.6	National Gallery, London
Josef Israels	The Jewish Scribe	Oil on canvas	1902	108 x 151	Kroller-Müller Museum, Oterloo
Paul Gauguin	The Vision after the Sermon or Jacob wrestling with the Angel	Oil on canvas	1888	73 x 92	National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh
Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret	The Pardon in Brittany	Oil on canvas	1886	114.6 x 84.8	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret	Les Bretonnes au Pardon	Oil on canvas	1887	125 x 141	Museu Calouste Gulbenkenian, Lisbon
William Rothenstein	The Browning Readers	Oil on canvas	1900	77.5 x 97.2	Cartwright Hall, Bradford

Chapter 5 Table 1

<u>Population Figures '000</u>	<u>1877</u> <i>Est b</i>	<u>1881</u> <i>Pop. Official Census (Pop Density /sq mile)</i>	<u>1891</u> <i>Pop. Official Census</i>	<u>1901</u> <i>Pop. Official Census (Pop Density /sq mile)</i>	<u>1902</u> <i>Est.</i>	<u>1911</u> <i>Pop. Official Census (Pop. Density /sq mile)</i>
Total Population of Great Britain		35,206	37,880	41,609		
Total Jewish Pop	68.3				200 est	270 d
Total London Pop		4,713	5,571	6,507		
Total Inner London Pop		3,8306 (32,488)	4,228	4,536 (38,476)		
Total London/ Jewish Pop.	53.9				150 c	
London Tot Foreigners		60.2	95.0	135.4		153.1
London Tot. Russian/Polish			36.7	53.5		63.2
Stepney a Population		282.7	285.1	298.6		
Stepney Tot. Foreigners		16.0	32.3	54.3		53.1
Stepney Tot. Russian/Polish				42.0		43.7

This table is based primarily on the decennial Census Reports, except where noted below

**Notes**

a Stepney comprised; Limehouse (North & South), Mile End (New & Old Town), Ratcliff, St George in the East, Shadwell, Spitalfields (East & West), The Tower, Whitechapel

b Jewish Chronicle 1878

c Joseph Jacobs, "London", *Jewish Encyclopaedia* 1901- 1906 pp 155 ff.

d I. Cohen *Jewish Life in Modern Times*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> London: Methuen & Co., 1914 [www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/Book/Cohen/icohen.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/Book/Cohen/icohen.html)

Cohen explained his method of calculation thus. 'This estimate is arrived at by adding together the figures of the Jewish population in all the towns of the United Kingdom, as given in the *Jewish Year-Book* for 1914, multiplying the number of families (where the population is so stated) by 5, and assuming a minimum population of 30 for towns with a synagogue for which no figure is given. The Jewish population of London is estimated at 160,000 (the estimate of Joseph Jacobs for 1902 was 150,000, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. viii. p.174)'.

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London Metropolitan Archive

Museum of London

National Portrait Gallery

Royal Academy

Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of London

Slade School

Tate Gallery

**E. Journals Scanned**

*The Independent*

*The Jewish Chronicle*

*Ost und West*

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