JULIET STEYN

THE JEW IN BRITAIN: ASSUMPTIONS OF IDENTITY

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier drafts of Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7 and 8 have been published under the following titles, 'Which History?' in *Art Monthly*, Dec/Jan 1990; 'The Complexities of Assimilation in the exhibition, *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 1906' in *The Oxford Art Journal*, Vol.13 No.2, 1990; 'Yids, Mods and Foreigners', *Third Text No.15, Summer 1991*; 'The Mythical Edges of Assimilation' in *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Art Centre, London 1992 and 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Rider', *Art Monthly*, Feb. 1988.

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Bernard Steyn (1907–1985): it was he who, despite everything, remembered.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with institutions and discourses which together produce the category *Jew-as-Other.* It examines the identity of the *Other* by applying cultural theory to the social and political condition of the Jew in Britain at particular moments in the 19th and 20th centuries. It looks at art and culture in the representation and construction of the notion of Jewish identity as *Other.*

Proceeding through an examination of case studies and events in Britain – including legislation on aliens and a number of art exhibitions which were themselves productive of *Otherness* – the thesis argues that these events shed light on the limits to, and of: the processes of (Jewish) emancipation; the dialectic of identity and difference; assimilation and dissimulation; cultural differentiation and the articulation of a national culture; affirmation and negation and finally, universalism and particularism – all of which emanate from the Enlightenment project creating yet another dialectic whose synthesis was, for some, the anti-semitism of annihilation.

The thesis necessarily troubles the notion of Jewish identity: Identity, although used as a method of analysis and production and inscribed within historical processes, is a problematic and unstable category which endlessly twists and turns. *Jew-as-Other* occupies different sites which lie not just outside British culture but inside (as well as outside the inside, and inside the outside), cultural institutions and discourses.

The thesis ends by posing a series of alternatives to the *Other* as a threat (both Subject and subject) seeking instead languages, modes of thought and an ethic, through which the Self and the *Other* can be understood as surpassing the dialectical configuration of identity and difference.

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PREFACE

ASSUMPTIONS OF IDENTITY

'To be a Jew is to constitute a problem, for Others, and hence for oneself'[1].

This text is an examination of forms in and through which *Jew*[2] has been constituted. In this thesis I draw a distinction between *Jew* as a regulating idea and 'real' Jews and argue that *Jew* does not equal the Jew. Jews and their history are both different from yet connected to *Jew*. The networks of representations which constitute 'Jewishness' in modern culture provide the focus of this study. My concern is to identify and understand the practices of institutions and discourses which use *Jew* as a category.

The terms 'institution' and 'discourse', are deployed here with the ranges of meaning they have in current usage. The term 'institution' is sometimes used in a narrow sense to denote that which is established or constituted in society, a 'body' with a programme of public responsibility. (So for example, the Whitechapel Art Gallery is an institution which organises art exhibitions). On other occasions, 'institution' is also used to denote a governing ideology and a corporate project which for example, in the art world, functions to secure the legitimacy of a particular form of art. Louis Althusser argues that we are first united by institutions which he describes as the 'myths' and 'themes' that govern us without our consent[3]. His understanding of 'institutions' brings it close to the notion of 'discourse' which has been given special meaning in the work of Michel Foucault. (The intended meaning of 'institution' will be clear from the context.)

For Foucault the world is known to us through systems of representation: A discourse is a form of representation, it is a domain of language-use, a way of speaking and indeed, of thinking. A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations which characterise it. The 'world' is made up of many discourses.

This thesis examines some of the many forms of discourse through which the *Jew* as different is constantly produced and reproduced; in legislation, social policy, literary and visual cultures and art exhibitions. These forms are not here perceived

as isolated currents, practices or procedures but 'technologies' and 'techniques' of power which mutually reinforce and cut-in upon one another[4].

In *Discipline and Punish*[5], Foucault makes an important distinction between types of power and their particular forms of control. For him,

> "Discipline" may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a "physics" or anatomy of power, technology.[6]

Here Foucault suggests that power is not above social relations but is within them. Power, as part of the social fabric is embedded in and dispersed through the micro-relations that make up society.

The thesis as a whole, by recognizing a variety of sites in which identity is made and made over, presents itself as a migration which traverses several routes through and in which the Jews (a group without a single foundation, a heterogeneous linking of the non-identical) and their identities as *Jew* have been (and continue to be) achieved. Following Foucault it can be argued that there is no simple mechanism for identity production and differentiation. Social identities of subjects are mediated by discursive practices and values.

Jewish identity formation involves an ensemble of dispersed portions and conjunctural positions; it is over-determined and is saturated with meanings. The symbolism attached to *Jew* is linked to primary psychic processes and plays a 'primordial' role. Here I follow Emanuel Levinas who describes anti-semitism as,

> a repugnance felt for the unknown within the psyche of the Other, for the mystery of its interiority or, beyond any agglomeration within an ensemble or any organization within an organism, a repugnance felt for the pure proximity of the other man, for sociality itself.[7]

The relationship with the *Other* is not one that is idyllic, harmonious or even reducible to one of mastery: rather, Levinas argues, it is a relationship with mystery. In the text I differentiate between the *Other* (a regulating concept) and others following the rationale used to distinguish between *Jew* and the Jews.

"Assumption of Identity" (I recite the title, in-as-much as identity is always a citation of itself), risks repetition; re-writing 'identity' is dangerous as it might just repeat 'identically' those identities it seeks to expose. Though the assumptions of Jewish identity, past memories of pogroms and of the Shoah are often evoked to legitimate and explain today's defensive nationalism most vividly enacted in Israel. The image of *Jew* as victim of history provokes distrust or worse still is itself used as an incitement to violence. The fabric of Jewish identity is interwoven with the complex formations of anti-semitism.

This text began in a desire to understand anti-semitism in Britain. It followed a route akin to that of my own family who emigrated from Riga to East London in 1880 and there assimilated. A project such as this one is beset with anxieties which come out of a sense of loyalty inspired by such people. As Edward Said has recently pointed out:

> All of us without exception belong to some sort of national, religious
> or ethnic community: no one, no matter the volume of protestations,
> is above the organic ties that bind the individual to family, community,
> and of course nationality.[8]

He going on to remind us that when 'your' people are threatened with political and sometimes actual physical extinction the temptation is to protect and defend them. This temptation, he argues, must be resisted. Following Aimé Césaire, Said believes our goal should be 'the invention of new souls'. Those that do not remember are compelled to repeat[9]. Remembering enables a movement beyond identity to reveal the traps of 'identity thinking'[10].

The text while acknowledging the assumptions of identity refuses them. Uncovering Jewish identity is not to say that identity is 'essential', rather, it is to enable a going-beyond of that identity (in-so-far as going beyond necessitates a working-through, a repetition).

[1] Mary McCarthy, 'Hannah Arendt and Politics', *50th Anniversary Partisan Review*, 1984, p.733.

[2] This distinction is marked throughout by the typographical convention that whenever *Jew* is italicised it refers to the regulating idea of *Jew*. Usually I write 'Jew' in the singular to connote something of the violence that is for me inextricably associated with the histories and discourses of Jews and *Jews*. Throughout this text the Jews and *Jew* are gendered as masculine. The *Jew* in discourse is almost inevitably male. There are few positions in which 'woman' speaks or can be enunciated. However, there are moments in which *Jew* is 'feminized' and these will be noted.

[3] Louis Althusser, 'The Piccolo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht', *For Marx* (trans. Ben Brewster), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, p.150.

[4] See for example, M. Foucault, 'The Eye of Power' in *Power/Knowledge*, (ed. Colin Gordon), New York, Pantheon, 1980, pp.146–166.

[5] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977.

[6] *Ibid*, p.215.

[7] Emanuel, Levinas 'Zionisms', *The Levinas Reader* (ed. Sean Hand), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p.279.

[8] Edward Said, 'Holding Nations and Traditions at Bay', *The Reith Lectures*, BBC Radio 4, June 30, 1993. The edited text, from which I quote, was published in *The Independent*, I July, 1993, p.14.

[9] 'Identity thinking' in Adorno refers to the idea that there is an identity between concept and object, as between *Jew* and Jew. The particular is subsumed under the general concept as the individual is subsumed under the 'plan'. See David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, London: Hutchinson University Press, 1980 p.202.

[10] George Satayana's observation has now become a common place of cultural criticism. It originally appeared in *Life of Reason*, 1905, cited in *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*, (ed.) Tony Augarde, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.190.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Assuming Jewish History and Identity: *Jewish Experience in the Art of the 20th Century*, Barbican Art Gallery, London 1990-1991

In an essay 'Reflections on Forgetting'[1], the historian of Jewish history, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, citing Friedrich Nietzsche observed:

> We must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember.

I imagine that most people would assent to this assertion because the point is essentially banal. But more importantly it begs the question – given the need both to remember and to forget – where are the lines to be drawn? So Yerushalmi goes on to ask: how much history and what kind of history? What should we remember? What can we afford to forget? Although, as he reminds us, these questions are unresolvable, they are urgent and always, in the course of things, apparently resolved. The choice for Jews, as for non-Jews, is about what kind of past shall be had? Again, I turn to Yerushalmi:

> Today, Jewry lives a bifurcated life. As a result of emancipation in the diaspora and national sovereignty in Israel, Jews have re-entered the mainstream of history and yet their perception of how they got there and where they are is often more mythical than real.[2]

Myth can be understood as a form of power – the power that comes from bringing together and mobilizing fundamental forces and beliefs of a people[3]. Myth, in this sense, is the articulation of a deep, concrete and embodied identity. History is one of our myths. It brings together what can be thought and the origin. It combines them in ways that allow us to see, give us insights into, a society's understandings of its own workings. It is a great mistake to think that history is solely about the past. The past is brought into the present and past and present intertwine.

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In *The Writing of History*[4], Michel de Certeau distinguishes between the idea of making history – that is to say, history as an act or a process – and the idea of history as a noun, notionally divorced from making or production. History can be understood as vacillating between two poles: the first of which refers to a practice (reality): the second, to a closed discourse that is the text itself. This text, as a form of production, organises and creates a mode of intelligibility. De Certeau also suggests that language 'not so much implicates the status of reality of which it speaks, as posits it as that which is other than itself'[5]. Hence, ideologies are already invested in history. History can be understood as an interpretative practice which is connected to social praxis. Conceived in this way, that is to say as a series of discursive texts, history can be subjected to scrutiny which reveals its own ideological assumptions and practices.

Myth and history are bound up with questions of identity (which may be as much about the future as about the past). Identity is indelibly linked, grounded and formed in and by the processes of re-telling the past. Cultural identities are formed and legitimated through and by their representations in history. Historical discourse makes social identity explicit. Yet the concept 'identity' is not self-evident; nor is it as transparent or as unproblematic as we might like to think[6]. Identity is not an already accomplished fact; identity is itself a form of myth. Yet we now witness a Europe in agony – beside itself – tormented by the violence of national and ethnic struggles in a myriad of forms. And from the ways in which these are represented, it would appear that identity is something inherent, pre-given, unconditional and immutable. However, identity needs to be re-thought as something made and unmade; a process (like history itself), something which can never be complete, is always becoming yet always contingent.

The 'Assumptions of identity' in the title identifies the examination of identities given by and in history. This process itself risks presuming them. But the concern of the text is not to merely re-iterate these 'identities' which, through repetition, make identity appear essential. Rather, its concern is to re-write identity so as to expose it and surpass it.

Now, to return to the question 'which history?'. This question is brought into sharp focus in the context of the exhibition *Chagall to Kitaj: The Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art*, held at the Barbican Art Gallery, London 1990-1991[7]. The Barbican's resident curator, John Hoole, described, in the 'Preface' to the exhibition catalogue, the collective support the exhibition received from many sectors of the Jewish and Israeli communities. It represented, as he put it, their 'wish to recognise and reappraise the past'[8]. This statement brings me to question how the past was narrated in the exhibition and what assumptions were made about Jewish identity?

The intention of the organiser of *Chagall to Kitaj*, Avram Kampf, was 'to shed light on the submerged context which thus far has been largely ignored by contemporary art historians and critics'[9]. The key which locked the exhibition together was the Jewish 'origins' of each artist. Included among the 360 works on show were images by Bomberg, Epstein, Lipchitz, Modigliani, Joseph Herman, Lillian Lijn, Zadok Ben-David as well as -as the title makes plain – Chagall and Kitaj[10]. The focus of Kampf's study was the Jewish background, concerns and motifs of the artists. He thereby attempted to establish and to thematize a social matrix in which the artists worked and out of which they emerged into art history.

Based on an exhibition organised for the Jewish Museum, New York in 1976[11], the London exhibition, whilst changing many of the particular works on view, maintained

the approach of the earlier show which Kampf claimed 'has been vindicated by a widespread rejection of formalism in favour of a search for roots and identity'[12]. Both exhibitions represent a revision to, or even a repudiation of, modernist interpretations of European and American art history. Indeed, Kampf argued,

> There is the need to affirm that the tendency in the visual arts to regard works as autonomous aesthetic objects only denies these essential truths.[13]

The Barbican exhibition was used by Kampf to affirm his anti-formalist stance. By now, however, he claimed that his approach had been vindicated by art history itself. Moreover he asserted that his account, in opposition to 'formalism', reveals 'essential truths'[14]. These 'essential truths' are articulated in the catalogue as attacks on modern historiography which, according to Kampf, describe European history in terms of nation states. On this point he argued:

> The culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe transcended political boundaries, so the Jews of Poland, Lithuania, Rumania, the Ukraine, and other nation states, shared a pervasive identity and language and had more in common with one another than they did with the ethnic majorities of the countries in which they lived.[15]

Thus Kampf challenged the dominant view of European culture as formed by political geography, in place of which he substituted the idea of 'Jewish Experience'. Jewish history, in Kampf's discourse, represents the 'essential truths' of European culture.

Rituals, events like pogroms, the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel formed the basis for his notion of 'Jewish Experience' and by implication European history. The artists all share, and here I paraphrase: the experiences of continuous upheavals; persecution and immigration; a struggle for survival; the formation of Israel; the encounter with the biblical landscape and the rebirth of an ancient

language. For Kampf then, Jewish Experience was identified as persecution, survival, migration and adaptation. These were further thematized in the exhibition and the catalogue as: the 'Quest for a Jewish style'; the 'Encounter with the West'; 'Paris'; 'the Holocaust'; the 'Search for Roots in Israel'; the 'Evocation of the Religious Tradition', and finally, 'Reaching for the Absolute'[16]. The story Kampf tells is articulated through a miraculous conflation of continents and moments of twentieth century geography, history and art history. A common language, religious tradition (faith and ritual) and family life according to Kampf, held (and hold) the Jews together and provide the basis for interpreting twentieth century Jewish history. The display of the show mapped out the themes so that they all lead to the 'Promised Land'. The past was installed to narrate and explain the present.

The historical experience of the Jews was generalised so as to allow Kampf to produce what are (and were) for him, the defining characteristics of Jewish identity. *Jews*: exhibit a propensity for moral and ethical values; a tendency towards abstraction (explained as a national characteristic derived from religious education and ritual); and angst (identified as a condition of many Jewish artists). These all come about as a direct result of the individual artists' Jewish Experience. This collective experience was again defined by Kampf as,

> ..... large migrations from east to west, from close-knit communities
> to a strange atomized world .... a meeting with the culture, ideas and
> art of the West ..... the problems arising out of the struggle to survive
> .... the need to strike roots in a new environment, to adapt,
> assimilate, and yet preserve one's identity.[17]

The ideological demands for Jews to be different (coming from both Jews and non-Jews) were (and continue to be) great. They confirm the *Jew* in an identity. Moreover, Kampf's representation of Jewish experience and identity is by no means unique. Similar notions have frequently been used to articulate and install the notion

of 'essential' *Jewish* experience. These have fed into diverse and contradictory definitions of what makes Jewish art. For some, Jewish art is inherently abstract; for others, who perhaps look at Soutine, it is essentially expressionist; for others, it is a testament to the *Jewish*, and by extension human suffering in the world; for others again, who look perhaps at Chagall, it is the folk-lore of the shtetl or the ghetto. There has been a marked desperation to locate and to identify characteristics through which Jewish art can be classified. At times these have been coupled with a tendency to psycho-pathologise the Jewish artist.

In London, 1953, the Redfern Gallery staged an exhibition called *Russian Emigré Artists in Paris* which included works by Chagall, Soutine, Zadkine, Mané-Katz and Chapiro. John Berger's response[18] was to identify emotionality, sensuality and nostalgia as the unifying characteristics of Jewish art and artists which arose as a direct consequence of their Jewish history of persecution, along with 'pride with which they have withstood persecution'. Hence *Jewish* art is, according to Berger, 'the result of acute suffering and intense yearnings', so that these artists become 'almost hysterically intoxicated and hopelessly impetuous'[19].

By the end of the nineteenth century, it was commonly accepted that the Jews were more prone to hysteria and neurasthema than other 'races'[20]. Different diagnoses were offered. Jean Martin Charcot argued that it was because of a 'weakening' to the 'nervous system' due to endogamous marriages. In the Tuesday Lesson of 23 October, 1888, Charcot described 'a case of hysterical dysprie'. His lecture concluded with the remark,

> I already mentioned that this twenty-year-old patient is a Jewess.
> I will use this occasion to stress that nervous illnesses of all types are
> innumerably more frequent among Jews than among other groups.[21]

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Cesare Lombroso, while accepting the general thesis that the Jews were particularly subject to mental illness, differed from Charcot in his diagnosis of the causes. He advanced the theory that it was due to 'residual effects of persecution'[22] which, it was believed, constituted Jewishness. In other words *Jewishness* became a psychological quality. Hannah Arendt explains:

> Instead of being defined by nationality or religion (assimilated) Jews
> were being transformed into a social group whose members shared
> certain psychologies, attributes and reactions.[23]

Berger perpetuates such typification. For him too, it is the suffering of the Jews which gives the Jewish artist his identity. In this discourse, the *Jewish* artist is *a priori* the romantic artist. He [sic] becomes identified with, or indeed the prototype of, the angst–ridden genius.

The image of the modern *Jew* involved in culture is often represented as bookish, intellectual, secular if not atheist, assimilated, cosmopolitan, with leftist or anarchist political tendencies. Here we quickly arrive at the familiar stereotypes of Jews, that is to say, that *Jews* are more cerebral, having a tradition of abstract thinking originating from the Talmud with its traditions of exegesis and commentary. However, Ilan Halevi points out the,

> intellectual and cultural characteristics that Westerners identify with
> Jewishness and consider to be the constitutive features of being
> Jewish – such as humour, criticism, liberalism, cosmopolitanism –
> were part of [this] crisis.[24]

According to Halevi it was the specific crisis of Jewish identity produced by, and achieved in and through, the processes of Emancipation which created those responses – not traditional Jewish culture. These psychological characteristics are contingent, and necessarily cannot be fixed categories for all Jews at all times and places.

In *A Short History of Jewish Art*, described as 'an inquiry into the nature and development of Jewish art', published in 1948, Helen Rosenau accepts and reinforces the influence of the book in Jewish thought. She argues that it results in the 'one-sided development of the intellectual against aesthetic sensibilities'. However she suggests that this 'one-sidedness' can be overcome through the practice of art[25], whereby the Jews could create a new harmony in Jewish life. Edward Carter, in the preface to the book, replicates these views. He adds 'emotion' as yet another ingredient of Jewish art:

> .... an interesting feature of Jewish art is the capacity of so many Jewish artists to inject dynamically powerful charges of emotion into abstract or near-abstract forms.[26]

The imperative which structures Rosenau's book is the rehabilitation of Jewish cultural achievements at a time when, since

> .... the Jews are being considered either sympathetically or unkindly mainly from a political point of view, it is important to be reminded of their cultural and religious contributions to civilization.[27]

Her text provides a vast historical survey, the scope of which is narrowed by its defensive tone.

In Western society, 'the people of the Book meet the people of books', suggests Sander Gilman in *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*[28]. He suggests that Western culture stresses the centrality of the written word as the 'icon' of culture and civilisation, and believes that the *Other* does not, cannot, share the most civil of arts – writing, reading and interpretation. Rosenau's defensive attempt to promote Jewish culture, inadvertently perhaps reiterates the vocabulary of those discourses which would seek to deny the existence of other cultures as civilised. By so doing she places the entire burden of responsibility for

the disintegration of Jewish culture(s) upon the Jews themselves.

Leo Steinberg [29] has argued – in his discussion of the New York School Second Generation – that a common ground existed between Jewish life and modern art. He seeks to assimilate them to the exigences of each other. He considered them both to be 'masters of renunciation' having 'renounced all the props on which existence as nation or art once seemed to depend'. Jewish religious ritual and abstract painting are for Steinberg 'free of representational comment', largely self-fulfilling, and established by 'uncompromising exclusiveness'. Difference has been assimilated. Hence in this discourse, Jewish and modernist art become synonymous.

Modernism, in Richard Cork's thesis, provides Jewish artists with the escape route from the ghetto. In *Jewish Artists in the East End*[30], which focuses on Bomberg, Gertler and Wollmark, he argues on the one hand a common identity existed between them as *Jews*: they are bonded by their difference from *Others* (dissimulated). While, on the other hand, he claims that Modernism provided the place for them to be the same (assimilated). In this discourse, alienation is the condition shared by all modernist artists. For Cork, Jewish artists are at once different from other artists and are the same.

Always to name a *Jewish* art, or an artist as *Jewish*, is to seek a basis for defining or categorizing them in ways which inevitably differentiate them from the 'norm'. Assimilation and/or dissimulation are the critical axes around which the notion *Jewish* art interminably spins.

Now to return to the Barbican exhibition: *Chagall to Kitaj.* Each name provokes

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different questions and sheds more light on the problems arising from the very idea 'Jewish Experience'. For Kampf,

> .... Chagall, [who] had his roots in the Jewish religious communities of Eastern Europe, has evoked the spirit of their way of life, Kitaj, [who] grew up in the privileged diaspora of the American midwest, is intrigued by the psychic and cultural uniqueness of the Western Jewish community and reflects upon the meanings and anxieties of a Westernised Jewry.[31]

Hence Chagall/Kitaj can be regarded as paradigmatic individuals who pre-figure a type. They represent models of Jewish identity already formed and realised. The type provides the myth with its own truth. It allows the dream that between the poles signalled by the names Chagall/Kitaj, the 'whole' (Jewish identity) can be embodied and possessed.

When discussing Chagall's painting *Cavalry* (1912), Kampf suggests that it illuminates the 'tension and conflict which the Enlightenment and the processes behind it brought into the Jewish community'[32]. The choice to depict a crucified Christ is, according to Kampf, the result of Chagall's migration to the West and the urge (which Kampf discovers in the work of other Jewish artists and writers) to re-assess their attitudes towards Christ[33]. [fig.1]. Later he argues that Chagall presents an organic and convincing synthesis between East and West, between Jewish life experience, between Jewish Russian folk art and contemporary Western art. Hence for Kampf, Chagall stands

> .... culturally rooted in traditional Biblical lore as transmitted by the Cheda, yet already open to the whole world and capable of assimilating fully the icons of St. Petersberg, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish folk art, Gogol and Lermontov, aspects of cubist and modern French poetry. He moved freely in those domains but remained most deeply attached to his own culture.[34]

Thus, Kampf argues, Chagall is able to assimilate diverse traditions and create a

synthesis. Yet he is always, finally, the *Jewish* artist.

However, if identity is understood otherwise, 'Chagall' can be re-thought. The need (whose?) to construct his work as synthetic and consistent would of necessity change and allow different forms of interpretation to be thought and to exist. In these discourses the 'who' (Chagall) comes before the subject. It is assumed to be already there. Chagall is ceaselessly *a priori*. The subject as the centre of identity is given as a fact. Chagall/*Jew* becomes the sign through which his work is read or not read. However, the subject 'Chagall' is not identical to itself. It is fragmented and unstable.

Moreover, his work was constantly responsive to artistic, social and political exigencies. Persistent ambivalence was the one constant feature of his life's work. Chagall's life spanned the years charted in the Barbican exhibition, years punctuated by pogroms, revolution, the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. His reactions to and interpretations of these events effected his relationship with his 'Jewishness' not simply as aspects of history, folklore, religion, or even of his deep unconscious self, but as part of a lived present which had to be negotiated and renegotiated. His autobiography *My Life*[35] which was written in the early 1920s in the USSR (when the founding of a Jewish Soviet Republic was for a moment a possibility), stressed a *Jewish* past. Yet he is buried in a Christian cemetery. Chagall – like his paintings of fable and fantasy – has been mythologised, a process to which he himself contributed.

The texts which seek to describe and explain his art range from celebrations of Chagall's work as the model for and of *Jewish* art, to accounts which secularize it and assign its appeal to the realm of the 'universal'. Chagall's work can be seen as

a site where the battle of identities, *Jewish* or *Other*, are played out. In that battle, judgements about Western art and the place assigned to *Other (Jewish)* cultures are at stake and polarized around the notions universalism and particularism[36]. For Franz Meyer, Chagall's Jewish origins are the decisive factor in both the development and the interpretation of his work. His Jewish heritage is installed as the source of his symbolism:

> The spirit of Jewish mysticism is one of the fundamental sources of Chagall's art .... The Hassidic spirit remains .... the sustenance and foundation of his art.[37]

However, a problem emerges for Meyer as he attempts to puzzle out how these images, which he has designated as fundamentally and essentially *Jewish* in spirit, can carry a universal meaning. To place his art in the realm of the 'universal' has been the basis for judgement in the making of a canonical art history. So it is imperative for Meyer to come up with an explanation; in spite of itself Chagall's work transcends its own origins, is universal and is thus enabled to enter the discourses of modernist art history.

Susan Compton, on the other hand, in the catalogue which accompanied the Royal Academy exhibition, had no such quandary – Chagall's images are for her

> timeless ..... reminding man [sic] of the continuity of life for generation after generation, since the earliest days of recorded time.[38]

Thus his work is represented in normative art history as belonging to all people for all times.

These two accounts represent a polarity. Each claims to know the authentic Chagall, the truth about his art. Within those terms neither is either right nor wrong in any simple sense. Each is partial. What they share is the imperative and the

obligation to testify to Chagall's 'greatness', his art as universal and its place within the canon.

In Paris 1912 Chagall met the Yiddish art critic Leo Koenig[39]. And it was in *La Ruche*[40] that according to Koenig they first discussed the idea of a *Jewish* art. (Soutine was a daily visitor to Chagall and was also involved in these discussions).

From this date Chagall started to paint a number of works which dealt with themes in a way which departed from earlier depictions of Russian and/or Jewish life. Here I include *Deadman* (1908) and *Russian Wedding* (1909) [fig.2]. Amongst the 'new' are *Jew at Prayer* (1912-13) [fig.3], *Praying Jew* (1914) [fig.4] and *Feast Day* (1914) [fig.5][41].

At intervals throughout the rest of his life Chagall turned to other conspicuously Jewish subjects, imaged in paintings such as *Cemetery Gates* (1917) [fig.6] and *Solitude* (1933) [fig.7]. I am not here designating these pictures as essentially Jewish. Rather I want to suggest that they mark a self-conscious attempt on the part of Chagall to construct such an identity. Writing to him in April 1948, Chagall is flattered by Koenig having suggested that his art might be Jewish, but Jewish in a very specific sense:

> It is a very great honour for me when you compare me with Scholem Aleichem. True my art is Jewish, that is psychologically and even 'technically'.[42]

Explicit is the idea that 'Jewish' signalled psychological traits which may then be manifested in form; and more, that Jews share a psychological condition. Jewish identity is a reiteration of *Jew* as an already known and predetermined type.

The variety and scope of Chagall's art in the Paris 'period' is remarkable, especially if it is compared with his work of later years. Paintings like *I and the Village* (1911) [fig.8], *Hommage to Apollinaire* (1912-13) [fig.9] and *Adam and Eve* (1912) [fig.10], all show the extent of his debt to a cubist syntax. The differences between the individual works or groups of works as indicated above should not be explained merely as matters of stylistic (language) differences, but as indicative of different views, as translations which in themselves articulate and encompass a variety of perspectives. In a 1912 review, in the St. Petersberg Yiddish language paper, *Dag Leben*, Koenig had written with regret,

> It is a pity that M. Chagall has fallen into the mouths and hands of the futurists and it is a greater pity that he is influenced by them, because actually he is the opposite of them. He is essentially a folk artist, primitive.[43]

Koenig was discussing *Deadman, Herdsman* (1911/1912) and *Golgotha* (1912), which Chagall had exhibited at the *Salon D'Automne* of 1912, Koenig celebrates 'folk art' and the 'primitive', which in the avant-garde critical discourses of the time were perceived and understood as measures of authentic art and critically valued and appraised as such. Later in the same review he remarked:

> The young M. Chagall is not entirely free of outside influences and it is difficult to describe his character clearly and completely but when he rids himself of these outside influences purifies himself and settles down then we shall probably have a very significant and great Jewish artist.[44]

Koenig suggests that Chagall had a choice to make either 'Futurist' (modern) art or, indigenous *(Jewish)* art, that is to say, either 'cosmopolitan' or 'provincial' art[45]. However, to become a great Jewish artist Chagall must be cleansed. He must purify himself. This rite will return him to his origins and he will become whole, authentic again.

Many years later (1955), in a letter written to Koenig from Venice, Chagall reflected

upon and re-appraised what might then have been for him the differences between

Koenig and the poet Cendrars:

> You were such a contrast to Cendrars who was at that time the chief
> cosmopolitan poet. And he loved me in his own fashion. I think you
> were among the first who has dreamed about a new style of art
> among the Jews.[46]

Cendrars was one of Chagall's main connections with the Parisian vanguard. More

even than that, his poetry was instrumental in the formation of Chagall's Cubist

language. Of course, Chagall did not have to, nor indeed did he, make the choice

between a 'cosmopolitan' or a 'Jewish' style of art in any absolute or simple sense.

He accommodated both, to the detriment of neither. As the work from the early

Paris period shows, he was fully able to negotiate different identities – perhaps as

a Parisian avant-gardist, perhaps as a Russian artist, perhaps as a *Jew*.

Chagall's identity – artistic or Jewish etc. – was not fixed, but fabricated by and in

those very conflicts. In another letter to Koenig, Chagall alludes to those shifting

perspectives which for him, at that moment, constituted what it might mean to be a

Jew. It was different from before.

> I want to talk to you and to tell you how good it is to live in Israel, in
> our country, which our enemies want to take away from us but they
> will not succeed. We are no longer like those Jews in Vitebsk
> without power.[47]

This letter marks the dramatic introduction of Israel into Chagall's self-representation

and production of himself as *Jew*. The account of Chagall I have presented comes

from a particular relationship with a Yiddish poet where he was encouraged (and it

was appropriate for him) to voice his concerns regarding Jewish culture. But above

all else his art testifies to a shifting, restless negotiation of identities which are never

fixed but fabricated by and in conflict.

Chagall's art is a product of deep ruptures: East/West; Jewish/Christian; assimilationist/ essentialist. Interpretations of it are not reducible to the timeless (universal), nor to the essential (the seamless issue from his Jewish soul), nor to folk art (primitive), nor to a Parisian avant-gardism (modernism).

This unceasing, restless struggle with identity, argues Zymund Bauman in *Modernity and Ambivalence*[48] marks the modern condition. Indeed it is, for him, modernity itself. Ambivalence is understood as the impossibility of classification and categorization; it is the unknown component of the known – the unknowable or, in Bauman's words, 'the other of order is the miasma of the indeterminate and unpredictable'[49]. Modernism, according to Bauman, has been predicated upon the myth of knowledge as unassailable. Ambivalence is precisely the arena which modernism cannot control:

> It is a fight of determination against ambiguity, of semantic precision against ambivalence, of transparency against obscurity, clarity against fuzziness. Order as a concept, a vision, as a purpose could not be conceived but for the insight into the total ambivalence, the randomness of Chaos.[50]

The examples I have cited, in the Chagall texts, range from struggles to contain Chagall and to keep Chagall *Jewish*, to others which seek to make his art universal. I want to suggest that at its best, Chagall's works bristle with those very tensions. They are not reducible to any one set of meanings or identity. Rather his work can be understood productively as a testimony to, or a witness of, ambivalence itself.

Kitaj's art enters history at a different moment and seems to test the limits of the assimilationists' dreams. To return to the Barbican exhibition catalogue, Kampf is

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at pains to establish Kitaj's identity as *Jewish* artist. To support and give authority to this claim works made by Kitaj before his 'coming out' are accommodated and fitted into a *Jewish* map through citing an article by Fredrick Juten describing them as 'commemorative icons in the hagiography of martyred radicals'[51]. These 'icons' include Rosa Luxemberg and Walter Benjamin.

Walter Benjamin is installed, by Kampf, as the paradigmatic *Jewish* intellectual and the model for Kitaj in terms of both the form and the content of the work. He claims that the openness of interpretation provoked by the works of both Benjamin and Kitaj corresponds to the method of argument and counter-argument which characterises the Talmudic tradition of scholarship. This claim is predicated upon the notion that *Jewish* thought is organized differently from other modes of thinking.

Indeed, while this may have been true (and for some is still the case), it is not to suggest that Jews are 'essentially' different from others. However, what is at stake here, and indeed an issue that will be picked up again later[52] is the use and significance Kampf makes of the distinction between *Jewish* and other thought. Kampf is writing at a moment when Western philosophy, as elaborated in the Enlightenment, is under ever-increasing pressure and is being rewritten. The term 'postmodernism' has been used by Jean-Francois Lyotard[53] to suggest what he interprets as a crisis in knowledge. My concern here is to remark upon what in Kampf's writing amounts to an exclusive preoccupation with the identity of *Jewish* thought and to consider his concern with identifying and articulating its difference. However, for now, I want to signal that this issue has a place in contemporary epistemological debates, *Jewish* and/or *Other*.

By the 1970s Kitaj had fully identified himself as a *Jew* who, according to Kampf,

felt a kinship with a tribe and culture about whom he knew little except that they had wandered the world since the time of Abraham, nowhere fully at home.[54]

Kitaj changes from an artist who 'distanced ethnic representations' to one who actively sought them out. These 'Jewish features' are characterised by both Kampf and Kitaj as 'intellectual' and 'outsider'. Whilst the language Kitaj uses in his art is 'international', Kampf differentiates his work from another modernism. It is 'infused by a strong moral commitment' which Kampf also identifies as a trait shared with Jewish artists from New York[55].

It is true that *Jewishness* has become the central concern for Kitaj and is articulated in a number of texts[56] as well as paintings and drawings which often picture displaced Jews on trains, in transit, in no-place. They invite and provoke an interpretation of Jewish experience in terms which are close to Jean-Paul Sartre's no-history thesis of the Jews, which is to say that the Jews are only *Jews* by and through anti-semitism[57]. Kitaj himself has written,

> The subject which interests me most of the time now is vast, and it is as small as I am. I think I can call it – Jews in trouble, or Jews in danger. The trouble with Jews is that we are an endangered nation, almost always. Also the hotly debated question – What is a Jew? – has never been resolved, except by murderers.[58]

Kitaj has been represented by Andrew Brighton as a 'veteran History Painter'[59]. Here Brighton perpetuates and re-creates the image of the '*Jewish* Kitaj' and privileges him with a unique insight into history. Brighton writes,

> In many ways American Jews know the history of Europe better than goy Englishmen. It is inscribed on their past in terrible ways ... Kitaj mythologises modern history. At the centre of his mythology is the Jewish intellectual, perhaps the bearer of European culture.[60]

Which history does Brighton and Kitaj mythologise? Brighton sets up an opposition

between 'American Jew' and 'English goy' in order to establish the special ground –

the 'uprooted *Jewish* intellectual'. Kitaj agrees,

> These are my men [sic] .... the precursors I wish to create, as Borges
> said we do ..... those Diasporic jewels in the crown of our Western,
> universalistic art. There is a very modern sense in which that has
> remained untried by (Jewish painters), but done very well by Jewish
> writers like Bellow, Singer and Roth.[61]

Kitaj places at the centre of many of his works not only the Jew as intellectual but

also as victim.

In *Germania (the Tunnel)* [fig.11] dating from 1985, the ageing, myopic artist is

depicted supported by a stick carried in a hand as eloquently gestured as any found

in Giotto. He is watching a child walking on a ledge carrying a book. Thus Kitaj

typifies *Jews* as the people of the book. In the background is an arcade–like tunnel.

It is lit at the end while to the right, but cut off from the main incidents, is another

picture, in which the open and brightly–coloured brushwork, has been replaced with

closed, deliberate and flat application of paint. Leading back, as if on a conveyor

belt in a crematorium, lies an outstretched figure, face down, her long dark hair

perfectly arranged as if in death. Kitaj represents an infirm man, a woman and a

child – the three categories of people who were sent immediately to the gas

chambers upon arrival at the death camps during the Holocaust.

The arcade/tunnel motif combines two identifiable sources: the interrogation centre

in Warsaw which Kitaj visited with David Hockney, and the hospital in St. Remy

where Van Gogh was a patient[62]. But perhaps the tunnel also refers to that one in

Treblinka, the tunnel through which the victims of Nazi genocide were savagely

ushered to their deaths. The modern Jew (in the painting), represented as the artist

himself, is haunted by a memory of history. The child's presence is a recognition

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of the future. But ever present is knowledge of that other reality, the knowledge of extermination.

In the works of Chagall and Kitaj we witness, in different ways, some of the faces which represent Jewish identity. Through them we can see how Jewish identities have been (and continue to be) achieved. These are bound to fluctuate since contingency is the only certain ground. But in another sense the images also confirm existing post-Emancipation stereotypes – Fiddler on the Roof and the uprooted, angst-ridden, perpetually threatened intellectual. These need exploding lest Jews remain in a cycle of victimology and fail to come to terms with the consequences of power.

As a response and directly in reply to this last point[63], Monica Bohm-Duchen, one of the assistant organisers of the Barbican exhibition, responded to an earlier exposition of my views on this subject as follows :

> Since I assume she is here alluding primarily to the existence of the State of Israel, I feel obliged to point out, firstly, that most diaspora Jews regard Israel with considerable ambivalence (and never more so than in today's political climate); secondly, that the widespread and sinister resurgence of European anti-semitism makes it clear that the status and security of European Jewry is far from unassailable; and lastly, that the stereotype of the alienated, angst-ridden intellectual or artist has become a central part of western cultural mythology – evidence yet again of the Jew's paradoxical insider/outsider status.[64]

Bohm-Duchen was correct to assume that my reference was to the State of Israel, while she may also be right to argue that for many Jews their attitude to that State is nothing if not equivocal. Surely the point is that they are expected to 'identify' with Israel. Israel has become yet another determining feature of *Jewish* identity production. What needs to be questioned here is the certain assumption that *Jewish* identity in the present (in the Diaspora) is pre-figured by and in an Israeli identity.

Although Bohm-Duchen may be trying to shift the terms of the argument, for her the underlying assumptions about identity remain the same. As long as the logic of identity remains, we can only ever move endlessly from the Same (the already assigned) to the Other, inevitably and always under the authority of the Same, and of the foregrounding of the problematic of the identical.

With Bohm-Duchen's second point about anti-semitism; I concur, though not entirely. The link she makes between anti-semitism and Israel (as a refuge from it) is to repeat yet another misapprehension. The implication that the Jews in Europe can be protected from anti-semitism by Israel's presence as a haven for European Jews is yet another mis-recognition. The situation as, Ilan Halevi argues is not so simple,

> The point is that Zionism and anti-semitism cannot be treated as simple opposition: on the contrary, it is important to show how Zionism is a product of anti-semitism and a reaction to anti-semitism, is built upon and consolidated by anti-semitism.[65]

After the second world war the knowledge of the extermination became for the Zionists, a major justification for their actions and for the very existence of Israel as a European-type nation state. The problem here as Halevi indicates [66] is that by making anti-semitism the sole evil principle, the Jews are forever innocent, not only of any responsibility for their own sufferings but also for what in other places and other times, they may make others suffer.

On her last point; to recycle and represent those 'stereotypes' does nothing but maintain and confirm Jewish identity, mythologise it, and embody it as already known, fixed, recognisable and understood – an over-determined sign. Finally, as has already been witnessed this century, these very stereotypes have been mobilised to such tragic consequences which have in turn rendered them both

necessary (*Jews*) and expendable (*Jews*). To reaffirm those identities is not only a limited view of identity but is dangerous.

The map the exhibition charted led to Israel. The narrative punctuated by the themes described earlier, inscribed the end in the beginning. And more, the exhibition presented a version of history in which Zionism was 'the centre, the Alpha and the Omega, the base and the end'[67]. It presents an historical reconstruction which deflects, hides its origins, and works to serve the ideological needs of Zionism: this vision of history, this memory, is given as the moral foundation for the 'Return'.

Kitaj's painting *Arab and Jew (Jerusalem)* [fig.12], which dates from 1985, can perhaps be understood[68] as a gesture towards a critique of contemporary Middle Eastern politics which cannot be vindicated by past atrocities – in spite of the evidence presented in the exhibition which pointed to the contrary.

Here, two children are depicted seated, in profile, on a long padded bench–like form. They are separated from each other. An ungulfable space lies between them. The child on the left propped against pillows or seated winged, perhaps like a fallen angel, faces the other child. He looks whilst the other child averts his gaze. The posture of the former is upright, his index finger in his mouth, giving him an arrogant mien; the latter, who is curled up in a posture of submission, sucks his thumb. Scattered around the foreground of the room are two discarded teddy bears. It is a bleak image which bears no hope of reconciliation. Indeed, it postulates Jew/Arab in opposition and may be understood as bearing witness to the dangers of the idea of identity as located by and in nationhood, and the other as trapped in the body of opposition.

The exhibition as a whole portrays Jewish identity as the history of the Ashkenazi Jews (as if that in itself were a unitary story) and passes over in silence other and very different histories, like such as that of the Sephardi Jews. This unmentioned battle of identities is now being played out in Israel itself. In 'Israel: Jewish Identity and Competition over Tradition'[69], Robert Paine argues that a multi-faceted Zionism or more accurately, as he puts it Zionisms, are

> .... the source of the *divisive energy* of Jewish identity in Israel because there is competition over tradition and because of the near impossibility of rebecoming, this identity is still in the toils of labour.[70]

From its inception the task of nation-building in Israel was in the hands of the European, Ashkenazi Jews, who like David Ben-Gurion argued 'the culture of Morocco I would not like to have here'[71]. A consensus had to be formed around the notion of 'one' Israel, and the processes of cultural assimilation to a European model were vigorously enforced.

Kampf's version of the country is a representation of a conflict-free Israel: a promised land which was then superseded by another Israel which attempted to assert a new identity, one struggling to free itself from European tendencies; replaced by yet another Israel which sought to assimilate European art with ancient culture. The exhibition articulated three main phases in the construction of the history of Israel and identity: from secular Utopianism, to biblical, to the bringing together of European culture with 'archaic styles'. These phases occupy a time span and a sequence, from the early settlers to the influx of immigrants after the Second World War through to the present. All are selectively screened to present a unity in spite of differences. Kampf explains,

> However free and liberal Jewish people tend to be in their religious practices, at the core of their cohesiveness and collective consciousness exists a common religious tradition shared for

centuries. It is this tradition which shaped them and made people scattered all over the world feel a common identity.[72]

Identity is not 'born': it is made, moulded and shaped. The exhibition in its effects perpetuated the assumption that whatever art is made by Jews – over and above the diversity of contexts in which it is made and understood – shares an unequivocal *Jewish* essence and identity. Halevi points to a paradox when he writes:

> At the very point when Jewish society was breaking up as an autonomous social system, disintegrating into a host of special social situations, the idea spread among Europeans, as among the Jews of Europe, of a single question: a question which always went back in the last analysis, to the idea that each had a Judaism in general.[73]

I do not go along with those who seem to know exactly whether some phenomenon or another is *Jewish* or not. Nor do I subscribe to the idea that there is a well-defined and unvarying essence of Judaism especially where the evaluation of historical events are concerned. Like Kampf, I am interested in instating Jewish dimensions to understandings of twentieth century history. Unlike him, I am uncomfortable with a 'grand' or 'meta-narrative' through and in which to create and describe it.

A critique of meta-narrative has been mounted by Lyotard, for whom post-modernity is a 'crisis of narratives'[74]. Bill Readings explains that Lyotard is concerned with the 'troubling effects of narrative',

> This crisis means we can no longer tell a new story (begin another modernity); it means that our understanding of the place of narrative is itself in crisis because we no longer believe in meta-narratives. Meta- or grand narratives provide accounts of how the field of narratives might be organised and returned to a centre, origin or meaning. Grand narratives organise and legitimate the narratives of culture by positing an origin (God) or a telos (universal Emancipation) that gives the rules of narratives whilst itself escaping the condition of narration.[75]

Grand narratives organise the succession of historical moments in terms of a

projected revelation of meaning as a continuum of an already in place discourse. The Barbican exhibition perpetuates this form of narration.

Jews live in a larger world than the one described by Kampf; a world larger than themselves. It is impossible to understand the larger world without the Jews; it is equally impossible to understand them without the larger world. The idea of history presented by the exhibition where, and I quote,

> 'a group of works which re-establish a community of artists linked through shared origins have been assembled'[76]

is dangerous and treacherous. It subscribes to a political view of Jewish history shaped by a Zionism of the present.

Earlier, I suggested that history is as much about present concerns as it is about the past's. Here I want to ask, (and the questions come out thick and fast) when and where – in what contexts – are Jewish identities discussed and formed, and in what and whose terms? What is important is to consider the values attached to the differences constructed between *Jew* and *Other* in the hegemonic cultures and their discourses. Moreover, notions of *Jewishness* need to be replaced by attention to the production of the category *Jew* both by themselves and others.

These questions are not meant to deny Jewish singularity, rather they should be understood as refusals to homogenise, totalise or reduce it any way. Or, perhaps as Jacques Derrida suggested recently,[77] a question of 're-affirming' difference but now with respect for others, without giving way to aggression. The attempt in *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Art of the 20th Century* to identify an exclusively Jewish element in the diverse works of art in the exhibition is an act of desperation and one which I believe is doomed. It repeats, reiterates and traps Jew in an identity which

needs to be prised apart. Here I follow Edward Said when he writes,

> Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives
> usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant
> ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of
> exile free from this triumphant ideology – designed to re-assemble
> an exile's broken history into a new whole – is virtually unbearable,
> and virtually impossible in today's world. Look at the fate of the
> Jews, the Palestinians, and the Armenians.[78]

As I mentioned earlier, the choice for Jews – as for non-Jews – is not whether or

not to have a past but rather what kind of past shall be had. To return to

Yerushalmi,

> Myth and memory condition action. There are myths that are life-
> sustaining and deserve to be re-interpreted for our age. There are
> some that lead astray and must be redefined. Others are dangerous
> and must be exposed.[79]

The Barbican exhibition as a 'grand narrative' of Jewish history is 'dangerous' and

indeed needs 'exposing'. The idea of a restored people offers to both individuals

and groups the chance to become someone else 'for the time being', or the chance

to become what they once were. Or, even and most often, to become again what

they never were.

1   Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zahor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York, Schocken Books, 1989, p.107.

2   *Ibid.* p.99.

3   My use of the term 'myth' has a debt to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, in *Heideggar, Art and Politics*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990.

4   Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (trans.Tom Conley), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

5   *Ibid.* p.21.

6   Stuart Hall suggests that identity should be thought as a form of 'production'. 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford (ed), London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, p.222.

7   *Chagall to Kitaj; Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art.* The exhibition was held at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, Nov.1990-Jan.1991 and was the centrepiece of the London celebration of Israel.

8   John Hoole, 'Forward', in Avram Kampf *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art*, London, Lund Humphries/ Barbican Art Gallery, 1990, p.4.

9   *Ibid.* p.11.

10   *Ibid.* pp.184-196 for the full list of works on show.

11   *Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art*, Jewish Museum, New York, 1976. The Barbican exhibition and catalogue was a revised version. All quotes are from the Barbican exhibition catalogue.

12   *Ibid.* p.5.

13   *Ibid.* p.9.

14   *Ibid.* p.9.

15   *Ibid.* p.11.

16   These titles refer to the chapters in the catalogue around which the exhibition was structured and laid out.

17   Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.10.

18   John Berger, 'Jewish and Other Painting', *New Statesman and Nation*, Dec.12 1953, p.57.

19   *Ibid.* p.57.

20   The categorisation of people into racial groups was a quintessential 19th century project and can be seen as a 'technology' of power and an aspect of discipline. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, passim*.

21   Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, University of Cornell Press, 1985, pp.154-155.

22   Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and The Hidden Language of the Jews*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990, p.290.

23   Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1958, p.66.

24   Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, London and New Jersey, Zed Books, 1987, p.134.

25   Helen Rosenau, *A Short History of Jewish Art*, London, James Clarke, 1948, p.71.

26   Edward Carter, 'Preface' in Rosenau, *op cit*, p.12.

27   *Ibid.* jacket blurb.

28   Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.15.

29   Leo Steinberg, *The New York School: Second Generation*, Jewish Museum, New York, 1957, cited in Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.163.

30   Richard Cork, *Jewish Artists in the East End*, video recording, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1985.

31   Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.12.

32   *Ibid.* p.12.
33   *Ibid.* p.12.
34   *Ibid.* p.22.
35   Marc Chagall, *My Life*, London, Peter Owen, 1965.
36   Chapter 9 will pick up this theme to explore the significance of this opposition in art and in political discourses.
37   Franz Meyer, *Marc Chagall: Life and Work*, New York, Abrams, 1963, p.15.
38   Susan Compton, *Marc Chagall*, London, Royal Academy, 1985, p.14.
39   Unpublished letters from Chagall to Leo Koenig from the archive of G. Koenig, London, Hereafter K/A.
40   *La Ruche* was the name given to a building in Montparnasse, Paris where a number of artists lived and worked. It was so-called because of the beehive shape of the central building. *La Ruche* has been described as a 'kind of reception-room for indigent art immigrants' Léger, Alexander Achipenko, Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipchitz, the Delauneys, Moise Kisling Soutine, Max Jacob, Pierre Reverdy and Blaise Cendras were amongst those who lived there. Nigel Gosling, *Paris 1900-1914. The Miraculous Years*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978, p.208.
41   The dating of these pictures are based on Meyer, *Marc Chagall*.
42   Letter from Chagall to Koenig (trans. C. Abramsky), April 1948, K/A.
43   L. Koenig, (trans. C. Abramsky), *Dag Leben*, 1912, K/A.
44   *Ibid.*
45   *Ibid.*
46   Letter, Chagall to Koenig, September 18, 1955, K/A.
47   Letter, Chagall to Koenig, 1956, K/A.
48   Zygmund Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge, Polity Press 1991.
49   *Ibid.* p.7.
50   *Ibid.* pp.6-7.
51   Fredereck Juten, 'Neither Fool, Nor Naive, Nor Poseur Saint: Fragments on R.B. Kitaj', *Art Forum*, Jan. 1982, cited in Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.106.
52   Chapters 8 and 10 of this thesis discuss this theme.
53   Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988.
54   Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.106.
55   *Ibid.* p.106
56   See especially R.B. Kitaj, 'Jewish Art, Indictment and Defence', *Jewish Chronicle*, colour magazine, 30 Nov. 1984, R.B. Kitaj, 'A Passion', London, Marlborough Fine Art, 1985, R.B. Kitaj, *Diaspora Manifesto*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1989.
57   Jean-Paul Sartre's, *Réflexions sur la Question Juive*, Paris, Gaillimard 1954, has been characterised in this way e.g. by Harold Rosenberg in 'Does the Jew Exist? Sartre's Morality Play about anti-semitism', who argues that Sartre represents the Jews as having 'no history and are but the wretched creatures of anti-semitism'. *Commentary*, Jan. 1949, p.9. See also Chapter 9 of this thesis.
58   Kitaj, *'A Passion'*, p.2, also quoted by Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.106.
59   Andrew Brighton, 'Conversations with R.B. Kitaj' *Art in America*, June 1986, p.99.
60   Correspondence between Andrew Brighton and R.B. Kitaj, 1988, kindly lent to me by Andrew Brighton. An amended version was published as 'Conversations with R.B. Kitaj', *op.cit.*
61   *Ibid*
62   Marco Livingstone, *R.B. Kitaj*, Oxford, Phaidon Press, 1985.

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[63]   Her critique is a response to Juliet Steyn 'Which History?' *Art Monthly*, No.142, Dec/Jan. 1990–1991, pp.22–23.

[64]   Monica Bohm-Duchen, 'The Stranger within the Gates, *Third Text* No.15, Summer, 1991, p.12.

[65]   Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, p.159.

[66]   *Ibid.* p.158.

[67]   *Ibid.* p.158.

[68]   Every work of art, every picture offers up to the possibility of many readings, many understandings. In practice – that is, in the historical situatedness of the production and reception of interpretable objects – some 'readings' may be preferred over others – preferred by the artist, preferred by the spectator, preferred by the critic. Not only are they preferred readings but also some are more defensible, more warranted by the picture/text by its circumstances. In my thesis I unashamedly draw attention to those historically permitted readings with bear on the questions of the constitution of identity.

[69]   Robert Paine, 'Israel: Jewish Identity and Competition over Tradition', *History and Ethnicity*, (eds.) Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman, Routledge, 1989.

[70]   *Ibid.* p.132.

[71]   David Ben-Gurion, cited in Paine *op. cit.* p.121.

[72]   Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.141.

[73]   Halevi, A History of the Jews, pp.129–130.

[74]   Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition*, p.xxiii.

[75]   Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, p.64.

[76]   Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.10.

[77]   Jacques Derrida *Talking Liberties*, produced by Patricia Llewellyn, *Wall to Wall*, edited transcript Derek Jones and Rod Stoneman, Channel 4 TV, 1992, p.9.

[78]   Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', *Granta*, No.13, Harmondsworth, Penguin, Autumn 1984, p.163.

[79]   Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, pp.99–100.

Figures – Chapter 1

1. Chagall, *White Crucifiction*, 1938, oil on canvas, 155x139.5cms, Art Institute Chicago.
2. Chagall, *Russian Wedding, 1909*, oil on canvas, 68x97cm, Foundation E.G. Buhrle Collection, Zurich.
3. Chagall, *Jew at Prayer*, 1912–13, oil on canvas, 40x31cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.
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5. Chagall, *Feast Day*, 1914, oil on canvas, 104x80.5cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein–Westfalen, Düsseldorf.
6. Chagall, *Cemetry Gates*, 1917, oil on canvas, 87x68.5cm, Private Collection, Paris.
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8. Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1911, oil on canvas, 191x150.5cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
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10. Chagall, *Adam and Eve*, 1912, oil on canvas, 160.5x109cm, St. Louis Art Museum.
11. Kitaj, R.B. *Germania (The Tunnel)*, 1985, oil on canvas, 183.2x214cm, Marlborough Gallery, London.
12. Kitaj, R.B. *Arabs and Jews (Jerusalem)*, 1985, oil on canvas, Marlborough Gallery, London.

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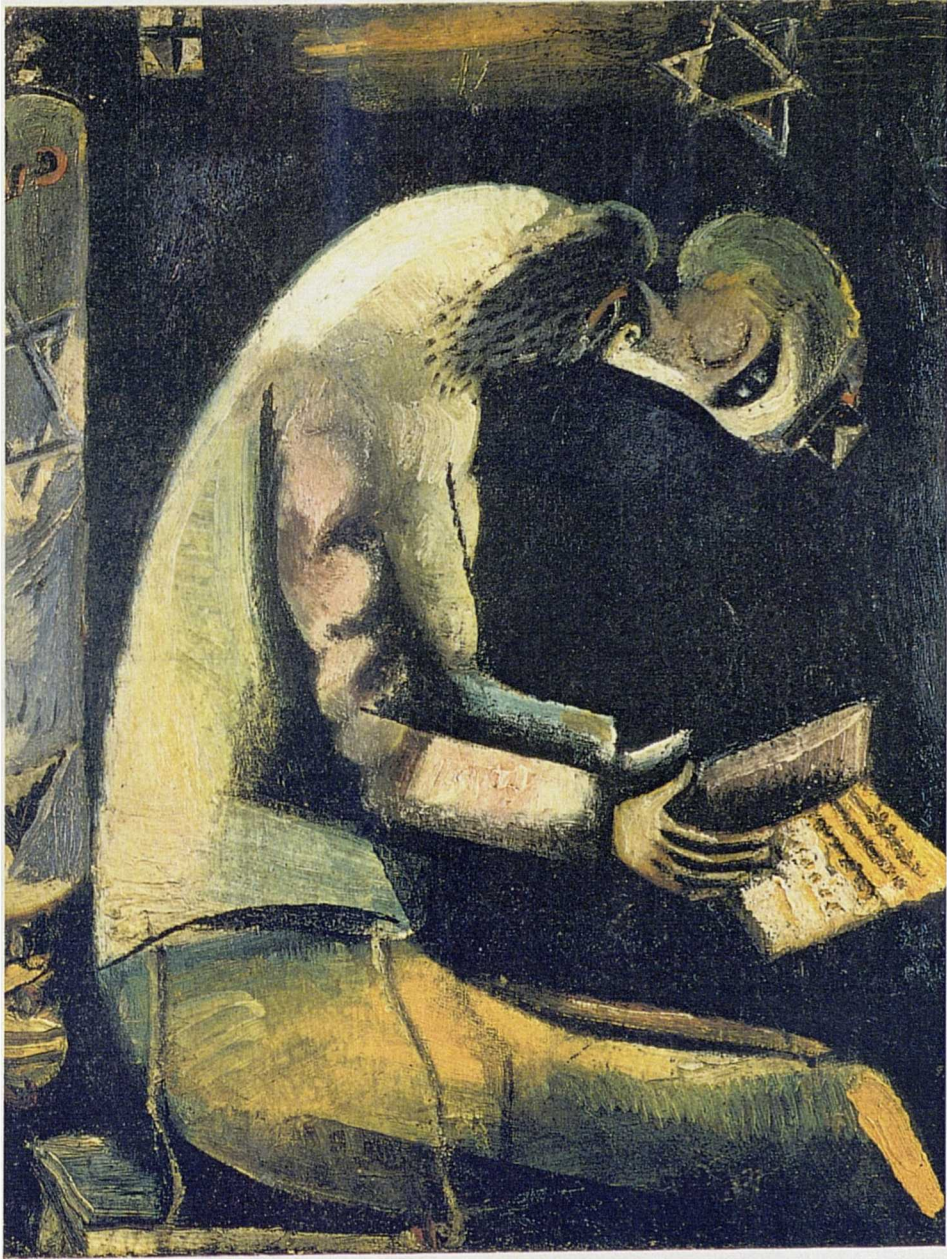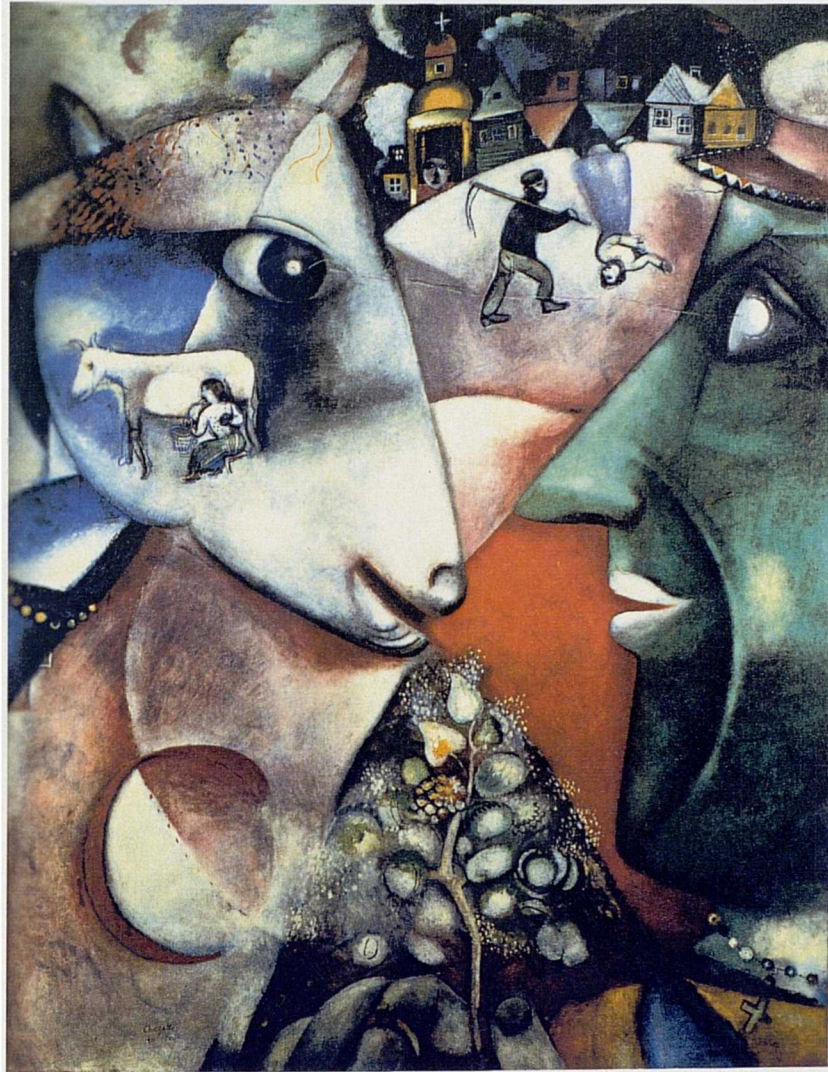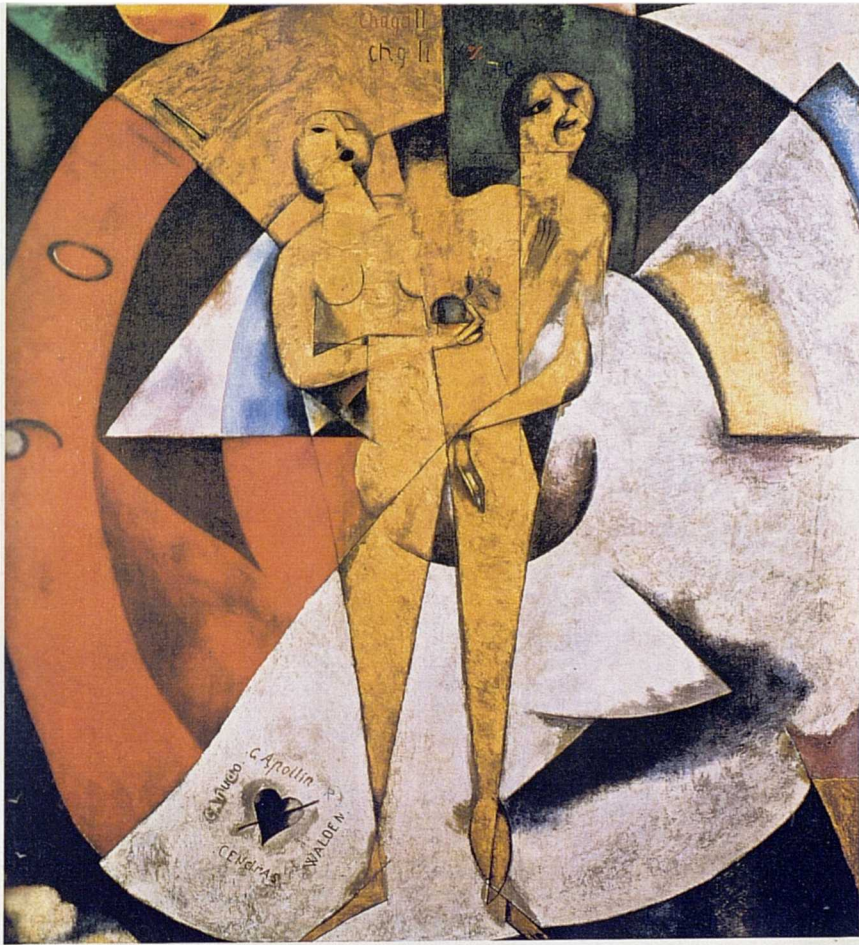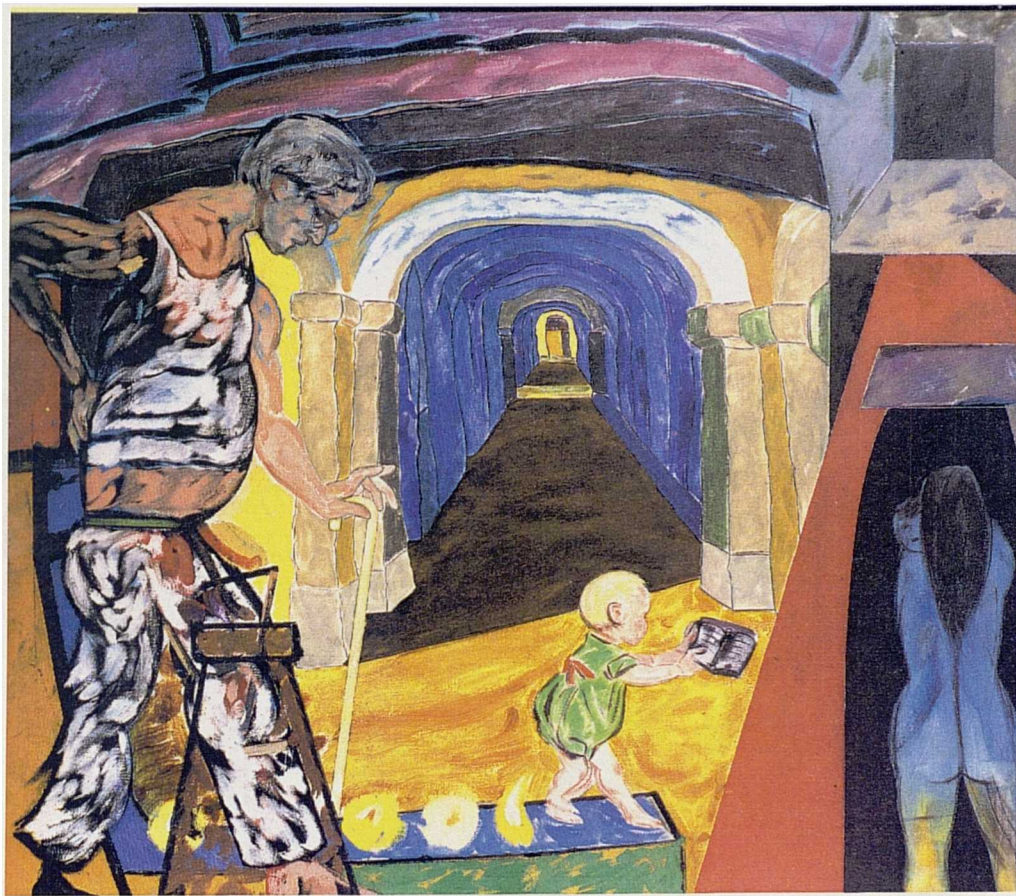
PART 1

LITTLE HISTORIES

Identity needs to be thought otherwise – as something which lives with and through, not despite, difference. Identity is always fractured and is contingent: its interpretations should themselves attest to that fragmentation and contingency; they need to free themselves and to be freed from fixed positions, so as to enable us to see, and be seen, from many perspectives. 'Little Histories' explores the formation of identities and the assumption(s) of identity. To speak of identity is to presuppose that it exists; that the subject is identical with its identity. But 'Little Histories' seeks to disrupt and disturb the 'grand narratives'[1] of identity and history.

Modernity is not here perceived as one site but as consisting of little 'events'[2]. Each chapter of 'Little Histories' marks an event through which the category *Jew* is established and can be refuted. 'Little Histories' has a debt to Lyotard's notion of culture as a 'patchwork' of little narratives, in and through which the 'grand' or meta-narratives of modernism are brought into crisis. The category *Jew* itself is unstable: as are the assumptions of identity and the sites of identity production. *Jew* occupies various places. At one and the same time he is outside British culture and yet appears inside every part of its spectrum. He is at once outside/outside; inside/outside; outside/inside and inside/inside British culture. The 'events' described in 'Little Histories' are discontinuous, fragmented and disparate and show the limits to the universalising, emancipatory dreams of the Enlightenment project.

'Little Histories' speaks of survival, of adaptation, of negotiations and re-negotiations. Each chapter presents different themes through which the processes

of assimilation, acculturation and alienization can be viewed – and the *Other* identified both within and outside them. These processes in all, and in their different ways, can be said to characterise the experiences and forms of life of Jews living in Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It examines how their lives were shaped – and how they indeed shaped their own lives – by, through, within and perhaps beyond the complex networks of legislation and institutions which sought to regulate and administer them and to make of them 'modern' British subjects.

The cloth out of which 'Little Histories' is woven, is made up of details where the colours and threads blend into patterns whose very shapes texture the assumption(s) of identity. Again and again the limitations of the Enlightenment project are met and the ever shifting boundaries of liberal democracy encountered.

[1]   As noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, for Jean-Francois Lyotard post-modernity puts into crisis 'grand' or meta-narratives: these themselves assume the possibility of an ordering and legitimizing narrative which he argues have collapsed in the face of events.   See Lyotard 'Introduction', *Postmodern Condition*, pp.xxiii–xxv.

[2]   The event, is an occurrence after which nothing will ever by the same again. It 'disrupts any pre-existing referential frame within which it might be represented or understood', Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.xxxi.

CHAPTER 2

The Otherness of the Other: The Jew as a Sign

The 'Otherness of the Other' refers to the signs through which *Jew* has been constructed as *Other* in the European imaginary[1]. The creation of the *Other* has been the means by and through which an identity for Europe has been articulated and installed. European identity has been constituted both in relation with and in opposition to the *Other*. The identity of a nation (and an individual) has to be negotiated and achieved. It is consented to and imposed; regulated and controlled. Identity is always established through differentiation. I am a citizen of Europe because I am not like others, (the non-Europeans).

Now it is through the process of deconstructing the sovereign state of Europe, argues Robert Young, that the ways in which the 'other has been a narcissistic self-image through which it has constituted itself while never allowing it to achieve a perfect fit[2] can be shown and understood. In psycho-analytical terms the *Other* is conceived as an entity made and accomplished in and by the disavowed elements of self.[3] Identification occurs out of the twin processes of desire and denial and affirmation and negation.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,[4] Adorno and Horkheimer open up the possibility of exploring these themes, exposing the cracks and fissures which they identify within the Enlightenment project. The Enlightenment did not present doctrines as such, it celebrated humanism, universalism and rationality. Reason, argue Adorno and Horkheimer, is both the instrument by and through which humankind has freed itself from nature and the very means by which Europe subjected others to domination. Further they insist that the rational spawns the irrational.

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In their text, 'Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality',[5] Adorno and Horkheimer are

concerned to reveal the dialectic, that is to say, the double-edgedness of the

Enlightenment project,

> The Enlightenment of modern times advanced from the very
> beginning under the banner of radicalism; this distinguishes it from
> any of the earlier stages of demythologization. When a new mode
> of social life allowed room for a new religion and a way of thinking,
> the overthrow of the old classes, tribes and nations was usually
> accompanied by that of the old gods. But especially when a nation
> (the Jews, for example) was brought by its own destiny to change to
> a new form of social life, the time-honoured customs, sacred
> activities, and objects of worship were magically transformed into
> heinous crimes and phantoms. Present-day fears and idiosyn-
> cracies, derided and execrated character traits, may be deciphered
> as the marks of the violent outset of this or that stage of progress in
> human development. From the reflex of disgust at excrement or
> human flesh, the suspicion of fanaticism, laziness and poverty,
> whether intellectual or material, there is a long line of modes of
> behaviour which were metamorphosed from the adequate and
> necessary into abominations. This is the line both of destruction and
> civilization.[6]

Here Adorno and Horkheimer explain how it was that the Enlightenment was in part

a fantasy and (like all fantasies) spoke in barbed tongues. Whilst it promised

'radicalism' and so seemed to say that all people are welcome to share power, they

could only do so as long as they abided by the rules that defined the privileged

group. In themselves these rules define and construct the *Other*. The ruling group

projects its own insecurities concerning its potential loss of power on the shape of

the *Other* by which it imagines itself threatened. The *Other* undermines the power

which is always desired. The other of the *Other* retaliates and creates, what Adorno

and Horkheimer refer to above as 'abominations'.[7]

In *Elements of Anti-Semitism*[8], Adorno and Horkheimer elaborate further their

critique of the Enlightenment project. The phenomenon of anti-semitism is for them

the dark side of the Enlightenment and the one which illuminates their analysis.

Here they argue that anti-semitism itself reveals the extent of the limits of radical

liberalism which was heralded by the Enlightenment.

The *Other* is made up of those who are precisely disallowed, placed outside or on the margins. The *Other* hears the call to come inside, to become alike, but may be rejected and condemned for accepting the invitation. Those on the *inside* wish to contain the *outside* and thereby to neutralise the power the *Other* is imagined to possess. By keeping him *outside*, the fantasy of control and power is preserved. The liberal state was constituted by this double-bind, which for the Jews at least, was both a promise and a curse.

Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis brings together two strands of Western thought: Marxism and psychoanalysis. They argue that the modern human subject is formed through the processes of differentiation and identification, self-awareness and conscience, the distinction between the self and the *Other*. The integrated subject, they suggest, recognises the external world as other. The life of reason takes place as conscious projection which Adorno and Horkheimer call 'controlled projection' and which they distinguish from 'false' projection. The latter, they argue,

> confuses the inner and outer world and defines the most intimate
> experience as hostile. Impulses which the subject will not admit as
> his own even though they are most assuredly so, are attributed to the
> object – the prospective victim. The actual paranoiac has no choice
> but to obey the laws of his sickness.[9]

When a subject is not able to return to the object he loses his ability to differentiate and reflect. False projection (paranoia) is 'the dark side of cognition'[10]; it is that which in ourselves we refuse to recognise. The lack of integration of the self (the ego) defends itself by denial (disavowal) and seeks to divest the persecuting object of all reality by making everything in its own image (narcissism).

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the portrait of the Jews offered by nationalists is a self-portrait based on false projection:

> .... they long for total possession and unlimited power, at any price. They transfer their guilt for this to the Jews, whom as masters they despise and crucify, repeating *ad infinitum* a sacrifice which they cannot believe to be effective.[11]

The desire of the nationalists for absolute power is transmuted onto the *Other*. The liberal project offered, as an image of itself, the idea of the unity of men. This was put into jeopardy by the very existence and form of life of the Jew as it threw into question (and doubt) the very generality by which liberalism was constituted. The *Jew* just did not conform. Additionally, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the seemingly inflexible adherence to their own order of life brought the Jews into an uncertain relationship with the dominant order.

Adorno and Horkheimer situate the Jews not just within capitalism but as the embodiment of capitalism itself. They argue that the relationship of the Jew with the ruling class was based on greed and fear. Marx had proposed in 1844[12] that the 'secret' of the Jew would not be found in his religion, but that the secret of his religion would be discovered in economic and social life in which, 'the contradiction of the State with a specific religion like Judaism, into the contradiction of the State with specific elements' would be evidenced. Marx's socialist project subordinated all difference to the ideals of the universal.

In *On the Jewish Question*, written initially as a critique of Bruno Bauer's two essays on the same theme, Marx set out his fundamental critique of the political principles of liberalism. He began it as a critique of (speculative) philosophy, which for him represented a form of alienation which he compared with religion. Speculative philosophy, religion along with the political, Marx argued, must be rejected. The

goal for Marx was the transformation of the State into human society in which class conflict would be eradicated, or at least transformed through a dialectical progression. Just as the state would wither away, so too would religion, so too would the Christian and the Jew. Marx argued:

> Money is the jealous god of Israel before whom no other god may stand. Money debases all gods of man and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal, self-constituted value of all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world, human as well as natural, of its own values.[13]

According to Marx, the god of the Jew had become secularized and had become the god of the world. Exchange, or money, had become this god. He describes 'haggling' as the language of the Jew and the Talmud as the language of capitalism. Accordingly, for Marx the imaginary nationality of the Jew is mercantile. True emancipation would thus be emancipation from 'haggling' and from money. Western states operate on the cult of money and in Marx's argument *Jew* becomes identified with bourgeois culture[14].

Adorno and Horkheimer quote Marx's association of the Jew with finance and his identification of the Jew with capitalism but point out:

> The Jews remained objects, at the mercy of others, even when they insisted on their rights. Commerce was not their vocation but their fate. The Jews constituted the trauma of the knights of commerce who had to pretend to be creative, while the claptrap of anti-semitism announced a fact for which they secretly despised themselves. Their anti-semitism is self-hatred, the bad conscience of the parasite.[15]

Through their analysis of production and consumption, the 'body' of capitalism is revealed as a confidence trick, a rip-off. However, claim Adorno and Horkheimer,

> the people 'know' this: And so the people shout: stop thief! – but point at the Jews.[16]

Yet in spite of their knowledge – the fact that the thief is already known to be capitalism – the finger of blame is pointed at the Jews. Adorno and Horkheimer's text shows how it was that Jew becomes a category available and ripe for exploitation. The Jew is thus installed as the archetypal capitalist: he who produces nothing and consumes everything. Economic injustice is attributed, by this process, to the Jew who is cast, as rapacious as capitalism itself.

The construction of the Other, as distinctive, different and inferior as a counterpart to the project of liberalism occurs at a critical juncture. The consolidation of the nation state was an abiding problem for nineteenth century Europe. The union of peoples around the concept 'nation' was to preoccupy the newly formed European states, and the incorporation and consolidation of colonies was a crucial issue. The central question was, who had the right to belong? The repression of the outsider was transmuted into a re-ordering and classification of people around the concept of 'race'. The concept of race was itself quintessentially a 19th century question and issue.

The study of anthropology worked as a 'disciplinary' technique which rationalised, explained and categorized people into different races and out of which hierarchies were elaborated. The science of anthropology divided humankind into three races: Hamites (Blacks), Semites (the Jews and Arabs) and Aryans (the Europeans)[17]. In these discourses Ham was represented as half animal and half man, Shem was half man and half demon, while the Aryan was the real man. The term Aryan was supposed to be derived from the same root as honour or Ehre[18]. Race was connected with language and its study occupied the domain of philology. As Edward Said has suggested a profound confusion existed between race and language and between history and anthropology[19].

Within the anthropological discourses of the time, differences between one race and another were considered to be 'essential', that is to say, differences of 'nature' or kind. The techniques of those scientific investigations produced empirical and descriptive evidence to define differences between races. Biology, intelligence and physical attributes, were made central to definitions of racial identity and to support the idea of racial hierarchies. Indeed as Sander Gilman suggests

> No longer was the perception of the Other to be the subject of legend; it had become the focus of a science, with the extraordinary strength that the very word *science* had for the late–nineteenth–century mind, supporting its claim for objective status.[20]

The nature of human difference could be explained, it was believed, through a science which interpreted human nature, psyche and language as springing directly from biology; and thus was 'essential'. Today, the science may have been proved erroneous but the myths remain as powerfully corrosive forces.

The Jews stood out as the disturbing factor in the projected harmony of the evolving nations. Ernest Renan, the French philosopher and philologist, through his comparison between Semitic and Indo–European characteristics, drew out what he took to be the deficiency or primitiveness of the Semites:

> In all things the Semitic race ... appears an incomplete race by virtue of its simplicity. The race – if I dare use the analogy – is to the Indo–European Family what a pencil sketch is to a painting; it lacks that variety, that amplitude, that abundance of life which is the condition of perfectibility. Like those individuals who possess so little fecundity that, after a gracious childhood they attain only the most mediocre virility, the Semitic nations ..... have never been able to achieve true maturity.[21]

In this account the Semite is represented as the child of humankind and as ineffectual and weak. The 'masculine' threat (of virility) is contained by a regressive image of the *Other* as 'child'.

Edward Said argues that Renan's views belonged less to the 'realm of popular prejudice and common anti-semitism than they do to the realm of scientific Oriental philology'[22]. Said distinguishes between two forms of discourse which suggests that they occupy different modes of thought and perception. But he is saying more than this when he identifies a shift within, as he puts it, the *loci* of power. He argues that the 'putative human subject matter .... is based finally on power and not really on disinterested objectivity'.[23] The discourses elaborated by Renan do not exist in a neutral space but are themselves implicated in power. Renan's theory can thus be understood, Said argues, to work as a construction or a sign of 'imperial' power over recalcitrant phenomena, as well as a confirmation of the dominating culture and its 'naturalization'[24]. The Semite, in this discourse, is subordinate to the Aryan. Yet again, he emerges as a category for differentiation and denigration. Said argues:

> Jews come to represent the Orient within, uncannily appearing inside when they should have remained hidden, outside Europe: thus the logic of their expulsion, or extermination becomes inextricably linked with Orientalism itself.[25]

The shift in discourse from the notion Semite to Jew is part of the process by which *Jew* becomes a racial classification, ever more ripe for exploitation. *Jew* is a representation, a form of discourse. This discourse has its own power and technological apparatus including the 'science' of race. The technologies of science constructed the paradigms, providing the myth with its 'truth'; that it possessed, classified and understood each and every Jew. The figuration of a type is both a model of and for identity, an identity formed and realised. The subject is understood as 'identical' to itself.

Theories like Renan's which, in their effects at the very least, demonstrated the superiority of the Indo-European race, took hold of the imagination of the European mind and sensibility. So much so that people, according to Said, 'so unlike each

other as Matthew Arnold, Oscar Wilde, James Frazer, and Marcel Proust' not only agreed with them but further employed the category of race[26]. The classifications and articulations of difference are not random; along with anthropology, phrenology and physiognomy were installed within the discourses of science where, it was claimed, the systematic study of outer appearance, of faces and bodies, revealed 'true' character and identity. In addition, external signs such as language, clothes, social and hygienic codes were also used in the construction and maintenance of the *Other*.

In literature even an enlightened, radical writer such as Charles Dickens sought to justify his characterisation of Jews as the demonic *Other* using pseudo science and unsubstantiated claims that most criminals of a certain class were Jews. Indeed in *Oliver Twist*[27] Dickens and the illustrator Cruikshank employed a rich repertoire of signs and references, through which to represent Fagin as *Jew*, as *Other*. Moreover, Fagin is the embodiment of 'false' projection as elaborated by Adorno and Horkheimer in 'Elements of Anti-semitism'. False projection makes the world identical to itself.

On the 22 June 1863 a Mrs. Eliza Davies felt moved to write to Charles Dickens asking for his patronage for the setting up of a Convalescent Home for the Jewish Poor, which was to be a memorial to Lady Montefiore and as such bear her name[28]. Her letter was presented as a challenge to Dickens and showed more than a 'little disquiet'[29], chastising Dickens for his particular characterisation of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. She accused him of encouraging 'a vile prejudice against the despised Hebrew'. She contrasted Dickens' attitude to the Jews – exemplified in his depiction of Fagin – with his well known position of championing the causes of the oppressed. It would seem from the anger and anxiety displayed in her letter, that

she considered the Jews in Britain to be oppressed and generally despised and as such, indeed more than worthy of Dickens' usual philanthropic stand.

Dickens' reply to this charge, in a letter dated July 10, was to offer a nominal sum towards the charity[30]. However, he made it plain and in no uncertain terms, that this offer was not to be understood as an admission of the credibility or validity of Davies' complaints. He defended his story on the grounds of literary realism explaining that Fagin was a Jew not because of his religion but because of his 'race'.

> If I were to write a story in which I pursued a Frenchman or a Spaniard as the 'Roman Catholic', I should do a very indecent and unjustifiable thing: but I make mention of Fagin as the Jew because he is one of the Jewish people and because it conveys that kind of idea of him, which I should give my readers of a Chinaman by calling him Chinese.[31]

The 'myth' of the *Jew* was powerful enough to be a substitute for reality or indeed to have become reality for Dickens himself. Throughout the narrative of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens refers to Fagin as the Jew. It is only in direct speech that the Jew is given his proper name. If he is ever called Jew to his face it is only in a derisory manner. Again and again, Jew is remarked upon in a language of scorn and loathing. But what is made to seem repellently alien in the text is in fact all too familiar. The *Jew* (Fagin) is the typification of the criminal and of evil itself. Dickens continued,

> Fagin in Oliver Twist is a Jew, because it unfortunately was true of the time in which the story refers, that that class of criminal almost invariably was a Jew.[32]

He had already amplified and justified the idea of the Jew as criminal in the Preface to *Oliver Twist*.

> It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really did exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their

wretchedness, in all the squalid misery of their lives; to show them as they really were, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great black ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they might; it appeared to me that to do this, would be to attempt a something which was needed, and which would be a service to society. And I did it as I best could.[33]

'Best' in this context is to be understood as the accurate depiction of characters. These would in themselves be reflections of what actually existed, that is to say for Dickens, of reality itself.

One of the 'realities' for Dickens was to associate the Jew with smell. Adorno and Horkheimer point to the significance of smell in so-called civilised society when they write,

The multifarious nuances of the sense of smell embody the archetypal longing for the lower forms of existence, for direct unification with circumambient nature, with the earth and mud. Of all the senses – that of smell – which is attracted without objectifying – bears witness to the urge to lose oneself in and become the "other". As perception and the perceived – both are united smell is more expressive than the other senses. When we see we remain what we are: but when we smell we are taken over by otherness. Hence the sense of smell is considered a disgrace in civilization, the sign of lower social strata, lesser races and base animals.[34]

The squalor and the smell of the setting described by Dickens in our first introduction to Fagin evokes impurity and signals danger. The air of the neightbourhood is described as being 'impregnated with filthy odours'[35] and the Jew's room is rank. The walls and ceiling are 'black with age and dirt'.[36]

In a frying pan, which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying pan and the clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging.[37]

The toasting fork with the red hair resonate with popular imagery of the Devil. The scene is dirty. Fagin himself is dressed in a 'greasy flannel gown'. Greasy smells are metonymically evoked.[38] Through smell, individuals merge and their boundaries dissolve. Their wholeness, their integrity, is threatened. Sander Gilman traces a long and changing history which associates Jew with a particular smell – the *foetor Judaicus*[39].

For medieval anti-Jewish rhetoric the smell of the Jew was their special distinguishing feature. It was connected too with the sexualized image of the goat; Jews, like the goat and the Devil, are horned. Each shares yet another similarity – possessing both a tail and a beard. By the eighteenth century, again to cite Gilman, Jewish smell had become disassociated from the supernatural but became instead an issue of uncleanliness and 'immoderate use of garlic'; while by the nineteenth century the racialised science of biology, in the work of eg. Gustave Juerger (1880), labelled the *foetor Judaicus* as one of the natural, inherent signs of Jewish difference[40].

Dickens employs the sign 'bad smell' in his representation of the *Jew* (Fagin), whose relationship with the world is connoted primarily through smell. Smell denotes the material nature of existence. Smell and taste are both the 'lower' senses as opposed to, what are construed as, the 'higher' aesthetic senses, sight and sound.

Through smell Fagin is identified with nature not culture. Yet paradoxically, Fagin is situated against nature, in the city. But the city was understood by Dickens as the site of degeneracy, of debased nature. The text contrasts city and country, and townspeople who can see 'sky, and hill and plain, and glistening water' are bound Dickens suggests, 'to feel uplifted' and experience 'a foretaste of heaven' and

'memories ... not of this world'. But in the 'unnatural' towns this beauty is defiled and the people become 'pain-worn dwellers in close and noisy places'[41]. The country then is understood as a haven; a lost paradise: and the city an unyielding hell.

Noah and Charlotte start out in the novel as merely naive country bumpkins with just a few wicked fantasies. But it is through their encounter with the city and with the Jew that they are made corrupt. But then Noah, although seduced by this encounter, cannot go the whole way along the road to evil as his inheritance, represented in the written and visual texts by his small nose, (in contrast with Fagin's) will not permit it.

The dirty city is also where the Jew lurks and creeps around:

> ..... the mud lay thick upon the stones and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt wild and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.[42]

The part of the city in which Fagin moves was a slimy underworld. In *Purity and Danger*[43] Mary Douglas – drawing upon an essay by Sartre[44] – argues that the viscous is an in-between state. It lacks stability but it does not flow. 'Its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech'. Stickiness, as Douglas reminds us, is clinging. It is an 'aberrant fluid of melting solid'. It is as such judged as 'an ignoble form of existence'. It falls outside of the basic categories, it is an anomaly. When something is anomalous 'the outline of the set in which it is not a member is clarified'[45]. Impurity is defined by Douglas as that which departs from the symbolic order. The opposition between order and disorder defines the limits and boundaries

of each of the other. Zygmunt Bauman[46] extends this analogy to incorporate the image of the *stranger*. The stranger himself is a typification of the alien and is installed by Bauman to signal disorder.

> The stranger's unredeemable sin, is therefore, the incompatibility between his presence and other presences, fundamental to the world order; his simultaneous assault on several crucial oppositions instrumental in the incessant effort of ordering. It is this sin which throughout modern history rebounds in the constitution of the stranger as the bearer and embodiment of *incongruity*; indeed, the stranger is a person afflicted with incurable sickness of *multiple incongruity*. The stranger is, for this reason, the bane of modernity. He may well serve as the archetypal example of Sartre's *le visquez* or Mary Douglas's *the slimy* – an entity ineradicably *ambivalent*, sitting astride an embattled barricade (or, rather, a substance spilled over the top of it so that it makes slippery both ways), blurring a boundary line vital to the construction of a particular social order or a particular life-world.[47]

Anything which falls outside this order, into the abyss of disorder and uncertainty, is reviled and becomes an object of revulsion.

Fagin is described as a prehistoric animal. He is a sort of reptile, a primitive creature: as such he is an object of loathing ('loathsome reptile')[48] who defies or disobeys the rules of classification. He is outside civilised society. Medieval imagery creeps in to illuminate the character and the race of Fagin. In the popular imagination Jews as a whole are associated with the participation in magic and bloody rituals and from this point of view the rich offal touches on the idea of *Jew* as child murderer[49].

Moreover, Fagin only comes alive when others are asleep,

> It was nearly two hours before daybreak; that time which, in the autumn of the year, may be truly called the dead of night; when the streets are silent and deserted; when even sound appears to slumber, and profligacy and riot have staggered home to dream; it was at this still and silent hour.[50]

68

In the hinterland between reality and pre-history, this not-quite-human, the unclassifiable, lurks. Throughout the text Fagin is described variously as 'villainous-looking and repulsive'[51], 'wily'[52] with a 'hideous grin'[53] as displaying 'earnest cunning'[54] and as 'demonical'[55]. He is 'lynx-eyed'[56], or has a 'hawk's eye'[57] and an 'evil leer'[58]. His hand is described as a 'withered old claw'[59]. He is a 'blackhearted wolf'[60]. More, when Fagin 'bit his long black nails, he disclosed among his toothless gums a few such fangs as should have been a dog's or rat's'[61]. And again,

> the Jew sat watching in his old lair, with face so distorted and pale, and eyes so red and bloodshot, that he looked less like a man, than like some hideous phantom, moist from the grave, and worried by an evil spirit.[62]

Moreover, this man/animal/demon – a combination of Shem and Ham – beats Oliver and is violent and cruel. Furthermore, he is presented as being a stranger to civility, Fagin in an exchange with Nancy says, 'We must have civil words'[63]. Nancy replies 'civil words, you villain'. The *Jew* cannot be civil, cannot be a full member of polite society.

Fagin is also crafty and intelligent. He manipulates others to do his dirty deeds. He leeds Nancy 'step by step, deeper down in the abyss of crime'[64]. Nancy describes him as 'Devil that he is, and worse than devil as he has been to me'[65]. She is loyal to Sikes who is, compared with Fagin, merely brutal and violent. Sikes and Nancy cannot stand the Jew yet they are seduced by him. They imitate him and give themselves over to mimetic attraction. They are both depraved but it is Fagin who must bear the responsibility for their depravity.

Sikes and Nancy, though wicked, are redeemable, their crimes are represented as

a consequence of social injustice. Here Dickens the nineteenth century moralist speaks. Had they not become entangled with Fagin (imitated him), and despite Nancy's protestations to the contrary, both she and Sikes could have been saved. Fagin by contrast is doomed by virtue of his birthright. He was born wicked. Sikes declares that being with Fagin reminds him,

> .... of being nabbed by the devil. .... There never was another man
> with such a face as yours, unless it was your father, and I suppose
> *he* is singeing his grizzled red beard by this time, unless you came
> straight from the old 'un without any father at all betwixt you: which
> I shouldn't wonder at, a bit.[66]

Macauley when advocating Jewish rights in 1831, had compared being Jewish with being born with 'red hair'[67]. He made this point to suggest that to be a Jew was an unimportant an accident of birth as having red hair; Dickens reverses this detail and makes the red hair with its demonic references a determining factor of Fagin's racial and physical identity, his biological inheritance.

The Chapman and Hall edition of *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* carries twenty four illustrations by Cruikshank. In these, *Jew* (Fagin) is indicated by physiognomy, especially the large, so-called, 'semitic' nose and costume.

The first plate, *Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman*, [fig.13], shows Fagin in his 'lair'. He is depicted in a loose garment reminiscent of a kaftan. Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the

> .... kaftan was a relic of ancient middle class costume. Today it
> indicates that its wearer has been cast onto the periphery of a society
> which, though completely enlightened, still wishes to lay the ghosts
> of its distant past.[68]

In the illustrations which follow, in all but one picture Fagin is depicted wearing a flat

rimmed-hat, consistent with eighteenth century Jewish dress and custom but not

with the assimilated British Jew of the nineteenth century. In the final image of

Fagin [fig.14] he is depicted in prison, facing his death, waiting to be hanged. There

his hat has been placed behind him. His head if covered by a piece of fabric

knotted around his head resembling a kefia. But this nomad is to die. He bites his

nails. His knees knock together. His eyes are wide with terror. A bible remains

unopened on a shelf. Fagin does not repent but curses his condition. On his last

night he

> .... started up, every minute, and with gasping mouth and burning
> skin, hurried to and fro, in such a paroxysm of fear and wrath that
> even they – used to such sights – recoiled from him with horror. he
> grew so terrible, at last, in all the tortures of his evil conscience, that
> one man could not bear to sit there, eyeing him alone; and so the
> two kept watch together.[69]

The texts allow him no compassion. There is no vista through the window. He does

not, cannot be allowed to, atone for his sins. The story permits no compassion

either on his part or on the part of others. The Jew is evil out and out. He is

irredeemable. Fagin's *Jewishness* is, for Dickens, a question of race which is

represented as a throwback to earlier 'primitive' pre-enlightened times. Dress is an

important device through which this is connoted.

The illustrations closely mirror and inform the written text. Likewise the written text

informs the visual imagery. The relationship between the two is parasitic. It

stresses a narrative both written and drawn, in which physiognomy is crucial to the

interpretation of the characters.

Take, for example, *The Jew and Morris Bolter begin to understand each other*

[fig.15], which is linked to the following passage,

71

"Yer a sharp fellow" said Noah. "Ha! Ha! only hear that Charlotte!
"Why one need be sharp in this town, my dear" replied the Jew,
sinking his voice to a confidential whisper; "and that's the truth".[70]

Fagin followed up this remark by striking the side of his nose with his right forefinger

– a gesture frequently invoked to signal *Jew*. Noah often tries to imitate Fagin's

hand movement, though not with complete success, as his own nose, as depicted

in the drawing, was not large enough for the purpose. Again to cite Adorno and

Horkheimer,

> There is no anti-semite who does not basically want to imitate his
> mental image of a Jew, which is composed of mimetic cyphers; the
> argumentative movement of a hand, the musical voice painting a
> vivid picture of things and feelings irrespective of the real content of
> what is said, and the nose – the physiognomic *principum
> individuationis*, symbol of the specific character of an individual,
> described between the lines of the countenance.[71]

The image signifies *Jew* through his clothes and the determining feature – the large

nose. In the written text, the size of Fagin's nose is mentioned obliquely – through

comparison with Noah's which is not large enough to accommodate the 'knowing'

gesture. The drawing highlights Fagin's nose. It is the only illuminated area of his

body. The dramatic lighting serves too, to contrast the lost innocence of the country

folk with the (evil) city dweller, Fagin. Although Noah and Charlotte are in the

shadow of the room their faces and bodies are lit. Fagin is depicted in the lighter

part of the scene but embodies darkness itself.

The illustration *Monks and the Jew* [fig.16] functions to undermine ambiguities which

may exist in the written text:

> Oliver knew, perfectly well, that he was in his own little room; that his
> books were lying on the table before him; and that the sweet air was
> stirring among the creeping plants outside. And yet he was asleep.
> Suddenly, the scene changed; the air became close and confined;

and he thought, with a glow of terror, that he was in the Jew's house again. There sat the hideous old man, in his accustomed corner: pointing to him: and whispering to another man .... Oliver awoke with fear, and started up .... there – there – at the window; close before him; so close, that he could almost have touched him .... Stood the Jew.[72]

If there is any uncertainty about the status of the event, that is to say, whether a dream or 'reality' is being described, the illustration serves to locate the occurrence in the 'real' world. The sleeping child is viewed through the window by Monk and the Jew and the image works to denote something which actually happened. Here it functions as substantiating evidence. The interplay across the two sites (written text and image) is contiguous but not homogeneous. Across the two terrains 'ambiguity' may not disappear but certainly recedes. Roland Barthes explains that in traditional forms of illustration the

.... image functioned as an episodic return to denotation from a principal message (the text) which was experienced as connoted since, precisely it needed an illustration.[73]

The image serves to make the text clearer: the image illustrates the words which are dependent upon the image.

Michael Hollington in *Dickens and Cruikshank as Physiognomers in Oliver Twist*[74] asks what constitutes a 'correct' or reliable (or indeed by implication erroneous) interpretation of external signs in the novel. He argues that a dynamic is set up between the reading of the written text and visual images. Physiognomy, he claims,

.... is a democratic appeal to the use of common powers of observation and discrimination between, for instance, the relative importance of 'natural' signs of physical body and the secondary signs offered typically by clothing.[75]

The illustrations fix and identify the characters in particular ways and Hollington observes:

It is, in fact, a cardinal tenet of the Dickensian physiognomic system that profound observation and insight into character are dependent upon moral goodness.[76]

But he appears surprised to find that in the novel itself, many of the so-called 'good' characters have trouble deciphering and evaluating facial appearance. Hollington cites the character Brownlow as a case in point:

'There is something in that boy's face' he muses when he first sees Oliver, but he fails in his initial attempt to identify the connection in his mind.[77]

In the novel, Brownlow attempts to situate and interpret Oliver's face as one of a spectrum of faces he has seen and known before. Hence he called 'before his mind's eye a vast amphitheatre of faces'[78] amongst them 'strangers peering intrusively from the crowd'.[79] But this observation does not help Brownlow: to see a face is not to know one. In the passage cited above, Hollington argues that the problem of reading faces correctly is itself a representation of the instabilities of city life. The problem (for Brownlow), of identification and classification, is for Hollington symptomatic of a greater question, that is to say, the status of physiognomy in England at the time. He explains,

.... the tide was turning against the materialist physiognomy of radical culture. In shifting into another place of conformity with the drift towards religion in the justification of physiognomy, they were able to create unforgettable images of an inverse sublimity, the supernatural seen through the lineaments of sordid and grotesque criminals.[80]

Hollington's interpretation of the shifting status of physiognomic system is a mark of the critical confusion of his own commentary. His critique collapses the characters in the novel, their difficulties, failures and uncertainties in 'reading' people, with those of the reader of the book. Or more precisely, he misses the process of reading a text in which written and visual imagery are interwoven so insistently.

Although Hollington points to the inter-dependence of the different textual forms – and when referring to the image *Oliver recovering from the fever* [fig.17] indeed notes, 'It is clear from the text that the precise moment upon which the illustration concentrates is of importance here'[81] – he fails to articulate the relationship between the two. Hollington underplays the active construction, on the part of the reader, of those signs (words and pictures) which identify the characters. The possibility of such identification means that *Oliver Twist* can be viewed as an instruction manual in a 'science' which is neither 'democratic' nor plain common sense after all. Physiognomy requires a form of initiation. Hence for the reader of the text, any uncertainties or doubts that may be had about reading the physiognomic signs correctly, or indeed with the question of the veracity of physiognomy itself, are assuaged, or at least put to one side through the skilful interplay, the parasitic relationship of the texts: the intertextuality of the novel.

As our gaze vacillates between words and image, the one informs the other. While there may be no guarantees as to the 'correct' reading it is, I argue, against Hollington, in the inscription of and in the uncertain space which lies between text and image, that the lesson of physiognomy is imparted and moral 'truths' learnt. Brownlow may have been equivocal about physiognomy and found it a difficult 'science' but then he was not reading *Oliver Twist*. We, the reader, recognise that these problems of interpretations are the problems of the characters in the book (Brownlow etc). So while physiognomy may be in crisis in the world outside the text, in the space or the world of the reader, there is no crisis. Hollington over-identifies the reader with the characters in the book, thereby he ignores the critical process of reading itself. For him there is no space between what is written about and what is read.

Moreover, when the supernatural is installed in the novel it may, as Hollington suggests, indicate a shift away from the materialism of science indicated by physiognomy but also, and perhaps more importantly, it serves as yet another device through and in which the wicked and dangerous world of the Jew, a world of disorder, could be articulated and installed. Two worlds are connoted in the structure of the novel: the first deals with the particular space and time of Victorian London in which *Oliver Twist* can be interpreted as a critical comment on the harsh and inhumane Poor Laws and their debasing effects on people when treated solely as 'bodies'; the second belongs to another world, the domain of the supernatural – the nightmarish world inhabited and controlled by the Jew. These two worlds collide. In this encounter the dialectic interplay of the Enlightenment is metaphorically played out. The novel figures worlds of darkness and light in which, as if in a fairy tale, 'light' wins out and justice prevails. But this can only happen when evil (Jew) is put to death.

Dickens places the Jew in the under world. He constructs the Other as unchanging and secures the Jew forever 'outside' civilisation. But this chimerical world of *Otherness* is 'false' projection. The desire to represent the space between the worlds as ungulfable, only highlights the proximity of the image of the *Other* to the image of the self. Jacques Lacan has suggested 'man's desire is the desire of the other':

> What he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want, the
> form assumed by the negation in the méconnaissance of which he
> himself is unaware is inserted in a very strange way – a
> méconnaissance by which he transfers the permanence of his desire
> to an ego that is nevertheless intermittent, and inversely, protects
> himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences.[82]

Following Lacan, Dickens does not merely represent the other but projects him; at one and the same time, desiring and negating him. Hence while Fagin is vile, he is also intelligent. He is charismatic.

Torsen Petterson, in 'Enough to have Bodies? Two Incongruities in Oliver Twist'[83], again with reference to Fagin, misses this point. He argues that on some occasions Fagin conforms to physiognomic strictures which connote wickedness – for instance his face is described as 'villainous-looking [sic] and repulsive' – but Petterson also claims that with,

> .... his wily looks, soft-spoken persuasiveness, and clever pantomimes of gentlemen who have had their pocket's picked, Fagin is also so funny that like Oliver listening to his stories the reader cannot help 'laughing heartily' and showing that he was amused in spite of all his better feelings.[84]

Petterson argues that Dickens' and Cruikshank's schema showed a 'weariness' for representations of repulsive characters and for physiognomy. But this realism was qualified by and articulated through fantasy. Through defining Fagin as *Jew*, Dickens ascribed to (all) Jews the features of the animal/demon. He accomplishes this by employing physiognomic signs. His realist aesthetic was wrought within the discourses of science. Thereby his stories acquired the status of 'truth' and at the same time realism is aestheticised.

Dominance over the *Other*, while endlessly asserted, is never complete. It slips, slides and is forever displaced. Every image of the *Other* is double faced. For every bad Jew there is the good (enlightened) Jew. If Fagin was the embodiment of evil (Jew) then Benjamin Disraeli creates a positive image of *Jew*. In many of his novels and his speeches[85] Disraeli took up the issue of race to use it and, it has been argued, to subvert it to his own ends.[86] Racial theories could aid him in overcoming inferiority. He thereby promoted the Semites to the 'aristocracy of nature' and claimed for the Jewish race such luminaries of European culture as Kant, Mozart and Napoleon. His thinking belongs too in the world of 'false' projection. His is a defensive attempt to represent Jews as better than others. He

is locked into the double bind: affirmation/negation.

In a speech delivered to the House of Commons (1847) he demanded the admission of the Jews, not on the basis of tolerance or equality but as a privilege due to the people of God,

> On every sacred day you read to the people the exploits of Jewish heros, the proofs of Jewish devotion, the brilliant annals of past Jewish magnificence. The Christian Church has covered every kingdom with sacred buildings, and over every altar .... we find the tables of the Jewish law. Every Sunday – every Lord's day – if you wish to express feelings of praise and thanksgiving to the most High, or if you wish to find expression of solace in grief, you find both in the words of the Jewish poets. All the early Christians were Jews. The Christian religion was first preached by men who had been Jews until they were converted; every man in the early ages of the Church by whose power or zeal, or genius, the Christian faith was propagated was a Jew.[87]

Hence he argued that Christianity was born of Judaism. It was infused with it. The Father gave to his progeny not only spiritual guidance but the Law, from this came all morality and ethics. The negative image of *Jew* as 'primitive' is transmuted into the positive image of *Jew* in which the 'primitive' connotes wisdom and civilisation.

Hannah Arendt explains that Disraeli came from an assimilated family and was himself baptised[88]. He knew, as she put it, 'everything depended upon the "division between him and mere mortals", upon "an accentuation of his lucky "strangeness"'[89]. Hence she argues, 'he chose to accentuate the fact that he was a Jew "by dressing differently, combing his hair oddly, and by queer manners of expression and verbiage"'[90]. He must construct himself as different, as a caricature of the *Other* in order to leave everything intact, in place, the same.

Arendt explains that one of the reasons for Disraeli's success was his good fortune to have been born in England, which did not yet know Jewish poverty.

Not until the end of the nineteenth century, when the pogroms in Russia initiated the modern Jewish emigrations, did Jewish poverty enter London, and along with it the difference between the Jewish masses and their well-to-do brethren.[91]

Her argument is both true and false: while it may have been true that the 'poor' Jew was less perceptible in England up until the 1880s, it is false, as we have seen from Dickens' picture of Fagin, that they were invisible. The processes of typification through which *Jew* could be constructed as *Other* in the English imaginary were well established.

In *Daniel Deronda*, George Elliot gives an account of Deronda's notion of Jews and through it she introduces a range of *Jewish* types which the text will later unmask:

Spite of his strong tendency to side with the objects of prejudice, and in general with those who got the worst of it, his interest had never been practically drawn toward existing Jews, and the facts he knew about them, whether they walked conspicuously in fine apparel or lurked in by-streets, were chiefly of a sort most repugnant to him. Of learned and accomplished Jews he took it for granted that they had dropped their religion and wished to be merged in the people of their native lands .... Deronda could not escape (who can?) knowing ugly stories of Jewish characteristics and occupations.[92]

Here we are introduced to three types of *Jew*: the ostentatious *Jew*, the parvenu,[88] the one who is always visible and in excess; then the slimy *Jew* who lurks in the side street, who is there but not quite there; finally, the educated *Jew* who can, through his intelligence, choose to assimilate, become the same and disappear. These representations may appear to be hegemonic in the passage quoted but through Deronda's encounter with Mirah, Elliot creates a crisis in those categories.

Mirah conforms to none of those identities (neither, of course, does Deronda himself but in the passage cited above his origins have yet to be revealed), but is close to Arendt's 'pariah'[94], she accepts her inheritance with equanimity and grace. She

desires neither to be the Same nor Different. Moreover, Mirah, the good *Jew* is

constructed through identification with her mother. Her father is rejected as uncouth

and vulgar. Elliot constitutes the 'good *Jew*'as 'feminine', a characteristic which is

replicated in Daniel Deronda himself. Indeed F.R.Leavis made this a critical issue

in his introduction to the novel.

> when we contemplate Deronda we cannot ignore the presence in it
> of something strongly, and very questionably, emotional; a powerful,
> but equivocal, element of inspiration .... The nature of the inspiration
> is given us when we are told (characteristically) of Deronda's 'sweet
> irresistible hopefulness that the best of human possibilities might
> befall him – the blending of a complete personal love in one current
> with a larger duty'.[95]

The gendering of *Jew* as female renders 'him' at once more and less threatening:

an object of desire and disavowal.

In late 19th century Britain, the Jewish question became sharper, more acute with

a perceptible rise in numbers of the Jewish population through immigration. The

immigrants tended to settle in conurbations like the East End of London. So their

presence there was vividly felt. The pressures to restrict immigration built–up and

culminated in Balfour calling a Royal Commission to investigate the extent of the

problem which was described by some as an 'invasion'.[96]

In a cartoon by H.E. Bateman [fig.18], which dates from the year of the Anti–Alien

Bill 1905[97], a boy stands accused. Two styles of drawing are used; the one

connoting the teacher is 'naturalistic', the other, for the boy, is caricatural – an image

of excess. The teacher, who also resembles a judge asks: 'What fault did Joseph's

brothers commit in selling him?' The school boy replies: 'They let him go too cheap'.

The boy is pictured with the face of a middle– aged man. His ears and nose are

predictably large. His appearance is ugly.

'In his essence, *Jew* is a caricature: ugliness itself', argues Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe[98], and this is why racism

> .... goes hand in hand, no less fundamentally, with a massive unleashing of *techne*, which is in fact its radical transmutation into *excrescence*, which proceeds increasingly to conceal *physis*, whose limits it oversteps, having lost sight of or 'forgotten' them. There is a kind of 'lethal' essence of technology, which means that its 'everything is possible' does in fact end up introducing, that is to say *being about*, if not the impossible, than at least the unthinkable. Extermination or genetic manipulation – and the latter is still on the agenda today).[99]

Lacoue-Labarthe discusses the processes by and through which 'the aesthetic-isation of politics' was the essence of National Socialism. He cites a letter which Dr. Goebbels had written to Wilheim Furtwangler, dated 11 April 1933.

> Politics, too, is perhaps an art, if not the highest and most all-embracing art there is. Art and artists are not only there to unite; their far more important task is to create a form, to expel the ill trends and make room for the healthy to develop.[100]

As Lacoue-Labarthe explains this letter was not an isolated declaration. 'Politics as the plastic art of the State' was one of the favoured themes of Goebbels and the Nazi project. He goes on to argue that the work of art does not merely provide 'the truth of the *polis* or the State' but the political is 'instituted and constituted in and as a work of art'. Hence the identification of art with politics was the only way of the nation finding its identity.

Jew in this discourse was the embodiment of ugliness. He lies outside of civilisation. Hence *Jew* was the antithesis of European aesthetic values; and was ready for such projection. To return to Adorno and Horkheimer:

> The products of false projection, the stereotype is of thought and reality, and therefore the products of evil. For the ego which sinks into the meaningless abyss of itself, objects become allegories of destruction which contain the meaning of its own downfall.[101]

Reason contains irrationality; fascism made false projection political. And England was ready to receive to such projection.

Many questions remain: In what ways did these powerful images in English literature percolate throughout the culture in general? Did they fuse with it and emerge to give shape to the culture or equally to take its shape? Certainly, *Jew* as a criminal/evil type filters through and forms the evidence taken in England by the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1902/1903[102]. The *Other* locked-in an assumed identity becomes essential for the structure and preservation of boundaries – national and other.

[1]   Imaginary is used in the sense given to it by Jacques Lacan. It refers to one of the 3 orders of the psyche/psychoanalytic terrain; the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The order of the Imaginary is characterised by the 'prevalence of the relation of the image of the counterpart'. Laplanche and Pontalis *The Language of Psychoanalysis* The Institute of Psychoanalysis and Karnac Books, 1988, p.210.

[2]   Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, p.17.

[3]   This commonplace of psycho-analytical argument has received more attention recently as the thought of Melanie Klein has gained attention in both Britain and the USA. Within Kleinian thought the psychic mechanism that is at stake here is that of 'projective identification' a term which is insightfully discussed in R.D. Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, Free Association Books, 1988.

[4]   Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London, Verso, 1989.

[5]   *Ibid.* pp.81–120.

[6]   *Ibid.* p.92.

[7]   See on this also S. Zizek 'Eastern Europe's Republic of Gilead' *New Left Review*, No.183, September/October 1990, pp.50–62.

[8]   Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.168–209.

[9]   *Ibid.* p.187.

[10]   *Ibid.* p.195.

[11]   *Ibid.* pp.168–169.

[12]   Karl Marx 'On the Jewish Question' *Early Texts*, David McLellan (ed), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972.

[13]   *Ibid.* p.112.

[14]   According to Sander Gilman, Marx saw his own life (his recent marriage to a Protestant woman, his writing), as the antithesis of the image of the Jew which for him summed-up bourgeois society and was the epitome of the state. He saw himself as the antithesis of Jew which for him equalled money. Gilman *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.194.

[15]   Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.175.

[16]   *Ibid.* p.174.

[17]   Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, Vol.3, London, Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975, p.319.

[18]   *Ibid.* p.318.

[19]   Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985, p.149.

[20]   Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.213.

[21]   Ernest Renan, cited in Said, *Orientalism*, p.149

[22]   *Ibid.* p.148.

[23]   *Ibid.* pp.145.

[24]   *Ibid.* p.145–146.

[25]   Said cited in Young, *White Mythologies*, p.139.

[26]   Said, *Orientalism*, p.145.

[27]   Charles Dickens, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*, Odhams Press.

[28]   Letter, Eliza Davies to Charles Dickens in Cecil Roth (ed), *Anglo-Jewish Letters (1158-1917)*, London, Soncino, 1938, p.304.

[29]   Poliakov in *The History of Anti-semitism,* argues while there may have been feelings of 'unease' nonetheless anti-semitism in Britain was at 'low ebb', p.324.

[30]   Letter, Dickens to Davies, cited in Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters*, p.306.

[31]   *Ibid.* p.306.

[32]   *Ibid.* p.306.

[33] Dickens, 'Preface', *Oliver Twist*, p.13.
[34] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.
[35] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Chapter VI, p.51.
[36] *Ibid.* p.52.
[37] *Ibid.* p.52.
[38] Not only are the objects that Dickens catalogues himself redolent of odour but George Cruikshank's illustrations to the text time and again make great play with smokes and other vapours. Of those that are illustrated here, see figs.13, 17 and more suggestively fig.15.
[39] Gilman, *Jewish Self Hatred*, pp.174–175.
[40] *Ibid.* p.300.
[41] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Chapter XIX, p.132.
[42] *Ibid.* p.300.
[43] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London and New York, Ark Paperbacks, 1989.
[44] Jean-Paul Sartre cited in Douglas *Purity and Danger*, p.38.
[45] *Ibid.* p.38.
[46] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
[47] *Ibid.* p.60–61.
[48] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Chapter XIX, p.132.
[49] Gilman, *Jewish Self Hatred*, p.77.
[50] *Ibid.* Chapter XLVII, p.320.
[51] *Ibid.* Chapter VIII, p.64.
[52] *Ibid.* Chapter XVIII, p.132.
[53] *Ibid.* Chapter IX, p.65.
[54] *Ibid.* Chapter XX, p.140.
[55] *Ibid.* Chapter XIX, p.155.
[56] *Ibid.* Chapter XXXIX, p.269.
[57] *Ibid.* Chapter XXXIX, p.269.
[58] *Ibid.* Chapter XIII, p.91.
[59] *Ibid.* Chapter XLIX, p.305.
[60] *Ibid.* Chapter XLIX, p.307.
[61] *Ibid.* Chapter XLVII, p.320.
[62] *Ibid.* Chapter XLVII, p.320.
[63] *Ibid.* Chapter XVI, p.117.
[64] *Ibid.* Chapter XLIV, p.304.
[65] *Ibid.* Chapter XLVI, p.316.
[66] *Ibid.* Chapter XLIV, p.305.
[67] Poliakov, *The History of Anti-semitism*, p.329.
[68] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.175.
[69] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Chapter LII, pp.362–365.
[70] *Ibid.* Chapter XLI, p.290.
[71] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.
[72] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Chapter XXXIV, p.234.
[73] Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', *Barthes: Selected Writings*, introduced by Susan Sontag, Oxford, Fontana/Collins, 1983, p.204.
[74] Michael Hollington, 'Dickens and Cruikshank as Physiognomers in Oliver Twist', *Dickens Quarterly*, Vol.7, No.2, pp.243–254.
[75] *Ibid.* p.243.
[76] *Ibid.* p.250.
[77] *Ibid.* p.250.
Brownlow says 'There is something in that boy's face ... something that touches and interests me. Can he be innocent?' Thus the expectation is set

up that Oliver's face can be read. Dickens *Oliver Twist*, Chapter XI, p.76.

[78] *Ibid.* Chapter XI, p.76.

[79] *Ibid.* Chapter XI, p.77.

[80] Hollington, 'Dickens and Cruikshank as Physiognomers in Oliver Twist', p.251.

[81] *Ibid.* p.240.

[82] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, London, Tavistock Publications 1977, p.312.

[83] Torsen Petterson, 'Enough to have Bodies? Two Incongruities in Oliver Twist', *Orbis Litterarum*, No.5, 1990, pp.341–350.

[84] *Ibid.* p.346.

[85] Benjamin Disraeli was baptised at the age of 13 in 1817. He wrote a number of novels including *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845), and *Tancrede* (1847).

[86] Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, p.329.

[87] Disraeli cited in Poliakov, p.334.

[88] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, George Allen and Unwin, 1958, p.69.

[89] Sir John Skelton, 'Sketch of Disraeli 1867' in Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, New York, 1929, cited in Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.68.

[90] *Ibid.* p.68.

[91] *Ibid.* p.70.

[92] George Elliot, *Daniel Deronda*, London, Panther Books, 1970, p.196.

[93] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.66.

[94] *Ibid.* p.66.

[95] F.R. Leavis, 'Preface' in George Elliot, *Daniel Deronda*, pp.10–11.

[96] See e.g. the titling of articles such as 'The Invasion of the Destitute Alien', 4th Earl of Dunraven, in *The 19th Century and After*, XXXI, No.184, June 1892, pp.985–1000. 'The Alien Invasion', W.H. Wikens London 1892, and 'The Invasion of Pauper Foreigners', Arnold White, *19th Century and After*, XXIII, No.133 March, 1888, pp.414–422.

[97] See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[98] Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics, passim.*

[99] *Ibid.* p.69.

[100] *Ibid.* pp.61–62.

[101] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.192.

[102] Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, Vol.11, Minutes of Evidence cd. 1742, 1903.

Figures – Chapter 2

Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman.

Fagin in the condemned Cell.

The Jew & Morris Bolter begin to understand each other.

Monks and the Jew.

Oliver recovering from the fever.

CHAPTER 3

Fried Fish and Matzo Meal: Representations of the Jew in the evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration 1902-1903

Legislation, social policy and culture have initiated, installed and used forms of discourse which imitate, create, re-create and replicate – in an almost endless cycle – the category Jew. *Jew* has been made in, over and across many sites, which in Britain include the evidence taken by the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration over the years 1902-1903[(1)]. The Commission's enquiry culminated in legislation to restrict what was perceived by many as unfettered immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe. Its practices and procedures 'normalized' the *Jew-as-Other* in political and legal discourses.

Yet many historians have celebrated Jewish integration into British society which has been seen as more tolerant than other European states. Recently Todd Endelman has claimed:

> Jewish integration into the mainstream of society proceeded more
> smoothly, with less resistance on the part of the majority, than in
> other European states.[2]

However, David Cesarani has identified and criticised Jewish historical research which has adopted what he calls an 'apologetic stance'[(3)]. This, he argues, has taken two very particular forms which are in themselves the outcomes of, and shaped by, Anglo-Jewry's particular route to modernity. The first, Cesarani suggests, devotes itself to showing that Jews in Britain had both earned and deserved full equality; the second has been fashioned to support, as he puts it, the 'Zionist revolution', and to show that the 'lessons' of history 'proved the inevitability of assimilation, enervation or annihilation'[(4)]. This version, as I have argued earlier, was recently reiterated in the Barbican exhibition *Chagall to Kitaj: The Jewish Experience of Art in the 20th Century.*

As for anti-semitism again, there are conflicting readings of its significance, meaning, intensity and indeed presence in Britain. Leon Poliakov suggests in *The History of Anti-Semitism,* that in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was at a 'low ebb'[5]. However Cesarani, in my view rightly, argues:

> The issues of anti-semitism in British society and related questions of culture were overshadowed by continental models and subtly marginalized, if not entirely dismissed.[6]

Endelman follows the pattern identified by Cesarani and claims:

> Anti-semitism, while not uncommon in many social settings and in popular consciousness, remained largely outside the political arena.[7]

Against Endelman, I argue on the political point that, as evidenced in the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, anti-semitism was a significant issue. Whilst it is true that no systematic pogroms occurred in Britain and that overt 'racial' attacks upon the Jews were few, nonetheless anti-semitic discourses existed and to a large extent were officially legitimized by and in the evidence to the Royal Commission. The attitudes to Jewish integration, as exemplified by Endelman above, leave aside many questions and side-step many of the problems. The Royal Commission was both a symptom and a product of social anti-semitism, which could have easily, as Hannah Arendt has argued in the context of Germany, 'paved the way for Jew-hating as a political weapon'[8]. Garrard[9] suggests that the crucial question is not whether the anti-aliens legislation was anti-semitic in intent, but that people thought it might be[10].

According to the census returns used by the Royal Commission, there was an increase of 151,285 'aliens' between the years 1881 and 1901[11]. Not all of these people were Jews but their concentration in East London [fig.19], in the two square miles from the City to Mile End Road, from Bethnal Green to Cable Street, made

them especially visible in the metropolis and created the impression that the alien issue was both a Jewish problem and a question for the Jews. On the basis of this geographical microcosm, macro-political solutions were provided by legislation to restrict immigration. The Aliens Bill was passed in 1905.

Enshrined within its discourses – their waft and their weave, their very texturing – was anti-semitism. Now I refer to the definition of anti-semitism proposed by Daniel Levinson:

> Anti-semitism is conceived here as an ideology .... specifically it involves negative *opinions* regarding Jews (they are unscrupulous, clannish, power seeking and so on); *hostile attitudes* towards them (they should be excluded, restricted, kept subordinate to Gentiles, and so on); and *moral* values which permeate the opinions and justify the attitudes.[12]

The evidence presented to the Royal Commission called upon a variety of witnesses, Jews and non-Jews, who again and again produced images of *Jews* which conformed with and re-established a picture which replicated the mythology of the 'stranger'. A stranger who in Bauman's words,

> threatens sociation itself – the very possibility of sociation. He calls the bluff of the opposition between friends and enemies as the *compleat mappa mundi,* as the difference which consumes all differences and hence leaves nothing *outside* itself. As that opposition is the foundation on which rest all social life and all differences which patch it up and hold together, the stranger saps social life itself. And all this because the stranger is neither friend nor enemy; and because he may be both. And because we do not know, and have no way of knowing, which is the case.[13]

The place occupied by the stranger is hazy, unstable and endlessly shifting. The cover of *The Illustrated London News,* [fig.20] provides a vivid image of the poorly clad foreigners with their meagre possessions disembarking from a boat. At stake in this image is stability and the social order itself. The very risk of instability makes the stranger dangerous. The discourse of anti-semitism in the evidence presented

to the Royal Commission invoked the figure of the stranger, hence it signalled, articulated and installed a less tolerant society than the one represented by Poliakof and Endelman above. Indeed Britain may well not have been a culture immune to anti-semitism in all its guises, rather one that was ripe for its expression.

Fear of the alien was politicized. Late in the 19th century the anti-aliens movement crystallized what must have been a general sense of insecurity on the social and cultural domain by placing the immigration issue firmly within the political realm. *The Jewish Chronicle*, the official newspaper of Anglo-Jewry, carefully followed and reported the developments of the 'movement'. Ever sensitive, even in anticipation of criticism, on the 18th September 1888, it had warned:

> If poor Jews will persist in appropriating whole streets to themselves in the same district, if they will conscientiously persevere in the seemingly harmless practice of congregating in a body at prominent points in a great public thoroughfare like the Whitechapel or Commercial Road, drawing to their peculiarities of dress, of language and of manner, the attention which they might otherwise escape, can there be any wonder that the vulgar prejudices of which they are the objects should be kept alive and strengthened. What can the untutored, unthinking denizen of the East End believe in the face of such facts but that the Jew is an alien in every sense of the word – alien in ideas, in sympathy, and in interests from the rest of the population, utterly indifferent to whom he may injure so long as he benefits himself, an Ismael whose hand is against everyone, and against whom the hand of everyone may rightly be.[14]

The immigrants were condemned from inside the Jewish community – as well as from outside – for their visibility, for their differences, for just being there. Moreover, Jewry was split amongst itself. Anglo-Jewry was seeing and representing itself through the optic of middle-class England. Indeed as Halevi has argued,

> Emancipation inaugurated the era when the Jew looked at himself in the eye of Western Christians and integrated the vision of the other into his own representations of himself.[15]

But Jewry could neither achieve, nor was it allowed to accomplish, the perfect

match. Liberal democracies were not prepared to acknowledge what were after all, explicit tensions in 'universalism' and the particular needs of socially differentiated societies and cultures. The desire for universal emancipation subordinated the concerns of the 'particular' to its totalizing dreams.

The Jewish Chronicle in 1889 provided a description of one of the leading anti-alienists, Arnold White. He was,

> at once, apologist and accuser, a strange mixture of frowns and smiles, a veritable Janus at the Gates of Jewry ..... Mr. White seems to love and to hate us in a breath, to at once kiss us and scratch us with proverbial feminine inconsistency.[16]

The text – troublingly echoing anti-semitic characterisations of the Jew – announces powerful fears. Love/hate are dramatically opposed and made all the more dangerous by the feminization of these emotions. This is a discourse in which the feminine is produced as the uncontrollable, irrational and unpredictable elements of human nature. White's attitude to the Jews is characterised as one of desire and disavowal: as 'false projection' and is as such deeply unstable. His ambivalence is represented in the text as demonic. The Jewish Chronicle, representing the interests of establishment Anglo-Jewry[17], had a message for all Jews; assimilate. In editorials and news coverage it articulated concerns which must have contributed to installing 'anxieties' on the part of its readership. Additionally it contributed to dividing Anglo-Jewry from greeners, new arrivals in Britain.

In May 1901 the British Brothers League was established by Major William Evans Gordon and Murray Guthrie, MP for Bow, as a response to complaints that the King's Speech omitted an Aliens Bill. In August of that year the 'Parliamentary Alien Immigration Committee' was set up and fifty two MP's signed a letter to Lord Salisbury demanding legislation. A year later, in January 1902, Evans Gordon

moved an Amendment to the Address:

> To represent the urgent necessity of introducing legislation to restrict
> the immigration of destitute aliens into London and the cities of the
> United Kingdom.[18]

Behind the demand that the Jew should be classified as alien from there on, lay dubious nostrums from economic theory, particularly as regard theories of unemployment which blamed the Jew for creating social problems. The amendment, reflecting the urgency it presumed, was swiftly followed by the appointment up of a Royal Commission which commenced sitting on April 24, 1902. The Commission was chaired by the Right Honourable The Lord James of Hereford. Its members were the Right Honourable The Lord Rothschild, The Honourable Alfred E. Lyttelton, K.C. MP, Sir Kenelm E. Digby, KCB, Major W.E. Evans Gordon, MP, Mr. Henry Norman, MP and Mr. William Vallance[19]. They sat for thirteen months. The recommendations they produced were not unanimous – Rothschild and Digby presented a minority report in which they argued that the restrictive measures proposed were inoperable; and more in Rothschild's words, 'even if they are directly aimed at so-called 'undesirables' they would certainly affect deserving and hard-working men'[20]. Nevertheless, in 1905 a Bill to restrict alien immigration was passed.

First the case for restriction was presented to the Commissioners. It was organised by Evans Gordon. By and large the witnesses were in some way associated with East London. A variety of people from shop-keepers to doctors, charity workers, dockers, sanitary inspectors, costers, policemen, boot-makers and teachers were called. In class terms the witnesses were representative of a broad sector of the population yet the number of women called was negligible. The Jews themselves were represented by Anglo-Jewry, that is to say often by men from the second or

third generations. The 'alien' Jew was not called to represent himself. Witnesses were 'qualified', they were 'experts'. Eye-witness anecdotes were presented as facts with universal implications. Looking does not take place in a neutral domain. What they 'saw' was already 'known' and re-presented for them by the questions which the witnesses had only to confirm.

In considering the deliberations and Report of the Royal Commission it is important to remember that such Commissions had at that time enormous status and power in the British system of government. The Commission, advised by the civil servants, could call upon experts in the relevant fields of enquiry. Yet in this case it can be argued that from the outset the Commission created the conditions as if aliens were on trial, rendering them guilty from the beginning. The fact that Anglo-Jewry were defensive, almost disassociating themselves from the *greeners*, again suggests strongly that Britain was no more free of prejudices than mainland Europe.

The Commission framed its questions to the 175 witnesses called so that they could explore

> The character and extent of the evils which are attributed to the unrestricted immigration of Aliens, especially in the Metropolis.[21]

Inscribed within the language itself was the inevitability of its own conclusions. The key word here is 'evil'. It seems that the amendment was based on the certain assumption that immigrants bode ill, cause trouble, are *a priori* bad. It was alleged, (I summarise) that on arrival in Britain they were impoverished, unclean, insanitary in their habits and likely to be carriers of infectious diseases. It was argued too that they were liable, in higher proportions than the native population, to be criminals, anarchists and prostitutes. According to the mass of evidence presented, the immigrant Jews were destitute, criminal, fraudulent and evil and contaminated the

population. Inscribed in the very structure of the questions set by the Commission was an outcome bound to lead to such characterisations. The witnesses were subject to, and indeed some of them subjects of, anti-semitic discourse at its crudest. Heavily inscribed with representations of the *Jew*, the commission seemed set on the course of not only replicating and reinforcing such representations but re-inventing and creating new representations of the *Jew-as-Other*.

The Commissioners were pledged to investigate 'destitute' immigration in general but in fact they focused on Jewish immigration. Their enquiry into 'destitutes' led them to distinguish between 'good' (the respectable) and 'bad' (the residuum – pooi) and by extension 'good' and 'bad' Jews. The division of the social into good/bad maps out the divisions between civilized/uncivilized. These social categories were legitimised in, and rarely challenged by, the evidence presented to the Commissioners. People were to be granted the right to enter Britain and become a citizen, in relation to what was perceived as their potential to become good citizens. This process entailed evaluating the kinds of people who were suitable and could be allowed to belong. Moral and ethical judgements were installed through which those decisions could be made.

Arnold White, who as we have seen was one of the major protagonists in the fight against the aliens, described the 'lowest type' of immigrants as,

> persons who .... have no regard to any provision for sanitation and
> scanty regard for cleanliness and for whom the conditions of life are
> very low; those who are comparatively indifferent to anything outside
> the mere sensual indulgence of eating, drinking and sleeping, and
> those who have no hope or ideal in life, no pleasure in the past and
> amusements, and who really approach the condition of animal life.[22]

White is again projecting his own middle class fears onto others. The bourgeois subject, and here I follow Stallybrass and White[23], continuously defined and re-

defined itself through excluding what it assigned to the 'low'. Low is dirty, repulsive, noisy, polluting [fig.21]. It was, however, that very exclusion which was constitutive of its own identity. Again and again the Royal Commission's questions produced representations of the aliens as 'low', as people of bad character, in whom and through which the bourgeoisie could differentiate itself and produce itself as 'good'.

The image of the Jew as evil – *Other* was further strengthened by the allegation that the Jews did not intermarry with the 'native race' and so would remain a 'solid and distinctive colony'[24]. The immigrants were accused of congregating in large masses in certain districts, especially in the East End of London, particularly the Borough of Stepney. It was argued that here they had become a compact, non–assimilating community: and that the immigrants dealt exclusively in trade with their own 'race' and religion so that the native tradespeople would lose out.

But contradictorily and at the same time, it was feared that the population would be 'mongrelized' to become a hybrid and hence impure. The Earl of Dudley gave voice to this anxiety:

> They come to intermarry and this means necessarily a lowering of
> the whole moral and social standard of the population and those
> districts in which they settle.[25]

The law of natural selection, proposed, installed and legitimised by the science of social Darwinism had, it was thought, begun the processes of weeding out the 'strong' from the 'weak', the 'poor' from the 'degenerate'. But the influx of immigrants, it was claimed, disturbed and disrupted this process.

Here are three 'typical' witnesses. George Brown[26], a photographer's assistant, described what he saw as the great changes which had taken place in East London
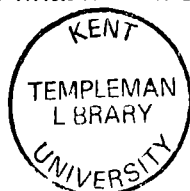
since the arrival of the immigrants. He claimed that the English had been driven away and were consequently suffering great hardships. The Englishness of England was being undermined by the destruction of the English Sunday which had caused 'pandemonium' in the district. The neighbourhood had become what he termed a 'foreign colony'. The traders dealt only with their own kinspeople.

A house and insurance agent in Stepney, George Augustus Dix[27], spoke of the deterioration of the district, overcrowding, and the displacement of shop-keepers. Ill feeling, he said, had arisen because of rent rises, immorality, coarse habits, socialistic principles and hostility to the country.

The Reverend Ernest Courteney Carter[28], Vicar of St. Judes, Whitechapel, produced a further inventory of complaints. He claimed that feelings against the aliens were very strong due to the displacement of the indigenous people, to the aggressive conduct of the Jews, to their language, their attitude to the Christian religion and to their behaviour on Sundays. He conceded that dealings with the 'better class' of Jews were on a more friendly basis. His chief complaint, which he claimed to share with others, was the Sunday grievance.

A distinction was in the process of being installed within the working class between the 'respectable' and the 'rough'. Harold Perkins has noted that there was:

> A diagonal frontier running right through the working class from top
> to bottom but taking in more at the top and progressively fewer
> towards the bottom. To some extent it coincided with the divisions
> between the chapel- and church-going (chapel for the urban working
> classes was usually superior to church, which was for the more
> abject, dependent poor, and the Catholic Irish were automatically
> classed as rough).[29]

The Jews, as neither chapel- nor church-goers, and foreign, could only be placed

within this schema alongside the 'rough'. (Anglo–Jewry seemed anomalous with this framework, and people tended to be judged as individuals, being considered as 'rough' or 'respectable' depended on class and circumstance.) Jews wrecked the English Sunday and were thereby seen to threaten the social order. Through this chain of associations they were categorised as the residuum.

Yet another contradiction was to condemn them for being hard–working. Their willingness to work long hours for low pay, it was claimed, depressed the wage level and caused unemployment among the 'native' workers. The immigrants were blamed also for the levy of key money and for high rents leading to overcrowding and the displacement of the local population. The evidence of R. Leavis Thomas[30] provides a summary of such fears,

> At first aliens are far below the native people in habits and standard of life. They improve rapidly, but as others are pouring in there is always a permanent sub–stratum of people living under horrible conditions.

Gareth Steadman Jones[31] argues that the geographical separation between rich and poor was becoming ever more complex. Indeed, as he put it, 'the poor themselves were becoming more closely crammed together regardless of status or character'[32]. Israel Zangwill put perhaps a Jewish view in his novel *The Children of the Ghetto* where he wrote,

> England was well named, for to the Jew it was really ENGE–land, which in German signifies the country without elbow room.[33]

If the etymology is spurious nonetheless the point is well made. The overcrowding of the poor was attributed less and less to economic exigence, even though during the years 1880–1914, according to Harold Perkins,[34] inequality in Britain was at its height. The distribution of income was more skewed and the economic distance

between the classes was greater than ever before. He characterises the cumulative effect as an overwhelming 'fear of the poor'[35] which was managed by the State through forms of legislation designed precisely to contain and control that fear.

Fear of social unrest was exacerbated by a language which dramatised the extent of immigration by calling it an 'invasion'[36]. Poverty was attributed more and more to criminal fecklessness. Overcrowding, in this discourse, was not bad luck nor an effect of social policy but a crime; and the people subjected to it were criminalised.

It was argued that London was becoming a school of crime for the aliens. It was claimed that many of the immigrants who had arrived there had not hitherto been 'believed to be criminals'[37] but that in London they were educated in criminal practices. On the 24 July 1902 John Mulvavy[38], Chief Inspector of H Division for six and a half years was called before the Commission. H division formed the so-called Jewish East End. It extended from the City Boundary, through Norton Folgate, to High Street Shoreditch, Warner Place in Hackney, to Squirries Street and White Street, across Bethnal Green Road, the Whitechapel and Mile End Roads to the Regents Canal and to the Thames. It included the whole of Stepney except a bit of Limehouse. Mulvavy described the changes he had seen in this district. In particular he noted an increase in the number of foreigners and what he described as the displacement of the native population. He claimed 'in certain parts, streets are wholly colonized now, if I may use the word, by foreigners'. The accusation that the Jews or foreigners 'colonized' a neighbourhood was a common theme. 'There is no end to them in Whitechapel and Mile End. It is Jerusalem said William Walker, a caretaker[39]. But at the same time it was feared that if indeed they assimilated they would become indistinct and concealed, and would insert themselves into the indigenous culture and state. The fear of territorial boundaries as indeterminate and

unstable is again articulated here, and as has been shown before, this same objection to separateness was usually accompanied by an equally strong objection to 'mongrelization'.

According to Mulvavy[40], of the 101 streets he claimed were 'colonized', 84 were occupied by persons of good character, 17 of them he designated as 'bad'. He defined 'bad' as those people who ran 'disorderly' houses. Mulvavy did argue against the questioner who was pushing him to say that civil unrest would occur as a direct consequence of the foreigners. He would not commit himself to spelling out that they were inherently bad or worse than their English counterparts.

A development of the complaint of the assimilated or 'concealed' was that if his 'true' identity was also concealed then the true nature of his crime could never be known. It was also suggested that foreigners who did not speak English could more easily evade the police:

> It follows from that, does it not, that the foreign criminal has a certain advantage over the English speaking criminal in this district, because it is more difficult for you and your officers, on your own statement to trap him than if he spoke English?

Mulvavy reluctantly agreed. Pushed again by the interrogator he admitted that 'there was always a certain amount of difficulty in extracting information from a foreign person'. The questioning continued to produce the reply that foreigners are criminal by 'nature'. This being the case they must be visible and recognisable. The criminal could only be understood and hence the crime solved, if the true nature of the criminal type was identifiable and known. Jews are thus perceived as infinitely mimetic beings who disguise their difference to become in this discourse, as well as criminal, destabilisation itself.

The Chair of the County of London Sessions, Mr. McConnel KC, who unremittingly 'laid-in' to the aliens, gave evidence claiming to show that hundreds of foreigners who landed in the country were organised into 'colonies' and into 'committing depredations'[(41)]. In addition he suggested that,

> The offences used to be larcenous and generally committed amongst themselves such as goods entrusted for tailoring purposes being stolen or otherwise disposed of. Now, with regard to the offences, the most important one is the increase in burglary and house breaking and stealing from dwelling houses.[(41)]

Then McConnel was invited or cajoled into identifying more precisely the 'class' of aliens to which he referred. He replied:

> They are all classes together, but the combinations seem to be principally of the German and Yiddish-speaking nationalists.[(41)]

This appears to show a major confusion of languages, of perceived nationality with nationalism. It is a similar confusion to that shown in the previous chapter, between language and the 'science' of race. But the distinction he draws enables him to elaborate categories which distinguish between different 'nationalities' and attribute to them different crimes.

The questioning increasingly led McConnel to distinguish between the crimes committed by 'Germans' and by others. He was asked whether German crime was 'Scientific'. This term enabled him to identify 'a highly skilled burglary with scientific tools'. An example was produced for examination. From the 'fact' that it had no manufacturer's name on it, it was inferred that it was the tool of a foreign criminal who had brought it into Britain, and as proof that the nature of crime and the criminal was changing. Crime was now more organised, skilled and clever than hitherto; it was 'German' criminals who were creating a highly specialised 'scientific' form of housebreaking.

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The Commission repeatedly provoked assertions that the aliens were not as reputable as the English who previously lived in that district. Supporting such assertions were questions about gambling. It was argued that 'the foreigners are so very addicted to gambling'. Mr. James Gilmour[42], formerly Superintendent of B Division, Manchester City Police, who became a sanitary inspector and then returned to the police force, claimed that the lower classes were very fond of gambling; they gambled in the kitchens and cellars of private houses in the evenings. Often, he said, they started on Friday nights and continued sometimes until Sunday morning, and received payments for the games.

Evans Gordon, always at pains to get the witnesses to distinguish between the foreigners and the English, prompted Gilmour to agree that gambling was a foreign vice:

> In all the raids that I have made there have been foreigners caught.
> In one case there were 22 men caught in one house. All were fined.[42]

At this point in the evidence Evans Gordon abruptly shifted his line of enquiry to question Gilmour about the birthrate and asked: 'do they increase very rapidly?' Gilmore replied,

> They increase much more rapidly than the English people. They tend to marry young and have large families.[42]

This about turn in the questioning – from gambling to the birthrate – sets up a chain of associations suggesting profligacy on the part of the foreigners possibly leading to a scourge of illegal gambling throughout the nation. A retired inspector of Criminal Investigation H division, Stephen White[43], a Stepney resident, associated the first wave of immigrants with the springing up of hundreds of 'common gaming houses' which, in spite of many convictions, remained 'as rife as ever'.

The illicit manufacture of spirits and their distribution and sale at restaurants, was yet another cause of concern. Nathaniel J Highmore[44], Senior Assistant Solicitor of the Inland Revenue at Somerset House, specialised in frauds in this area. An example of the 'illicit' substance was tasted by Evans Gordon who himself found it 'tasteless'. He then asked the witness what or whose taste it suited and was told, 'It is entirely consumed by Jews – sold mainly at the big festivals and Passover'. The summing up confirmed that there was a considerable number of illicit stills in bogus clubs, which sold liquor either without a licence or with forged ones.

Foreigners were also, it was alleged, subject to systematised bankruptcy. The chief offenders being those categorised as Germans, Russians and Russian Poles. During the three years ending March 1903 Leadam Hough[45], Senior Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, attached to the High Court of Justice, claimed that of the 289 people who had incurred losses on unsecured loans of upwards of one-and-a-quarter million pounds, 93 were Jews. On the basis of his figures, it was estimated that the proportion of the alien population to the whole population was 2.98%. The orders received against aliens in the metropolis represented 14.5% of the total number issued.

Evidence on the incidence of crime categorised people on the basis of such nationalities as Germans, Russians and Russian Poles and Yiddish speakers. Volume I of the Commissioners Report[46] claimed upon the evidence of the Prison Commissioners that over the five years 1899-1903 the number of aliens committed to prison had risen. In that period Americans totalled 23.25% of the prison population, the Germans following with 19% and the Russians and Poles with 17%.

The crimes were categorised as: offences against the person; against property with

violence; against property without violence; forgery; drunkenness; disorderly conduct; frequency; hawking without a licence; indecency; keeping a brothel; and obscene language[47]. These were then broken down further to show precisely the increase of foreign criminals between 1892 and 1902.

Crimes of violence	28 to 56
Larceny and Receiving	54 to 86
Night and Gaming Clubs	20 to 60
Prostitution	150 to 347
Drunkenness	130 to 237
Other offences	94 to 171

In 1892, out of a total of 344 charges, 331 related to British citizens and 13 to foreigners; while in 1902 out of the total of 272 charges, 220 were brought against British citizens and 52 against foreigners. It was argued that the crime rate of the British was diminishing while that of the foreigners was increasing. Indeed Arnold White, much aggrieved that this information had failed to reach the public domain, told the Commission:

> The first evidence that we are importing a criminal Jewish population is shown by the fact that the Government, without mentioning the matter in the House of Commons, are building Synagogues at Wormwood Scrubs, Parkhurst and Pentonville.[48]

The argument that the crime rate was increasing was used to provide the substantive evidence against the unrestricted entry of aliens into Britain, which White, an acknowledged authority on such matters, explicitly associates with the Jews. These statistics were an elaboration of the disciplinary technologies; perceived as 'science', they achieved the status of truth.

The 'evils' represented were in fact those associated with social discipline; the problems concerned with the control and direction of people, demography, public health, hygiene and housing conditions. Steadman Jones points out that the,

.... poor was represented as neglected, perhaps exploited. But more significantly they were generally represented as coarse, brutish, drunken and immoral, another "ominous threat to civilisation".[49]

In other words, in a more general sense the 'evils' were the issues facing the re-organisation of urban life and particularly the regulation of the working class in the late 19th and early 20th century. The institutions in the public sphere worked to transform political exigences into rational authority in order to guarantee what was understood as the general interest. This was the moment when, as Harold Perkins has argued, the political extension of citizenship to the whole community began the processes of 'differentiating professional society from its predecessors'[50]. These were the decades of eg. Charles Booth author of *Life and Labour of the People of London*, whose work constituted what Steadman Jones has called a 'literature of crisis'[51]. Working class life was increasingly surveyed and inspected. It was subjected to the scrutiny of the professional classes. The alien issue was both a part of the general question of social reform yet differentiated from it: it was installed as a distinctive category where difference was articulated as an aspect in the maintenance of control.

However, not all the witnesses called before the Commission were hostile to the immigrants. Lord Rothschild presented a case against restricting immigration, doing so in terms already established by the pro-restrictionists. Hence his evidence became a series of defensive manoeuvres.

The prevailing ideology which promoted self-help and discouraged any dependency on the State, was itself replicated as a defence against the charge that immigrant poverty would make them a burden on the rates. Proof that the Jews were increasingly independent was offered by, among others, a Jewish charity organisation, represented by Sir Samuel Montague[52], responsible for the issue of

free matzo meal before Passover. It produced data, used as a register of poverty, which demonstrated that between the years 1893 and 1902 there had been a steady decline in the numbers of people calling on that form of relief: in 1893 2,414 people accepted free matzo meal but by 1902 only 1,725.

William Ward[53] was another witness testifying in defence of immigrant Jews:

> ..... the foreign Jews seem to be moral by nature, their men are thrifty and domesticated and marry freely. This probably is one of the causes of the absence of immorality among women.

Moreover, he suggested that what had been described as their primitive habits should not be interpreted as 'indecent'. This 'primitive' behaviour was defined through yet another opposition: that of the 'mob' – the residuum of the English working class – who by implication whittled away their wages in pubs and were more immoral. Yet another characteristic was thus installed to define the 'bad' (the undeserving) against the 'good' (the deserving) poor.

Diet was used to demonstrate that the aliens were thrifty/good. In this discourse morality and food became intertwined. The Jews would spend their money sensibly – on good wholesome food – unlike the 'mob' who dissipated it in pubs. On the evidence of Mrs. Amelia Levy:

> .... as to the food of the foreigners, several witnesses have stated that the standard of food is much lower amongst these foreigners than among the natives, and one witness stated that the reason why they could work for less money that the natives was that they could live on a crust of bread and a cup of tea with a piece of dried fish now and then. I can absolutely deny these statements as to the food of the foreigners, and it is a matter of astonishment to me that such statements should have been seriously made. If there is one thing as to which the foreigner is particular it is his food. Firstly he insists on getting the best of everything – eg his meat has to pass an official, and no portion of diseased animal will be marked with the necessary seal. The foreign Jew pays more for his meat than the English, and the latter buys largely at the Jewish shops on Saturday

night because they know that the meat is good. This is a grievance
to the Christian butcher. The foreigners are large fish eaters, and I
believe that more fish is consumed in the East End of London than
anywhere else in this country.[54]

Further evidence was marshalled to show that an average foreign Jewish family

would eat, on an ordinary day, three meals and at least two of these would consist

of fish. A good diet enhanced the physical standard of the individual and, it was

argued, contributed to the general health of the nation as well as ensuring that the

people would not be a burden on the rates: they could be good citizens. It was also

argued by Levy that,

The foreign Jewess of the lower classes is very clever in the
preparation of fish and when properly prepared and fresh it is most
nutritious.[54]

Food was used to classify people. It was yet another way of articulating their

differences and establishing hierarchies between them. Zangwill, in Children of the

Ghetto, characterised a woman's ability to fry fish properly as a measure of her

authenticity as a Jew:

She (Leah) will marry Sam Levine, though he belongs to a lax
English family, and I suspect his mother was a proselyte she can't fry
fish ....[55]

According to Zangwill, of all foods, fried fish was sovereign:

Fried fish binds Anglo-Judea more than all the lip professors of unity.
Its savour is early known in youth, and the divine flavour endured by
a thousand childish recollections, entwined with all the most sacred
associations, draws back the hoary sinner into the paths of piety.[56]

Fried fish was the binding force which constituted Jewish identity itself. But as if that

was not enough, it becomes a symbol for the superiority of the Jews over the

Christians,

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> The Christians are ninnies, they can't fry dutch plaice .
> Believe me, they can't tell a carp from a dace.[57]

Even today this mystique surrounding fish prevails and is perpetuated in the Evelyn Rose cookbook[58]. She suggests,

> Maybe it is because Jewish housewives have been cooking fish for about three-and-a-half thousand years - ever since their ancestors were slaves in Egypt - but there can be little doubt that the Jewish ways with fish are some of the most practical and tasty in the whole repertoire of cookery.[59]

Here again a tortuous version of Jewish history and identity is presented. In this case it is an identity shaped by food and cooking - especially significant is the versatility of their fish recipes. This knowledge is part of the heritage. But more, as Rose explains, it is not just symbolic but practical. 'Perfect fried fish' can be eaten cold, and can thus be prepared before the Sabbath when the cooking of food is prohibited. But frying fish creates strong, bad odours and Rose warns:

> If the oil smells acrid after it has been used it has been overheated and has started to decompose and should be thrown away. So should any oil which has become dark and smelly .... [60]

Smell, as we have seen in Adorno and Horkheimer, is considered a disgrace in civilisation, 'the sign of lower strata, lesser races and base animals'[61]. To seek out and disinfect 'bad' odours may be one of the urges of so-called civilised people in their attempts to control nature and regulate social behaviour[62].

The defence of the alien recycled a language which assumes identity. The mechanisms of identity formation never operate in a neutral space. They operate in a domain with its own implicit principles of sifting and selection, through which appropriate forms of behaviour are articulated and forms of domination and insubordination installed. It has been argued, notably by Steadman Jones[63] and

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Philip Dodd[64], that the latter years of the 19th century entailed the invention, transformation and remaking of a specific form of English identity and more particularly the 'remaking of the working class'[65]:

> The distinctiveness of a working class way of life was enormously accentuated. Its separateness and impermeability was now reflected in a dense and inward looking culture, whose effect was both to emphasise the distance of the working classes above it and to articulate its position within an apparently permanent social hierarchy.[66]

But at the same time, as David Feldman suggests, practices that departed from, or did not fit in with, the evolving national pattern and ideas about the nation, were construed and represented as alien. The working classes were being addressed as part of the nation more insistently than ever before[67] but the form of this address · was circumscribed, effecting inclusions and exclusions.

The witnesses called before the Royal Commission discussed, in a cursory way, other immigrant groups including Italians[68] who were characterised as men of violence who were likely to precipitate street brawls and who wielded knives; Italian women were prostitutes. The Italians were represented as uncontrollable. The Jews, by contrast, were installed as gamblers, as people who courted chance; who transgressed the law in a different way. The fatalism of the gambler is a long way from the much vaunted ideology of self help which was thought to be the motive force of the 'respectable' poor. All immigrants were contrasted with the 'good' English workman, constructed as a wholesome John Bull who ate steaks and drank beer. A picture of foreigners emerges from the evidence at two poles. The centre, by inference, was occupied by the British who were controlled, or at least controllable, so long as the extremes were contained.

A language was being installed to remould, to change people, so that they would fit

in with changing ideas of England and Englishness. Dodd argues[69] that this applied to various groups; particularly women, the working classes and the Irish. To this list could be added the Jews. Englishness was being reconstituted both to incorporate and to 'neuter' various groups who had fallen outside the mainstream of political life. But to create the 'one nation' entailed segregation and discrimination.

However, some witnesses, as we have seen, did attempt to defend the Jewish immigrant (Levy, Ward). In their accounts, charity matzo meal and fried fish became emblems of and for *Jewish* identity. Here, matzo meal was the means by which people were sifted and differentiated: the 'good' Jews who did not need charity, distinguished from the 'bad' ones. Fried fish embodied ideas about health and morality (Levy); defiance and difference (Zangwill). It was simultaneously celebrated and decried, embracing emotions of pride, shame and fear (Rose). But this defence rested always on terms already established for them: on the grounds that they were a people who could be assimilated. Hermann Landau[70], who had been naturalised for 38 years and worked with the Jews Temporary Shelter [fig.22], identified and listed characteristics of the 'aliens' which would, in his view, enable them both to assimilate and to be assimilated. For him, they were acceptable because of their sobriety and thrift, which together with their concern for hygiene and morals accounted for their higher standard of living. He praised their loyalty to Britain and argued that second generations had adopted and would continue to adopt English customs.

But even if the financial independence of the Jews could indeed have been proved by statistics, and if it had been shown that they were still a numerically small group and therefore unthreatening, and more that they were 'good', nonetheless their presence would, it was feared, contaminate London. In this context of an expanding

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and more visible Jewish community the established Anglo-Jewry, who had come to think of and represent themselves as Britons of the Jewish faith, created and shaped social institutions such as the Jewish Board of Guardians, The Jews Free School, the Jews Temporary Shelter, as well as the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the *Jewish Chronicle*, through which to introduce to poor and alien Jews the values of the English middle class. The worst evils of poverty and slum-dwelling among the East End Jews had to be checked to undermine and eliminate the perceived identity of Jew as criminal, unsanitary and smelly.

Through its own institutions, Anglo-Jewry participated in the re-organisation and stabilisation of a national culture. Their aim was to re-create Eastern European Jews as British citizens. Assimilation and accommodation with the 'normative' culture, of the 'host' nation, was the prevailing model for English Jewry.

However, amongst the structural difficulties inherent in assimilation, as Zygmund Bauman suggests[71], were the processes of raising social and political acceptance to levels which, as a consequence of economic depression and deprivation, were impossible for most people to achieve. Assimilation was a middle-class project; thus there were inbuilt and powerful restrictions to the assimilationist model with inevitably its set limits. Assimilation in Bauman's argument was a 'one way ticket'. Hence the Jews were expected to struggle for assimilation neither for the sake of liberal democratic rights nor even indeed for their rights as Jews, but for the sole purpose of accommodating themselves to the values of the people amongst whom they were to live – the so-called 'host' nation. They were in a 'no-win' situation.

The social insecurity of established Anglo-Jewry was displaced onto the new immigrants, the *greeners*. Anti-semitism was a force which they believed could only

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be checked by assimilation. Their fear of anti-semitism was rationalised to justify their support of legislative control on 'alien' immigration. During this period there were between seven and sixteen Jewish Members of Parliament several of whom, including H.S. Samuel, Conservative MP for Limehouse, were staunch anti-aliens[72]. The Jewish Board of Guardians, whilst helping 'poor' Jews, did everything they could to circumvent the arrival of yet more poor immigrants including advocating restriction. Indeed between 1881 and 1906 it facilitated the return to Eastern Europe of over 31,000 Jews[73].

It was not until after the Bill was passed that Anglo-Jewry started to mount pressure against the restrictions it imposed: these had in their effects drastically attenuated the right of political and religious asylum and introduced into Britain a system of administrative justice for the first time. Feldman argues that the Anti-Aliens Act was not a legislative 'quirk' but at the vanguard of a 'transformation of the regulatory ambitions of the British State and a re-orientation of the idea of the nation'[74]. It both articulated and installed the limits of the liberal democratic project.

1   The findings of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration are published in 4 volumes:

Volume i	Report cd. 1742, 1903.
Volume ii	Minutes of Evidence, cd. 1742, 1903.
Volume iii	Appendix cd. 1741, 1903.
Volume iv	Index and analysis to minutes of evidence cd. 1743, 1904 (sp. 1903 ix).

Hereafter RC. Source, the House of Commons Library.

(2)   Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656–1945*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p.3.

(3)   David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo–Jewry*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.2.

(4)   *Ibid.* p.2.

(5)   Poliakof, *The History of Anti–semitism*, p.324.

(6)   Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo–Jewry*, p.5.

(7)   Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History*, p.3.

(8)   Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.169.

(9)   John A. Garrard, *The English and Immigration*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971.

(10)   *Ibid.* p.57.

(11)   RC Vol.1., Report p.14

(12)   Daniel Levinson, 'The Study of Anti–semitic Ideology' in Adorno (et al), *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York, 1950, p.57.

(13)   Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.55.

(14)   *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 September 1888, p.19, cited in Garrard *The English and Immigration*, pp.49–50.

(15)   Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, p.130.

(16)   *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1889, p.19, cited in Garrard *The English and Immigration*, p.65.

(17)   For a discussion of Anglo–Jewry, see Chapter 5 of this thesis.

(18)   RC., Vol.i, cd 1741, 1903, p.5.

(19)   *Ibid.* p.vii.

(20)   *Ibid.* Memorandum signed Rothschild, p.50.

(21)   *Ibid.* Warrent v. Evils attributed to Alien Immigration, No.38, pp.5–6.

(22)   House of Commons Select Committee on Alien Immigration, Vol.1, *SP 1888*, ix, p.92.

(23)   Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, London, Methuen 1986, p.191.[Fig.21] is a photograph of '100 Jews' taken by the Rev. Cecil Cohen who catalogued the East End.

(24)   RC., Vol.i, p.6

(25)   Earl of Dudley, *Hansard 4S H*, (58) 274, 23 May 1898, cited in Garrard *The English and Immigration*, footnote 4, p.53.

(26)   RC., Vol. ii, Evidence George Brown, 2377. The numbers refer to the first line of evidence presented by each witness.

(27)   *Ibid.* George Augustus, Dix, 5286.

(28)   *Ibid.* Rev. Ernest Couteney Carter, 10230.

(29)   Harold Perkins, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*, Routledge, 1990, p.107.

(30)   RC., Vol.ii Evidence, R. Leavis Thomas, 5433

(31)   Gareth Steadman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian Society*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984.

(32)   *Ibid.* p.284.

(33)   Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto*, London, 1892, p.58.

(34)   Perkins, *The Rise of Professional Society*, p.28.

(35) *Ibid.* p.53.

(36) See footnote 95, Chapter 2 of this thesis.

(37) RC., Vol.ii, Evidence, 12796.

(38) John Mulvavy, 8222.

(39) William Walker, 8947.

(40) Mulvavy, 8222.

(41) McConnell, KC. 12700.

(42) James Gilmour, 21195.

(43) Stephen White, 7534.

(44) Nathaniel J. Highmore, 9857.

(45) Leadom Hough, 22760.

(46) RC., Vol.i, p.17.

(47) *Ibid.* para. 119.

(48) RC., Evidence, Arnold White, 32989961.

(49) Steadman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.285.

(50) Perkins, *The Rise of Professional Society*, p.9.

(51) Steadman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.312.

(52) RC., Vol.ii, Evidence, Sir Samuel Montague, 16855.

(53) William Ward, 18303.

(54) Amelia Levy, 17897.

(55) Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto*, p.49.

(56) *Ibid.* p.45.

(57) *Ibid.* p.49.

(58) Evelyn Rose, *International Jewish Cook Book*, New York, Robson Books, 1980.

(59) *Ibid.* p.37.

(60) *Ibid.* p.37.

(61) Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.

(62) For further discussion of the intricate and intimate connections between smell, knowledge and social control, see Alain Corbin *The Foul and the Fragrant*, New York, Berg. 1988, *passim*.

(63) Steadman Jones, *Outcast London, passim*.

(64) Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and National Culture' in Robert Coll and Philip Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, Croom Helm, 1987.

(65) Steadman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.67.

(66) *Ibid.* p.77.

(67) David Feldman, 'The importance of being English, Jewish immigration and the decay of liberal England', in David Feldman and Gareth Steadman Jones (ed.), *Metropolis London*, London and New York, Routledge 1989.

(68) RC., Vol.ii, Evidence, 7735.

(69) Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and National Culture' in Coll and Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, p.1.

(70) RC., Vol. ii, Evidence, Hermann Landau, 16266.

(71) Zygmund Bauman, 'Entry Tickets and Exit Visas', *Telos*, No.77, Fall, 1988.

(72) Garrard, *The English and Immigration*, p.37.

(73) Feldman, 'The importance of being English' in Feldman and Steadman Jones, *Metropolis London*, p.63.

(74) *Ibid.* p.79.

Figures – Chapter 3

LONDON HOSPITAL

JANE STREET

RICHARD STREET

LITTLE TURNER STREET

MORGAN STREET

LANGDALE

UMBERSTON STREET

GROVE Ch. ST

CHRISTIAN STREET

BRUNSWICK STREET

BATTY STREET

PROVIDENCE STREET

MYRDLE STREET

NOTTINGHAM PLACE

PARFETT STREET

SETTLES STREET

GREENFIELD STREET

BERNER STREET

FAIRCLOUGH STREET

FORDHAM STREET

CHARLOTTE STREET

Church

School

MULBERRY STREET

COKE STREET

BACK CHURCH

GOWER'S WALK

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LAMBETH STREET

CHURCH LANE

COMMERCIAL ROAD

FIELDGATE STREET

UNION ROW

PLOUGH STREET

RUPERT ST.

TENTER

MANSELL

OSBORN STREET

OCASSON STREET

FINCH STREET

HOPE STREET

ST MARY STREET

GREEN STREET

MOUNT STREET

GARDEN

CHICKSAN STREET

LOLESWORTH STREET

THRAWL STREET

FLOWER & DEAN STREET

FASHION STREET

WENTWORTH STREET

CASTLE ALLEY

HIGH STREET

WHITECHAPEL

ROAD

TRAM

St. Mary's
Station

St. Philip's
Church

Medical College

Pavilion Theatre

Goods Depot

Mills

Wool

Free Library

School

Hall

Brewery

Fire Station

Cart Works

E. Station

IMMIGRANTS—A 1903 REPORT

from *The Illustrated London News*, August 22 1903

The influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe led to housing problems in crowded
cities. A Report of the Commission on Alien Immigration raised the question of
Britain's age-old policy of granting the " right of asylum " to foreign refugees.

I·L·N · 18/5/1965
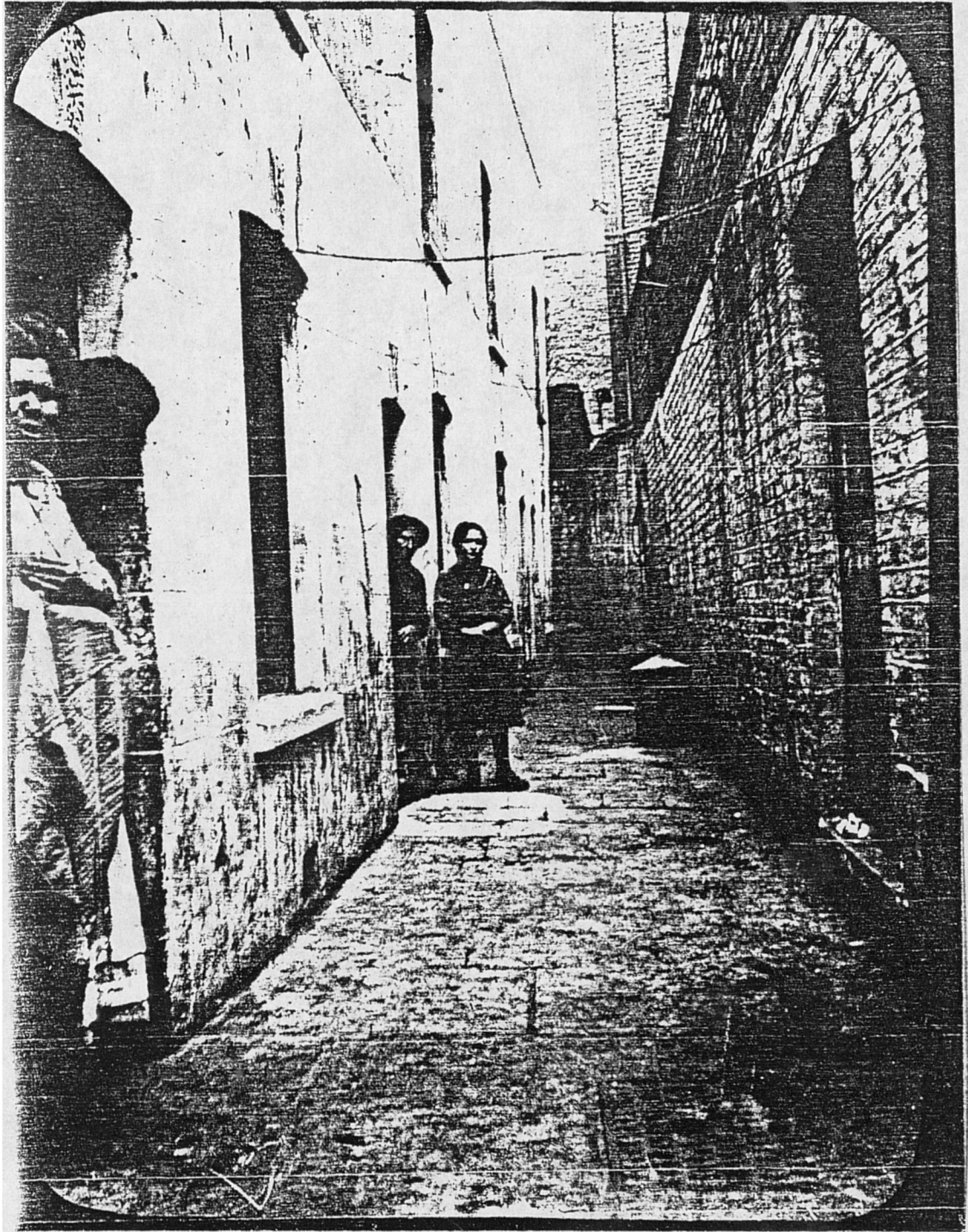
IN THE POOR JEWS' TEMPORARY

CHAPTER 4

Cutting the Suit to fit the Cloth: Assimilation in the 1906 Whitechapel Art Gallery, Exhibition, *Jewish Art and Antiquities.*

One year after the Anti–Aliens bill, perhaps as a way of defending themselves from the excesses of anti–alien rhetoric, members of the Anglo–Jewish community [1] staged an exhibition entitled *Jewish Art and Antiquities* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in East London. The exhibition had two main aims: to uncover Jewish treasures from the past and to display them alongside contemporary artistic achievements. Thus the show attempted to enhance Jewish prestige and status. The exhibition sought to impart pride and confidence in the value of Jewish existence for the Jews themselves. It offered a unitary concept of *Jew* subsumed under the general category English Jew. On one level it represented the *Jew* fighting back; on another it was Jews proclaiming the virtue of assimilation. This dialectic was played out in an East End that was seething with social and economic discontent.

The exhibition was designed to represent the cultural achievements of Jews and their place in Western European and particularly English history. Its aim was to appeal to both Jews and others. The Whitechapel Gallery was a popular venue that attracted a vast number of people to its exhibitions, both from the immediate locality and outside. As an institution it functioned to educate and to civilize the working class of East London. It reinforced the values of the British middle class. Well regarded in the world of art, critics (those who influenced and formed opinion) took note of its work. Thus for the Anglo–Jewish community this was an exhibition that might be expected to achieve impact, particularly given its particular timing. Expectations were fulfilled. Between 12 noon and 10 pm. for the six weeks between November 7 and December 16, 1906, over 150,000 people visited the exhibition and

no less than 20,000 of them purchased catalogues[2]. It would be surprising if the show did not effect the views of both Jew and non-Jew.

The Gallery, founded by Canon and Henrietta Barnett, was opened on 12 March 1901 by Lord Rosebery. It was the outcome of twenty years of exhibitions organised by the Barnett's in St. Jude's Schools, Whitechapel where the attendance figures had risen from 10,000 in 1881 to 55,300 in 1886[3].

The success of the venture meant that extra space for the exhibitions was desperately needed. In 1897 Canon Barnett decided to purchase land to build a 'permanent Picture Gallery scheme'[4]. Within two weeks he had raised the £6,000 necessary for the project and commissioned the architect Charles Harrison Townsend to design the building.

The site chosen for the gallery was next to the Passmore Edward's Library[5] in Whitechapel High Street. The decision to build the gallery next to the library was significant; their social functions were seen as compatible. It was considered that both provided the means for the social advancement of the working classes and gave them a respectable and sober form of recreation. Townsend had established a reputation as architect of the Bishopsgate Institute (1894) which provided a library and accommodation for the cultural activities of the working classes.

The architectural style of the Whitechapel Gallery was to be modern – and modern in a particular sense. It was described by *The Studio* as 'a building that attempts to strike its own note, to be personal, and to speak 1897, not 1797 or 1597'[6]. The language of its design had affinities with that of the Arts and Crafts movement. In 1875 Barnett had his church of St. Jude's decorated by William Morris. For him:

> The great want of this East End of London is beauty; the streets are
> ugly, and few signs of taste are anywhere apparent; it is therefore
> well that it should be possible for both inhabitants and passers-by to
> enter a building which, by its grace and beauty, should remind them
> of a world made beautiful by God's Hand.[7]

Furthermore, according to Henrietta Barnett, Canon Barnett believed that 'the social problem is at root an educational problem'[8]. Moreover, Barnett saw 'art as a teacher' and pictures as 'preachers, as voices of God, passing his lessons from age to age'[9]. For Barnett, education, religion and art worked hand in hand to ameliorate social life and resolve social problems.

By the late 19th century a transformation of the public and the private spheres was occurring. Education, in a variety of sites, including an art gallery such as the Whitechapel, strove to secure, sustain and legitimate itself as a 'body' and a 'voice' in the public sphere. It sought to inculcate in the population a higher subjectivity which could transcend nature by offering experiences, feelings and pleasures that were beyond what were perceived as the mindless routines of the working class life. In their first report the Trustees of the Whitechapel stated that its aim was to 'widen the thoughts and the pleasures of East Londoners'[10]. The Report continued:

> There would probably be less poverty, less drunkenness and less
> vice if the people who have the healthy disciplines of work had also
> the opportunities of seeing and hearing about things which make life
> beautiful.[11]

The 'culture' offered by education could, it was argued, control 'nature' by generating a higher form of life[12]. In this context, culture was used to mould people in the reproduction of social roles and in the productive processes. The view expressed in 1885 by Samuel Smiles was typical in this respect,

> I am deeply convinced that the time is approaching when this
> seething mass of human misery will shake the social fabric, unless
> we grapple more earnestly with it than we have yet done .... the

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proletariat may strangle us unless we teach it the same virtues which have elevated the other classes of society.[13]

Others, like Jack London, writing twenty years later, were deeply sceptical of this form of social engineering and indicate perhaps a shift in perception. He was indeed deeply critical of the form of altruism proposed by earlier Victorian philanthropy,

> I have gone through an exhibition of Japanese art, got up for the poor of Whitechapel with the idea of elevating them, of begetting in them yearnings for the Beautiful and True and Good. Granting (what is not so) that the poor folk are thus taught to know and yearn after the Beautiful and True and Good. The foul facts of their existence and the social law that dooms one in three to a public-charity death, demonstrates that this knowledge and yearning will be only so much of an added curse to them.[14]

London's attack was aimed at those, like Barnett, who he perceived as do-gooders. His own solution was overtly political and in marked contrast to the paternalistic philosophy espoused by Barnett[15]. Similarly, on the 6th of January 1906 the *East London Observer* commented,

> East London is nothing; indeed less than nothing – wholly a vile, malodorous, irreclaimable thing, a dumping ground for undesirables, a dustbin, a forgotten garrett, a neglected basement, creepy, smelly, stifling; that superior person now and then must perforce sniff gingerly as it for a short space boast of their daring philanthropic sacrifices.[16]

The role of institutions such as the Whitechapel Gallery, Tonybee Hall (where Barnett was appointed Warden in 1884) and Public Libraries, was that of mediating between the family and the state. However, by the 1890s Steadman Jones suggests that these institutions were changing in their function,

> They were no longer seen as manor houses from which a new squirearchy would lead the poor to virtue... They were now seen as informal social laboratories where future civil servants, social investigators, and established politicians could informally work out new principles of social politics.[17]

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As such a changing attitude to the idea of the responsibilities of the `state is indicated.

The Whitechapel Art Gallery, which shared a role in elaborating the processes and techniques of social control, saw as its principal audience the urban masses living in and around the Whitechapel district. It had established a tradition, since its inception, of organizing exhibitions which reflected the origins of its local constituents and inflected these in particular ways.

The district of Whitechapel was seen as a foreign continent whose natives had to be observed, educated and tamed. Whitechapel was a district where, it was reputed, only the brave would venture. Again in the *People of the Abyss*, Jack London dramatises the difficulties encountered by a person who wished to visit the East End. He compares these difficulties not without irony with the trials of an explorer who would be seeking to discover exotic, foreign lands,

> But O Cook, O Thomas Cook & Son, pathfinders and trail clearers, living sign-posts to all the world, and bestowers of first aid to bewildered travellers – unhesitatingly and instantly, with ease and celebrity, could 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.[18]

The head quarters of Thomas Cook's was in Ludgate Circus and provided , as John Pearce argued, 'the threshold of an ordered universe, offering trips to Europe, the Levant and Egypt. Cairo was deemed to be 'no more than a winter suburb of London'[19]. According to Pearce, travellers who used the services of Thomas Cook were middle class tourists for whom Cook's agency substituted regularity and simplicity for confusion and complexity. T.H.Huxley compared East Londoners with primitive tribes when he wrote 'the Polynesian savage in his most primitive condition,' was not 'so savage, so unclean, so irreclaimable as the tenant of a

tenement in an East London slum'[20]. Increasingly, as has already been noted, from the 1880s Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe had been settling there. Whitechapel conveyed a sense a 'race' as well as class concentration. For many contemporary observers the East End of London meant the *Jewish* East End[21].

Philip Dodd has argued that between the years 1880 and 1920 specific notions of Englishness were being reconstituted in order 'to incorporate and neuter various groups who threatened the dominant social order'[22]. In addition Dodd contends that:

> The colonisation of the 'other' was the necessary complement of the definition of the dominant English.[23]

As we have seen, the making of the English entailed the remaking and incorporation of other identities including *Jewish*. This process was undertaken in a variety of social locations – e.g. schools, universities, art galleries and museums – and by various professional groups with the tacit understanding that identity must be secured at the cultural as well as political level.

The Whitechapel, by teaching its publics the 'art to live', was part of this larger project of social organisation and control; and one in which identities were at stake and being managed in highly specific ways. The gallery participated in the articulation and negotiation of cultural identity, 'racial' or national.

The exhibition *Jewish Art and Antiquities* was to have been organised by a Committee selected from leading Jewish societies. The original intention was to include works by foreign as well as English Jews by inviting the offer of exhibiting objects from 'all countries'. This plan was revised because it was thought that it was too ambitious for the Whitechapel. Thus, it was decided that the authorities of the

Gallery should themselves organise the show with support from Jewish societies. The exhibition was funded from individual donations with the support of the *Jewish Chronicle* and *The Jewish World* newspapers. All involved were prominent members of the Anglo–Jewish community[24].

The catalogue tried to fulfil its educative and social functions in various ways. It made it clear that the initial idea was to mount an exhibition similar in scale to the earlier 1887 exhibition of Anglo–Jewish art which had occurred at the Victoria and Albert Museum[25]. The V&A exhibition took place the year before the first Commons Select Committee on Alien Immigration, 1888. The Whitechapel exhibition was originally planned for 1905, the year in which the Anti–Aliens Bill was debated in Parliament. The delay of the opening of *Jewish Art and Antiquities* meant that it was staged after the Commissioner's recommendations found their way on to the statute books. The proximity of these two exhibitions to political processes and legislation which could directly affect the Jews cannot be mere coincidence and should be understood as part of the sub–text of the show.

The objectives of the exhibition according to the catalogue[26], and I summarise, were:

1.   To gather together 'the rare, costly, and beautiful Appurtenances from the Synagogues in London'. In addition to these, 'many beautiful exhibits associated with domestic devotion' from private owners would be on view.

2.   To show rare Manuscripts and books for the delectation of all but especially for Scholars and Bibliologists.

3.   To illustrate by a selection of Portraits and prints the history of the Jews in England since the Protectorate of Cromwell.

4.   To exhibit examples of works by mainly English artists but to include the pictures of some foreigners – 'notably by the Nestor of Dutch Art – the illustrious Jozef Israels'.

The Preface to the catalogue sought firmly to establish the notion of Jews with their

own history in England. A distinction was made between English and foreign Jews. Whether English or foreign the Jews' participation in European culture was recognised and praised. Religious ritual was celebrated and presented as the bedrock of Judaism. The distinctions between its ritual and ceremonial manifestations and functions were blurred by showing how religious, spiritual and moral values percolated into the secular domain – the home.

The version of Jewishness and Jewish identity offered by the exhibition *Jewish Art and Antiquities* or adduced by the catalogue was predicated upon particular notions of high culture, ideas of identity, views of assimilation, middle class moral values, judgements on class and a need to combat anti-semitism.

I shall proceed with an analysis of the catalogue, the instituting discourse. That discourse is indispensable for without it there is and was no exhibition. It provided a framework through which the exhibition was supposed to be experienced. As has already been noted, 20,000 visitors to the exhibition purchased catalogues which sold at the cost of a penny[27].

The catalogue clearly had a didactic function. The Trustees Report of 1906 spelled this out. Its role and aim was to describe,

> the pictures in language which aimed at linking the subject to the experience of the visitors, and at assisting their judgement in appreciating the various merits.[28]

However, it appears from the tone of the Trustees' Report that the value of art and the educative purposes of art exhibitions could not be taken for granted. In fact the text seems to be defensive and an attempt to fend off anticipated criticisms. It suggests that the particular claims it wished to make for the value and uses of art

needed to be established, argued and defended. They could not be assumed as uncontroversial. The voice of the Report is assertive, arguing that experience had taught:

> that with higher tastes people turn away from the things which make for poverty. A greater love of beauty means, for instance, greater care for cleanliness, a better choice of pleasures, and increased self-respect. The use of the powers of admiration reveals new interests which are not satisfied in a public house but drives their possessors to do something both in their work and their play which adds to the joy of the earth. The sordid character of many national pleasures and the low artistic value of much of the national produce is due to the unused powers of admiration.[29]

The text opposed value to necessity; the need for 'beauty' was set against the need for 'bread'. 'Admiration' which would transform individuals by leading them away from 'base pleasures', was contrasted with 'skill'. Moreover, 'national pleasures' which were characterised as 'sordid', would be transmuted by the 'powers of admiration' as would the 'national produce'. The choice was clear: High culture would rescue the masses from all forms of poverty – social, economic, moral, intellectual and spiritual. It was thought that the acquisition of 'culture' by individuals would lead inevitably to social change and to a better society. These points were re-iterated in different ways, with different emphases in the sections of the catalogue that follow.

Engravings: These were to be found in the lower gallery. This section of the catalogue has no introductory text. It consists of a titles list, artists' names and ownership with occasional entries on individual works. The engravings covered an historical span from 18th century to the contemporary. Judging from the titles, the works replicated the categories established in the Preface ranging from Old Testament subjects, woodcuts from the *Book of Ruth*[23] and the *Book of Esther* by Lucien Pissaro, to local themes like Madame Jacob-Bazin's *Italian Laundress*. A

portrait of *Baron Lionel de Rothschild* M.P. by William Richardson was accompanied by an extended entry:

> B. 1808 in London. Energetic worker for the emancipation of the Jews in this country. Not before the fifth time of his election to Parliament was he permitted to take his seat without taking the oath 'on the true faith of a Christian'. Philanthropist. Father of Lord Rothschild. D. 1879.[30]

Thus the caption emphasises the desire and indeed the resilience necessary for an individual Jew to assimilate himself but at the same time it stresses the difficulties Rothschild encountered in being assimilated by the 'host' nation. The text gives a double message: it seems to say that assimilation can be achieved, but only by a few and exceptionally able and gifted people. Explicit here is a challenge to the idea that equality of opportunity would lead to an egalitarian society.

With Emancipation the extension of civil rights had encouraged Jews (and others) to fit in with the country and the values of the countries they lived in. In Britain the political integration of Jews into the State was a comparatively minimal process. Since the Resettlement, prompted by Cromwell's Republic of the 17th century, any person born there automatically had the right of citizenship. Hence the problem of civil rights technically existed for the first generation alone[31].

However, while Jews may have been citizens they were in fact only second class citizens. For it was not until 1858 when the obligation to take the Christian oath was wavered and Lionel de Rothschild was able to take his seat in the House of Commons, that (male) Jews achieved and received full political emancipation. Jews were a minor aspect of the bigger question of non–conformism[32].

Their emancipation followed in the wake of the numerically more powerful Protestant

Dissenters and Catholics. The Jews in Britain were small in number – in 1828 it has been estimated that there were about 27,000 and by 1860 circa 60,000 – hence they did not form a critical mass. And their campaigns for political rights relied upon the changes effected by those other more powerful groups[33].

Little by little throughout the 19th century the male Jew gained the full rights of citizenship. In 1830 they gained the right to become freemen of the City of London and members of the Livery Company; in 1833 the right to be called to the Bar; in 1833 the right to vote in parliamentary elections; in 1845 the right to hold municipal office; in 1858 the right to sit in Parliament; the right to take degrees and hold Fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge was granted in 1871[34]. These fundamental rights of citizenship were fashioned in the perfect image of the liberal constitution with its promise to incorporate everyone and make them equal. This was a precarious promise; democratic liberalism assumed the equality of all peoples united by the idea of the nation. The question put to the Jews was whether they could fit in. Hence assimilation was in the front line of shaping the new order and the identity of the nation itself.

To return to the Whitechapel exhibition, here religious culture appears as contiguous with the secular. In the next section of the exhibition entitled *Ecclesiastical Art* the accompanying text was divided into two parts –*Domestic* and *Sabbath Requisites*. The religious Law was at one and the same time contrasted with and linked to the home. The Law was characterised as 'the fountainhead of spiritual consolation'. Home was sanctified and represented as the place where 'sorrows are soothed'[35]. A man's affection for domesticity was combined with 'reverence for *his* faith'. In this regard it is important to note that the exhibition was addressed to the male spectator, as indeed were all the exhibitions in the Gallery. Indeed, Lord Rosebery

said, in his speech which inaugurated the Whitechapel in 1901:

> If you offer this civilising agency, these rooms, this gallery, as a place
> where a rough fellow who has nothing else to do can spend his time,
> you offer him an option which he had not had before and which if he
> avails himself of it cannot fail to have the most favourable results.[36]

This statement both sets up and represents a major opposition between the 'civilised' and 'rough' as well as between male and female[37]. The catalogue to the exhibition addresses the male subject, it is he who needs subjugating. The male Jew is the protagonist, the active subject. Yet he, according to the text, was already civilized in and by a culture which was essentially home centred. Domesticity is idealised in the bourgeois imaginary. It is a haven which guarantees morality and civilisation. The text draws upon and puts into effect a specific notion of Judaism from which it could be inferred that it had a civilising effect upon its male constituents.

The idea of civilisation was dealt with and picked up in the next section *Antiquities*, where the text maintained,

> scattered throughout all the nations of the *civilised* world the Jews
> have had points of contact with every nation that has a history.[38]

Thus civilisation was defined in terms of a national ideal and the nation state was described in terms similar to those elaborated by Ernest Renan in 'What is a Nation?'. According to Renan, a nation represented,

> a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that
> one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make
> in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in
> the present by a tangible fact, namely consent, that clearly expressed
> desire to continue a common life.[39]

In the discourse of the exhibition Jews are shown, in the past, to have made a

contribution to 'civilised' nations. Moreover, it would seem that if a nation is formed out of consent (in the present) then the Jews also have a place. For they are already part of the nation as they share the history of the nation states. Thereby, the Jews are established as civilized and are distinguished from others – non-Europeans – who have not consented to the national ideal and are by inference, outside civilization and are 'primitive'.

Four exhibits in particular were used to testify to Jewish presence in England. These were: *An apology for the Honourable Nation of the Jews* by Edward Nicholas dating from (1648); *The Restoration of the Jews* (1665); *The Rudiments of the Hebrew Grammar in English* by Hanserd Knollys (1648); and *Narrative of the late Proceeds at Whitechapel concerning the Jews* (1656)[40]. From these titles it can be deduced that the Jews were associated with a civilised country – England. Their presence, since the 17th century, was made manifest in and by the paintings. The Jews were *a priori* cultured.

The display of the precious objects for both synagogue and domestic uses seem to reiterate this point. The text is at pains to point out that the show was not exhaustive or even representative in that it included just a few 'specimens'[41]. The word has scientific connotations and reminded the viewer that, in spite of the miscellaneous collection of objects on view, the items served as evidence of greater truths. The chaos of miscellany was overcome by the display of specimens. The fragments evoked the greater whole from which they had been detached. The display implied an ordered system through which recorded and accumulated facts could be verified. It called for methods of observation and analysis which were seemingly independent of the interests of the observer. Thus an effect of disinterested contemplation was created in which the perceiving subject, the

observer, interposed minimally between the objects and their representation. The question of how to display the objects – manuscripts, books, inscriptions, seals and rings, coins and medals recording historical and family events of the 18th and 19th centuries – was in fact the problem of representing historical truth and reality. For the nineteenth century empirical investigations, the accumulation of 'facts' and 'data' gave to history the status of science and truth. The historian was produced as a disinterested purveyor of this 'truth'.

The catalogue's text also dealt with the objects by evaluating them. According to it, among the best items were ornamented and illuminated prayer books, megillah, Hagadah and Bibles of the 15th and 16th centuries which vied in elegance and beauty with masterpieces of non–Jewish presses to be found in Spain and Italy. Thus it argued that Jewish craftsmanship was at least as good as that produced in Christendom.

Like all exhibitions, this one at the Whitechapel was partial. It was the culture of Western European Jews which was celebrated. The objects on loan – and most of the organisers themselves – came from the established Anglo–Jewish community who were by and large derived from Dutch, German or Sephardic cultures. It omitted large aspects of Jewish cultures, notably those of the Eastern European Jews – those very Jews arriving weekly in the Port of London. Many set up homes and found work in the East End and might indeed have been visitors to the exhibition. The exhibition concealed what were emerging fractures within the Jewish communities themselves – ruptures between the Sephardic and Askanzi Jews, the orthodox, reform and liberal Jews, class differences, established Anglo–Jewry and *greeners*. It offered a version of Jewishness which was the Jewishness of the Enlightenment – the Jewishness of a modern English Judaism. Indeed the expected

mode of conduct in synagogue and dress was changing so as to be consonant with the Anglican High Church[42]. Jewish identity was being produced as an image to which Jews in Britain should aspire rather than perhaps as the conscious expression of what they were – diverse and differentiated groups.

Jewish Art was placed in the *Upper gallery*. The text pointed out that the 'Hebrew race' had not been known for Fine Art culture although this was not developed as a critical theme. However a distinction was being made between *Jew* and Hebrew: the former referring to the Jew in the Diaspora; the latter connoting race. Notable exceptions were called upon to disprove the rule, including Meier le Brun, the Jew who had, in 1270, received a commission from Prince Edward and Lucas von Leyden (1494–1533) whose real name we read was Lucas Jacobs. His art had a debt to Israel van Mecheln who belonged to the Jewish 'community'. According to the catalogue, if there had in the past been any religious embargoes on painting nonetheless Jews excelled in decorative arts, graphic arts, line engravings and etching and special attention was drawn to their contributions in Verona where Jews were involved in decorative glass[43].

We are told that it was not until the 19th century that the *Jewish* Fine Artist emerged. Three artists were singled out for attention thereby showing the range of subjects and treatments of themes embarked upon by Jewish artists.

Solomon Hart (1806–1881) was described as an history painter of 'essentially Jewish subjects'[44]. *The Conference between Menasseh Ben Israel and Oliver Cromwell.* [fig.24] *The Jews and their Proposal to Ferdinand and Isabella. Simchatch Torah and the Elevation of the Law*, were cited as examples[44]. These pictures were 'true' history pictures and not 'reconstructed histories like the others'.

They are differentiated within and by the text from 'merely' biblical subjects like the *Prophet Ezekiel* or *Solomon*. 'True' history was defined as the depiction of events which were known to have taken place in which verifiable facts about a historical milieu were represented.

In addition to historical themes 'popular' pictures were shown. These 'coincided with the tastes of former generations'. Abraham Solomon's (1824–1862) *Waiting for the Verdict* [fig.25] and *Not Guilty* [fig.26] were cited as examples. 'Popular' pictures were differentiated from 'history' pictures and represented as a lesser category of art.

In contrast to the popular painters – and of infinitely greater merit as an artist according to the catalogue – was Simeon Solomon (d.1905) whose work it was claimed, had he lived longer, would have surpassed that of Burne–Jones and Rossetti[45]. The text celebrated the work of Josef Israels and affirmed him as the 'Jewish Rembrandt', it suggested that little need to be said about his work. Even though few words were necessary, nonetheless the language used to speak of it was fulsome and quasi–biblical in tone. Israels did not have to wait for 'his passing for his name to be inscribed on the scroll of the immortals'. He had won 'universal admiration' and the 'applause of every school of artistic thought'. His art was thus, represented as reaching beyond the artist's 'origins'[46].

This defensive attempt to establish Jewish artists as equally as good as if not better than their Christian counterparts was part of a wider endeavour to assert the intrinsic value of Jewish culture and the benefits that it could bring to the host country.

In the *Modern Section*[47] where 'every' school of art was represented – 'Victorian' painters to the 'ultra–impressionists' – it was again claimed that few words were

needed to describe the participation of the Jews in contemporary culture. The catalogue text oscillates between different schemata. On the one hand it offers narrative accounts of and explanations for the objects on display and on the other it denies the necessity for such framing discourses. Implicit in this schema is the idea that knowledge springs directly from the objects themselves. The text proceeds by making a distinction between British Jews and *foreigners*, here referring to Jews who lived abroad. At that point however, the text seems to contradict itself by suggesting that some of the figure painters may choose,

> to infuse racial passion into their work by the treatment of essentially Jewish subjects, poignant in their significance and profound sincerity.[48]

According to this discourse 'essentially Jewish subjects' are those which exhibit particular forms of emotion. The differences between one race and another were considered to be 'essential', that is to say, differences of 'nature' or kind. The techniques of scientific investigations produced empirical and descriptive evidence to define differences between races.

Biology, intelligence and physical attributes were made central to definitions of racial identity. The Jews here are represented as emotional by nature. Moreover, emotion had come to be designated as the domain of Women whose roles were to care, nurture and feel. Hence the text presents a feminized image of *Jew* whose 'otherness' could be possessed through this image; but one for which he could also be reviled. To feminize is to disempower; to control, deny and to disavow. We are back in the world of 'false' projection.

Some artists, it was argued, could choose their Jewishness and their work would be thus infused with 'racial passion' characterised as 'emotionality'. Others, the

'majority', could choose to identify themselves 'entirely' with their 'adopted country' and show no trace of 'distinctive thought or differentiation'[49]. The contradictions continue. Jews are described as a 'race', a 'community' distinctive yet comparable with and indistinguishable from, their various host communities. The neat categories are slipping: If it is race, birthright, biology and inheritance which make a Jew a Jew, what happens to the project of assimilation?

The catalogue provides an example of an apparent paradox which Halevi points out when he argues that definitions of Jewishness proliferated precisely at the moment when the Jews were no longer one thing – were no longer definable as such:

> while there was a sociological splitting up of Jewish social reality into a greater number of very diversified social and cultural situations, the discourse was completely essentialist.[50]

The version of Jewishness identified by the catalogue text as inherent to the Jewish race was that which could be harnessed for the good of the English nation itself, an unstable notion. But, in the claim that Jewish artists were both different from and the same as others, the text demonstrates a capacity for the distinction *and* incorporation, differentiation *and* assimilation of the Jews.

Three classes of Jewish artists were created in the text: Firstly, British Jews who maintained their difference through depicting 'essentially' *Jewish* subjects or themes; secondly, British Jews who assimilated themselves by working within the available artistic traditions and by not referring in any conspicuous or obvious ways to *Jewishness*; and thirdly, foreign Jews who resided outside Britain. In other words Jewish identity appears as a choice. But in sum the catalogue concluded with the confident assurance that the course of future development will be 'continual assimilation' with the sole purpose of 'advancing the honour and glory' of the British

school. Thus the catalogue proclaimed:

> Young men and women of ability are arising on every side who will
> certainly remove the reproach of the past, and the graphic arts, like
> the others, will before long be recognised as equal witness of the
> emotional and intellectual genius of the House of Israel.[51]

The idea of the nation was, at one and the same time, extended and narrowed. The very construction of the nation was dependent and based upon inclusions and exclusion. It occupied a precarious site between integration and disintegration. Anglo-Jewry's choice to be 'included' was based on defence. They adopted a utilitarian stance and model of Jewish identity and history which found ways of representing the 'good' Jew and the benefits that he could bring to the evolving ideas of the national culture. Anglo-Jewry, it would seem did not attempt to argue for liberal principles of equal rights.

It is no accident that the Whitechapel Gallery was the initiator of an exhibition which celebrated Jewish cultural achievements and provided the venue for it. As has already been noted, the Whitechapel was located in the heart of the East End of London where Jewish immigrants were concentrated. Moreover, concurrent with the planning of the exhibition, the Royal Commissioners were taking the evidence which was to lead to the restriction of alien immigration.

If the impression left by the catalogue of the *Jewish Art and Antiquities* exhibition is of the Jews as intellectual, artistic, emotional, socially mobile and capable of being assimilated, they are a far cry from the images created and the pictures drawn by the witnesses to the Royal Commission. The Commission was presented with no evidence about the contribution which the Jews might make to art or culture. It was as though the Whitechapel exhibition and all that was claimed for it, was unthinkable. The particular identities constituted for the Jews by and within the

exhibition were not those necessarily perceived in the world 'outside' as the evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration showed.

The most powerful image which came from the exhibition was, as we have seen, that Jewish artists could promote 'the power and glory of the British school'. Inherent in this message was again the desire to anticipate and to affirm the dream of assimilation. Political loyalty and trustworthiness were seen as the conditions for granting Emancipation and the rights of citizens. These went hand in hand with conforming with predetermined values. Bauman argues:

> Citizenship and cultural conformity seemed to merge; the second was perceived as the condition, but also as the means to attain the first.[52]

The exhibition *Jewish Art and Antiquities* can be seen as a symptom of a struggle on the cultural plane over the matrix of Jewish identity in England. In the context of the debates of the time, it was an exhibition with a message. Through its address to East End Jews, recent arrivals or *greeners* it spoke of Jewishness in a way which urged them to assimilate. It proposed a version of Jewishness purged of its own languages, of its Yiddish cultures and above all cleansed of a potential class radicalism[53]. Its aim was to encourage the so-called uncivilised, foreign looking, poor, uneducated peoples to accept the standards set by the English middle classes and to make a version of *Jewishness* which would be compatible with *Englishness*.

The *Other* (the Jew) kept itself alive by imitating the other (the English) and attempted to become the same. Identity was established by denying it. Odysseus' dilemma provides a metaphor for assimilation itself. Like Odysseus, in Adorno and Horkheimer's account of the myth, who answering 'nobody' to his name, at one and the same time, denied it. They suggest

..... the artifice of self-preservation depends on the process which decrees the relation between word and thing. Odysseus' two contradictory actions in his encounter with Polyphemus, his answering to the name and his disowning it, are nevertheless one.[54]

He acknowledged himself to himself by denying himself. Thus Odysseus made the act of recognition and negation one. He saved his life by losing himself.

Assimilation argues Bauman[55], is a particularly modern phenomena. It derives its form from modern 'nationalization' in which the State insists upon legal, linguistic, cultural and ideological unification and uniformity. The adaptations and re-interpretations which the processes of assimilation entail, provide the unstable conditions in and through which a culture is destroyed and re-made and old traditions replaced and made to assume new forms. These are in themselves shaped in constant recognition of and negotiation with, both the 'old' and the 'new' and are always restless, always marked by ambivalence. To turn again to Arendt,

What non-Jewish society demanded was that the new-comer be as 'educated' as itself, and that, although he not behave like an 'ordinary Jew', he be and produce something out of the ordinary, since, after all, he was a Jew. All advocates of Emancipation called for assimilation, that is adjustment to and reception by, society, which they considered either a preliminary condition to Jewish Emancipation or its automatic consequences. In other words, whenever those who actually tried to improve Jewish conditions attempted to think of the Jewish question from the point of view of the Jews themselves, they immediately approached it merely in its social aspect. It has been one of the most unfortunate aspects of the history of the Jewish people that only its enemies, and almost never its friends, understood the Jewish question was a political one.[56]

Assimilation in the sense of acceptance by the non-Jewish society, was granted to some Jews only so long as they were clearly distinguished from the Jewish masses.

Culture is political. Here I follow Efraim Shmueli and take culture to mean a grouping of elements in which inconsistencies have been minimized at the same

time as recognizing that incompatibilities never disappear[57]. The fight over culture is a power struggle through and in which meanings are defined and identities shaped. The exhibition *Jewish Art and Antiquities* shaped an identity which was not solely created by Jews and it was subject to how the Jews were perceived as *Jews* in their non-Jewish surroundings. This in turn related to the wider issue of the making of that national identity which was in the process of being defined as English. Dodd has argued that its successful creation was both predicated upon and nourished by the illusion that, 'everyone had a place ... and had contributed to the past which had become a settled present'[58]. The Jews of Whitechapel, with all their diverse cultural identities, were invited to become spectators of a culture already complete, presented and represented to them and for them by their Trustees. They were given their place in the national culture. They accepted the invitation to assimilate and this came in the form of a contract which had a pre-determined form.

Today I ask what were the options then available to the Jews? In Britain at that moment it could be argued that asserting Difference would have amounted to maintaining Jews in an inferior position in relation to the host community. The notion of 'equality in difference' does not hold up. All it would have been, was an ideology of domination whose goal it was to hide that domination. So perhaps – at the time – assimilation was the right course.

But if Adorno and Horkheimer are correct when they argue that the

> ....gentile sees equality, humanity, in his difference from the Jew, but this induces a feeling of antagonism and alien being .... It matters little whether the Jews as individuals really do still have those mimetic features which awaken the dread malady, or whether such features are suppressed .... The Jews automatically stand out as the disturbing factor in the harmony of the national society[59].

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then it little matters whether or not the assimilatory processes failed to achieve or accomplish homogeneity. However the question that still has to be asked is, 'what kind of assimilation and in whose interests'?

Like all didactic exhibitions, *Jewish Art and Antiquities* put its message across by trading on a treacherous compromise. If the Jews were respectable and trustworthy, already good citizens – as it seemed to say – it was only at the cost of marginalising some Jews (to the benefits of others). Thereby the exhibition offered as truth the pretence that what was in reality an unceasing struggle over identity had already been settled.

[1]   The organizers included, The Rev. Prof. H. Gollanz, HSQ Henriques, the Hon. Walter Rothschild, Solomon J.Solomon and the Chief Rabbi.

[2]   *Trustees Report*,Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. 1906 p.9 Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

[3]   Henrietta Barnett, *Canon Barnett. His Life and Work*, Vol. 2. London, 1918 p.151.

[4]   *Ibid*.p.172.

[5]   John Passmore Edwards was Liberal MP for Salisbury 1880-1885. He gave grants of money to boroughs on the basis that they establish a library.

[6]   Studio vol.10 1896 quoted by Ribin Roth *The Whitechapel Art Gallery: Arts and Crafts or Art Nouveau?* Unpublished Open University Project, Whitechapel Art Gallery Archive.

[7]   Barnett,*His Life and Work*, Vol.1 p.216.

[8]   *Op.cit.* Vol.2 p.154.

[9]   *Ibid.* p.152.

[10] *Trustees Report*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1906 p.5.

[11] *Ibid.* p.14.

[12] See Brian Doyle 'The Invention of English' in Robert Coll and Philip Dodd *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, Croom Helm 1987 p.92

[13] Samuel Smiles 'The Industrial Training of Destitute Children. *Contemporary Review* xi vii Jan. 1885, p.110 cited in Steadman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.291.

[14] Jack London, *People of the Abyss*, (1903), London, Journeyman Press, 1977 p.122

[15] The study of working class life became a major preoccupation during this period. See for example Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London 1883-1903.*

[16] *East London Observer*, January 1906, p.6 cited in Garard, *The English and Immigration*, p.49.

[17] Steadman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.328.

[18] Jack London, *People of the Abyss*, p.11.

[19] John Pemble *The Mediterranean Passion*, Oxford University Press, 1988 p.47.

[20] T.H.Huxley cited by Asa Briggs in *Victorian Cities*, Pelican, 1975 p.315.

[21] See, RC Vol.ii Evidence cd. 1742, 1903.

[22] Philip Dodd 'Englishness and National Culture' in Coll and Dodd *Englishness, Politics and Culture*, p.2.

[23] *Ibid.* p.15.

[24] Dr.Joseph Jacobs and Lucien Wolf wrote the catalogue text.

[25] *Jewish Art and Antiquities* exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1906. Preface. I hope at some future date to publish an account of this exhibition.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Trustees Report*, Whitechapel Art Gallery 1906, p.9.

[28] *Trustees Report*, Whitechapel Art Gallery 1907, p.3.

[29] *Ibid.* p.3.

[30] *Jewish Art and Antiquities* catalogue entry No. 229 p.18.

[31] Todd Endleman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History*, p.73.

[32] David Sorkin, 'What was the Emancipation? Lecture at the SPIRO Institute London, August 13 1990.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History.*

[35] *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, p.18.

[36] *East End Observer*, 16 March 1901, Whitechapel Art Gallery Archive.

[37]   It is interesting to note that in the *Modern Section* of the exhibition, one third of the exhibitors were women.

[38]   *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, p.21.

[39]   Ernest Renan 'What is a Nation?' in Homi K Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, 1990 p.19.

[40]   *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, p.23. Aim 3 of the exhibition was:
To illustrate by a Selection of Portraits and a remarkably interesting series of Prints the history of the Jewish community in England since their re-admission, during the Protectorate of Cromwell. 'Preface', *op.cit.*

[41]   *Ibid.* p.21.

[42]   *Ibid.* p.23.

[43]   *Ibid.* pp 84–86.

[44]   *Ibid.* p.84.

[45]   *Ibid.* p.85.

[46]   *Ibid.* p.85.

[47]   *Ibid.* p.85.

[48]   *Ibid.* p.85.

[49]   *Ibid.* p.85.

[50]   Halevi 'Jewish Identity Through the Ages', *Return*, March 1989 p.9.

[51]   *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, catalogue, p.85.

[52]   Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.142.

[53]   William Fishman has written on the socialist and anarchist traditions of East London immigrants, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875–1914*, Duckworth's 1975.

[54]   Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.60.

[55]   Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.141.

[56]   Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.56.

[57]   Efraim Shmueli argues 'every culture is also a political phenomenon. Human beings forge their life-experiences in the inter-personal realities that activate their economic and political behaviour, and in the prototypes they create for their thoughts and actions.' *Seven Jewish Cultures*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 34–35.

[58]   Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and National Culture' in Colls and Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, p.22.

[59]   Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.185.

Figures – Chapter 4
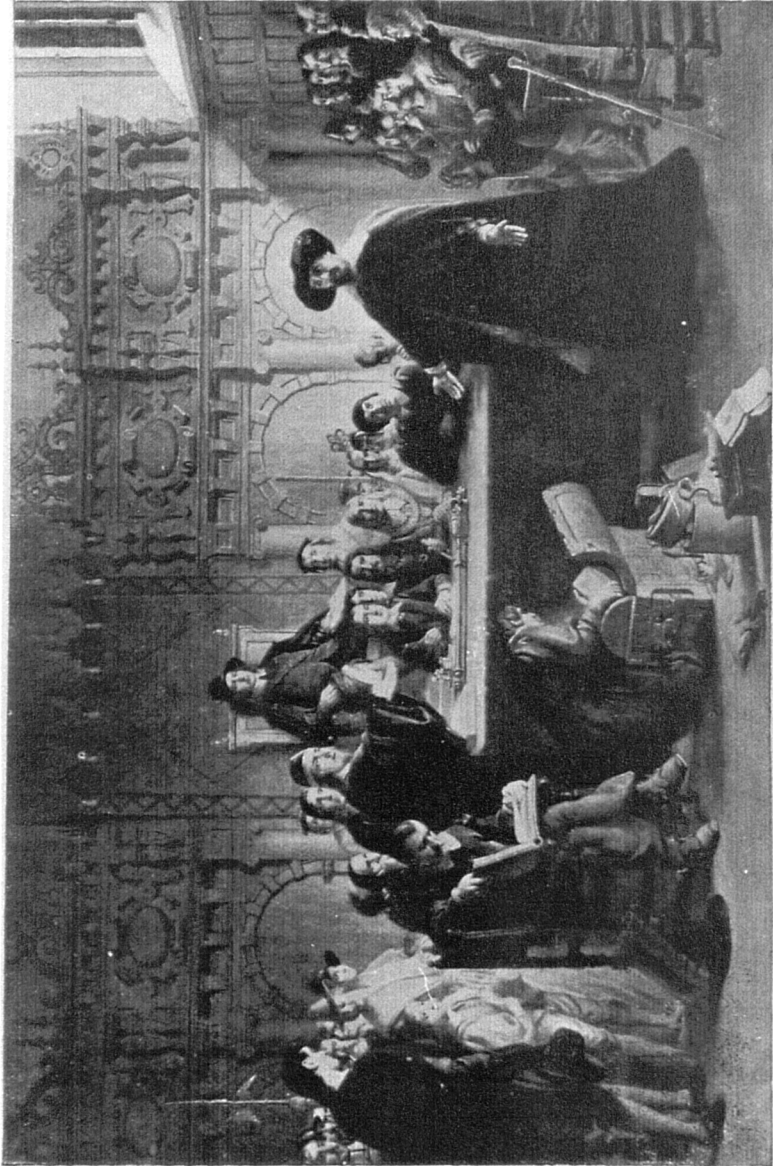
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CHAPTER 5

An Ill-Fitting Suit: Acculturation and Resistance. The Problem of the Subject[1]

This chapter examines some of the forms and discourses of identification and dis-identification which together constituted the category *Jew* in the 19th and early 20th century. I bring together spokes people, a random network of individuals who have come together by way of different journeys and migrations. These separate individuals – the Perkoff family, the Shackmans[2], Theodor Herzl, alongside and with a 'body' identified and recognized as 'Anglo-Jewry' – are here given an 'identity' precisely because they themselves could not create it on their own. Whether or not they believed in assimilation, their identities nonetheless were constituted by it. If assimilation was the force or power of the normative culture what, or indeed where, were the spaces in which it could be resisted? What were the forms (if any) of that resistance?

The intellectual quest of Michel Foucault[3] has been to consider how different kinds of subjects are made in and through specific and changing discourses which are in themselves exercises of power and power exercised. Following Foucault, I ask what kinds of Jewish identities were being assumed, made and re-made? Were those 'subjects' identical with those assumed identities? Were there spaces in which they could resist those very identities? Foucault's work troubles the liberal-humanist idea that individuals are responsible for their actions and to a greater or lesser extent able to wield power both in and outside of institutions and discourses.

The questions asked in this chapter are whether the institutions, which both produced the *Subject* and subjected him, were such that the *Jew* always remained *Other*? Could there exist the determined exercise of choice by an individual?

Perhaps the Jew in Britain had choices as to what could constitute his identity. He could perhaps strive for assimilation about whose success there could be no guarantee. To this end he might try to adopt a form of life that was, for example more English than Jewish, more bourgeois than the bourgeoisie (parvenu), or more revolutionary than the working class. Additionally, Zionism offered a new institutional framework for Jewish identity formation.

Foucault[4] shows from his study of Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon* the effects of an architectural/spatial form on the creation and the maintenance of control over individual subjects. He describes how power can be invisibly maintained, diffused and mediated through a new and particular kind of architecture which, he argues, became the prototype for institutional buildings such as prisons, schools and hospitals in the 18th century.[5]

The panopticon was a circular building in which – taking the particular case of prisons – the inmates of each cell would be in full view of the enclosed central inspection tower. This tower housed an unseen observer so the prisoner would never know when or whether he was being observed. Therefore, according to Foucault, it follows that the inmate must at all times behave as if he was being surveyed. This architecture was the perfect apparatus for a single gaze to see everything constantly.

> It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly visualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth.[6]

This 'normalizing gaze' represents the power which institutes the discourses which

institute the power, the processes, the procedures, the theories of for example, crime and medicine. It was powerfully realized and made manifest in the spatial arrangement, the form of the *panopticon*. The architectural/spatial form is, for Foucault, a metaphor through which he can explore the creation and the maintenance of control over individual subjects. According to Foucault, Bentham established the principle that power should be 'visible and unverifiable'[7]: he had invented a 'technology of power designed to solve the problem of surveillance'[8]. Power or control over individuals was maintained through surveillance, real or imagined:

> Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under
> its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own
> overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and
> against, himself.[9]

Foucault suggests how we as subjects and objects of that gaze 'internalize' it so that it comes to be the 'norm', and how we can conceive that power can be invisibly maintained and mediated. For Foucault then, it might be argued that power, in this particular case expressed in architectonic terms, subsumes the subject. Indeed, in *The Eye of Power*, Foucault claims that 'Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth: it becomes a machinery that no one owns'[10]. For him, discipline should not be identified with individuals, institutions or apparatus but rather with an 'anatomy' of power or a technology.

Some critics have charged Foucault with rendering the subject impotent in the face of such technologies or structures, which they claim he represents as overly deterministic. Edward Said[11] has criticised parts of Foucault's work for confusing the power of institutions to subjugate individuals with the fact that individual behaviour in society is frequently a matter of following rules and conventions.

Following conventions, Said argues, is not the same as submitting to power. Steven Lukes[12] goes so far as to state that Foucault, by excluding subjects and agents from his analysis, fails to grasp the meaning of power at all. Moreover, by appearing to treat power exclusively as an impersonal deterministic structure, Foucault renders the subject powerless and thereby fails to explain how power is exercised by individuals who must according to Lukes, bear the responsibility for their actions. It is possible to argue, as Lukes does, that for Foucault social power is without a subject. Furthermore, it has been possible to interpret Foucault's work in such a way that the subject disappears in a sea of discourse, and as such appears irrelevant. Indeed, it is the emphasis that Foucault has given to the exercises of power itself that has enabled commentators to produce critiques which argue that resistance to power is impossible insofar as resistance itself is implicated in power relations, and that the 'gaze' has been interiorized to the extent that self-surveillance has become the norm. So is it possible to speak of the possibility of 'revolts against the gaze' and of resistance?

Following Barry Smart's[13] reading of Foucault, power itself can be understood as the creator of the processes of individuation and differentiation. It is the operation of power that constitutes the 'object' which is the subject of power. It is the experience of power itself which empowers and produces resistance. As Foucault himself has put it:

> At the heart of the procedures of discipline it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance.[14]

For Foucault society is not an abstract concept but refers to a series of methods, techniques and practices which have created and effected particular forms of social

bonds and produced cohesion. Foucault does not conceive of the modern state as monolithic or homogenous but, as Barry Smart puts it, as a 'matrix of individualization'[15] which forms, shapes and governs individuality through forms of 'pastoral power' over the individual via public institutions and private ventures. Smart has argued that Foucault's work represents,

> an analysis of the various complex social techniques and methods fundamental to the achievement of a relationship of direction, guidance, leadership, or hegemony.... hegemony contributes to or constitutes a form of social cohesion not through force or coercion, not necessarily through consent, but most effectively by way of practices, techniques and methods which infiltrate minds and bodies, cultural practices which cultivate behaviours and beliefs, tastes, desires and needs, as seemingly naturally occurring qualities and properties embodied in the psychic and physical reality (or truth) of the human subject.[16]

In *Truth and Power*[17], Foucault suggests 'one has to dispense with the constituent subject' to get rid of the inalienable subject itself, that is to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. Foucault does not conceive of the subject as pre-constituted or pre-given but formed historically. The human subject is constructed; it is 'made' not 'born'. He has claimed to seek a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges and discourses without having to make reference a subject which is according to him, 'either transcendental in relation to a field of events or runs in empty sameness throughout the course of history'[18].

However, it can also be the case that Foucault, through reformulating the questions and languages of historical/political discourse, is enabled to ask precisely those questions about the individual subject's capacity to resist through an understanding of the relations of forces which constitute history and the subject itself. Foucault himself claimed that the theme of resistance can only be understandable if it is established in concrete terms – who is engaged in struggle, what the struggle is

about and how and where?[19]

Power itself can be understood as the creator of the processes of individuation and differentiation. Foucault emphasises the productivity of power; power subjects bodies to render them not passive but active; power of the body corresponds to the exercises of power over it. The 'normalising gaze' itself creates the object of the gaze which is the subject. Hence since the subject is always constituted as an agent, there always exists possibility of a reversal of that power.

The invention of photography and its institutionalisation in the nineteenth century is just one of the 'techniques' through, in and by which individuals were socially regulated but equally could resist regulation. In the gaze of the camera what types of Jewish subjects were being made?

Upon his arrival from Russia in 1870, Isaac Perkoff opened a photographic shop on the Commercial Road, East London, which he called the St. Petersburg Studios[20]. He had learnt his trade from his father, Michael, in Kiev. Perkoff and his studio staff photographed members of his own family in a variety of situations – from formal studio ones, such as that of Isaac himself with his wife Anuta and their son Ben (taken by Rube Mason) [fig.27], to informal pictures like those showing Anuta Perkoff with her eight children (Alec, Victor, Michael, David, Ben, Bella, Rebecca and Rachel) playing snowballs in the garden of their home in Lea Bridge Rd, London, [fig.28] and the picnic in the forest at Chigwell, dated May 19th 1889 [fig.29]. Photography was part of their everyday life and the photograph album had become one of the seemingly natural accompaniments of their family life.

According to the depositor, Tsippa and Minnie Perkoff were not expecting to be

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photographed when this picture was taken, circa 1895[21] [fig.30]. They had been scrubbing the kitchen floor and were interrupted by having their photograph taken. Tsippa's blouse is untucked and Minnie still wears her apron, they face the camera smiling and appear 'natural' and at ease. This was 25 years after the family's arrival from Russia. Isaac's business must have been successful enough for the family to live beyond the boundaries of the *Jewish* East End, but not successful enough to employ domestic servants. By the 1890s Clapton (Hackney) had changed from a gentile middle class suburb to one occupied by the 'respectable' working classes[22].

Lea Bridge Road was, judging from the census returns of 1891[23], an almost exclusively English street of the 'respectable' working class or lower middle class. The census recorded a number of labourers, clerks, milliners, shopkeepers, and washerwomen as living there. The Perkoff family does not appear in the census return nor in the Kelly's Directory for the following decade[24]. But the depositor dated their move there as *circa* 1895. This suggests either they did not stay long at that address, or did not choose to be in the directory or, as was most likely, were tenants.

The girls posed holding a book, giving the photograph a particular meaning – that books were part of the family culture. The picture thus would seem to confer value upon, to affirm and celebrate, the acquisition of knowledge. From the expression on their faces it would also appear that we witness an everyday 'natural' event; they have not dressed up for the occasion. Today, momentarily, they have been interrupted from reading to face the camera. Their domestic work (low culture) was replaced by a picture which transformed it into an image connoting intellectual labour (high culture) denoted by the book.

Referring to portrait photography in the nineteenth century, John Tagg has argued that a portrait was a 'sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity'[25]. The photograph of Tsippa and Minnie slips and slides around the category established by Tagg. It both accepts (in the pose including the book, connoting culture) and defies (in the unkempt appearance and 'natural' demeanour, connoting nature) such a simple equation. The clashing signs break the conventions of nineteenth century portrait photography. This is a 'private' photograph and as such could perhaps escape the confines of the formal public gaze. Interpretations of the particular image cannot be reduced to the simple codifications proposed by Tagg. A photograph may ape the social conventions but may also transgress them, and the transgressive photograph clarifies the ruling conventions at the very moment that it posits the space for new ones.

Raphael and Anne Shackman (née Perkoff), married about 1907, were photographed at the St. Petersberg studio in 1910[26] [fig.31]. At first glance it looks like a conventional bourgeois betrothal portrait. Photographs, Roland Barthes argued, have been,

> worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation.[27]

It follows from this argument that every sign presupposes a code which can be 'read'. Moreover, Barthes suggests:

> Its signs are gestures, attributes, expressions endowed with certain meanings by virtue of the practice of a certain society: the link between signifier and signified remains, if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical.[28]

Thus Barthes argues that historical understandings are necessarily implicated in the effective decoding of images. The posing of people and of objects, arranged in

particular ways in front of a camera, induces and creates particular associations and ideas. Objects possess the possibility of conveying meanings. In the portrait of the Shackmans, the studio accoutrements include a French 18th-century style chair and table.

In England from the 1840s there had been a revival of these furnishings among some in the fashionable classes. Ferdinard de Rothschild described this French style as

> not classical, it is not heroic, but does it not combine as no previous art did, artistic quality with practical usefulness?... French eighteenth century art became popular and sought for, because of that adaptability which more ancient art lacks....[29]

Both the Rothschilds' London home and Halton House in Buckingham were decorated in French style. However, the interiors were condemned by establishment women such as Lady Frances Balfour and Mary Gladstone for being 'vulgar'[30]. Such derision in itself may well have prompted Rothschild's defence of his taste in terms of utility and aesthetics. The studio furnishings may be indicative of high social achievement as exemplified by the Rothschild family, but they also conveyed tasteless extravagance to the English bourgeoisie.

The 'vulgar' Jew has been described by Arendt[31] as the *parvenu* which she defines in opposition to the *pariah*. The pariah (embodied for her by Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Sholom Aleichem and Charlie Chaplin) self-consciously brings his Jewish existence into the unsympathetic world of the non-Jew (the world in which he must live); but he neither denies nor idealizes his Jewish heritage. The parvenu does either; he is the opportunist in excess. Indeed, 'parvenu' and 'pariah' are two of the *Jewish* types we have seen sketched by George Elliot in *Daniel Deronda*[32].

The Shackmans themselves take up the pose, are posed, in accord with the conventions of bourgeois portrait photography. They face us, they are posed frontally. Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that this is a pose which gives the subjects a sense of self-respect,

> Photos ordinarily show people face on, in the centre of the picture, standing up, at a respectful distance, motionless, and in a dignified attitude. In fact to strike a pose is to offer oneself to be captured in a posture which is not and which does not seek to be 'natural'. The same intention is demonstrated in the concern to correct one's posture, to put on one's best clothes, the refusal to be surprised in an ordinary attitude, at everyday work. Striking a pose means respecting oneself and demanding respect.[33]

The Shackmans have dressed up for the occasion: she wears a blouse trimmed with lace inserts and ribbons; the sleeves are long, full and ruched; the collar is high, the skirt long with a few inches touching the ground. Her hair is worn swept up into a chignon. Around her neck is a velvet ribbon with a small heart hanging from it. In all, her costume would have been à la mode in 1906 but by 1910 high fashion was changing and producing narrower, more tailored costumes with shorter skirts which touched the instep. The contour of the 'mature' woman was being replaced by a more svelt form.[34]

For men, by 1906 the single-button fastening was common. Raphael Shackman's suit was in the mainstream of male dress which was less subject to change than women's. Subtle shifts were, however, occurring. In 1900 separate collars of starched white linen up to about 3" in height were the accepted mode, but gradually the height declined to about 1" and unstarched collars became acceptable[35]. Here the high starched collar is worn. The sleeves and the trousers are a touch too long and Raphael also breaks one of the cardinal rules of day dress – his tie-pin attracts 'too much' attention.[36]

Their costumes just don't quite fit. Their posture is forced. While they face the camera and stand upright – and if Bourdieu is right they seek to command respect – they are nevertheless not quite secure; his hand grips the arm of the 'parvenu' chair perhaps a little too firmly and Anne's pose in relation to Raphael is a little too mannered. She holds him up, supports him, but at the same time she cannot 'stand' in the world without him. They are depicted as one, connoted through the indissoluble union signified by their hands.

The photograph as a public statement, paid for and taken in a *studio*, conferred status upon the sitters. John Tagg has argued that having their portrait taken was a symbolic act by and through which the subjects could make their social mobility visible both to themselves and to others[37]. Thereby they could see themselves classed among those who possessed and enjoyed social status. Walter Benjamin suggests that the photograph (the reproducible image) opens up the possibility of forms of representation which are a part of the processes of democratisation[38]. He argues that mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from, as he puts it, a 'parasitical dependence on ritual'. Instead of which it begins to be based on another practice – politics[39]. But people represent themselves in a language and through conventions which they themselves have not established. The Shackmans are photographed within, and seemingly desire the conventions of high art. The studio setting presents an 'art world'.

Yet in the gaze of the camera, the Shackmans are ill at ease. If, as Bourdieu suggests, the sense of frontality is the 'need for reciprocal deference'[40] and

> Honour demands that one pose for the photo as one would stand before a man whom one respects and from whom one expects respect, face on, one's forehead held high and one's head straight on[41];

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then this reciprocity is lacking.

The Shackman portrait plays the role of high art; it uses the language of (bourgeois) painting but its message could not be communicated through its signs. If the photograph was an agent of democracy then it becomes clear in the Shackman portrait that the gap between the worlds of the bourgeois and the democratic is too great. The camera, the image, cannot tolerate the strain.

When Raphael and Anne Shackman posed for their portrait it was a sign of their desire to assimilate with bourgeois culture, but also a sign of the limits of that very project. However, to say this is to ignore the heterogeneity of the photograph's address and to assume that the photographic representation is hegemonic. The photograph presents merely the possibility of meaning, and as Allan Sekula has suggested, following Barthes, it is 'polysemic' in character. The photographic image is a 'floating chain of significance underlying the signifier'[(42)].

So to and for themselves, as assimilating Jews, the image could have been a mark of their social achievement. But for others, perhaps religious Jews, it could have represented a sacrilegious act; or, perhaps for a Lady Balfour or a Mary Gladstone, a sign of vulgarity; or for a Rothschild the satisfaction of self-emulation. Alternatively the photograph might even have constituted a threat: the *Jew* might be construed as a mimetic being, the *Other* that slips into the same, which would itself present a menace.

Barthes has also argued,

> ....photographic connotation, like every well-structured signification,
> is an institutional activity; in relation to society overall, its function is
> to integrate man, to reassure him.[(43)]

However it does not follow that there is always a simple, direct or immediate identification with those values or institutions which will permit or produce a 'reassuring' image. So it would seem that the photographic image escapes the limitations of strict codes and conventions. The edges are necessarily blurred. Whilst the motivation to conform and to seek reassurance may be there – indeed in this portrait they are inscribed in and constitute its form and staging – in its effects the image once again escapes the limitations of the frame. The image may be 'universal' but it is a condition of its very universality that it allows us to witness its breaking of the codes thereby enabling us to glimpse the Shackmans in their 'singularity'.

In contrast to the desires of assimilationists, although the Shackmans may be surveyed, they cannot be fixed. The institutions of Anglo-Jewry were attempting to manage the whole of British Jewry and subject it to a form of identity which it shaped and reshaped in its own image. Bauman characterizes the drive towards assimilation as follows:

> Obliteration of cultural distinctiveness and acquisition of a different power-assisted culture was construed and received as the drive of politically ambitious, advanced sectors of 'alien' populations to seek excellence in practising the dominant cultural patterns and to disavow the cultural practices of their communities of origin. The prospect of full political citizenship was the main source of the seductive power of the acculturation programme.[44]

Assimilated Anglo-Jewry comprised an elite group which prospered in banking, investment and business[45] and whose members created the institutional infrastructure of Jewish life. These private individuals assembled into public bodies and transmitted the needs of English bourgeois society into the State. Political exigences were transformed by these processes into 'order' which is rationalized as the norm. Or as Harold Perkins puts it,

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The twentieth century would become the century not of the plain man who knows where it hurts but of the professional expert who 'knows best what is good for him'.[46]

Anglo–Jewry, in part at least, seduced by unconditional acceptance into English society, devised and organized in Britain a number of sites; charities, youth clubs, cultural societies, schools and defence organizations, through which to foster Jewish awareness and a group life compatible with perceived English values. Emancipation in Britain had been a slow process. It may well not have been as dramatic or as fraught as in continental Europe but nonetheless problems existed. Indeed, we have already noted in numerous contemporaneous texts[47] the sense of unease that was experienced by both the *greeners* and the more established British Jews. Furthermore, by the latter part of the 19th century, the Anti–Aliens movement had crystallized what was a general sense of insecurity on the social domain by placing the 'alien' issue within the political realm.

Driven in part by such fears, Anglo–Jewry exercised control through combinations of welfare and social services which were similar to, and in some cases in advance of, English institutions[48]. Thereby Anglo–Jewry created the infra–structures which regulated, mediated and empowered sectors of Jewish life. They were in their enterprises, driven by the hopes and expectations of equality shaped by acculturation and assimilatory processes. Power is never evenly distributed in society, and the Jews were inevitably divided by class.

Elites both maintain and legitimate their power and dominance by establishing their systems of judgements and meanings as valid and redeeming. The ideas and values of the Jewish élite needed transmitting. Schools were in the front–line of shaping the identity of the children of the new immigrants. Clearly teachers were ideally placed to convey such values and Anglo–Jewry depended upon them to

impart the necessary skills to make Jewish children effective and productive members of British society.

Primary and secondary school education for boys and girls was an intermediary space between the public and private spheres. Assimilation was their main goal, as Louis B. Abrahams spelled out to his pupils and their families in the annual prize-giving (1905) at the Jews Free School, London:

> Strengthen the efforts of the teachers to wipe away all evidences of foreign birth and foreign proclivities, so that [your] children shall be identified with everything that is English in thought and deed, that no shadow of anti-semitism might exist, that [your] boys and girls may grow up devoted to the flag which they are learning within these walls to love and honour, that they may take a worthy part in the growth of this great Empire, whose shelter and protection [I hope] will never be denied them.[49]

In this discourse it is claimed that foreignness is the key problem and that anti-semitism is the inevitable result of refusing to assimilate. Foreignness or difference is construed as the motive force behind anti-semitism. Abrahams' message thus reads; become alike, become English, and anti-semitism will disappear. Assimilation was both managed and consented to on the basis of fear. Jews should, according to Abrahams, be eternally grateful to be offered a place in British society. If Abrahams was right, then any signs of a refusal to assimilate would in themselves produce anti-semitism. It would be the Jews' own fault, something they brought upon themselves.

These efforts to assimilate were cited in evidence to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. Several East London Head Teacher witnesses accepted and reinforced the view that the second generation children were striving successfully to become anglicised. JMP Rawden[50], of Deal Street Board School, which had on its roll 335 Jewish boys out of a total of 340 pupils, confirmed that in his school:

Practically the whole of these children are of foreign parentage. Not withstanding this fact, the lads have become thoroughly English. They have acquired our language. They take a keen and intelligent interest in all that concerns the welfare of our country. They are proud to be considered English boys.

This pride was identified with patriotism and with the successful acquisition of the English language. This latter theme was taken up by the Commissioners when Lord Rothschild questioned Sir Samuel Montague[50]:

I went with a Polish doctor to the Jews Free School which is the largest school, and has the most foreign children, and had the greatest difficulty in finding one child (although they held up their hands that they were the children of foreign parents) who knew the Polish or Yiddish language... They had become so thoroughly English from the tuition of the free schools that they had lost all their foreign characteristics, except, probably in their own homes, where they would be teaching their parents English.

Yiddish was the mark of *Otherness.* Abrahams, at the prize–giving speech cited earlier, urged his audience to give up Yiddish, 'that miserable jargon which is not a language at all'[51] [fig.32]. In his view it created the 'dividing line' between the Jews and the English. He argued they should throw off their 'foreign habits' and 'foreign prejudices and become English – truly English'. So for Abrahams and others, Yiddish was the sign of the *Other* and one for which they showed nothing if not fear marked by disavowal and contempt. Assimilation seeks to consume everything that is other, to remake everything in its own image, to reduce the other to the same.

The Jews Free School played an exemplary role as transmitter of the values of Anglo–Jewry. There the children were forbidden to speak any language but English. The *Daily Graphic,* in 1895, described the Jews Free School in the following terms:

It is essentially a foreign school and the immense majority of the children on entering the school cannot speak a single word of English. When they leave, after passing the successive standards, they all speak English with a regard for grammar and a purity of accent far above the average of the neighbourhood.[52]

The success of the education was measured in terms of the language achievements of the pupils, and it was not to be just any English but a particular kind of English, a 'pure' English, devoid of any nuance or intimation of local speech. The English language was not to be polluted or contaminated by any foreign inflections (including, by implication, Cockney). The article continued with a case history, given as evidence of the efficacy of the schooling offered:

> As another instance of the completeness of the English education given in this school, I may mention the case of a gentleman to whom I was introduced as the manager of another Jewish institution. After a few minutes 'conversation' I could not help asking him how it happened that he, an obvious John Bull, came to be connected with the Jews. He explained that his parents were Polish Jews, that he came to London with them at the age of four, and that he had received the whole of his education in the Jewish Free School. That is typical of the work the school does. This school, supported by Jewish subscriptions and Jewish endowments is in effect, a huge factory for the production of English citizens from foreign material.[53]

Communities are not given, they are made. The analogy with a factory is, to say the least, apt. The school was involved with the manufacture and production of English Jews, fixed by and in a notion of identity shaped yet again by that all-English emblem, John Bull.

A Yiddish-speaking Eastern-European Jew, or a Jew speaking English with the traces of a foreign language, was the sign of a despised incomplete symbiosis with the 'host' culture. Their visibility was not just a question of looking different but also of sounding different. Thus language contributed to the perception of the *Jew* as essentially different. As the discourses of race defined difference through language, then to expunge the other language could have been yet another way of hiding, of appearing to become the same. Speaking Yiddish would, it was believed, impede the way to full unconditional citizenship.

The status and meaning of Yiddish was paradigmatic of the struggle over *Jewish* identity. For some it represented the ghetto – it was the very language which kept the Jews literally and metaphorically apart – for others it was the language of 'the people' and carried with it socialist meanings.[54] For others again, it was jargon, an impure language and a source of shame. Yiddish was simultaneously celebrated and decried as either the ultimate shape of *Jewish* identity or the very embodiment of their difference which became transmuted for some into the embodiment of fear.

London, that great ocean of cultural and class differences, was to be cleansed of differences and united by and through a revival of a national cultuie. The educational processes were part of the 'techniques' and 'technologies' of power through which differences could be ironed out eventually, potential difficulties calmed and 'one' nation created. The *Daily Graphic* article was accompanied by a line drawing showing the interior of a Jews Free School classroom full of children at work. It was captioned 'Children of the Ghetto: A Class Room in the Jewish Free School for Boys' [fig.33]. So there they were – in spite of a text which insisted to the contrary – depicted in a ghetto.

A boy, occupying the centre of the drawing, is shown with his arms folded on a bench top. His gaze suggests introspection and/or disconnection from the task at hand. The other boys surrounding him are shown working diligently. They are writing or reading what they have written. The image is full of question–provoking ambiguities. Has the pensive boy completed the exercise or is he unable to start it? Is he the child, the only one, who must stay behind to complete the task? Have the others, the majority, made the ultimate adaptation and submitted to the exercises? Vividly shown is his separation, his difference, from the others. The meaning or significance of this difference is bound to be allusive.

There is nothing in the picture to suggest that this is a school unlike any other. The school curriculum aimed to produce people with 'sound bodies' and 'agile minds'[55]. Another image[56], a photograph from 1908, shows boys performing a 'Shakespearean Tableau' – 'All the World's a Stage' [fig.34]; another shows boys learning carpentry [fig.35]; another pictures girls in a sewing class wearing the white aprons typical of Victorian schoolgirls [fig.36]; and yet another shows girls in the gymnasium [fig.37]. The production of healthy bodies was perceived as a contribution to the health of the nation and also a sign of patriotism.

In all, these photographs represent school activities that are entirely consistent with English secondary education of the time. The one exception is the religious class. Here the boys (as in the picture from the Chedar [fig.38], wear hats, a religious obligation [fig.39]. The main purpose of religious classes at the Free School was to provide moral and social guidance. However, another glimmer of resistance creeps in here. There were many parents who were critical of what they perceived as the inadequacies of religious instruction at school[57]. Indeed 70% of the pupils at the Jewish Free School also went to a Talmud Torah or Chedar after school. Chief Rabbi Adler was contemptuous of these systems of education which, he argued, had not changed for two hundred years. His project was after all, the rapid modernisation of the Jewish immigrants and their adaptation to an English form of life. But he consented to the continued existence of those classes on they basis that they would provide yet another site where moral values would be instilled into young people. A speech in 1902 clearly identifies his fears:

> Every Jewish scamp, every Jewish money-lender, every Jewish cheat, does more harm to Judaism than a Christian scamp, a Christian money-lender, a Christian cheat does harm to Christianity. Contrariwise every Jewish hero does us more good. This is the necessary condition of minorities. So may you recognise and understand your importance and your responsibilities.[58]

In this speech he stresses the communal responsibilities and accepts and reinforces the opposition between Jews and Christians. He recites familiar and conventional negative stereotypes of the *Jew* as money-lender, cheat etc. thus, far from refuting them, he reinforces them. Bauman has argued:

> Assimilatory success was to be assessed and marked individually, but the stigma from which the successful assimilation was meant to emancipate had been assigned collectively, to the community as a whole. As long as the Jewish masses persisted in their traditional ways, no amount of self-grooming on the part of the civilized elites would suffice to convince native opinion that Jewishness ceased to be a stigma, and to free the elites from their embarrassment.[59]

Although Bauman was discussing the situation in Germany, it is entirely applicable to the English experience of assimilation.

Jewry was split within itself into a myriad of parts: by class interests; by issues arising from religious teaching and beliefs represented by orthodox, reform or liberal synagogues; and by attitudes towards Jewish nationalism and the processes of assimilation itself. Halevi has suggested that,

> In the space of two generations the status and place of the Jews of Europe had undergone changes on an unparalleled scale: from the *shtetl* to modern citizenship.[60]

He points out, there were those who had not been given any opportunity to integrate or assimilate – like the Jews of the Pale in the Russian Empire who tended to favour Jewish nationalism whether religious or secular. They considered that Western European or American Jews were traitors to the essential cause of Jewish identity in their desire to become part of those societies[61]. This was a view upheld and maintained by some Jews after their arrival in Britain, including Zangwill for whom acceptance into English society could only be at a cost:

> Judea prostrated itself before the Dragon of its hereditary foe, the Philistine, and respectability crept on to freeze the blood of the Orient with its frigid finger, and to blur the vivid tints of the East into the uniform grey of English middle class life.[62]

But of course, 'identity' cannot be simply imposed. For, alongside regulation there must also be consent. Forces of domination and resistance exist side by side. Power can be understood in such a way that resistance can be recognised as freedom's refusal to submit and constitutes a condition of its very existence.

> .... there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised: resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power resistance is multiple ....[63]

Hence, Foucault's definition of the 'subject' as both *subject to* someone else by control and dependence, and tied to an identity by a conscience or self-knowledge[64].

Had people desired to become totally assimilated, to have totally identified, one way would have been to convert to Christianity. Indeed the Church was active in its missionary zeal in East London as the parish records of St. Mary's, Whitechapel, show:

> .... The Christian faith is in its essence propagandist and proselytising ... It aims, by its Founder's command, at winning the world for Christ, than in him there be at last neither Jew nor Gentile, but that all may be one in Christ[65]. [fig.40]

An account[66] by a missionary takes the reader to two East End homes – those of a Mrs. S. and a Mrs. P., who represent the opposite poles of a spectrum. Mrs. P is 'only a carman's wife, but most intelligent'. According to the text, she 'has a capacity for spiritual things far beyond most of the women I meet'. The missionary

appears surprised that a person of that class and gender is both intelligent and spiritual. It was the memory of Mrs. S's dead father that gave her the power to resist the 'truth' in spite of her 'thirst' for knowledge. It was family bonds (tradition and emotion) rather than religion (spirit and intelligence) which explained her resistance. Mrs. P was simply ignorant and refused to convert. She was represented as a bigot. In spite of pressure and inducements, the conversion rate of Jews to Christianity was minimal[67]. For both Zangwill and Dr. Theodore Herzl, Jewish Nationalism provided the space of dissimulation which was in their terms resistance to assimilation, which they understood as facilitating the end of the Jews. On Monday, 7 July 1902, when Herzl was called to give evidence to the Royal Commission, he was asked to define assimilation:

> By assimilation I understand verbally what the word implies – to become assimiliar – that you are no more distinguishable. That is assimilation.[68]

Herzl did however support the view, and here he comes close to Abrahams, that in the present circumstances Jews 'should accept English hospitality gratefully', implying both subservience to the host and the transitory nature of the experience. As long as Britain was constructed and indeed constructed itself as the 'host' nation, the rights of the immigrants could never be guaranteed. They would always be subjected to the favours of the other. Hence Herzl argued that the Jews should set up their own homeland in Palestine, a place where they could achieve autonomy and civil rights. The 'rights' granted in Britain were, he thought, inevitably precarious as long as Jews were perceived as aliens and they saw themselves always as 'guests' in other nation states.

On June 9, a month before, writing his diary in London, Herzl voiced some of the problems facing the Commission which he anticipated would cause him difficulties

in answering the questions. He felt he was walking a tight-rope:

> My testimony before the Royal Commission, which will throw into
> relief the horns of a dilemma that now perplex them: either to break
> with the glorious tradition of free asylum, or leave the working class
> defenceless.[69]

In a private meeting before, Herzl was required to testify to the Royal Commission,

Lord Rothschild alerted him to the reasons for his invitation from Evans Gordon and

Arnold White. Herzl's reputation could, Rothschild thought, be exploited. Indeed as

the following letter from Max Nordau in Paris, 27 June 1899, to Alfred Austin in

London, shows, Herzl had already acquired an awesome reputation:

> You will see in him one of the most remarkable men of the time, less
> so as yet by actual achievement than by grandeur of purpose. His
> mental qualities are those of a poet and a statesman welded into
> one. His character is of almost Anglo-Saxon staunchness and of
> puritan severity. He is an idealist in conceptions, a realist in
> execution – withal a born leader of men.[70]

As such he was open to exploitation by Evans Gordon and White as he was

'unquestionably expert as a Jew' and, moreover, one who combined all the qualities

celebrated and by, and attributed to, Anglo-Saxons; not least he was a Jew who

argued 'that a Jew can never become an Englishman'[71]. Rothschild also warned

Herzl not to mention the plight of the Jews in Rumania where people must either,

in Herzl's words, 'die or get out'[72]. Rothschild argued that if Herzl disclosed this

information it would be inferred that thousands more Jews would arrive in England,

and lead inevitably to restrictive legislation. Herzl, however, refused to accept

Rothschild's advice and reported in his diary:

> I would be a wicked person, if I confined myself to saying things that
> would lead to a restriction of immigration. But I would incidentally be
> one of those wicked persons to whom English Jews might well create
> a monument because I saved them from an influx of East European
> Jews, and also perhaps from Anti-Semitism.[73]

The 'expert' witness set out his reasons for Jewish nationalism before the

Commissioners in the following emotive terms:

> I myself was an assimilated Jew and I speak from experience. I think
> the Jews have rather a tendency to assimilate, they have a natural
> tendency to assimilate; but there comes the moment when they are
> in a very good way on the road to assimilation, and then at that
> moment comes anti-semitism. The whole history has taught us that
> never have Jews been in a happier condition than they were in Spain
> before the events which led up to the Inquisition and Expulsion of the
> fifteenth century; they were to Spain all they could be, and they had
> all they could have.[74]

Herzl articulates a choice or a no-choice situation; whether or not to assimilate, or

to 'belong to his historical nation'. For him it was up to each individual Jew to make

such a decision. A nation in Herzl's terms was 'a historical group of men of a

recognizable cohesion, held together by a common enemy'[75]. The common enemy

for the Jewish nationalist was anti-semitism. For the non-Jewish nationalist the

enemy was perhaps the Jew. Herzl created the architecture which combined Jewish

nationalism with the modern state. His Zionist vision articulates a response to the

limits he perceived as endemic to the project of assimilation. His Zionist dream was

predicated upon European nationalist ideals and as such upon identification with

those values.

Herzl saw the 'Dreyfus case' in France 1894, as one which provided a terrifying

precedent for European Jewry. He argued that if such a thing could happen,

> in Republican, modern, civilized France, a century after the
> Declaration of Human Rights, the Jews as a whole had better look to
> themselves for salvation in a land of their own creation.[76]

The Dreyfus case created 'mass hysteria', according to the argument mounted by

A.L. Shane[77]. Alfred Dreyfus had been convicted by the French government of

treason which involved Germany. In France this produced both nationalist and anti-

semitic responses. As Shane points out, the Dreyfus affair was an 'event' which reached a vaster public than ever before. It marked a new phase in mass communication, being the first time a national issue was debated through both national and international press, as facilitated by the newly established wireless telegraphy. Furthermore, this was the first occasion when a news item was featured in the cinema by the Pathe Gazetteer newsreels[78].

French Jewry were notably passive in their response and were fearful that if his supporters – the Dreyfusards (who included his immediate family, intellectuals and politicians such as Bernard Lazare, Emile Zola and Clemenceau) – were too vociferous, anti-semitism in France would be intensified.

Shane argues that the response of Anglo-Jewry, as presented in the Jewish Chronicle editorial of December 28, 1894, was a mixture of 'disbelief and trust that all would come right in the end '[79]. However, by September 15th of 1899 they were forced to concede that this view had been unjustified, optimistic and unfounded. The Chief Rabbi saw events in France as a warning to Anglo-Jewry. On the Day of Atonement, the 22nd September, 1899, his sermon at the Great London Synagogue was dedicated to the plight 'of our brother, Alfred Dreyfus, who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron, though he has done no violence'. His conclusion read:

> We must regard the events passing on the other side of the Channel
> as a handwriting on the wall warning us that a fierce light is beaten
> upon us and that it behooves us to be   more cautious and
> circumspect than ever before.[80]

So here again Jews are being warned to be careful in their behaviour. Adler feared that they would be punished, not as individuals but as a community, for any misdemeanours. In addition, Shane argues that they were urged to demonstrate

their patriotism and to control the immigration of more Jews.

Earlier in 1895, Herzl had written *The Jewish State* as a response to the Dreyfus affair, and the rest of his life was devoted to the creation of that State. That same year, in *Young Israel*, he cautioned Anglo-Jewry:

> If English Jews do not take the trouble to understand Zionism and further the movement, they will be hunted out of genteel society as in France. They will be attacked in the Press, as in France, by an anti-semitic party in Parliament, as in France.[81]

He argued that the situation for Jews in general had deteriorated since 1894; that the Jewish question existed wherever the Jews live and that 'our presence produces persecution'[82]. He claimed too that, 'the unfortunate Jews are now carrying anti-semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America'[83]. His message was fatalistic; for Herzl anti-semitism was inherent to the Jewish estate. Herzl himself was caught up in an evolving discourse in which, as Halevi argues:

> Anti-semitism came to be conceived of as an essential, and in some ways metaphysical, constant of non-Jewish societies, the symmetrical and absolute counterpart of the eternally bad essence of the Jews in anti-semitic paranoia.[84]

According to Halevi, whilst in practice anti-semitism was aimed at the Jews in Europe it was a facet of a larger racist discourse through and in which Europe was asserting its hegemony. In claiming the concepts of culture and civilization for itself, Europe positioned itself as different from and superior to the Other, whom it represented as barbarians from the semitic world. As vivid and vibrant presences in Europe, the Jews became increasingly the subjects and objects of anti-semitism. This crisis was summed up in the Dreyfus affair which, according to Arendt, sharply outlined and contained within it a number of traits which anticipated the form of the anti-semitism to come of the twentieth century:

> The Dreyfus case, therefore is more than a bizarre, imperfectly
> solved crime, an affair of state officers disguised by false beards and
> dark glasses, pedalling their stupid forgeries by night in the streets of
> Paris but a prelude to Nazism played out over the entire European
> stage.[85]

For Arendt, the Dreyfus affair pre-figured Nazism. It is to be understood historically

and as taking a specific form. However for others, such as Herzl, the Dreyfus affair

was anti-semitism in 'essence' and thus was perceived as trans-historical, the

essential and timeless fact of Jewish existence.

The modern Jewish subject had 'choices' to make as to what constituted identity.

There were those who departed from assimilationist views and found another

homeland in Zionism. Nordau's letter written to Austin from Paris, July 15 1889 cited

above, was an introduction not only to Herzl but to Zionism. Nordau continued:

> .... Zionism is the name given to the movement among Jews aiming
> at the returning to Palestine of those Jews, that are unable or
> unwilling to assimilate themselves with their Christian countrymen in
> the country of their birth, and the restoring of a Jewish nation
> controlling its own affairs under Turkish suzerainty, in the Holy Land
> of their forefathers. The Zionist Jews declare themselves to form a
> distinct nation in spite of their dispersion throughout the world, while
> those Jews that oppose the movement affirm that there is no such
> thing as a Jewish nation, that the English Jew is an Anglo-Saxon,
> the German Jew a Teuton, the French a 'Gaulois' etc. That the only
> bond that is knitting them together is their religion and that they have
> nothing to do with Zion and Palestine. I must further remark that
> almost all the wealthy Jews are violently hostile to Zionism, while
> most of the poor are enthusiastic Zionists.[86]

Anti-semitic discourse produced Herzl's Zionism which replicated European identity

– the identity of the liberal nation state. Paradoxically, that was the very 'identity'

which promised and betrayed that commitment to 'particular' rights.

The processes of modernisation were not monolithic: there were spaces in which

resistance to its power were always a possibility. Modernity is made of little events.

Foucault's analysis of the formation of the individual and the subjection of the gaze dealt with the interplay between modes of domination and various dividing practices and processes of self-formation that classify and construct individuals, and give them their social and personal identities. Thereby it enabled us to see that the Shackmans had faced the world in their portrait but they themselves could not be entirely incorporated by or, indeed into, it. In the Shackman photograph something – their singularity perhaps – remains.

Assimilation could not be a hegemonic project even though it set out to be. It can be construed as revolutionary for some; as servile for others. It was radical for those who took the opportunity to reshape and create new forms for their lives. It enabled them to leave the 'ghetto' and participate in the public life of the nation. For these people it must have seemed that their unending demand for a home was granted. But to achieve it the Jew had to imitate the *Other* and become the same. Even then he was the *Other* of the European imaginary, thus he could not be accepted on any terms. Moreover, assimilation was productive of a form of violence from within Jewry itself: the Jews who consented to the disciplines of the English middle class forms of life betrayed those Jews who were unable or not enabled to enter that class. If homecoming meant either the promise of reconciliation between Jew and Jew, or Christian and Jew, it remained only a promise – or an ecstatic illusion.

[1]   The title of this chapter has a debt to John Berger's essay 'The Suit and the Photograph' *About Looking*, London, Writers & Readers, 1980, p.29. Therein the suit became the motif through which social classes were differentiated.

[2]   The family photographs are from the archive of the Jewish Museum, London. Hereafter JM.

[3]   On this point see especially Paul Rabinow's introduction to *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984, p.7.

[4]   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977.

[5]   *Ibid.* p.201.

[6]   *Ibid.* p.184.

[7]   *Ibid.* p.201.

[8]   Foucault, 'The Eye of Power' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon (ed.), Brighton, Harvester Press 1980, p.148.

[9]   *Ibid.* p.155.

[10]   *Ibid.* p.156.

[11]   Edward Said, 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power' in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, David Couzens Hoy (ed.), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p.151.

[12]   Steven Lukes views are discussed by Hoy in the Introduction. *Ibid.* p.10.

[13]   Barry Smart, 'The Politics of Truth and the Problem of Hegemony', *passim*.

[14]   Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Rabinow (ed.), p.197.

[15]   Smart, 'The Politics of Truth and the Problem of Hegemony' in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, Hoy (ed.), p.162.

[16]   *Ibid.* p.160.

[17]   Foucault, 'Truth and Power' in *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (ed.), p.117.

[18]   *Ibid.* p.117.

[19]   *Ibid.* p.164.

[20]   Perkoff Archive, JM.

[21]   *Ibid.*

[22]   Census Returns, 1891, Rose Lipman Library, Hackney, London.

[23]   *Ibid.*

[24]   Kelly's Directory. These were produced annually. I used those dating from 1890-1905.

[25]   John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, London, Macmillan, 1988, p.37.

[26]   Perkoff archive, JM.

[27]   Roland Barthes, *Barthes: Selected Writings*, p.198.

[28]   *Ibid.* p.206.

[29]   Ferninard de Rothschild cited in Joanna Banham, Sally MacDonald and Julia Poster, *Victorian Design*, New York, Crescent Books, 1991, p.204.

[30]   *Ibid.* p.204.

[31]   Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.56.

[32]   George Elliot, *Daniel Deronda*, See also Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[33]   Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art*, Polity Press 1991, p.80, cited in Mark Durden, 'Incommunicability and the Documentary Book', *Boundaries*, University of Kent, 1992, p.10.

[34]   Joan Nunn, *Fashion in Costume 1200-1980*, Herbert Press 1984, p.175.

[35]   *Ibid.* p.402.

[36]   *Ibid.* p.402.

[37]   Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, p.37.

[38]   Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, London, Fontana, 1973.

[39]   *Ibid.* p.226.

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40   Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art*, p.80, cited in Durden, *op.cit*, p.10.

41   *Ibid.* p.10.

42   Allan Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning' in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin (ed.), London, Macmillan, 1982, p.91.

43   Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', *Barthes; Selected Writings*, p.210.

44   Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.142.

45   Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988.

46   Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, pp.169-170.

47   See chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

48   Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry*, pp.2-3.

49   Abrahams, *JC*, 7 July 1905, cited in Black, *ibid*, pp.110-111. The parenthetical remarks are the author's insertions.

50   *RC.*, Vol.ii, Evidence JMP Rawden: 18866.

51   *Ibid.* Sir Samuel Montague: 16766.

52   Abraham, cited in Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry*, p.110.

53   *Daily Graphic*, 1895, archive Stepney Green Library, London (n.p.)

54   *Ibid.*

55   William Fishman, in *East End Jewish Radicals: passim.*

56   All the photographs are from the Greater London Council collection, Stepney Green Library, London

57   Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry*, p.127.

58   Adler, cited in Black, *op.cit*, p.129.

59   Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.131.

60   Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, p.134.

61   *Ibid.* p.135.

62   Zangwill, *The Children of the Ghetto*, p.2.

63   Foucault, 'Power and Strategies' in *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (ed.), p.142.

64   Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hurbert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, University of Chicago Press, p.216 cited in Paul Rabinow's introduction to *The Foucault Reader*, p.21.

65   Parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, *Annual Report and Accounts*, London 1913, p.33. Fig.40 was taken by the Rev. Cecil Cohen and was published in the annual report.

66   *Ibid.* pp.39-40.

67   Parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, *Annual Report and Accounts*, London 1914, p.22.

68   *RC.*, Vol.ii, Evidence, Theodor Herzl, 6244.

69   Martin Lowenthal, *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, New York, The Dial Press, 1956, p.391.

70   Letter, Max Nordau to Alfred Austin, cited in Roth (ed.) *Anglo-Jewish Letters 1158-1917*, London, Soncino, 1938, p.321.

71   Lowenthal, *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p.365.

72   *Ibid.* p.365.

73   *Ibid.* p.366.

74   *RC.*, Vol.ii, Evidence Herzl, 6244.

75   *Ibid.*

76   Lowenthal, *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, 'Introduction', p.xix.

77   A.L. Shane, 'The Dreyfus Affair: Could it have happened in England?', *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol.XXX, 1987-1988.

[78]   *Ibid.* p.138.
[79]   *Ibid.* p.140.
[80]   *Ibid.* p.140.
[81]   *Ibid.* p.141.
[82]   *RC.*, Vol.ii, Evidence Herzl, 6244.
[83]   *Ibid.*
[84]   Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, p.133.
[85]   Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp.94–95.
[86]   Letter from Max Nordau to Alfred Austin, cited in Roth (ed.), *Anglo-Jewish Letters*, p.320.

Figures – Chapter 5

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29

BOARD FOR THE AFFAIRS OF SHECHETA.

NOTICE TO THE JEWISH PUBLIC.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that

selling meat on a Stall in Wentworth Street,
DOES NOT HOLD the LICENSE of the Board
and that all Meat, &c., sold by him is according
to Jewish Law Trifa (טְרֵפָה) and prohibited to
be eaten by Jews.

London.   1901. Sivan 5661   By Order,
                                     M. VAN THAL,
                                     Investigating Officer

באָרד אָף שחיטה

נאָטים צום אידישען פובליק.

עם ווירד היערמים בעמאנם געמאבם דאם

וואָם פערקויפמ פלייש אויף א כמאל אין ווענמוואָרמ
כמ. האָמ נים קיין לייסענם פיז דיא באָרד אָף שחיטה
אונד לוים דעם אידישען דין איז אלעם פלייש א.ז.וו.
וואָם ער פערקויפמ טרפה אה אידען מארז עמנים עמעז

לונדן פין תרס"א: מ. וואָן מהאל, אינוועסמיגיימינג אַפיסער

סרוד וזראָ רחקעריא צאו אה. ראָבביוואדיכם, אי כאָסעראָ מברים.

A "KOSHER" WARNING.

"CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO:" A CLASS ROOM IN THE JEWISH FREE SCHOOL FOR BOYS.

Copy letter 30.3.08 ... stage

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CHAPTER 6

Yids, Mods and Foreigners: *Twentieth Century Art (A Review of Modern Movements)*, Spring 1914, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. The Processes of Alienization

1914, The Whitechapel Gallery, London organised an exhibition called *Twentieth Century Art (A Review of Modern Movements)*[1]. Its aim was to map out the development of modern art and, indeed, it occurred at a moment when, as Charles Harrison has suggested, 'the mainstream practice of modern art was defined and entrenched in England.'[2] To define involves making categories, which entails drawing boundaries and differentiating. Furthermore, definitions create identities and produce hierarchies.

Now I shall explore the aesthetic boundaries and hierarchies which were constructed in and by the *Twentieth Century Art* show. I shall examine the production of the distinctive categories which situated an *inside* and an *outside* of and for a mainstream art. In addition, I shall draw attention to the formation of yet another category which occupied a space which is *outside* even when *inside* – that occupied by the 'alienized'[3]. I shall argue too, that the ways in which critics represented the exhibition *Twentieth Century Art* not only articulated the dominant definitions of modern art in Britain but also replicated social categories.

In *Twentieth Century Art* a broad range of works, from Impressionist to Cubist and Futurist, were shown. Vanessa Bell, Henry Lamb, Gaudier-Brzska, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash and Wyndham Lewis were amongst those who had work on view. In addition a large collection from Roger Fry and the Omega Workshop was displayed[4]. Separated from the rest and hung together in the *Small Gallery*, were works by Jewish artists, curated by David Bomberg.

Some critics blinded by fear, even went so far as to explicitly connect Cubism and Futurism with Jewish artists. Modern art was associated with foreign or malign influences. Furthermore, modern art was seen by some as being part of the occult, irrational and emotive world of the *Other*. The *Other* was seen and described as an alien force with an evil influence. The exhibition was to provoke and to create tensions between cultural differentiation and the national culture and between individualism and collective conformity.

The story mounted by the catalogue sought to make connections across a diverse range of art through identifying their stylistic similarities. A *Jewish* section within this exhibition did not, nor indeed could not, conform to or fit-in with the overall theme of the show with its aim to instate a modernist aesthetic into British art discourses. What bonded this section together were the Jewish origins of the participants. Fifty three works by fifteen artists were displayed. These included Bomberg, Gertler, Kramer, Modigliani, Wolmer and Pascin[5]. However, before examining the significance of this section, I establish the parameters of the exhibition as a whole.

As I mentioned earlier, correspondences between styles formed the basis for categorizing the works and indeed the rationale for the hanging. The show was divided into four main groups. Here, I summarize from the catalogue: the first group showed the influence of Walter Sickert and Lucien Pissarro on modern art and stressed their use of ordinary subjects which, it was argued, were treated in a 'luminous' manner; the second, constructed links between Puvis de Chavannes, Alphonse Legros and Augustus John whose works were characterised by their persistent use of decorative design and linear simplifications in the treatment of human types; the text argued that a third group had a debt to Impressionist painting and to Cézanne and suggested further that this work differed from the previous

group in its use of volumetric drawing and its abandoning of perspective. The final group, was characterised as having given up representation almost entirely. This group, it was pointed out, had recently established a Rebel Art Centre. Though not in this group, the works of Bomberg were mentioned in the catalogue as if hung in this context. His paintings and drawings were to be found in the *Small Gallery* with the works of other Jewish artists.

As a whole the exhibition was conceived as a follow-on to a show staged in the Whitechapel four years earlier called *Twenty Years of British Art*[6]. There, the intention had been to show what had happened in art since the 'absorbtion' [*sic*] of the lessons of French Impressionism:

> The 'Twentieth Century Art' exhibition is concerned with the progress
> of art since the absorbtion of the Impressionist teachings, as shown
> in the work of Younger British artists.[7]

The 1910 exhibition was designed to show the impact on art of French Impressionism, which it considered to have moved art away from *naturalism*. According to the 1914 catalogue the earlier *exhibition had*

> showed that artists had moved away from an academic treatment of
> history, anecdote, and sentimentality, and had gone in search of a
> *more brilliant treatment of light in landscape,* and of more truly
> decorative treatments of subject, and of a more intimate treatment of
> human life generally.[8]

Explicit in this statement was the notion of progress, which in art was taken to mean the assertion of the autonomy of aesthetic experience. Implicit too, was the association of artistic development with artistic language or style. Moreover, this implied the avoidance of subjects which were morally charged. Additionally, by creating a link between the one exhibition and the other, the continuity and evolution of modern art was suggested.

The catalogue accompanying *Twenty Years of British Art* did not have entries on

each of the 569 items on display, but it did include some short accounts of some.

A commentary produced for *The Convalescent* by Ambrose McEvoy is typical.[fig.41]

> This modest picture is a remarkable example of the attainment of the harmony necessary to make a painting into a fine work of art. The simple lines of the bare room, the sober colour scheme of ivory and brown and dim red, the quiet light falling on the sofa and its occupant, all combine to carry forward the expression of a gentle, homely beauty.[9]

This caption shows the shift in critical discourse mediated through particular

understandings of French art. The form and the design both articulate 'gentle,

homely beauty' which together evoke a scene of calm and simple domesticity. The

text links form and content to produce a moral message which celebrates and

idealizes the virtues of home. But above all, it is the achievement of a particular

aesthetic quality, 'harmony', which makes this picture a work of art.

An uncharacteristically lengthy entry on Tonks' *Rosamund and the Purple Jar*,

[fig.42] which I quote in full, spells out the ways in which modern art was

understood to be superior to nineteenth century art,

> Fifty years ago the mid-Victorians told the story of Rosamund and her purple jar to children to discourage reckless, unthinking love of beauty. We are now less certain that youth is foolish in grasping the glory of liquid purple, and going barefoot, as long as it does not expect to have boots provided for it, as well as the purple jars of beauty. The painting might almost be taken at first sight as the work of one of the Pre-Raphaelites, every detail rendered with quaint and loving care, yet there is a subtle difference – Rosamund has chosen an Aubusson carpet, not a Brussels, for her room. Behind the work of the artist here one feels a wider culture, a mind that knows childish things for what they are. He can delight in them, and, when his theme, as here, enjoins, revel in their charm, but we feel that he can also put childish things away. He does not labour under the illusion, natural and even praiseworthy as it was in the case of the Pre-Raphaelites, that the only way of art lies in childish methods.[10]

The differences produced by the text between Tonks' actual picture and an imaginary Pre-Raphaelite painting established the ground for judging modern art. The entry started by appearing to affirm the values of narrative painting but it continues by questioning the morality implicit in the work. A modern painting is more knowing, more intelligent, more discerning both in concept and in the handling of paint. Modern art is distinguished, in the text, by its sophistication and its greater understanding of the methods and procedures of art and culture.

The exhibition attracted an attendance of 80,000[11] people in less than six weeks.

> The East End visitors were numerous and so appreciative that it seemed as if good work was able to interest and attract them by its own merits without the aid of popular subject matter.[12]

The Trustees Report of the exhibition is explicit in its disassociation of subject matter from popularity. *Good* art has the power to appeal to the East End visitors. A space was being cleared for artistic judgements in which the ultimate value of art is 'aesthetic'. And aesthetic in a particular sense; one which reified form and divorced it from subject matter, was in the process of being articulated and made.

Twenty Years of British Art and *Twentieth Century Art* each suggest a change of paradigm for the Whitechapel. Previous exhibitions had been designed to mediate art to its publics in ways which would impart and convey moral lessons. The exhibitions themselves, for example *Jewish Art and Antiquities*[13], were organized thematically to facilitate this approach. Individual images which were deemed appropriate to instruct were often singled out for attention and comment.

The catalogue which accompanied the exhibition *Twentieth Century Art* began with a short essay through which the show was framed. This introduction was then

followed by the list of artists' names, lenders or the title of the work. Authorship and ownership were given priority. There was no additional amplification or elucidation of works. The exhibition employed a modernist approach to art which has now become the familiar discourse of professional art historical management. The form of aesthetic re-evaluation signalled by the exhibitions is significant and made more so given the particular history and ideology of the gallery[14].

As we have seen, the Whitechapel had been founded by Canon and Henrietta Barnett with the aim of taking high culture to the East End of London[15]. Its programme of exhibitions, lectures and guided tours sought to inculcate in the local population a higher subjectivity which could transcend nature by offering experiences, feelings and pleasures that went beyond what were understood as the mindless routines of working class lives. The gallery policy was predicated upon the belief that reform through art would lead to the improvement of the 'lower classes'. By teaching them to admire the beautiful, it was thought, they would gain insights and understandings which would enable them to share the values of the classes above them. According to Barnett:

> There can be no real unity so long as people in different parts of a
> city are prevented from admiring the same things, from taking the
> same pride in their fathers' great deeds and from sharing the glory of
> possessing the same great literature.[16]

This commentary established the sketch of a scenario in which culture was used to mould people – both in the reproduction of social roles and in the productive processes. In this context art was used to educate and morally uplift the public.

By 1914, art was no longer to be seen and valued explicitly in terms of its power to morally elevate and set standards for human behaviour. Rather it was now to be judged and assessed in terms of the strength of its appeal to aesthetic categories.

In these two exhibitions moral didacticism was being transformed into the progressive imperative. Of increasing importance were ideas about the purity of the aesthetic experience which were linked with ideas about progress. Art was to be seen and judged in terms of the strength of its appeal to aesthetic emotions and the particular vision of the individual artist. As the catalogue to *Twentieth Century Art* put it:

> A feeling common to the painters, sculptors, and designers represented in the exhibition is that of a compulsion on the artist towards a more personal statement of his relation towards his subject in particular and to life in general than has been expressed in the preceding phases of the development of art.[17]

The exhibitions were part of a process whereby a new theory of art was being formulated, articulated and promoted. In these discourses art's primary concern was understood to be aesthetic and where art history and criticism were constructed around artistic or stylistic precedents.

In 1912 contemporary artistic theory had been polarised by the London launch of Post-Impressionism. The Royal Academy, attempting to maintain its prestige and power, closed rank against the 'new' art. In these debates, Post-Impressionism, with Fry and Bells aesthetic theory, was constructed as progressive and defined in opposition to the Royal Academy which was represented as reactionary[18].

By pitting the one institution against the other the critics of the *Times* and the *Observer* recreated those polemics in the reviews of *Twentieth Century Art*. The *Times* asserted:

> This exhibition in Whitechapel seems like a challenge to the other in Piccadilly. The Piccadilly artists would say, no doubt, that Whitechapel is the proper place for it and Billingsgate the proper language. Art, like life, is at any rate more exciting in Whitechapel than in Piccadilly. Something is happening there and nothing at all at Burlington House.[19]

Through the nature of its exhibitions policy, its function and its geography, the Whitechapel presented a challenge to the prestige of the Royal Academy. The values espoused by the Royal Academy served as a negative foil through which 'progressive' or 'advanced' art could be assessed and measured.

For the *Observer* the exclusion of works by Royal Academicians was at least as worthy for comment, as significant, as those works which were included in the show:

> There is scarcely an exhibitor at the Whitechapel who is represented at the Royal Academy. We are thus faced with the remarkable fact that the official guardians of the nation's art, the members of the Royal Academy, refuse to take any account of the vast movement, or succession of movements, which have led twentieth century art into new paths, and, on the other hand what pretends to a representative exhibition of twentieth century art, organized by laymen who have no axe to grind and who have on previous occasions given proof of their liberal spirit, absolutely ignores the existence of the Royal Academy.[20]

Twentieth Century Art was selected by the Gallery Director, Gilbert Ramsey with the help of the previous director Charles Aitken[21]. They had asked William Dawson's permission to dispense with the usual practice of setting up an Advisory Committee for the exhibition. In a letter dated 5 February 1914 Dawson acceded to this request with the proviso that:

> .... we shall not have many examples of the "Cubist" and "Futurist" school, though perhaps we should have one or two as an example of what certain members of the public can be induced to tolerate.[22]

To whom was he referring? Whatever may be postulated as an answer to this question, Dawson's fears seem to have been well founded. The *Daily Express* asked what would be the consequences should, 'a whole flood of *isms* be let loose like a cataract on the unprepared East End?'[23] The Director of the National Gallery JB Manson had written to Ramsey expressing his disquiet at the decision to include Cubist works in the exhibition[24]. On the 15 May Dawson, in a response to a letter

from the Chair of Trustees of the Whitechapel, The Hon. Harry Lawson MP which

alerted him to an article in the *Telegraph* from Sir Claude Phillips, agreed with the

view that the Trustees:

> assume a grave responsibility in opening the doors of such an
> exhibition without careful preparation and warning to the artistic youth
> and larger public of East London.[25]

Thus for the Trustees at least, an educational and moral role for art was still of

paramount importance. But if this entailed the 'careful preparation' of the public

many of the critics appear to have been *ill-prepared* for the exhibition.

The *Star*[26] began its review with a critique of the title of the show. The critic

castigated the organizers for creating expectations which were misleading.

Furthermore, the exhibition was 'bewildering'. The *Standard* saw it as an insane

attempt to present a complete review of the whole evolution of modern art.

Bomberg's *The Hold* [fig.43], *Vision of Ezekiel* [fig.44] and *Racehorses* [fig.45] were

singled out for comment[27].

Moreover, a number of other newspaper reports completely misrepresented the

exhibition. Out of 494 exhibits, a total of 13 – by Nevinson, Roberts, Wadsworth,

Etchells and Wyndham Lewis – could be described as Cubist or Futurist.

Nevertheless, the headline in the *Observer* ran 'Futurist Art in Whitechapel'[28] and

a notice appeared in the *Daily Express*[29] under the title 'Futurist Picture Show'.

The *Manchester Guardian* suggested that the nucleus of Jewish art was Cubist:

> The little gallery at Whitechapel is always made a particular feature
> of in these exhibitions. This year it will house the younger Jewish
> artists with Mr.Bomberg and other cubists as the nucleus.[30]

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Yet, Bomberg was the only artist in the Jewish section whose work could have been characterised in that manner. The way in which the press dealt with Cubism and Futurism served to associate those forms of modernism with Jewish artists, or if not with the Jews then with foreign or malign influences.

The message of the *Westminster Gazette*, was as clear as a bell, modern art was infected by foreign influence. Commenting upon the works of Duncan Grant the reviewer argued:

> [Grant] has surrendered the gift which enabled him to paint a picture so beautiful as the 'Lemon Gatherers' for an apprenticeship in cabalistic decoration.[31]

The force of the reference to the Cabala is to intensify a specifically Jewish connotation and in this case and this context suggests the idea of an occult, irrational world where reason has been lost. The language is emotive. The idea of Grant 'surrendering' his talent evokes the sense of the artist gradually losing himself to an outside alien force. He is seduced by an evil influence (modern art). The text goes on to argue – that Grant could save himself through applying reason.

According to the *Westminster Gazette*, William Roberts was also in grave danger; he had overdosed on modernism. However, the text argued – following the rationale of the catalogue – that if an evolution such as Cubism was legitimately worked out, this evil influence need not be serious. Nonetheless the article continued with further reproaches aimed at modernism:

> .... and soon the individual artist finds himself out of sympathy with the Academy, yet believes that the language of art is a common speech based upon representation of reality, will be forced for his own life's sake to subscribe to a movement as to a trade union.[32]

Here, progressive art is equated with Trade Union politics. But the power of this particular association also served to suggest that personal or artistic freedom is at stake. An individual's freedom, under certain political conditions, may be sacrificed for the sake of the collective. Artistic integrity and political conformity were posed against each other.

Whilst the catalogue argued that the development of modern art was evolutionary, the press tended to depict its nature as revolutionary. The term revolutionary had, by this moment, acquired quite particular meanings. It was represented in opposition to evolution. The former connoted violent change while the latter a planned or 'natural' transition. Charles Harrison[33] has traced the use of 'revolutionary' in the context of art, to an article dating from 1910, by Frank Rutter. The article was a defence of Post-Impressionism. Certainly by 1914, if the reviews of the *Twentieth Century Art* exhibition are anything to go by, it was seized upon with alacrity. Doubtless, as Harrison also argues, 'revolutionary art' was not then a term applied casually.

The review in the *Star* displayed anxiety about thinking calmly and constructively about these 'artistic revolutionaries'[34]. Moreover, the *Observer*[35] described the exhibition as representing a revolutionary movement and again, taking up the theme in institutional terms, argued that the exhibition undermined and threatened the position of the Royal Academy. The text continued, commenting on Bomberg's *In the Hold*, in the following terms:

> Here one young fellow with artistic if rebellious instincts exclaimed –
> I'm going home to buy a penny box of paints and do some of those
> pictures myself. That's what I'm going to do.

Here two points were made: firstly, it is a rebellious young man who is drawn to

modern art; and secondly, modernism invites the uneducated or unsophisticated to partake of its pleasures. Rebelliousness and ignorance are represented as if inherent to the apprehension and appreciation of modernism.

The *Morning Post*[36] made an oblique, though immediately recognizable, reference to the Jewish East End.

> The Commercial Road ought to test their appeal to the love of bright
> colour an implicit grotesque humour, and the like.

The Commercial Road connoted *Jewish* in terms of locality and, perhaps, also through the identification of Jews with commerce. Additionally, the love of bright colour suggested a lack of sophisticated taste and restraint, as indeed did the idea of 'grotesque' humour. This characterisation suggests children or 'primitive' peoples and recalls an earlier discourse in which a traveller in unknown London, like Charles Booth, perceived the working classes as leading lives which were understood as congruent with their physical nature:

> I see nothing improbable in the general view that the simple natural
> lives of working class people tend to their own and their children's
> happiness more than the artificial complicated existence of the rich.[37]

If working class life was seen as uncomplicated or simple in contrast with the complexity of the life of the rich, it was also seen as more authentic, as more real. Indeed Mark Gertler, in a letter to Brett dated January 1914, appears to have shared this view:

> I was extremely fortunate to live in the East End amongst *real*
> people.[38]

A month before in a letter to Carrington, he had elaborated this notion in aesthetic terms:

As for realism – my work is real and I wanted it to be real. The more I see of life, the more I get to think that realism is necessary...I was born from a working man. I haven't had a grand education and I don't understand all this abstract intellectual nonsense! I am rather in search of reality.[39]

His text was both a celebration of the 'authenticity' of Jewish working class life and a defensive attempt to ward off criticisms of it. However, when he introduced his fashionable friends to the East End, he presented them with an image belonging to the literary imagination. He took them on missions to the cultural haunts. One of these visits with Edward Marsh was described in a letter, again to Brett:

He [Marsh] loves Jewish theatre and agrees with me that it is far and away more vital than the English, in fact there is no comparison.[40]

In recreating the romance of the ghetto Gertler comes close to George Sims epic picture book *Living in London* (1902) where a contributor, Gerlberg, had written of the East End in the following terms:

Only the superficial think this Jewish colony a mere vale of tears... Nay! Let no one call the Ghetto melancholy who has not looked in at its dancing clubs and watched an old crony at a Hebrew wedding feast foot the furious Kosatzli with a gay old dog of ten winters more.[41]

The lives and experiences of East Enders were deemed to be direct, unmediated and natural. Hence, according to the *Morning Post*[42], they could be expected to find pleasure in an art which was bold, bright in colour, emotionally simple and closer to nature. By inference this was an art devoid of skill, elegance or refinement. It was 'primitive'. And again it was Bomberg's work that was used to exemplify these traits.

The apparently anecdotal account of the *Morning Post* described the gallery as half filled with children, some brought in by parents. 'Stout, foreign mothers and dark

sometimes ragged fathers'. These people were not just poor but foreign too.

The *Standard*[43] also suggested that children and foreigners could understand these 'puzzle' paintings. Once more, it was Bomberg's work – *In the Hold, Ezekiel* and *Racehorses* – which served as examples. *The Daily Telegraph* review explicitly mentioned the Jewish section:

> The small room contains a good collection from the brushes of Jewish painters. There are also a great many subjects that will appeal to children.[44]

Again the reference was to associate *children and Jews*.

The critical reception of the show in the press erected a version of modernism which it explicitly associated with evil. It constructed this modernism as repressive, as working against the freedom of the individual artist. It both linked modernism with revolution, and trivialized revolutionary politics by characterising them as childish and unsophisticated. In short, this chain of associations and complicities anchored modernism to subversive, foreign, *Jewish* influences.

It is puzzling, given the anxieties voiced during the planning phase of the exhibition, to consider the motives which led to the creation of a special display of work by Jewish artists. It is even more perplexing since this display did not fit with the overall theme and conception of the show. Its inclusion can be explained in part by local interests, that is to say, the constituency that the Whitechapel sought to serve. However, if the special section of art by Jews had been devised to appeal to East End Jews in order to show to them and to others the success story of assimilated Jewry and its cultural achievements, it was a strategy which clearly backfired, as it was bound to do. To hang the works separately, in this context, was a deeply

ambiguous act; whilst they were in a position to be celebrated, they were also open to being reviled.

Judgements for art do not exist entirely apart from the normative values of society. For the press which produces and constructs, as well as mediates these values, the exhibition served to reinforce the myth of the *Jew* as a 'foreigner in our midst'. The hanging of the exhibition can be read as resonant with Simmel's idea of Jews as the very epitome of *strangers* – always on the *outside* even when *inside*[45]. Zygmunt Bauman has taken up this theme more recently in his book *Modernity and the Holocaust* suggesting:

> The objects of anti-semitism occupy as a rule the semantically
> confusing and psychologically unnerving status of foreigners inside.[46]

Moreover, as the words of Edouard Drumont (a French MP and a noted anti-semite) suggest, the very absence of solid boundaries between hitherto separate groups could in itself be the cause of confusion and lead to fear and resentment. He wrote,

> A Mr. Cohen who goes to synagogue, who keeps kosher is a
> respectable person. I don't hold anything against him. I do have it
> in for the Jew who is not obvious.[47]

So even the fact that some Jews assimilated was used against them by anti-semitic theorists. Their presence, now articulated as the not-quite-identical, was a distorted, displaced image of themselves. Ambivalence moves to menace. No doubt, had the Jews not consented to assimilate they would also have been blamed for anti-semitism.

The liberal compromise had offered emancipation to the Jews in the expectation that they would move closer to British society. In this discourse it was argued that anti-semitism would only end when society tolerated the Jews and this meant their

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assimilation. But this liberal creed allowed no place in society for a distinctively

Jewish population. Equality of conditions, though certainly a basic requirement for

justice, is nevertheless among the greatest and most uncertain ventures of modern

society. The more equal conditions are, the less explanation there is for the

differences that actually exist between people; and thus all the more unequal do

individuals and groups of people become. In Hannah Arendt's sharp words – Jews

had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was

no escape[48].

The Jews just did not fit-in. But, paradoxically that was their place. For although

the category *Jew* was ambivalent there was no escape from it. The Jews filled-out

and occupied the symbolically important place as *Other*. This category enabled the

re-articulation of a category that escaped articulation. But it had to be there to give

sense to the *Other*.

Modernity was, as Bauman argued, simultaneously bringing about the levelling of

differences and again creating boundaries and structuring further differences.

> Under conditions of modernity, segregation required a modern
> method of boundary building. A method able to withstand and
> neutralize the levelling impact of allegedly infinite powers of
> educatory and civilizing forces; a method capable of designating a
> 'no-go' area for pedagogy and self-improvement, of drawing an
> unencroachable limit to the potential of cultivation (a method applied
> eagerly, though with mixed success, to all groups intended to be kept
> permanently in a subordinate position – like the working classes or
> women). If it was to be salvaged from the assault of modern
> equality, *the distinctiveness of the Jews* had to be re-articulated.[49]
> [author's emphasis]

Cultural identity is always inseparable from the creation of boundaries. Furthermore,

the cultural order is always constituted around the figures at its territorial edge which

structure the relationships of *superior* and *inferior*. In Britain, Jews were installed at

the extreme edge of social relations as *Other* whereby they occupied both a cognitive and socio-economic position which secured and maintained them as a different, distinctive and inferior class.

Correspondingly, in the exhibition *Twentieth Century Art* the works by Jewish artists were constructed as other. The terrain they occupied was literally and metaphorically *outside* the *inside* of modern art practices as they were being formulated in the exhibition.

In an argument which draws upon the work of Raymond Williams, Stallybrass and White[50] argue that a culture which is 'inherently dominative' (that is to say, is constructed in a mode inclined towards domination), has access to power and prestige which enables it to create the definitions which come to dominate and form the *outside* and *inside*. They continue:

> Bourgeois democracy emerged with a class which, whilst indeed progressive in its best political aspirations, had encoded in its manners, morals and imaginative writings, in its body bearing and taste, a subliminal elitism which was constitutive of its historical being. Whatever, the radical nature of its 'universal' democratic demand, it had engraved in its subjective identity all the means by which it felt itself to be a different distinctive and superior class.[51]

The democratic aims associated with the site – the Whitechapel Gallery – and embedded in the particular aims of the *Twentieth Century Art* exhibition were spelled out clearly in the accompanying catalogue, which the authors ended with the following plea.

> They hope that all who are in sympathy with their conscious effort to introduce art to democracy will aid them in their endeavour to show that democratic feeling has been introduced into art.[52]

Now democracy refers to an idea of open argument and equality amongst people

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who are all deserving of respect. The aspiration to 'equality in difference' cannot stand up. As I argued earlier it can only serve as an ideology of domination whose goal it is to hide that domination.

European nationalism depended increasingly for its definitions on criteria which were 'cultural', argues James Snead[53]. It was possible to classify national cultures through one culture projecting an image of its difference from another. In this way superiority, which was deemed to be both natural and national, was established. Snead's argument continues by quoting Freud,

> Closely related races keep one another at arm's length; the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese. We are no longer astonished that greater differences should lead to an almost insuperable repugnance, such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semite, and the white races for the coloured .... In the undisguised antipathies and aversions which people feel towards strangers with whom they have to do we may recognize the expression of self-love – of narcissism.[54]

We are again in the world of 'false' projection. When faced with non-British culture, (and in particular the work displayed in the exhibition as Jewish art), the press, insensitive to nuances of desire, inevitably re-articulated difference to re-present an inferior category: a modernism associated with subversion, foreignness, *Jewishness*. This could be distinguished in effect from another modernism, a superior modernism, which celebrated the notion of the purity of artistic expression. This was a modernism which could be legitimated as a democratic, progressive form of art. A space was cleared for a version of modernism which sought to banish from the discourses of art all political, symbolic, moral or ideological readings and arguments.

The exhibition was inadvertently part of a larger project and process through which a particular version of modernist theory was being secured. The positioning of the

Jewish artists – *outside the inside* – was important. For there in that place, differentiation could occur and hierarchies be negotiated. The *Other* is never exclusively *outside*: the *Other* is *inside* too. Structures of power, forces of domination and resistance, mix and intermingle. The one is implicated with and in the other.

That chimerical place of the alienized was essential for the construction and articulation of the identity of a distinctively British account of modernism. No longer tempted to transgress, the modernism of British culture was rendered safe within such territorial pickets. Little has altered today, perhaps not surprisingly, since the formation of cultural identity is always inseparable from the definition and creation of boundaries.

* * * * * *

The exhibition took place in the summer of 1914: Austria–Hungary declared war on Serbia on the 18th of July, 1914. Russia mobilized along the German and Austrian frontiers on July the 29th. Germany declared war on Russia on the 1st of August and then on the 3rd of the month on France and invaded Belgium on the same day. Britain followed on the 4th by declaring war on Germany. Cultural xenophobia was being superseded by the xenophobia of war.

1   *Twentieth Century Art, (A Review of Modern Movements)*, Summer Exhibition, 1914, Whitechapel Art Gallery. The exhibition was from May 8 to June 20 and was open to visitors each day from 12 noon to 9.30pm.

2   Charles Harrison, 'Critical Theories and the Practice of Art' in *British Art in the Twentieth Century*, Susan Compton (ed), Royal Academy, London 1986, p.55.

3   This term was coined by Tony Skillen (University of Kent) and was suggested to me by David Reason.

4   These works, listed in the catalogue nos. 36-115, were all on sale. They included furniture and decorative items.

5   53 works by the following 15 artists were shown: David Bomberg, Moses Kisling, Mark Gertler, Horris Brodsky, Isaac Rosenberg, Bernard Meninsky, Alfred Wolmark, Mark Wiener, Jacob Kramer and Clara Bernberg.

6   *Twenty Years of British Art (1890-1910)*, Summer Exhibition, Whitechapel, 1910.

7   'Introduction', *Twentieth Century Art*, catalogue, p.3.

8   *Ibid.* p.3.

9   *Twenty Years of British Art*, p.21.

10 *Ibid.* p.20.

11 *Ibid.* p.6.

12 *Ibid.* p.6.

13 *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, Whitechapel Gallery, 1906, discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

14 See Chapter 4 of this thesis and also Frances Borzello, *Civilising Caliban: The Misuse of Art 1875-1980*, London, Routledge, 1987, Linda Hutchinson, *The Whitechapel Art Gallery 1901-1983*, Unpublished MA Thesis, City University 1983; Ribin Roth, *The Whitechapel Art Gallery; Arts and Crafts or Art Nouveau? Charles Harrison Townsend (1851-1928)*, Unpublished Open University project.

15 See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

16 S & H Barnett, 'Class Divisions in Great Cities' in *Towards Social Reform*, London 1909, cited in Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*, p.32.

17 *Twentieth Century Art*, p.4.

18 See Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939*, Allen Lane/Indiana University Press, 1987 for a full account of these debates.

19 'Challenge of Whitechapel to Piccadilly: An exhibition in the East', *Times*, (n.a.) 8/5/1914, Whitechapel Art Gallery archive. All press clippings have been taken from this archive and are unpaginated.

20 'Twentieth Century Art at Whitechapel', *The Observer*, 17/5/1914.

21 Aitken had been appointed Director of the Tate Gallery in 1911.

22 Letter from William Dawson to Gilbert Ramsey, dated 5/2/1914, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

23 P.K.G. 'Side-Splitting-Art', *Daily Express*, 8/5/1914.

24 Letter from J.B. Manson, to Gilbert Ramsey, The Whitechapel Art Gallery.

25 Letter from W.Dawson to The Hon. Harry Lawson, MP., dated 15 May 1914.

26 A.J.Finberg, 'The Whitechapel Art Gallery', *The Star*, 20/5/1914.

27 'Cubists in East-End: Picture-Puzzles to be seen in Whitechapel, *The Standard*, (n.a.) 14/5/1914.

28 'East End Critics: Futurist Art in Whitechapel, *The Observer*, 10/5/1914.

29 *Daily Express*, (n.a.) 11/5/1914.

30 'Post-Impressionists for Whitechapel', *Manchester Guardian*, 9/4/1914.

31 J.M.M. 'Twentieth Century Art', *The Westminster Gazette*, 21/5/1914.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism*, p.75.

34   Finberg, *The Star*, 20/5/1914.

35   *The Observer*, 10/5/1914.

36   'Whitechapel Gallery', *The Morning Post*, (n.a.) 11/5/1914.

37   Charles Booth, *The Life and Labour of the People in London*, in Philip Dodd 'Englishness and the National Culture' in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, Croom Helm, 1986, p.9.

38   Letter from Mark Gertler to the Hon. Dorothy Brett dated Jan.1914, Mark Gertler: *Selected Letters*, Noel Carrington (ed), Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1965, p.63.

39   Letter from Mark Gertler to Carrington dated Sunday [December 1913], *Ibid.* p.60.

40   Letter from Mark Gertler to Brett dated Jan.1914, *Ibid.* p.63.

41   Gerlberg 'Jewish London' in George Sims *Living in London*, Vol.2, London, 1902, p.29.

42   *Morning Post*, 11/5/1914.

43   *The Standard*, 14/5/1914.

44   20th Century Art: Whitechapel Exhibition, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8/5/1914.

45   Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Polity Press, 1989, p.53.

46   *Ibid.* p.34.

47   Drumont, cited by Patrick Girard, 'Historical Foundations of Antisemitism' in *Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust*, (ed) Joel E. Dinsdale, Washington 1980, p.70-71, cited in Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p.58.

48   Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.87, cited in Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p.59.

49   *Ibid.* p.59.

50   Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, *passim*.

51   *Ibid.* p.202.

52   *Twentieth Century Art*, p.5.

53   James Snead, 'European pedigrees/African contagious: nationality, narrative, and communality in Tutuola, Achebe, and Reed' in H.K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p.235.

54   Sigmund Freud, 'Group Psychology', *Civilization, Society and Religion*, Penguin, 1986, p.131.

Figures – Chapter 6

41   McEvoy, Ambroise, *The Convalescent*, c.1900, Tate Gallery, London, oil on canvas, 53x43cms.
42   Tonks, H. *Rosamund and the Purple Jar*, oil on wood, Tate Gallery, London.
43   Bomberg, David, *In the Hold*, 1913–14, oil on canvas, 198x256.5cms, Tate Gallery, London.
44   Bomberg, David, *Vision of Ezekiel*, 1912, oil on canvas, 114.5x137cms, Tate Gallery, London.
45   Bomberg, David, *Racehorses*, 1912–1913, chalk and wash, 42x65cms. Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College, Oxford.

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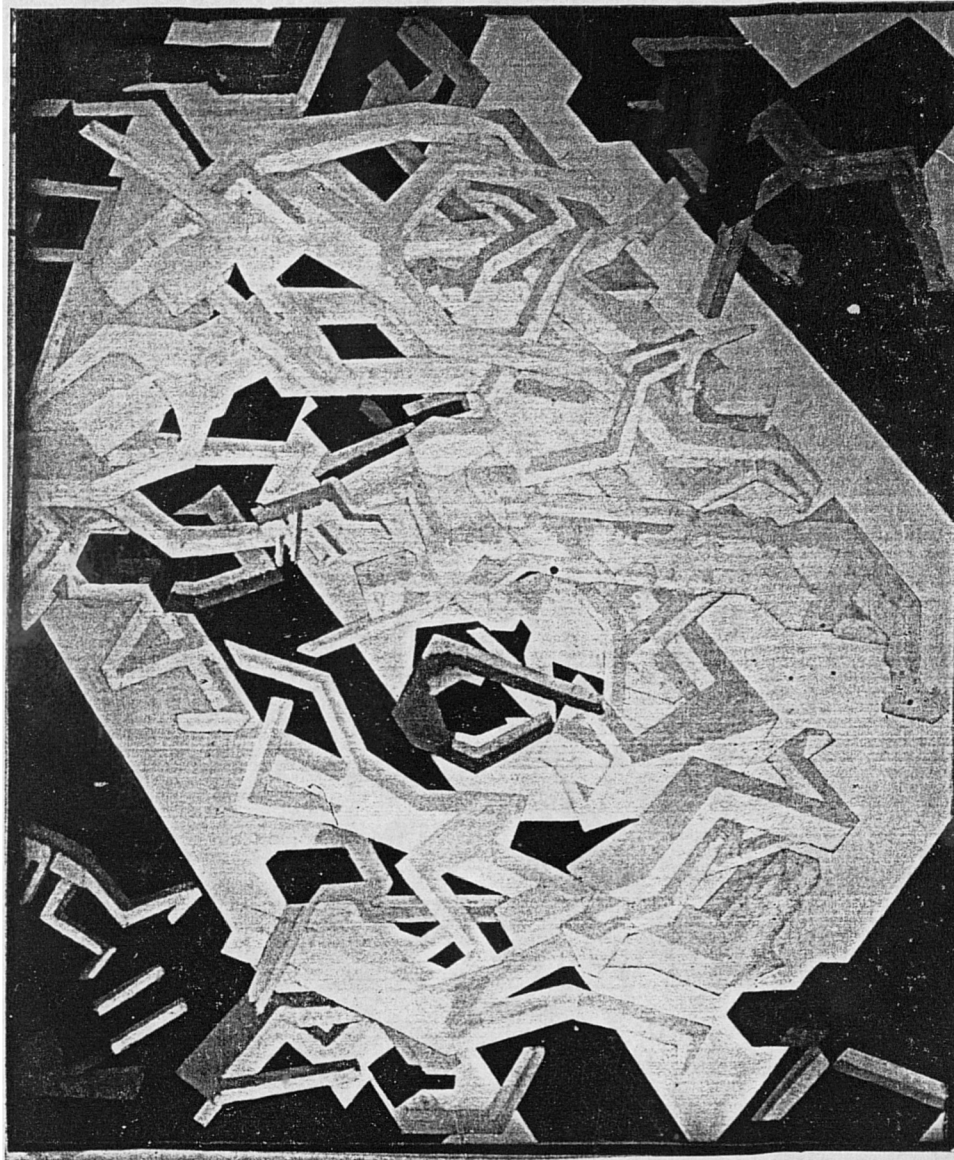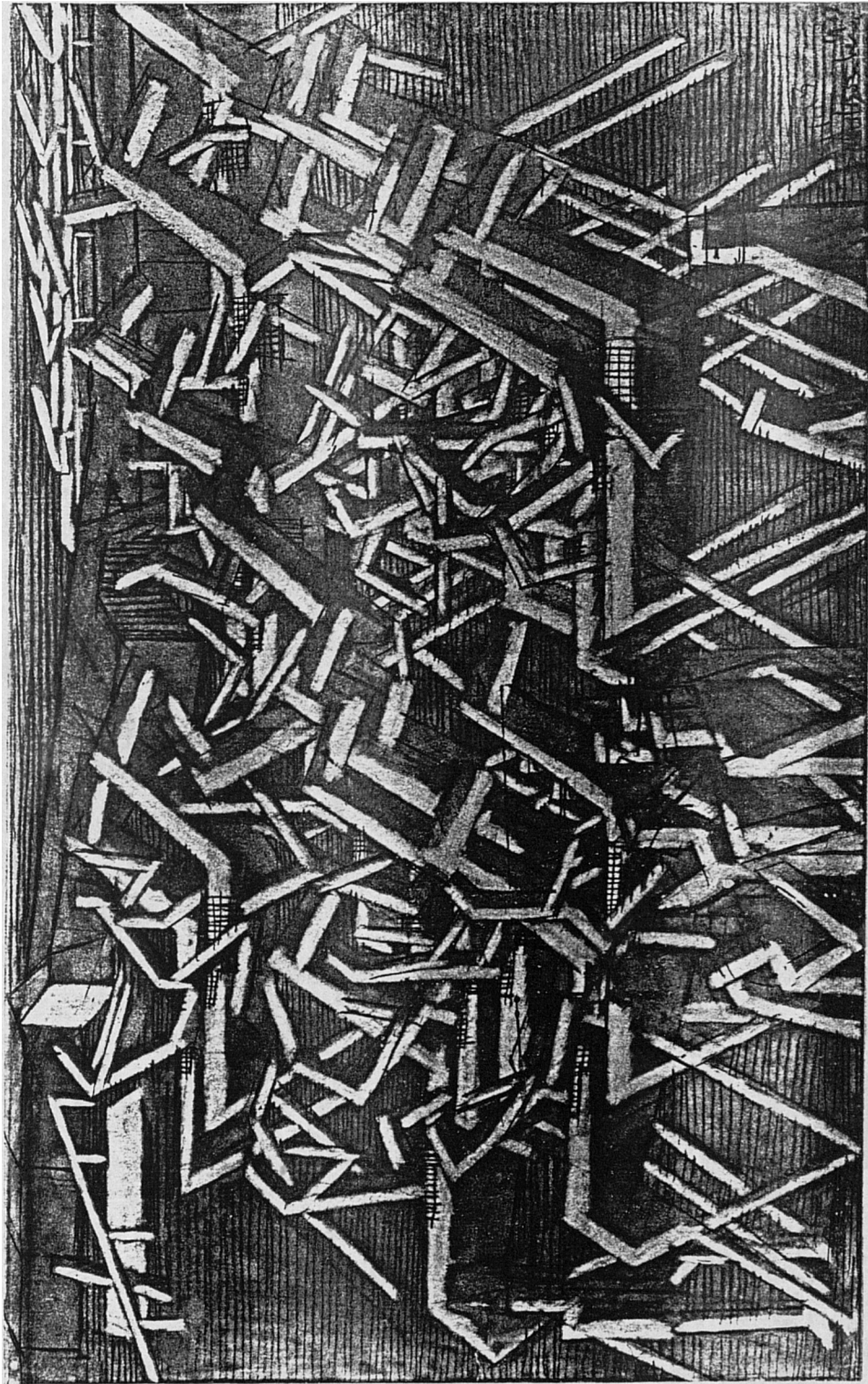
CHAPTER 7

The Mythical Edges of Assimilation: Mark Gertler

The Angel of Death wings its way across the pages of the Gertler literature which is inexorably haunted by its presence[1]. Knowing that Gertler's life ends in suicide, we might be tempted to look at his work as evidence of that fact, seeing it as a witness of that death, interpreting it as something other than that which it was. Powerful explanations perhaps nevertheless mystifications.

Yet Gertler's work could be revealing of something else. It could be understood perhaps, as a sign of a struggle between identification with Jewish selfhood and alienation from it – described by Shmueli as 'the essence of the Jewish dilemma'[2] – or even as a refutation of that proposition. Or again perhaps, his art could reveal a 'singularity' in tension with the 'universal'. It could provide clues about the ways in which an individual negotiated identities, *Jewish* and/or English. It could again raise questions about assimilation and indicate just where the limits to that social process lay. Re-writing Gertler could begin the unravelling of myth and history.

Born 9 December, 1891, Spitalfields, London. Named Max. In 1899 renamed Mark. Over those eight years Gertler's family returned to Austria and then moved back again to London[3]. His new name signals a change – from foreign to English Jew. It suggests a commitment to stay, to make a home, to assimilate. Gertler was sent to the Deal Street Board School in 1900 where he learnt English. In 1906-7 he went to Regents Street Polytechnic and the following year, with the advice and help of Solomon J.Solomon and William Rothenstein, he went to the Slade School of Art. The Jewish Educational Aid Society gave him a grant which was augmented by donations from Sir Edward Sassoon, Lady Desart and Sefton Sewell and by a Slade Scholarship. [fig.46] In 1912 he left the Slade. Education was for Gertler (as for

others from immigrant families) the primary means through which he was taught to be English, acquired English middle class values and began the processes of assimilation.

Being an artist gave Gertler a way out of the East End ghetto and access to an upper middle class English form of life. Many letters written by Gertler to friends he made while at the Slade reveal anger and deep ambivalence in relation to his experiences of assimilation[4]. He expressed his unease and disquiet with these middle class values, indeed often in class terms. For example, writing to Dora Carrington in December 1912, he declared:

> You are the *Lady* and I am the East End boy;[5] and, more 'I feel that I am *far* too vulgar and rough for you. But I am hoping through my work to reach to your level'. (October 1913)[6].

Yet again he confided to Carrington:

> By my ambition I am cut off 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. (December 1912).[7]

Gerter had become another. Now estranged from his family and his class, as well as from the English middle class.

This declassé Jew was struggling to find a pictorial language and to structure an artistic identity. In 1911–1915 these needed to be compatible with Slade values (and those of his benefactors), responsive to early modernism (and the tastes of his patrons) and true to his changing perceptions of art and artists (Jewish or otherwise). Gertler's artistic debts, like those of most ambitious art students, were many. These were variously to Rothenstein, Steer, Tonks, Epstein, Gauguin, Cézanne and Van Gogh. The latter two became increasingly important to him after

visiting Paris in 1911 and 1913[8]. However, his attitude towards his artistic peer group, as displayed in a letter to Carrington dated 24 September 1912, was nothing if not equivocal:

> So I went out and saw more unfortunate artists. I looked at them talking art, Ancient art, Modern art, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Cubists, Spottists, Futurists, Cave-dwelling, Wyndham Lewis, Duncan Grant, Etchells, Roger Fry! I looked on and laughed to myself saying, "Give me the *Baker*, the *Baker*," and I walked home disgusted with them *all*, was glad to find my dear simple mother *waiting for me with a nice roll, that she knows* I like, and a cup of hot coffee. Dear mother, the same mother of all my life, *twenty years*. You, dear mother, I thought, are the only *modern artist*.[9]

This text can be read as a summary of his search for truth and authenticity in art and life, and suggests that the image of (his, or even the) Mother provided him with such a form. Moreover, Mother represented for Gertler security and stability. In addition, what he perceived as the genuine simple skills of the craftsman, the *Baker*, he opposes to the false values of contemporary artists.

Now I shall consider three of the many paintings and drawings made by Gertler of his mother between 1911 and 1913. They span a range of pictorial languages and show Gertler negotiating different identities not just for the assumed subject – his mother – but for his art. He is searching for a voice responsive to, yet independent from, available pictorial languages. For Gertler this language had to resonate with honesty and authenticity.

The first picture [fig.47] can be read as a competent Edwardian portrait. Its language has a debt to Slade School painting. The woman is depicted wearing fine clothes. Her hair is neatly dressed. She has pearls in her ears and rings on her fingers. Her appearance is that of a city woman, middle class and civilized. Light touches of the brush give her face an animated look. Her eyes, bright and alert,

avoid our gaze. They are looking at something outside, beyond the picture frame. Her lively expression masks a tense, haughty mien. Her body, which fills the picture, takes possession of it. Body and face appear at odds with each other. The image connotes, perhaps, a person who is struggling to establish a place – in order to belong – and looking elsewhere; suggesting someone who resents this conflict.

The second painting, which dates from 1913, [fig.48] is part of a bigger change evident overall in Gertler's work. Increasingly from 1912 (the year he left the Slade), his pictures feature images of Jewish or peasant cultures. Here Gertler depicts his mother as a peasant. Her rough hands dominate the image. These are the hands of a worker – a provider. These are the tools which bear the signs of work. Indeed they appear larger than life. She is depicted in a kitchen, the place where food is prepared. The body touches, is connected to, the spoon in the pudding bowl behind her. Her hands are as heavy as the objects. Paint is applied thickly, consonant with the weight of a body, a basin, fruit. Like the objects, the body of the woman is immobile. Its feel is statuesque, a quality accentuated by the fixed set of the eyes, which are less alert than those of the other mother, the one in the earlier painting. This woman is reminiscent of *La Berceuse* by Van Gogh [fig.49] for whom that painting was to represent not just a woman but someone to comfort and alleviate the pain and sorrow of mankind[10]. Likewise for Gertler his painting was to be understood as symbolic:

> Her large hands are lying heavily and warily on her lap. The whole
> suggests suffering and a life that has known hardship. It is barbaric
> and symbolic.[11]

A charcoal drawing dating from 1913 [fig.50] is the third image. The sensuality of the lines – the drawing – contrasts with the former portrait where the paint lies heavy and inert. Those lines, which give the shape and the form to the head, also seem

to caress it. They then possess it, capturing the face, full-lipped and eye brows finely arched, beautiful. Emanuel Levinas in *Time and the Other* writes,

> The caress is a mode of the subject's being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact. Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks.[12]

For Levinas the caress is the anticipation of the 'pure' future. It is made up of even richer promises which open new perspectives into the ungraspable. He affirms voluptuousness as the 'very event' of the future which cleansed of content is mysterious and exceptional. In Gertler's image contact or relationship appears as failure and possession a synonym of power.

The pensive eyes suggest a woman of dignity and composure. The drawing shares similarities with works of Jacob Epstein who in 1912 had taken Gertler to the British Museum and introduced him to the art of ancient cultures[13].

The languages of the latter drawing and painting are simple, bold and direct, entering the category of *primitive*. In the art discourses of the time, the idea of the primitive oscillated in its meanings. It was used either to connote closeness to nature, truth and sincerity or to signify the barbaric and uncivilized. Hence the term could be used for praise or abuse. These tensions meet in the archaic forms of the matriarch imaged by Gertler.

Each of these three images traverses a different line from the acceptable mother (civilised and middle class) to the unacceptable (uncivilized and barbaric). The figure tends to press against the picture plane placing her close to the spectator.

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She is larger than life. They vacillate between being images of comfort and power, love and terror, beauty and ugliness, sensuality and denial. As a whole perhaps these *matriarchaic*[14] incarnations can stand in all their ambivalence as a metaphor for assimilation which was for Gertler an experience marked by feelings of deep ambiguity, tension and contradiction. Although they affirm no one thing with certainty, in their wide embrace they deny nothing. His own ambivalence is signalled by a pervasive restlessness in his art, registering perhaps a refusal or even an inability to settle for an all embracing style.

Also the choice of language was acquiring for Gertler the status of a moral imperative. It provided him with a means of disassociating himself from bourgeois art and re-identifying himself with his origins. In December 1913, writing again to Carrington, he argued:

> As for realism – my work is real and I wanted to be real. The more I see of life, the more I get to think that realism is necessary .... I was born from a working man. I haven't had a grand education and I don't understand all this abstract intellectual nonsense! I am rather in search of reality, even at the cost of "*pretty decorativeness*". I love natural objects and I love painting them as they are – I use them to help me to express an idea.[15]

The still-life, dating from 1913, [fig.51] shows Gertler's understanding of realism. Here, as in *Artist's Mother* the paint is applied thickly, as heavy as the objects in the material world which the artist seeks to transcribe. Realism is concerned with creating a balance between truth to visual experience with its imaginative transformation via the medium (paint). The means of representation do not efface themselves before the scene they represent. It is the logic of the discipline (painting) which dictates the picture. If the painting itself is beautiful so too is that which is portrayed. The picture provides a frame for the *real*, aestheticising *reality*. The still-life images painted by Gertler feature objects of no extrinsic value. They

celebrate the simplicity of things perhaps found in the kitchen of the peasant/mother of his imagination. They beautify the commonplace.

Austerity is dignified and aestheticised in Gertler's representations of Jewish people. The cluster of pictures of Jewish themes to which he was devoted during this period may have been a way of asserting and enunciating values which he interpreted as in conflict with those of the English middle class, represented for and to him by Carrington and her crowd. In July 1912 Gertler had written a letter to Carrington in which he compared her unfavourably with another correspondent, a Jewish girl. He castigated Carrington for being different:

> I have just had a letter from a Jewish girl I once knew. A girl that is simple and beautiful, who is, thank God, not "*arty*" and of my own class. She will not torment my life.[16]

Thus he could construct and affirm a version of *Otherness/Jewishness* in which qualities of sincerity, truth and comfort were vested. His notion of realism provided him with a language through which these values could be articulated.

For Gertler Jewish men and women, in different ways, were identified by the expression of suffering which he depicted as if incised on their faces. And thus he was able visually to differentiate Jews from others. Here he departed from his erstwhile mentor William Rothenstein who depicted Jews solely in terms of their religious life. [fig.52]. But he comes close to the characterisation of *Jews* by the writer S. Gerlberg who had in George Sims' popular book, *Living London*, described,...

> beshawled women with their pinched faces [and] long-coated men with two thousand years of persecution stamped in their manners.[17]

Gertler connotes *Jews* by and through the expression of pained emotion. He

situates them within the confines of family relationships.

The sanctification of the family was an important aspect of the bourgeois body politic. Through the family sexuality and social relations were regulated. The successful integration of Jews into English life was dependent upon them fitting in with the evolving values of the bourgeois order. To this end the centrality and importance of the family in Jewish culture was installed both for them and by them in the imagination of Jews and others[18]. Gerlberg's essay, 'Jewish London', idealizes Jewish family life which he argued cut across social classes,

> In essential characteristics they are really one. East-End or West-End, the Jew is still the family man among the nations, delighting keenly in the joys of domesticity.[19]

Jewish family life was reified and home in this discourse becomes a place of pleasure. For Gertler, however, in a picture such as *Family Group* [fig.53] there is no celebration of the family or of home. The people are not located. The picture is devoid of any clues through which we might become familiar with and identify with the family or recognise home. It is an image which denotes barrenness. The picture is absolutely still save the movement of the child who is constrained by the mother. There is no connection between the adults. The man's gesture is vague. Is he pointing? Is he supplicating?

Again, repression and suffering are the dominant themes in the relationship connoted by the picture *The Rabbi and his Grandchild*, dating from May 1913. [fig.54] The Rabbi – wearing a skull cap – is represented as long suffering. The expression on his face, the look in his eyes, register the tribulations of life. The child's face is reminiscent of a cherubim. Yet her lips are ripe and sensual and she is decorated with earrings. She is presented to us – displayed for us – by and

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through the gesture of the old man's hand. His index finger delicately touches her chin, raising it slightly. Its effect is to liken her face to that of a precious object. This is an image full of erotic ambiguity. Indeed the child's burgeoning sexuality, both enticing and denying, makes this more than a picture of old age and youth. Rather it becomes a site of repressed desire.

The old man reappears in *A Jewish Family*, 1913. [fig.55] He props himself up with the aid of a stick. He is creased with sorrow and could be in mourning – perhaps for the child? Her dress could be a shroud. But she is also like a carved doll and a small adult. Playfulness is kept under wraps, in check, signifying perhaps the tight culture for which she is being prepared. The adults are her future. They are what she will become. The bodies of the two woman are joined together. The one in profile is dressed as a peasant with her head covered in a scarf. The other woman confronts us. Her hair resembles a halo. Are we again facing the 'good' and 'bad', the 'ugly' and the 'beautiful' Mother?

Poverty and sadness, sexuality and repression, tensions between men and women, young and old, are witnessed in these images. They escape the notion of the happy family constructed by and in bourgeois texts (such as Gerlberg's) which revere domesticity, home life and the family. As such, Gertler's pictures may be understood in contrast to them as more real and genuine. But paradoxically they too are mythical. To venerate low life can also have the effect of celebrating it. Moreover, by representing this other side of life, the images served to reaffirm the position of the *Jew-as-Other*.

A Jewish Family was included in the exhibition, *Twentieth Century Art (A Review of the Modern Movement)*, which, as we have seen, was held at the Whitechapel Art

Gallery in the summer of 1914[20]. As has already been noted this show had a special section of works by Jewish artists curated by David Bomberg. Out of the fifty three works displayed from a broad range of Jewish artists, Gertler showed seven[21]. Bomberg exhibited five works. The other artists, including Modigliani, Jacob Kramer, Isaac Rosenberg, and Jules Pascin had no more than two or three works each. Gertler's A Jewish Family was appraised by the critic of The Star newspaper, A.J.Finberg, in the following terms,

In Mr. Mark Gertler's "Jewish Family" so much emphasis is placed upon certain characteristics of the sitters that presentation is occasionally pushed to the point of caricature. The seated old man in the picture is as monstrously grotesque as a gargoyle or some of the figures in medieval wood-carvings. But this kind of wilful exaggeration and emphasis belongs to a different world from that of abstract geometrical diagrams. It belongs to the world of flesh and blood, and therefore stirs our imagination and our sympathies. It seems on the whole the only proper development of the realist art of the nineteenth century, as it brings back vitality and vivid personal expression and interest to an art which had become too scientific and impersonal.[22]

The picture was used by Finberg along with those of Henry Lamb, R. Ihlee, John Curry and Stanley Spencer to create a category of modern art, which was imaginative, personal, expressive and humanist against the Cubo-Futurist works on show, particularly those by Bomberg, Wyndham Lewis and Frederick Etchell. Finberg, by placing Gertler and Bomberg in contexts outside Jewish art, confounded the category as established in the exhibition. However, as I argued earlier[23], the effect of the critical reception of the show replicated prevailing social categories[24].

The exhibition, by creating a special section for Jewish artists, recreated the place occupied by the 'alienized'. This was a space outside the mainstream of modern art even when apparently inside it. It was there that differentiation occurred and hierarchies within modernist art practices were installed. Difference was re-articulated to establish an inferior category of modernism. In spite of the Star's

critic's attempt to rescue his art – and by implication all Jewish art – from this lower class, Gertler was nonetheless entrenched *there*. *Jewishness* was unnegotiable. It was unequivocally *Other*.

This *Otherness/Jewishness* was an endless source of fascination for Gertler's friends (some of whom possessed his works on low life themes).[25] As seen in the previous chapter, Gertler used to take them to the East End. He describes one such visit with Cannan in a letter to Dorothy Brett written in January 1914:

> Cannan thought I was extremely fortunate to live in the East End amongst *real* people.[26]

For them it was a journey to an unknown London[27]. It represented a transgression[28]. In their imagination the East End was simultaneously hallowed and reviled. To cite Gerlberg again,

> The ghetto was not all poor. It is really homespun lined with ermine, Dives cheek by jowl with Lazarus. These industrious female costers, for instance, arguing volubly with reluctant customers, have left a husband – working in a factory – who is preparing to blossom into an employer, a son retailing jewellery in a second street, and a daughter selling hosiery in a third.[29]

The low domain – perhaps the forest, the fair, the theatre, the slum, the circus, the seaside-resort, or the savage – as Stallybrass and White suggest, are placed at the outer limits of civilized life, and become the symbolic contents of bourgeois desire[30]. The East End slum or ghetto is a site/sight which is simultaneously desired and disavowed.

And by 1915 Gertler felt impelled too to break free from the East End, from the slum, from his family and move to Hampstead which, in part at least, suggests that he was attempting to revoke a fixed *Jewish* and/or class identity. In a letter to Carrington,

January 1915, he explained his feelings about leaving and set out his reasons for doing so:

> I am *immensely* relieved to leave it and even my parents, although I like them. There, I shall be free and detached – shall belong to no class... I shall be just myself... I was beginning to feel stifled by everything here in the East End, worried by the sordidness of my family, their aimlessness, their poverty and their general wretchedness. I used to get terribly depressed also by my father, in whose face there is always an expression of the suffering and disappointments he has gone through. I keep wondering why they are alive and why they want to live and why nature treated them so cruelly.[31]

However, this geographical relocation could not suffice. It could offer him no guarantee of the detachment that he sought. Moreover assimilation had alienated Gertler from his family and it did not, nor could not, lead him to the full and unconditional acceptance of the world outside.

The year after his move, Gertler painted *Merry-Go-Round* [fig.56], about which D.H. Lawrence wrote an effusive but at the same time somewhat equivocal letter to Gertler[32]. For Lawrence it could only be a *Jew* who could paint a such a picture. He described the painting as 'horrifying, 'terrifying' and 'obscene',

> It would need your national history to get you here, without disintegrating you first. You are of an older race than I, and in these ultimate processes, you are beyond me, older than I am. But I think I am sufficiently the same, to be able to understand.[33]

Lawrence claims that both he and Gertler are outsiders. They share the experience of a class to which they don't belong by birth. Lawrence identifies himself with the *Jew* but at one and the same time he differentiates himself. He claims that the Christian (Lawrence) is three thousand years behind the Jew (Gertler). The *Jew* is more ancient, more 'primitive'. Yet again Gertler is produced as fundamentally different in kind. 'Race' was produced to explain, and indeed in its effects, served

to over-determine the interpretations of his art. Lawrence was keen that another Jew, Epstein, should appraise this painting. Explicit here is the notion that the image needed Jew to provide critical insights. Lawrence would seem to be saying that his own judgement was finally dependent upon the unconditional support of another, a Jew: authentic judgement could only be provided by the same.

Of course Gertler's experiences of assimilation were not unique. Indeed in general terms Bauman argues that

> Cultural assimilation was an intrinsically individual task and activity. Trapped in a situation of ambivalence they found in practice impossible to escape. Cutting ties with the community offered no way out of the impasse.[34]

Gerlberg had earlier described the East End as 'cosmopolitan', and 'symbolic of the vagabondage of the race'[35]. This imagery percolated into the very representations of Gertler himself. He becomes inscribed as both subject to and object of romantic fictions. Subsequent writing on Gertler reeks of exotic and hardly repressed erotic images. He was himself a 'gypsy', a 'vagabond'[36].

> More, 'this gypsy gaudiness and vehemence were part of his instinctive nature not a deliberate taste'.[37]

And again:

> There was about him an attractive vagabond gaudiness, a member of an 'oppressed race'.[38]

In the amorphous world of projection the gypsy, along with the *Jew*, has been installed as the *Other*. The gypsy Carmen is described by Sander Gilman[39] as the 'quintessential Other.... possessing all languages and yet native only in her hidden tongue, proletarian, and black'. The gypsy is yet another unfathomable mixture, another disorder. If Gertler was not to be named *Jew* then he was identified as

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gypsy. Whatever – gypsy or *Jew* – Gertler was never enabled or able to transcend

a pre-given identity – that of an *Other*.

The search for the essence of Gertler's work prescribed by and through ascribing

an identity for Gertler continues even today in the reviews which followed the

retrospective exhibition held at Camden Art Centre, London 1992[40]. Tim Hilton in

the *Guardian* affirms and re-iterates the image of Gertler as a gypsy:

> a certain gypsy gaudiness is what they said about Gertler at the time,
> and this is a good description of the way he inclined towards garish
> effects.[41]

And Hilton asks,

> Is Gertler's colour sense, his liking for interiors and rich patterns, part
> of a Jewish identity that he was determined to preserve?[42]

What Hilton identifies as the extremes or the excesses of his art provide him with

his definition of Gertler and allow him to contain Gertler's art. It is always in

opposition to what he characterises as 'English' painting. Indeed Hilton claimed,

'Gertler is at his best when he is least like an English painter'. By English, Hilton

here means Bloomsbury and 'good' taste. But for him, Gertler is only a good artist

when he enters a 'heated and blowsy realm in which taste is pushed beyond English

bounds'.

Again the theme of gypsy is invoked by Mary Rose Beaumont who, in *Arts Review*,

suggests:

> The post-war influence of Renoir suits Gertler's natural bent for what
> one critic termed 'this gypsy gaudiness'.[43]

She continues by quoting an article by Anthony Blunt which dates from 1932,

In general, borrowings in painting merely turn out duller than the originals, but Mr. Gertler manages to make his definitely more unpleasant.[44]

Following Blunt, Beaumont explains that this is, 'due to a quality rare in English painting "namely vulgarity"'. But then as she reminds us, Gertler was not 'after all English' and although 'he conformed in his early Slade days, he could never be assimilated'.

The critic of the *Economist*[45] would seem to agree with Beaumont:

This gypsy gaudiness did not suit English tastes, and sometimes Gertler's obsession with surface sumptuousness can alienate any viewer; but they show his joy in nature's abundance, made more acute by his early privation.

Similarly, John McEwen in the *Sunday Telegraph* picks up on the excesses of the work and which he then goes on to explain in culinary (cultural) terms,

In combination it is a richness which like Jewish pastries can prove too much for English tastes.[46]

He continues with the suggestion that Gertler is 'quintessentially Jewish by nature and therefore beyond the pale of any English comparison.' The same critic reviewing the show in the *Independent Magazine*[47] under the title 'The Outsider' perpetuates the image of Gertler as a gypsy 'not least for the gaudiness of his painting'. He goes on to describe Gertler as 'a dandy in dress, with wit and looks to match'.

Meanwhile in *Vogue*[48], William Feaver installs another familiar characterisation of the Jew as neurotic and by so doing identifies Gertler's depression with his social disadvantage as a Jew. He ends his piece by reciting the anecdote – about Gertler and Charlie Chaplin with which he had introduced his piece, 'He met Chaplin,

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danced a little and despaired'. He psycho-pathologizes the artist and trivializes his art.

Linda Talbot in the *Ham and High*[49] bewailed the lack of consistency in Gertler's work, 'had he lived longer, a more consistent identity might have emerged'. Two weeks later[50] the same paper announced,

> Do go and see the return of Mark Gertler and celebrate the fact that the outsider has come home in belated triumph.

Gertler: a story of doubt is the title of William Packer's article in the *Financial Times* where he writes,

> I said, of the Ben Uri show in 1982, that it was easy to see how convincing he must have seemed in his early days, and equally easy to understand how desperate his sense of his own subsequent failure must have been. I thought those later paintings extraordinary, flailing exercises in pastiche, but not in any knowing or cynical way. Rather more poignant than that, they suggested a repeated and despairing effort to catch the secret of another's authentic vision. In this he inevitably failed, and stood revealed as a truly tragic, unenviable figure.[51]

What has been taken as Gertler's (stylistic) inconsistency (unreliability/neurotic symptoms/suicidal tendencies) seems to have been the cause of the critics' dilemmas. All have offered explanations of his work on the basis of his being an outsider, a *Jew* who is assumed disordered. In each review emotion, sensuousness and sensuality are highlighted and used to denote excess. In all, these features become the way of differentiating, identifying and classifying Gertler the *Jew* and his art. His art is always viewed as a direct product of his *Otherness*. His work is scrutinized to reveal a true and singular identity as *Jew*: emotional, sensual, out of order. Excess. It is always characterized as un-English, that is to say, his art is not understated or urbane. Anthony Blunt not only accused Gertler of 'vulgarity' and 'plagiarism', but also he opined,

On the whole our painting lacks inventiveness, and perhaps life, but it is usually restrained by a certain taste, in itself a pleasant quality though it may be to some extent inseparable from the lack of vitality from which contemporary English painting seems to be suffering.[52]

For Blunt, it would seem that Gertler's work was unredeemable: (English) restraint or good taste could not rescue it; it could not be saved by or from itself. After all, it was not 'our' art. Bad taste, over-the-top, excessive, gaudy, gypsy or *Jew* are the categories which have been installed to celebrate and/or deride Gertler's work.

In an unpublished lecture on Gertler[53], Sarat Maharaj discussed the issue of Gertler's identity rather differently when he argued that it is impossible to say that Gertler's work is English or *Jewish*. For him, Gertler's art represents an unceasing restless shuttle between two poles. It puts both those worlds into equal question: *The Pond, Garsington* [fig.57] is for Maharaj a metaphor for England, that privileged England occupied by Bloomsbury [fig.58]; while the images of Jewish life reaffirm his origins – the world of the barbaric, the primitive, the exotic and the excess. It was the confrontation of those two worlds that was condemned and provided the grounds upon which Gertler's art was (and is) still challenged.

Maharaj, in contrast with Packer as cited above[54], celebrates Gertler's work as *pastiche*. Furthermore he situates it within, not outside, British modernism. It shares, for example, 'vulgarity' with the Futurism of *Blast*. Moreover for Maharaj, Gertler's still-life paintings are deliberately and unequivocally kitsch. The objects he selects are from the minutiae of the marginal, the excremental. *Still Life with Aspidistra* [fig.59], dating from 1926, is appraised by Maharaj as a severe and knowing pastiche of middle class respectability. The aspidistra is, after all, the ultimate sign of Englishness.

All of Gertler's still-life images are loaded, perhaps with boxes, with wicker work, with samplers, with toys, with richly coloured textiles and with ornaments. Like the *Basket of Fruit*, they are packed with things; exaggerated, exotic, excessive and charged with desire. Everything is heightened as if on parade. [fig.60].

Each object within becomes spotlighted. These images are described by the critics as vulgar. It is this very vulgarity that makes them transgressive. Taking *Still Life with Benin Head* (1937) [fig.61] Maharaj suggests that it is firstly a representation of a Benin sculpture. Then it is a remaking of it as a deliberate citation of Picasso. And it is in that space between the two that the going-beyond of identity is marked. To simply designate the works as either English or traditional *Jewish* is precisely to miss the point. In his re-interpretation of Gertler's still life paintings Maharaj begins to map out a discourse through and in which the logic of identity thinking can be re-thought and challenged. Identity is never a simple either/or but a complex realm of endless negotiation and re-negotiation.

The Coster Family on Hampstead Heath, which dates from 1924 [fig.62], is an image connoting alienation and separation but in the guise of reparation. Here, the family group, which I take to be two daughters and a son, are shown picnicking on Hampstead Heath.

The painting has been said[55] to ape the conventions of 18th century portraits, *conversation pieces* or set pieces where the portrait situates the sitters surveying their land. But Hampstead Heath is common land. A Coster family is likely to have gone there from East London. Indeed a railway connection operated which was frequently used by East Enders to take them there for work and/or leisure. Maybe it refers to the *Dejeuner sur l'herbe* of the 19th century. Hence, it can be seen as

a celebration of leisure (free) time.

At the centre is the mother, another great matriarch, this one reminiscent perhaps of Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna* [fig.63]. She is dressed in blue and red, the characteristic colours of representations of the Madonna's clothes, and at the heart of the image is her right hand which points to her sex. In her left hand, the place occupied by the child Jesus, in traditional paintings of the Madonna and Child, the woman holds a mug of tea. Besides her, on the ground, is an English tea-pot. Here an association with the Empire is invoked through that most quintessential of *English* beverages, Indian tea. The still-life of food consists of apples, cherries, bread, a pear. Each resonates with Christian symbolism: the apple refers to the Tree of Knowledge; the cherries the fruit of Paradise; the pear to the Church, the bread to the Communion. But it would be a mistake to read each as simple standing in for any one or all of those meanings.

The matriarch is flanked by two girls: one holds a basket of flowers. At her feet lies a languid youth reminiscent of a pièta who holds a flower. These solid figures are placed in a landscape with little depth which has the effect – as in the earlier images of Gertler's mother – of pushing the figures towards the viewer. The middle ground is compressed. The space of the picture is oppressive. Colour further articulates this spatial compression. Blues are immediately countered by reds to offset any possibility of deep recession. Distance is given by the spire of an English church. The hat of the coster is blue/red as is the dress of the girl on her left. The sky is gloomy as indeed is the landscape. Each individual is clearly defined, outlined, distinctive and separate from each other. No-one touches here. Even the gazes of their eyes which have been carefully orchestrated to avoid each others'. The boy and girl on the left look to the right. While the girl on the right looks to the left. The

Great Mother, head-on faces us, but also deflects our gaze. There is no contact articulated either within or outside the frame. She is implacable, untouchable, distant in demeanour. Each looks beyond the picture. They are locked in their own worlds beyond each other and beyond the frame. They are on display, like the still-life objects on parade. This ordering (in excess) paradoxically signals disorder, the out-of-the-ordinary. Like a frieze or a tableau, it seems as if a drama is taking place. It is situated in the rare space of common land. It belongs to everyone and no-one. Everyone has a place but no-one belongs.

This 'quintessential' English pastoral scene is overlaid with arcane signs and symbols. It is neither English, nor Christian, nor *Jewish*. But disquietingly articulates the disintegration and re-integration of all. It is irreducible.

The romanticization and myths of the *Jew* and the East End were to haunt not the Angel of Death. Difference, *Otherness*, *Jewishness* are maintained and diffused throughout the texts (both past and present) which have sought to describe Gertler and explain his art. His work and his biography are considered to be one but have failed to re-engage that individual with Life. In these accounts fables predominate. The place secured for his art has been *outside* the mainstream of British culture. When installed it is always the art of the *Other*. Gertler takes us to the very edges of assimilation. These limits may be social and economic[56], but they are also fantastic and mythical. And as such they lie beyond the winds of history and the wings of fate[57].

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[1]   See for examples Quentin Bell's 'Introduction', *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Noel Carrington (ed.), John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler, Biography of a Painter 1891–1939*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972.

[2]   E. Shumueli, *Seven Jewish Cultures*, p.7.

[3]   Biographical information in this Chapter comes from Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, pp.353–356.

[4]   *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Noel Carrington (ed.) includes letters from Gertler to his friends Dora Carrington, Edward Marsh and the Hon. Dorothy Brett.

[5]   *Ibid.* p.47.

[6]   *Ibid.* p.57.

[7]   *Ibid.* p.49.

[8]   Gertler's trips to Paris were paid for by the Jewish Educational Aid Society, John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, Exhibition catalogue, The Minories, Colchester, 1971.

[9]   *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.), p.47.

[10]   See Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, *Vincent Van Gogh, Artist of his Time*, Phaidon Press, 1978, p.54, for further discussion of this picture.

[11]   *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.) *op.cit*, p.55.

[12]   E. Levinas, 'Time and the Other', *The Levinas Reader*, Sean Hand (ed.), Blackwell, 1989, p.51.

[13]   Gertler described this visit in a letter to Carrington, July 1912, *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.), p.43.

[14]   David Reason suggested this term to convey the idea of archetype/archaic/matriarch.

[15]   *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.), p.60.

[16]   *Ibid.* p.37.

[17]   S. Gerlberg, 'Jewish London', in George Sims, *Living London*, Vol.2, London, 1902, p.29.

[18]   The importance of family life was stressed in the 1906 Whitechapel exhibition 'Jewish Art and Antiquities' discussed in Chapter 4. Jewish religious culture was represented in the exhibition as contiguous with the secular. Religious law was identified with the law of the family and was made compatible with the notions of *Englishness* and the bourgeois family.

[19]   S. Gerlberg, 'Jewish London', in Sims *Living London*, p.53.

[20]   'Twentieth Century Art, A Review of Modern Movements', *Whitechapel Art Gallery*, Catalogue, See Chapter 6 of this thesis.

[21]   Gertler exhibited *My Mother, Mother and Babe, Jewish Family, Gt. Grandmother's Dress* and three unidentified still-life paintings.

[22]   *Star*, 20/5/1914.

[23]   See Chapter 6 of this thesis.

[24]   The book of press clippings in the Whitechapel Gallery archive contains reviews from the following newspapers: *Daily Express*, 8/5/1914 and the 11/5/1914; *Manchester Guardian*, 8/5/1914; *Daily Telegraph*, 8/5/1914 and the 12/5/1914; *The Times*, 8/5/1914; *The Observer*, 10/5/1914 and the 17/5/1913; *The LCC Gazette*, 11/5/1914; *The Morning Post*, 11/5/1914; *The Standard*, 14/5/1914; *The Evening Standard*, 19/5/1914; *The Westminster Gazette*, 21/5/1914 and *The New Statesman*, 13/6/1914.

[25]   Edward Marsh was a major collector of Gertler's work at this time. Prof. F. Brown, Mrs. Blundell figure amongst others. See the catalogue of works in Woodeson *Mark Gertler Biography of a Painter*, p.357–391.

[26]   Letter from Gertler to Carrington, *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.), p.63.
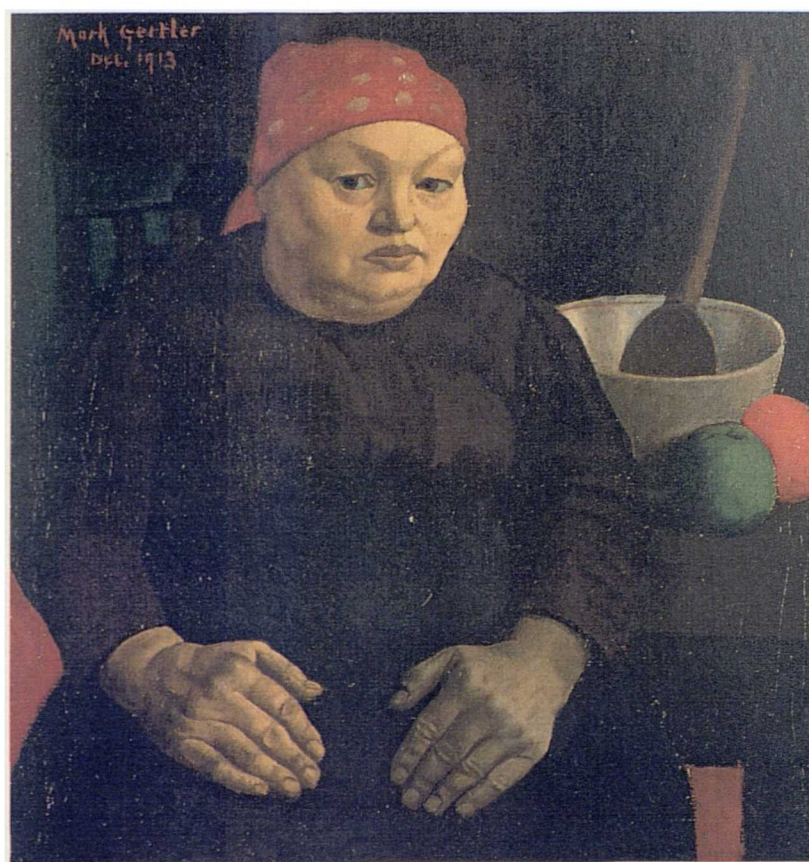
[27] Numerous contemporary texts sought to understand and to capture East London. See for example Charles Booth's *The Life and Labour of the People of London 1883-1903*, Macmillan & Co. 1896 and Jack London's *The People of the Abyss*, London 1903, and George Sims *Living London*.

[28] Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, passim.*

[29] S. Gerlberg, 'Jewish London' in Sims, *Living London*, p.29.

[30] Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgressions*, pp.18-20.

[31] Letter from Gertler to Carrington, *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, Carrington (ed.), pp.80-81.

[32] Letter from D H Lawrence to Mark Gertler dated 9 October 1916 in *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Arts Centre, London, 1992, p.40.

[33] *Ibid.* p.40.

[34] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.142.

[35] S. Gerlberg, 'Jewish London' in Sims, *Living London*, p29.

[36] Sylvia Lynd's introduction to *Mark Gertler Memorial Exhibition*, Leicester Galleries, London May, 1941.

[37] 'Mark Gertler', *Ben Uri Gallery*, London 1944.

[38] John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minories, p.7.

[39] Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.6.

[40] *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Arts Centre, London, January 17 – March 8 1992 (and touring).

[41] Tim Hilton, 'A brush with Bloomsbury', *Guardian*, 19 Jan. 1992, Camden Arts Centre Archive. All reviews are taken from the press clippings book and are unpaginated.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Mary Rose Beaumont, 'Mark Gertler', *Arts Review*, April 1992.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] 'Rich little poor boy', *Economist*, 8 Feb. 1992.

[46] John McEwen, 'Outcast brought in from the Cold', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2 Feb. 1992.

[47] John McEwen, 'The Outsider', *Independent Magazine*, 18 Jan. 1992.

[48] William Feaver, 'Art War and Roses', *Vogue*, Jan. 1992.

[49] Linda Talbot, 'Mark Gertler', *Ham and High*, Jan.24 1992.

[50] 'The Return', *Ham and High*, (n.a.) Feb.7 1992.

[51] William Packer, 'Gertler: a story of doubt', *Financial Times*, 4 Feb. 1992.

[52] Anthony Blunt, 'Art: Plagiarism and Vulgarity', *Spectator* 15 Oct.1932, p.478 cited in Andrew Causey, 'A Certain Gipsy Gaudiness', *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Camden Arts Centre, -.32.

[53] Sarat Maharaj delivered this paper at a symposium on the subject of 'Identity' held at the Camden Arts Centre, London, March 1992.

[54] Packer, 'Gertler: a story of doubt'.

[55] Causey, 'A Certain Gipsy Gaudiness', *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, p.24.

[56] The paradoxes of assimilation have been discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. See also Zygmunt Bauman, 'Exit Visas and Entry Tickets', *Telos*, No.77, Fall, 1988 and *Modernity and Ambivalence, passim.*

[57] Here I allude to Walter Benjamin's famous essay on our ability to understand our contemporary situation in the context of the head long flight into modernity. Walter Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', Illuminations (trans. Harry Zone), London, Collins/Fontana, 1973, p.259. Benjamin's baroque allegory can be seen to refigure the instability of discourses of identity (the theme of my principal thesis) within the problematic of a humanist-marxist vision of history.

46   Gertler, Mark, *The Artist's Family: A Playful Scene*, 1910-11, oil on canvas, 76.2x101.6cm, Birmingham City Museum.

47   Gertler, Mark, *The Artist's Mother*, 1911, oil on canvas, 66x92.5cm, Tate Gallery.

48   Gertler, Mark, *The Artist's Mother*, 1913, oil on canvas, 45x42.5cm, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery.

49   Van Gogh, Vincent, *Lullaby: Mme Augustin Roulin Rocking a Cradle*, 1889, 92.7x72.8cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

50   Gertler, Mark, *Head of the Artist's Mother*, 1913, black chalk on paper, 24x21cm, Private Collection

51   Gertler, Mark, *Still Life with Bowl, Spoon and Apple*, 1913, oil on paper, 40x30cm, The Hatton Gallery, The University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

52   Rothenstein, William, *Jews Arguing*, oil on canvas, 76x92.5cm, Private Collection.

53   Gertler, Mark, *Family Group*, 1913, oil on canvas, 92.4x61cm, Southampton City Art Gallery.

54   Gertler, Mark, *The Rabbi and his Grandchild*, 1913, oil on canvas, 50.8x45.9cm, Southampton City Art Gallery.

55   Gertler, Mark, *Jewish Family*, 1913, oil on canvas, 66x50.8cm, Tate Gallery.

56   Gertler, Mark, *Merry-Go-Round*, 1916, oil on canvas, 189.2x142.2cm, Tate Gallery.

57   Gertler, Mark, *The Pond, Garsington*, 1923, oil on canvas, 62x52cm, Private Collection.

58   Gertler, Mark, *The Manor House, Garsington*, 1921, oil on canvas, 56x76cm, Private Collection.

59   Gertler, Mark, *Still Life with Aspidistra*, 1926, oil on canvas, 100x115cm, Private Collection.

60   Gertler, Mark, *The Basket of Fruit*, 1925, oil on canvas, 78.7x100.3cm, Tate Gallery, London.

61   Gertler, Mark, *Still Life with Benin Head*, 1937, oil on canvas, 74x94cm, Mrs F.J. Dupays Collection.

62   Gertler, Mark, *Coster Family on Hampstead Heath*, 1924, oil on canvas, 141x197cm, Tel-Aviv Museum of Art.

63   Giotto, *The Ognissanti Madonna*, c. 1392, wood, Uffici, Florence.

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PART II:

ASSUMING IDENTITY

The alien has signified the difficulties of living with others, as another. Politically, he has pointed to the limits of liberal democratic constitutions within the nation state. Facing the question of the alien and the processes of assimilation, acculturation and alienization which accompanied it did not produce a grand narrative but rather enunciated and articulated the attitudes and relationships to and with foreignness, otherness and identity.

The ghost of identity haunts those pages which might seem to be saying there is an 'essential' *Jewish* identity after all. Having remarked upon the logic of that identity and disturbed it, to look again at 'identity' as a question to be re-investigated, will move identity beyond what might have been a trap: the trap of endless repetition. There are some things in that past which have yet to be released through which the present can both re-think itself and the past.

'Assuming Identity' examines the notion of *Jewish* identity now in circulation within the discourses provoked by the work of R.B. Kitaj with particular reference to a discussion prompted by Andrew Benjamin's essay 'Kitaj and Jewish Identity' in *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*[(1)]. 'Assuming Identity' deals with identity *as* difference, the tensions between 'universalism' and 'particularism' within liberal democracy and in aesthetics. It seeks a language through which both politics and aesthetics can be reformulated. Finally it considers identity *in* difference and poses questions of ethics and the formation of the human subject through 'Re-citing the Other'

'Assuming Identity' is a reconsideration of the problematics of dialectical thought: identity and difference, informed by Levinas' notion of the *Other* and Lyotard's

reformulation of the 'subject', the ethical and the political. The *Other* in these discourses is perceived no longer as a threat but as a way of recognizing that which is 'strange'[2] within ourselves.

[1]   Andrew Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde: Aspects of a Philosophy of Difference*, London: Routledge, 1991.

[2]   See Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, (trans. Leon S. Roudiez), New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, *passim*.

CHAPTER 8

Accusation/Justification: Kitaj's project and questions of an affirmative Jewish Identity

Kitaj's art demands attention: attention to surface; attention to picture-making; attention to making meanings. His work is complex and difficult. We cannot look at any one of his works and say with any certainty 'I know what that means'. Yet the temptation is there. He writes copiously about his art, notably in the *First Diasporist Manifesto*[1] and in the 'Prefaces' to Marco Livingstone's book[2]. As Kitaj himself has said,

> You can't make a canvas that's not redolent of something outside of the picture.[3]

The narratives of Kitaj's paintings refuse to be fixed, to be settled, to be stable, to offer either comfort or hope. To cite Kitaj again,

> The fact you can get lost in a picture seems very life-like because we all get very lost in our emotional worldly lives. We lose our way in cities, we get lost in books, lost in thought. We are always looking for meaning in our lives, as if we would know what to do with it once we found it.[4]

Kitaj provokes, teases even. His writings 'leave out' as much as they 'put in', a necessary condition of the text/of otherness, of text as *otherness*. He produces carefully edited texts, which suggest colour frame, but never explain the images.

However, there has been one issue about which Kitaj is unequivocal: the question of Jewish art, upon which he lectured in Oxford in 1983[5]. The text was later published in the *Jewish Chronicle Colour Supplement*[6] in which he declared:

> Of all the events leading to the Holocaust, the assimilationist tendency in so many of those poor doomed souls took hold of my imagination, at least as much as, and in tandem with anti-semitism itself. It just did not matter if you were a religious Jew or not, or if

you thought you were any kind of Jew or thought you were not, or willed yourself not to be. They'd kill you anyway. And they *still* might. A tremendous lesson began to form itself for my art: if it was Jewishness which condemned one and not the Jewish religion, then Jewishness may be a complex of qualities, a force of some kind; and might be a presence in art as in life. Can it be a force one *declares* in one's art? Could it not be a force one *intends* for one's art? Would it be a force *others* attribute for better or worse?[7]

Here Kitaj questions the identity of Jewish art by posing a series of questions which revolve around the notions of authorship and intentionality; reception and interpretation. These themes, of course, are not exclusive to Kitaj's project, but what is specific about them is their focus upon Jewish art and/or artists, which in itself provokes questions about Jewish identity and leads me to thematize a series of questions which involve Jewish identity.

Jewish identity has, for Kitaj, an *a priori* existence which is held within a web of reciprocal relationships. Jewish identity – its definition and self-definition – is indelibly shaped and marked by anti-semitism. Whenever Kitaj writes *Jew*, he seems to mean 'victim': someone trapped; someone imprisoned in and by an identity.

Kitaj's thinking is of a generation haunted by the Holocaust and the very real fear that the Jews will yet be annihilated. Indeed the 1980s witnessed yet again the destruction of Jewish cemeteries in, for example, Carpentras, France and Edmonton, Britain[8]. Such vitriolic acts had been commented upon earlier by Adorno and Horkheimer:

> Even the last resting place is emptied of peace. The destruction of cemeteries is not a mere excess of anti-semitism – it is anti-semitism in essence.[9]

Sadly, these are not isolated incidents. Indeed it could be argued that these acts in

themselves unite Western and Eastern Europe where with the demise of communist regimes, powerful hatreds are re-emerging with renewed vitality and conviction. Moreover, Kitaj has argued:

> I'm not a scholar, though I have been what used to be called an 'amateur' of recent history – right up to yesterday's news for instance, of a certain gent lecturing thousands of cheering people in Madison Square Garden and warning the Jews yet again of the day 'when God puts you in the oven' (ovation, delight). For some of us you see, that may be just a greater threat than the nuclear one, believe it or not.[10]

The 'gent' to whom Kitaj refers is the American Muslim fundamentalist Farrakhan. The Jewish question is not, alas, merely a problem of history. It continues to be posed. Its Middle Eastern dimension maintains and complicates it. The coming together of these factors and forces have given to Kitaj's project its *raison d'etre*, its particular urgency and meanings. And for Kitaj Jewish identity has to be made and made again in and through a history which takes account of these dynamics. In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci suggested,

> The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is *knowing thyself* as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you as infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory, therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.[11]

Following Gramsci, it could be argued that Kitaj is rediscovering those 'traces' through which Jewish identity may be achieved. To remark upon those traces entails questioning Kitaj's representation of Jewish history and identity and negotiating judgements about the nature of his project.

In an article called *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Rider*[12] I argued 'Jewishness is an issue which he [Kitaj] refuses to separate from anti-semitism'. There my concern had been to examine several works by Kitaj and comment upon

the ways in which his project constructed 'Jew'. Recently, Andrew Benjamin has posed questions about the nature of this 'refusal'. The chapter 'Kitaj and the Question of Jewish Identity', in *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*[13] criticizes what he identifies in my text as a 'reductive and self-enclosed conception of Jewish identity'[14] or, by extension, as my characterisation of Kitaj's work put it, the 'no-history'[15] thesis of Jewish identity, whereby Jews are *Jews* by virtue of anti-semitism and Jewish identity produced merely as a reaction to anti-semitism. While Benjamin acknowledges that there is a relationship between Jewish identity and the history of anti-semitism, he also poses the question, 'is there an affirmative conception that seeks to overcome the continual historical enactment of anti-semitism?'[16] For Benjamin, Kitaj's work becomes the site of the realization of such a possibility.

I continue here by taking up Benjamin's critique of Kitaj's project to examine the reliability of the claims he makes for it. I also wish to use it to recite and elaborate my earlier argument which Benjamin has misconstrued. To quote Benjamin,

> If Jewish identity were nothing other than the identity handed down
> by the history of anti-semitism then Steyn would be correct to argue
> that Kitaj's presentation of Judaism is reducible to creating a symbol
> through which and in which the Jewish experience can be
> encapsulated.[17]

Benjamin has taken my interpretation of Kitaj's work to be identical with my understanding of the problematics of Jewish identity and as such it is a misreading. It is precisely this – the gap between – that I wish to comment upon. For it is there that my criticism of Kitaj's art and Benjamin's reading of it begins.

Benjamin situates Kitaj's art 'within the space of the heterological'[18], that is to say, Benjamin installs it as the site of a possible philosophical counter-tradition. He

concludes his chapter with the claim:

> In the case of Jewish identity, when it is a question posed beyond the
> logic of the synagogue, and hence beyond the identity given to the
> Jew, what emerges as central is the space of paradox – space that
> contains the past but which moves towards the future; the space of
> process rather than stasis. Thinking this space is the concern of
> philosophy in the wake of the `Enlightenment.[19]

Here, Benjamin insists upon affirmative Jewish identity as something yet to be

accomplished. Accordingly it must resist the 'logic of the synagogue' and thereby

place itself, be placed, outside of or beyond Christendom, in a space which

promises a counter identity: one which articulates the fragmentation between the

'subject' and the 'world'; 'thought' and 'being'. This place is where the 'certainties',

the 'truths' represented by the discourses of universalism and reason can be

challenged. An 'affirmative Jewish identity' is to be created in the space which lies

beyond the dominant tradition of (Western) knowledge which has been founded

upon such certitudes. For Benjamin the possibility (in the future) of an 'affirmative

Jewish identity' resides in its capacity to present a counter to what he perceives as

the dominant present configurations of knowledge. He writes:

> Escaping this reductive and self-enclosed conception of Jewish
> identity necessitates detailing the space where the mirror image of
> the Jew as transgressor – namely the Jew as transgressed against –
> is mediated by the affirmative conception of identity. Even if the
> latter is the continually always as-yet-to-be-determined conception
> of the Jew.[20]

It is certain that the future will re-read the marks (Jewish identity) but there is no

guarantee in what, or indeed whose, terms.

Although I am in agreement with the larger issues raised by Benjamin, that is to say

to question what may be the implications of re-thematising 'identity', I am also

concerned that it should be constituted in such a way that it marks a going-beyond

of 'identity' (Jewish and/or other). Furthermore; firstly, I am not yet convinced that Kitaj's art (including the commentaries) merits the claims that Benjamin makes for it. Secondly, the implication in Benjamin's work that there can be authentic Jewish 'thought' which occupies a privileged space in which the heterological can already be said to reside needs examining. It is this latter claim which I believe can be construed as Benjamin's (and Kitaj's) totalising project and upon which I concentrate here.

Now a further question remains, if indeed Kitaj's is a project of 'affirmation', what is it an affirmation of, and what is it against? The issues I raised in 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Rider[21] and raise again here, question Kitaj's representation of Jewish history and identity. I consider also the implications of his insistence upon Jewish identity and ask other though related questions: what is assigned to that identity; how is that identity accomplished? I shall proceed by discussing The Jew etc. a picture which dates from 1976 [fig.64]. It is here that I shall set out the grounds for my disagreement with Benjamin's interpretation of Kitaj's work in general and of this image in particular.

The picture offers an invitation for it to be seen as a portrait. The precise details (marked or unremarked) registered (by absence or by presence) in the way of drawing – the homburg hat, the lowered eye, the straight nose, the slightly flared nostril, the opened mouth caressed by the delicately portrayed hand, the hearing-aid, the ear, the worn laced boots, the crumpled dark suit, the deliberate pose of the man (leaning forward) – these all evoke the sense of a particular man. They promise, or at least give to the image the conviction that this individual (who?) was there (where?) on that day (when?). Yet, for all those details we cannot identify that person. The picture denies the means (the attributes given in conventional

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portraiture) which might place this man, signify him or, make of him a referent, make him certain. We are however given a title, *The Jew etc.* about which Kitaj has written,

> I've seen people wince at this title; sophisticated art people, who think it's better not to use the word Jew.[22]

The name itself cannot be represented, it is featureless. It is that very name which distinguishes that man, his *Otherness*, his *Jewishness*. More, it articulates a subject who is not given in a specific place or time; one that is always alien, who is bound to a name but lacks property.

The man is drawn in profile. We can see him but he can never face us. If, as Emanuel Levinas has suggested

> Face and discourse are tied. The face speaks. It speaks, it is in this that it renders possible and begins all discourse[23]

and again, according to Levinas, 'the first word of the face is "Thou shalt not kill"'[24] then this is a man who cannot utter the fundamental commandment. For Levinas the 'originary' encounter is the discovery of the responsibility for the existence of the *Other*. 'The self, faced with the Other, is liberated from the self, is awakened from dogmatic slumber'.[25] The face is experienced as a manifestation of divinity – it is also the possibility of language. The *Other* is not to be perceived as a threat but constitutes the subject as an ethical being, instituted in dialogue. In this discourse, ethics means 'an anarchical assignation of the particular subject to morality'[26]. Ethical obligation arises not from logic and universal reason but from the uniqueness of the moral situation itself. Ethical individualism is always in tension with universalism which is itself pre-supposed by ethics. Levinas' work promotes new understandings of subjectivity. It begins to chart a path from individuation to

universality, a passage from individual responsibility to justice. There can be no over-arching concept of justice; it can only be judged in the fullness of each and every moment. *The Jew*, in the picture, is locked in – in on himself– in a railway carriage, where there is nothing to see or be seen through the window, and yet where he is forever observed.

His existence is announced, proclaimed by touch – the touch of his own hand upon his face. If this is a mark of self-sufficiency or independence it is dependent upon the same, enclosed within himself, desiring to be just himself alone. There is no *Other*. This lack of the *Other* corresponds with 'primary narcissism' which – according to Freud – refers to the moment when a child takes its self-image as its love object before identifying and choosing external objects. This state-of-being corresponds to the subject's belief in the omnipotence of her/his own thoughts[27]. The *Jew etc.* is self-absorbed and does not identify or face another. Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, in 'The Freudian Subject', describes the desire of the subject as one of desiring representation:

> If I *desire* to be (an) I, if I *desire* myself it must, following elementary
> logic be because I am not it. Thus this singular desire, by and large,
> is the desire of no subject.[28]

The desire of *The Jew etc.* is marked in and through the gesture of the hand: the Other who he would like to be. He is the same and is subjectless. As Borch-Jacobsen goes on to explain, the ultimate implication of the entire discourse of narcissism is

> the primary identification, and incorporation: if I am the other, then *I*
> *no longer represent him to myself*, since the exteriority in which he
> might (have proposed himself to me – either as model or as object,
> *Vor-bild* or *Ob-jekt* – has faded away. And at the same time, I have
> become unable to represent *me*, to present myself to myself in my
> presence: this other that I am no longer is and never was *before* me,
> because I have straightaway identified myself with him, because I
> have from the outset assimilated him, eaten him, incorporated him.[29]

Hence the ethical is rendered impossible; the *Other* is incorporated and appropriated. He is 'eaten' and becomes the victim of the same. Now Benjamin does not have anything to say about that hand. For him the drama and the potential significance of the image is to be found in the hearing-aid. The ear itself is rendered remarkable by being unmarked, its delineation is scant, sparse, spare. By contrast, the hearing-aid is strongly designated and particularized.

The eye of viewer, according to Benjamin, is drawn to the hearing-aid where 'the eye confronts listening'. Benjamin is drawing on Lyotard's writings[30], where the significance of the distinction made between hearing and seeing is extrapolated and where it is argued 'the readable is not given to the eye but to the ear'[31]. Lyotard continues,

> [But] in Judaism, hearing is dominant. And hearing relates to metaphysics, at least so long as one presumes that Someone has spoken.[32]

Benjamin, taking up this argument, suggests,

> The eye fixes. The ear is always open. It is always already open.
> Resolving the problem of developing an affirmative conception of
> Jewish identity must involve a dialectical interplay between the eye
> and the ear.[33]

Here Benjamin is setting out his claim for the heterological. Hearing is open to endless possibilities of change. What is heard is not what is expected. What emerges does not resemble anything. The eye fixes; sight is static and is dogmatic. The coming back of hearing restores an ethic.

For Benjamin, it is the hearing-aid in *The Jew etc.* which takes the figure beyond 'any status reducible to that of victim. He is more than merely transgressed against'[34]. It is the presence of the hearing-aid which both renders the figure

vulnerable but able to overcome the 'weakened ear'. Hence, the hearing-aid becomes, according to Benjamin, a site for the possibility of 'an interpretative differential plurality'[(35)].

Yet within the terms set by Lyotard, 'the eyes must be closed if the word is to be heard'[(36)]. In *The Jew etc.* the eye of the Jew is open. He looks and – if the logic of Lyotard's argument is pursued – he cannot hear.

The *Jew*, in Kitaj's image, cannot hear; he is being seen without seeing who sees him; he touches. Touch is the privileged sense/site which, in this image, superceeds either seeing or hearing. This is a constraining touch which locks the figure in and upon himself. He is subject to himself alone. If indeed this image can be understood as an image connoting narcissism, then it could be argued that the Jew's assertion of this love is in itself an act of affirmation. This celebration also carries within it the danger of refusal to tolerate the *Other* and with it the desire to eat, to negate and to obliterate. Hence the denial of the ethical and of the possibilities of change. The *Jew* in the picture becomes, in this discourse the ever-enduring victim and aggressor.

The identity of the name *The Jew etc.* pre-figures and identifies displacement. In the image, as I have already remarked, this man is on a train. The train carries with it a double connotation: the idea of the *Jew* as wanderer; and/or the *Jew* as victim being transported to the camps. Neither one of these interpretations can be collapsed into or onto the other. The importance of the choice of this site for Benjamin is precisely because it offers the possibility of a plurality of meanings which disallows a simple, hasty or reductive reading of Jew as victim.

The theme of wandering has also been taken up by Lyotard and used to distinguish further between the 'readable and the visible'. For him,

> The wanderings of the Jew express the transcendence of the readable over the visible: 'From that time on, the Holy Writ and intellectual concern with it were what held the scattered people together'.[37]

What makes a Jew a *Jew*, is the specific form of intellection prescribed by the book. Levinas, in a text which considers Jewish identity, suggests,

> To admit the effect that literature has on men is perhaps the ultimate wisdom of the West in which the people of the Bible may recognize themselves.[38]

He ends this discussion by recounting the Story of King Joshua (Book of the Torah 622 BCE.) who ordered a kingdom to be founded around the ideas re-discovered in an old book which hitherto had been lost. It is, says Levinas, the perfect image of a life that 'delivers itself up to the texts'[39]. Moreover, he begins to prise apart the identity of Europe and argues

> The myth of our Europe as being born of a similar inspiration was called the Renaissance.[40]

The Jew in the Diaspora is saved from total disintegration by the Book. He re-integrates and is integrated by and through the Word. Benjamin also designates *Jew* or *Jewish* identity by drawing on the theme of wandering:

> Wandering defers the answer. The Jew remains within the open question. Even the Holocaust cannot close the question of Jewish identity. It is precisely in relation to this that the distinction between contemplation and thought needs to be situated.[41]

But then, as Bauman argues in the post-modern miasma we are all now wanderers[42]. Yet it is through this image of wanderer, or wandering, that Benjamin attempts to wrestle the *Jew* away from – in order to surpass – the negative self-

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image produced by anti-semitism. He fails to acknowledge that by identifying 'pure' difference (achieved in thought itself) he again asserts and reproduces the very discourses of anti-semitism.

Benjamin's thought is locked in a double-bind; the *Jew* of the 'synagogue', the *Jew* created by Christianity, must be transcended by yet another identity, the identification and differentiation of thought itself. The wandering *Jew* in this discourse becomes a sign for self-identity. Yet it is surely this perpetually always-in-transit *Jew*, which marks him out in advance as victim or virus?

Another train journey figures in *The Jewish Rider*, 1984-85 [fig.65]. In this painting a man is absorbed reading a book. It is known to be a portrait of the art historian Michael Podro. Indeed, Kitaj uses the pictorial convention of the book to denote an intellectual. There is a second book perilously balanced on a ledge by the carriage window.

Unlike in the other picture, this window has a clearly delineated view – a second reality; a sepia coloured landscape, blighted ravines – deep blacks against soft translucent brown. A chimney burns – an evocation of the spectre of the camps, perhaps? The smoke is drawn as if by a wind, towards a cross upon a hillside – another Passion? Kitaj once commented on a

> train journey someone took from Budapest to Auschwitz to get a
> sense of what the doomed could see through the slats of their cattle
> cars 'beautiful, simply beautiful countryside'. I don't know who said
> it. Since then I've read that Buchenwald was constructed on the very
> hill where Goethe often walked with Ekerman.[43]

Inside the carriage primary colours masquerade as bright as Van Gogh's palette. The man appears relaxed, urbane, dressed in a lemon coloured jersey, red trousers,

casual white shoes. Assimilated. Whilst the situation itself – the pose of the man – might be calm and innocuous, the paint, the handling, the colour, is turbulent.

A third reality; a steeply rising corridor, chimney-like, reveals at its end a black uniformed guard who wields a whip and represents perhaps authority himself diminished yet ever present. Is the guard to be understood as a sign that the new enemy of the Jews is 'black'? Given Kitaj's fear voiced earlier, more specifically Muslim fundamentalists?

The title *Jewish Rider* perhaps refers to Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* (which is a late title given to that picture) and is purely conjectural. In Kitaj's painting the head and tail of a horse figure too. Are these allusions to the Rembrandt painting? Is it a rocking horse which is meant to evoke the movement of the train? Could it be an oblique reference to Gombrich's *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*? Podro was a pupil of Gombrich. The painting initiates a game between signs. It is a site of open readings in which the clues Kitaj offers may be misleading or revealing.

Perhaps we are being invited to think of those train journeys which took the Jews from their homes to the death camps. Long after the threat to annihilate all Jews, many would or could not believe that possibility. They were deceived by promises of resettlement, work camps or special provision. Can the image itself be understood as a deception, a deception akin to the deception played on the Jews?

The theme of exile, wanderer or refugee re-emerges in a painting entitled *Cecil Court London WC2 (the Refugees)*, 1983–84 [fig.66]. Cecil Court is a small street which runs between Charing Cross Road and St. Martin's Lane, London. It is still full of bookshops, many of them formerly – and a number still – run by refugees.

Edward Said, referring to a theme elaborated by George Steiner, argues that a whole genre of twentieth century literature is 'extraterritorial'; a literature by and about exiles which has come to symbolise the age of the refugee. Quoting Steiner, Said suggests,

> It seems quite proper that those who create art in a civilization of quasi-barbarism, which has made so many homeless, should themselves be poets unhoused and wanderers across language. Eccentric, aloof, nostalgic, deliberately untimely....[44]

Kitaj shares this view of exile and the exile as diasporist intellectual. He writes,

> The Diasporist feels uneasy, alert to his new freedom, groundless, even foreign...... the Diasporist pursues the phantom myth of nervous histories he claims for his own.[45]

But surely, as Bauman suggests[46], rootlessness has turned into a universal condition and with it all particularity has been effaced 'though not in the way once seen in the dreams of the rootless'. The idea of the intellectual exile is too easy; it presupposes a choice. It may well be so for (a) Kitaj but not for (a) Said (Palestinian).

In *Cecil Court* we witness a mixing of worlds – in forms, in shapes, in paint, in colour, in texture. Hard geometry marks out the shop fronts like De Stilj paintings. The uniform, flat coloured shapes which characterise those pictures are broken by a scumbled surface. The paint is applied thickly, as in *The Jewish School, [Drawing a Golem]*, 1982 [fig.67] more loaded, more charged physically and more overt in its handling than in earlier paintings by Kitaj. His Jewish themes are creating a response in form.

The discourses which have sought to describe expressionist art in the twentieth century have often associated it with Jewish artists and include Soutine's work as

a signifier. Could it be that Kitaj is literally loading his paint with a tradition that he

(and others) identifies as *Jewish*? The paint itself is beginning to provoke. The

brush strokes live independently of their subjects and articulate a fractured,

discontinuous surface. The street fans out into an open space filled with incident

and with people.

This is another world where the strict architectural order is further disturbed by the

people. Kitaj comments on the painting:

> I think I have a lot of experience of refugees from the Germans, and
> that's how this painting came about. My Dad and Grandma Kitaj and
> quite a few people dear to me just barely escaped.[47]

A man lies outstretched on a Corbusier/Perriand chaise-longue made out of tubular

steel and leather. This has an obvious association with modernist design, as do the

shopfronts. Functionalist modernism was characterised by Nazi commentators as

Jewish Bolshevik design. Kitaj has himself remarked, 'Modernism is dear to me.

Fascism and modernism are enemies'[48]. Was not fascism also modern; was it not

one of the possible consequences of the processes of modernisation?

The man frowns. Under the back of his chair, on the ground, a book has fallen.

One of his feet is booted, the other not. Alongside him floating or lying (it is not

clear) is another man; one reminiscent of Chagall's *Poet*. His head is cut by the

edge of the canvas. Behind him are two children, a girl and a boy. Further back

again there is a bald man carrying flowers, who looks down at the squatting figure

of a young man whose hand shields his gaze as he looks beyond us and out of the

picture. Next to him but small, out of scale, is a figure doing a handstand. To the

right, surveying the scene, is a man, carrying a book gripped firmly under his arm.

Through and back to the deepening street is an outstretched woman; her limbs

dislocated, her legs akimbo, her belly naked, her thighs uncovered. She resembles a disjointed puppet and is perhaps related to images by Balthus. Behind her a man, intent on his work, cleans the street and just visible in the distance is a woman hailing a taxi. But no-one and nothing fits here. Everything and everyone is out of place. Estrangement is ordinary here; if everyone is a stranger, no-one is.

Could this image also be understood as a comment upon late modernism, with its concentration upon 'artistic breakthroughs' and the banishment of political/social/ economic referents from its discourses and through this the evacuation of notions of identity. Writing to Andrew Brighton, Kitaj commented,

> For some reason, probably boredom with internationalism and its slogans in art and life, I'm very tempted to look at questions of nationality, peoplehood, identity, roots, milieux certainly....questioning things that seem richly veined and attractive, where nationality is not.[49]

These three of Kitaj's paintings provoke us to think about and to discover something about the condition of the Jew this century. He pictures rootless people on trains, without property, without a place. The train journey, although it may convey the double connotation of wanderer or victim, does not offer any escape from a pre-given identity, (the former associated with Jewish self-identity, the latter with assimilation). In neither case a way out of the trap of *identity thinking* is offered. Indeed the journey itself may signal '"the dying hatred" that forces the Jew to make endless departures'[50].

The refugees are outside in the street. Nowhere do we see a person settled, or at home. What these people share is a name united by an ensemble of limits and constraints, violence is always a possibility. In these three of Kitaj's images the *Jew* is presented as sharing only the experience of the hostility of the society which

surrounds him. If indeed this interpretation of the images is sustainable and viable then it brings them close to the notion of Jewish identity as elaborated by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1944.

> What makes a French person is not that he is born in France, votes, pays taxes. It is above all that he uses, understands and connects with the values of society and participates in their creations.... A Jew is a person who on principle refuses to accept those values. Without doubt the workers' case is the same. But the situation is different: he is still able to reject the values of bourgeois culture. He has his own. The Jew in principle has the appearance of belonging to a social class (bourgeois, petit-bourgeois, worker). He shares their values, tastes and way of life. He is affected by their values but he does not comprehend them. He lives with them but they do not admit him. The Jew remains a foreigner defined by his otherness.[51]

Here Sartre uses an analysis of class conflict derived from Marxism. National unity is understood as offering the illusion of a common name and conceals the divisions between people. The Jew is outside those values which bind a nation together. He is, always and inevitably alterior to the values of the state. He is the perpetual stranger.

Likewise, Kitaj's paintings suggest that wherever the Jews are, over and beyond the diversity of their concrete situations, they share an unequivocal character, a common and unchanging identity – Outsider. Thus, an apparently assimilated intellectual of the 1980s shares the 'Jewish condition' with refugees. Simultaneously they are defined and define themselves merely as products of the hostile society which surrounds them. Halevi points to this paradox when he writes,

> At the very point when Jewish society was breaking up as an autonomous social system, disintegrating into a host of special social situations, the idea spread among Europeans, as among Jews of Europe, of a single question: a question which always went back, in the last analysis, to the idea that each had a Judaism in general. The idea, at the beginning of the 19th century as, alas, much later, the 'idea' of the Jew replaced the analysis and perception of concrete situations. It was an idea in which the Christian prism filtered and distorted observation. Emancipation inaugurated the era when the Jew looked at himself in the eye of the Western Christian, and

integrated the vision of the other into his own representation of himself.[52]

Kitaj's images accept and reinforce a view of the Jews as victims and suggest, by their refusal to contextualise, an account of Jewish history which paradoxically consecrates *Jewishness* (as) *Otherness* in history. Hence, against Benjamin, I consider that Kitaj's imagery is now implicated in this continuing dramatization. In the three paintings I have considered, accusation and justification win out.

Accusation and justification are figured in *Self-Portrait as a Woman*, a painting which dates from 1984 [fig.68]. Kitaj has suggested, in connection with this image, that he wished to make 'woman' the hero[53]. The theme came from incidents concerning those women in occupied France during the Second World War who, having been known (or suspected of) consorting with a Jew, were forced to parade in the streets carrying a placard which announced their 'transgression'. The treatment of the 'woman' in the portrait, the violence of the brush marks, can be read as a violation of autonomy and integrity. The image is an appropriation, an over–identification with and of 'woman' – another – who Kitaj desires to be. The violent brush marks are the traces of the frustration of this impossible identification. For he is bound to remain the same. In trying to become the *Other*, in trying to master the *Other*, he is alienated and lost, yet again a stranger. Such an over–identification with woman recalls the orthodox Jewish morning prayer, 'Blessed be God ... that he did not make me a woman'[54]. The image would seem to sanction the violent obliteration of the *Other*, now designated as 'woman'.

Accusation, again of women, is the tone of Kitaj's painting *The Rise of Fascism*, 1978–1980 [fig.69]. He has written about this picture,

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> I used to mean these bathers to allude to the classic fascist period only, but now I don't. The bather on the left is the beautiful victim, the figure of fascism is in the middle and the seated bather is everyone else. The black cat is bad luck and the bomber coming over the water is hope.[55]

These two works are full of violence towards women. As an answer to the question 'Why do you use woman to stand for Fascism?' Kitaj replied[56] that the central figure is a typical *haus-frau*, a petite-bourgeois, a representative of the class which formed the bed-rock for Nazism. It can also be argued that the black cat, and its association in modernist painting with Manet's *Olympia*, makes a further connection with prostitution[57]. It could thus be that fascist politics are represented in terms of a political economy in which women are always and yet again victims, who must also bear the blame.

Kitaj has said he would like to rework Cézanne and Degas again after Auschwitz. He has been seeking to create a 'symbol' through and in which the Jewish experience can be encapsulated. He explains,

> The appearance of the chimney forms of my pictures ....is my very own primitive attempt at an equivalent symbol, like the cross, both after all having contained the human remains in death.[58]

Kitaj draws upon the possibilities of a 'symbolic consciousness' which can achieve 'universally' understood meaning through recourse to the typical. The chimney is clearly not an arbitrary choice through which to 'typify' Jewish experience. Written within it, are chains of possible associations which may lead to de Chirico paintings, to a crematorium, to Auschwitz. Each image resonates with memories connected with mystery, pain, fear, and death. The symbol evokes a collection of images and ideas and yet it is general and singular. For it to be effective and work to accomplish 'symbolic consciousness' it needs to be repeated.

The chimney as a symbol occurs in Kitaj's pictures in different forms, sometimes overtly as in the *Jewish Rider*, at other times obliquely, perhaps evoked by the shape of the canvas as in the *Self-Portrait as a Woman* and the right hand panel of *Germania (the Tunnel)* [fig.11]. The chimney functions as an indictment of Christianity. Hence *Jewish* identity in Kitaj's painting is achieved in opposition to Christianity. Benjamin's claim that Kitaj's art opens,

> the possibility of an affirmative conception of identity. Even it the latter is the continually always as-yet-to-be-determined conception of the Jew,[59]

has to be understood as a form of identity which can only be accomplished through reproducing the opposition *Jew/Christian*. It is an identity predicated upon violent negation.

To begin to understand Jewish history through interpreting the ways in and through which – in the subjective worlds of Jews and non-Jews – anti-semitism has become the principle which has shaped Jewish history and their representations of themselves could, I think, offer alternatives to the now familiar catalogues of heroes/ victims, pogroms/refugees which feature in many Jewish self-representations, including Kitaj's. My intention is not to minimize, deny or elevate Jewish identity, suffering or achievement. Rather, it is to prise it open to show its singularity which is at the same time also to insist on the ever-changing, yet historically grounded, definitions of *Jewishness* and Jewish identity which open up the past to new questions and may rescue Kitaj's art from merely replicating and reiterating the already determined, over-saturated historical identities.

If the Jew, since Emancipation, has been concerned to bring the Torah in line with Western thought[60], is Benjamin suggesting (with Levinas) that the Torah now

demands something more? Levinas calls for the rebirth of Jewish culture. Judaism is not for him merely another dimension of thought to be added to Western Philosophy but is,

> ....an excess of responsibility towards humanity whose singularity leads beyond any universal value. A withdrawal into itself on the part of Jewish identity or a Jewish state would therefore be the prelude to the exemplification of a Jewish singularity revealing a moral beyond the universal. As such the State of Israel will mark the end of assimilation by bringing us far beyond the concept in a spiritual, and so in a political sense.[61]

Levinas suggests that the special obligation of the Jewish state to realise the *Other* beyond mastery is both a political necessity and an ethical proposition. The tension between identity and assimilation in a modern state is to be transcended ultimately by the 'original' responsibility for the *Other* which is beyond universalism and stands against assimilation through which an ethical politics will emerge. This will mark the end of assimilation, identity and the possibility of totalitarianism which, Levinas argues, they indicate and preserve.

Benjamin fails to remark upon the political, or indeed upon the constitution of the ethical, save in terms of affirmation and with it its corollary – negation. For Benjamin 'affirmative Jewish identity' is to be assimilated into the Enlightenment project. It occupies a space designated as heterological where it has the task of redeeming Western thought. Unlike Levinas, Benjamin fails to question the 'imperialism' of theory or even of Jewish identity itself. Affirmative Jewish identity is the desire for the *Other*, for unequivocal self-hood and even perhaps for 'home'.

For Benjamin, as we have seen, the 'enemy' is the 'synagogue' Jew, that ubiquitous product of Christian dominion. This *Jew* is, I believe, also Kitaj's *Jew*. His art replicates this *Jew* and by so-doing re-iterates the *non-Jew's* representation of the

Jew and his post-Enlightenment representation of himself. When Kitaj asserts Jewish identity it is predicated upon accusation and justification. This *Jew* is doomed to remain forever *outside*. He is the stranger, the wanderer endlessly seeking 'home'. Benjamin's call for the return of an 'affirmative identity' can be understood as a retreat. More dangerously it is one that fits with racism. 'Jewish thought' may be organized differently: this is not to say that Jews are inherently different; or at least, following Kristeva, in *Strangers to Ourselves*, they are not any more different than are the same to their other-selves.

The rhetoric of the 'stranger' emerges out of the gaps, limits and difficulties inscribed within the project of assimilation. Bauman describes the limits of the assimilationist project and points to the stark alternatives implicated in its economy and form when he writes,

> If recourse to racism seems to be the natural way of salvaging the *objective* of assimilation programme in the wake of the bankruptcy of its ostensible *means*, so the retreat into 'strangerhood' as a substitute home of rootedness and confidence seems a natural way of salvaging the purposes of cultural self-adaption once the *vehicle offered by the programme have proved ineffective.*[62]

At best this 'home' offers a space where questions can continually be posed. Racism indeed may be a consequence of assimilation, which is different from seeing it as the cause. Benjamin articulates the longing for unequivocal self-hood and 'home'. But his identification of difference merely cleanses the inside. All he is left with is to affirm. His essay evinces the idea of the original 'nobility' after the Diaspora. He restores the opposition *Christian/Jew*. There is no possible evocation; what Benjamin is affirming is over there. The rest is here. Everything has a place after all.
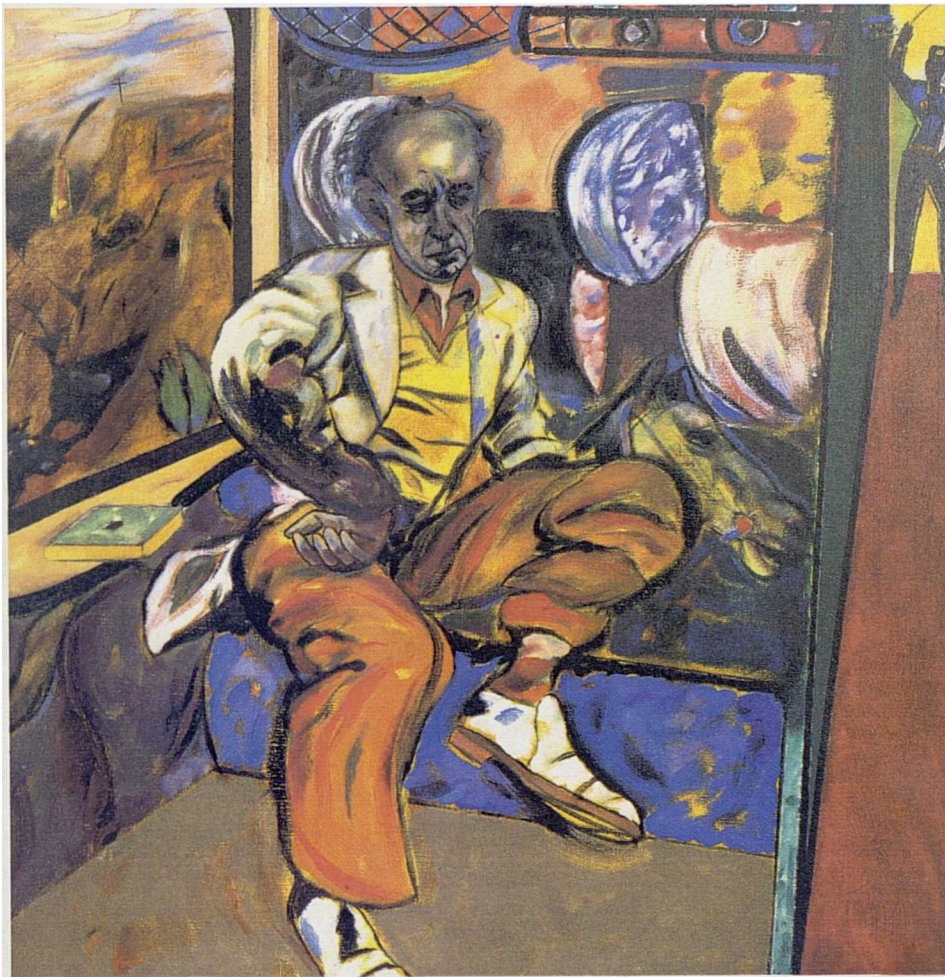
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12   Juliet Steyn, 'Readings of the Jewish Artist: The Loneliness of the Long-distance Rider', *Art Monthly* No.113, Feb.1988, pp.8-9. A version of this article was presented at the Association of Art Historians Conference, Brighton, 1986.
13   Andrew Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde, passim.*
14   *Ibid.* p.88.
15   Sartre's thesis in *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* has been characterised as such. See Chapters 1 and 9 of this thesis.
16   Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde*, p.85.
17   *Ibid.* p.88.
18   *Ibid.* p.96.
19   *Ibid.* pp.88-89.
20   *Ibid.* p.89.
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23   Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Memo*, Duqesne University Press, 1982, p.87.
24   *Ibid.* p.89.
25   Levinas, 'Philosophy and Awakening' in *Who comes After the Subject*, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy (eds), London and New York, Routledge 1991, p.214.
26   Fabio Ciaramelli, 'Levinas' Ethical Discourse' in *Re-Reading Levinas*, Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (eds), London, Athlone Press, 1991, p.85.
27   J Laplanche and JB Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, The Institute of Psychoanalysis and Karnac Books, 1988, p.337.
28   Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, 'The Freudian Subject' in *Who Comes After the Subject?* Cadava, Conner and Nancy (eds), p.66.
29   *Ibid.* p.67.   In *Identity Crisis, Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self*, Macmillan 1991, Stephen Frosch examines the psychological responses to modernity. Modern life is described as producing feelings of rootlessness. Narcissism, for him, is one of the states of mind which sums up the 'crisis of the self' to which modernity gives rise. See especially, pp.63-119.
30   Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'Figure Foreclosed' in *The Lyotard Reader*, Andrew Benjamin (ed.), Basil Blackwell, 1989.
31   *Ibid.* p.84.
32   *Ibid.* p.83.
33   Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde*, p.88.
34   *Ibid.* p.90.
35   *Ibid.* p.90.

[36] Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, p.82.

[37] Freud, 'Moses and Monotheism', *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fisher Verlag, 1962, p.223: SE 115, cited in Lyotard ibid, p.84.

[38] Levinas, 'Difficult Freedom', in *The Levinas Reader* (ed.) Sean Hand, Blackwell, 1989, p.266.

[39] *Ibid*. p.266.

[40] *Ibid*. p.266.

[41] Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde*, p.89.

[42] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.79.

[43] Kitaj, 'Prefaces' in Livingstone, *RB Kitaj*, p.150-151.

[44] Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', *Granta*, No.13, Autumn, 1984, p.159.

[45] Kitaj, *First Diasporist Manifesto*, p.89.

[46] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.97.

[47] Kitaj, 'Prefaces' in *Livingstone RB Kitaj*, p.153.

[48] Kitaj unpublished correspondence with Andrew Brighton kindly loaned to me by Andrew Brighton.

[49] Andrew Brighton, 'Conversations with RB Kitaj', *Art in America*, June 1986, p.100.

[50] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, p.314.

[51] Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question Juive*, (trans. Juliet Steyn), pp.98-99.

[52] Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, pp.129-130.

[53] Kitaj in discussion with Juliet Steyn, Jan.1988, London

[54] cited in Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Penguin, 1972, p.22.

[55] Kitaj, 'Prefaces' Livingstone, *RB Kitaj*, p.152.

[56] Kitaj in discussion with Juliet Steyn, Jan. 1988, London.

[57] Manet's painting 'Olympia', 1865 also features a black cat. For a discussion of this image see TJ Clarke, 'Olympia's Choice', *The Painting of Modern Life*, Thames and Hudson, 1985.

[58] Kitaj, 'A Passion' p.iii.

[59] Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*, p.89.

[60] Sean Hand, 'Zionisms' in *The Levinas Reader*, pp.267-268.

[61] *Ibid*. pp.267-268.

[62] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.81.

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CHAPTER 9

Universalism versus Particularism: Critical Dilemmas

Quoting Arnold Schoenberg, in the opening lines of the Marlborough exhibition catalogue[1], Kitaj announces his stance:

> I have long since resolved to be a Jew....I regard that as more important than my art.

This much is true, that Kitaj's insistence on Jewish identity tests the fundamental ideological views of his critics. In two of the reviews of the Marlborough exhibition – one by Peter Fuller in Art Monthly[2], the other by Waldemar Janusczak in the Guardian[3] – the tensions between the conflicting demands of 'universalism' and 'particularism' are played out. This chapter examines these themes.

In an argument which draws especially upon the Foucault of The Order of Things[4], Robert Young argues that history will always involve a form of historicism, but one that cannot be sustained:

> It is thus a contradictory (quasi) concept – a phantasm – in which neither the elements of totalization nor difference can be definitively achieved or despatched.[5]

This means that only a form of understanding which recognizes that an irresolvable tension between totalization (universalism) and difference (particularism) exists within history itself which will, as Young argues, 'make its contradictory claims productive'[6]. Now there is a need, writes Young after Derrida, to show that history is impossible and meaningless in the sense that is can never present a finite totality:

> it is impossible, meaningless, in the positive and actual infinity: that history keeps to the difference between totality and infinity.[7]

Hence history is the site of the impossible reconciliation of 'universalism' (totalization) and 'particularism' (difference).

The interpretations of Kitaj's work both presume and expose these oppositions. However, before I proceed with a discussion of the two reviews mentioned above, it is worth pointing out that of the 75 pictures on show, arguably just fifteen of them dealt with Jewish themes. It is the catalogue which framed the exhibition and where, as we have seen above, Kitaj dramatically introduced himself as a Jewish artist. The critics picked up on Kitaj's words as much as his pictures; his intentions as much as his practice. In the work of Gertler, *Jew* is also inscribed before the painting. The works are 'read' through that discourse. There, of course, the identity was given by others. In Kitaj's case, it is he who provokes such an inscription. The effect is similar. *Jew* is the sign through which the images are explained and understood.

Fuller, commenting on *Germania (the Tunnel)* [fig.11i], *Self-Portrait as a Woman* [fig.68], and *Jewish Rider and Yiddish Hamlet* [fig.65] comments,

> ...but on looking at these pictures, Gentiles are likely to feel a sense of exclusion, of the expression of emotions with which they can sympathise but with which they can hardly enter.[8]

Fuller accepts and uses the texts as elaborated by Kitaj, and by so doing reinforces the opposition *Jew/Gentile*. However, he continues by arguing that the painting *If Not Not* [fig.70] is different. For him, it provokes and achieves universally felt and understood meanings; it pictures Hell but not necessarily the Holocaust. Fuller concludes his article with the remark:

> We inhabit the wasteland. Like Phlebas, we are damned Gentile or Jew.[9]

Here Fuller takes up the ideological position of the democrat (a democrat in the sense that Sartre[10] had used the term as a friend:

> The Jews nevertheless have a friend; the democrat. But in practice this friend offers only the most pitiful protection. Of course he will proclaim that all men have equal rights and of course he founded the League of the Rights of Man. But his very pronouncements reveal the weakness of his position. In the 17th century he chose, once and for all, the concept of analysis. The only thing which matters for him are concrete synthesis offered to him by history. He knows neither Jews, Arabs, Blacks, the bourgeois or the worker, but only man unchanged everywhere and in all periods. By a process of reduction each collective grouping is conceptualised by him as an accumulation of molecules: a social body in a similar garb as one of individuals. And by individuals he construes everything as a singular incarnation of those universal traits which, according to him, make up human nature.[10]

Here, Sartre reveals the basic deception played by and enacted in democratic liberalism. On the one hand, it advocates the protection of individual rights and on the other it conceals the limits to those rights. Society structures itself, and is structured by, the principle that all people are alike and equal. It constructs a narrative which is upheld by an account of itself based on analysis. Out of this process a synthesis emerges which obscures the particular elements from which its narrative is made. The Liberal defenders of the Jews could claim that all people are equal and alike, but they also claimed that Jews can only belong to society so long as they suppress themselves as Jews. In this discourse, difference is to be subordinated to the universal. The liberal enterprise shows a blindness to the relationships of power and assimilates everything to the Same. Sartre's *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* was written and published shortly after the Second World War. The book is an important contribution to the study of anti-semitism in which, as for Adorno and Horkheimer, anti-semitism itself is understood as showing the limits of democracy and liberalism.

Anti-semitism shows that rights neither come from birth nor from state legislation:

rather they spring from hosts of cultural, economic and social relations which are more powerful than constitutions and laws so beloved by liberal democracies. Anti-semitism shows that while constitutions and laws provide a necessary condition for rights, these are far from being sufficient conditions. Anti-semitism shows also, that rights which are open to people in theory but denied to them in practice are not rights at all. Constitutions and laws provide frameworks which are little more than aspirations in liberal societies and are masks behind which malign forces dwell. Anti-semitism reveals, according to Sartre, that there is in liberal societies a limited and ill-defined place for particularism as opposed to universalism, as well as a limited and ill-defined place for the individual and for ethics. Whether liberalism can cope with *Others*, is liberalism's ever present paradox and problem.

In 'Judaism and Exile: Ethics and Otherness'[11] Elizabeth Grosz criticises Sartre for overlooking 'the weight of Jewish experience and counter history in constructing his notion of Jewish identity'. Her critique is marshalled around Sartre's essay, 'Anti-Semite and Jew'[12]. But she fails to see that his work was not a study of the *Other* in isolation from the discourses which both enunciate and designate that *Other*. His text was not, nor indeed did it claim to be, a study of the *Jew* in an essential sense. Moreover, Sartre before the war had become aware, as he later put it, of

> the specific nature of the Jewish fact and of the necessity for giving
> the Jews particular rights.[13]

He had incorporated these rights into the draft constitution he prepared in the 1950s. Grosz misses the point of his argument when she writes:

> His underlying belief is that the Jew will ultimately strive for
> assimilation, for self-annihilation rather than annihilation by the other.
> Indeed his 'solution' to the problem of anti-semitism betrays his own
> (anti-semitic) refusal to recognize any autonomous or self-chosen
> identity. The problem of anti-semitism will be solved by the removal
> of class antagonisms through the socialist revolution![14]

Here, she comes close to Herzl by arguing that assimilation will lead inevitably to the disappearance of the Jews. Sartre acknowledged a history of the Jew where the *Jew* figures as a representation of the *Other*. But his reflections on the Jewish question did not led him, as they had led Marx, to subordinate Jewish singularity to the universalism of the socialist project. His view was not a refusal to admit 'difference'. Indeed, the 'right' to difference was to have been enshrined as a human right. The interpretation of Sartre's work offered by Grosz is trapped in the logic of identity: universalism forever in opposition to difference.

The criteria used by Peter Fuller to evaluate Kitaj's work are those which allow him to appropriate it to the category of the 'universal'. The image that Fuller celebrates is the one that enables him to effect such a re- appropriation. On the other hand, Waldemar Janusczak's article on Kitaj carries the sub-heading, 'confronts his racial identity head-on'[15]. Thus the Jew is unproblematically characterised as belonging to a race. Janusczak continues with the statement, somewhat coy in the circumstances:

> There are few subjects in art which I, as a gentile and a coward, feel less qualified to comment upon than the subject of another man's Jewishness. But that is exactly what the new Ron Kitaj exhibition fiercely demands of the spectator.[16]

He goes on to ask if Kitaj's claim to be an 'interested' Jew makes him an interesting one. Janusczak proceeds to list those artists who, in his view, have been outstanding Jewish artists – Chagall, Epstein, Caro, Newman and Modigliani. What such a list shows is the degree of emancipation achieved by those individual artists. A similarity here can be drawn with versions of women's history in which high achievers are picked out to vindicate the general condition of women even now subject to discrimination. For Janusczak, difference (articulated for him by the concept 'race') is the impediment which prevents him from understanding the work.

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To bridge the gap which lies between 'knowing' (identity) and 'uncertainty' (difference) he searches for a way of identifying a Jewish style which he characterises as exhibiting 'a brooding, thick emotionalism'[17]. However, he goes on to argue that there is no coherent Jewish art while nevertheless stating that for him Kitaj makes Jewish subjects and gives to Judaism 'an art, a face, a mood, a set of symbols'[18]. Janusczak ends his article by berating Kitaj for his mind and his intellect when he writes:

> The Jewishness Kitaj illustrates is not the weighty, universal variety we find seeping out from the unconscious of Soutine or early Chagall or Jacob Kramer, but what we might call me-generation Jewishness; clever, literate, neurotic, bookish and urbane .... Most of the paintings in the show are littered with ideas, allusions and references. Yet the most moving work is a very simple drawing of a pregnant woman where for once Kitaj forgets his Jewishness and remembers his humanity.[19]

Here he assumes a position similar to that of Fuller. His entry into the work assimilates what is particular to it. To achieve 'humanity', difference (*Jewishness*) must be ignored if not 'forgotten'. Janusczak reveals his hostility to *Jews* in the proportion to which the *Jew* dares to 'think' or to situate himself as *Jew*. Rather than seeing this tension as integral to Kitaj's work, both Fuller and Janusczak present a choice between universalism and particularism.

While the anti-semite reproaches the Jew simply for 'being' a Jew, the democrat castigates the Jew for 'thinking' as one. Whilst the fascist will use difference to blame, degrade and even annihilate others, the democrat refuses to accept that differences exist. Both critics reveal the tension between universalism (humanism) and particularism (Jewish identity). Each seeks to subsume the particular into the universal, thereby attempting to wipe out the tension which exists between the two logics.

However it is, according to Chantal Mouffe[20], the very articulation in tension between 'universalism' and the claims of 'particularism' which must be the precondition of a modern liberal and democratic form of society. She stresses the importance of differentiating between the democratic logic of identity (universalism) and the liberal logic of pluralism (particularism). She urges that we should neither seek nor desire to reconcile the two logics. A tension, Mouffe argues, must always exist between equivalence and difference; citizenship and individuality.

The tension between these different logics in itself operates as a defence and guarantee against what she calls, 'pre-emptive closure'[21]. So, as Mouffe argues, there is not a simple choice to be made between equivalence and difference, citizenship and individuality. The processes which seek to negate this tension inevitably lead either to the radical abandonment or to the affirmation of one or other of the pairs; to unfettered individualism or totalitarianism. Mouffe's project marks an attempt to deconstruct liberal democracy so as to re-affirm it in difference.

To develop her critique of liberal democracy Mouffe, in 'Pluralism and Modern Democracy: around Carl Schmitt'[22] draws upon the work of Schmitt, who, writing as an anti-democrat (a position which eventually led him to embrace the Nazi regime), explored and exposed the logic of democratic liberalism. His work, Mouffe argues, enables us to grasp the significance of the different logics which co-exist in democratic liberalism: the democratic logic of identity, and the liberal logic of pluralism. Schmitt's writing reveals the distinctions between government and governed, law and popular will which he stresses lie at the heart of democracy. The conclusions of his analysis, Mouffe stresses, lead to a version of democracy, but this is a democracy without liberalism. It is this very loss (pluralism) which paves the way for totalitarianism.

What maintains democratic liberalism and saves it from authoritarianism is, for Mouffe, pluralism and the concept of individual freedom. Hence, she argues that a liberal form of modern democracy needs to be rethought in a way which allows space for pluralism. This is also a strategy fraught with danger insofar as liberalism stops itself, as Sartre had also argued, from articulating the formation of the political. The subject is installed and understood in a way that prevents the individual from forming collective identities. Mouffe warns:

> The democratic logic of identity of government and governed cannot alone guarantee respect for human rights. In conditions where one can no longer speak of the people as if it were a unified and homogeneous entity with a single general will, it is only by virtue of its articulation of political liberalism that the logic of popular sovereignty can avoid descending into tyranny.[23]

Indeed, if the aim is to provide a liberal democratic regime with an ethical and political content, then it is important and necessary to examine the liberal problematic to determine which of its different elements must be defended or rejected.

To deal with this problem Mouffe follows Joseph Raz in *Morality and Freedom*[24] and argues that the State must take up a position in order to judge between all the various possible forms of life: 'It must promote some forms and forbid others'[25]. Thus the State cannot be neutral: it must recognize itself as 'positioned' and defend itself against its claims of neutrality. The State must take on the character of an 'ethical state'. However, Mouffe is cautious about adopting wholeheartedly Raz s account which embraces and promotes the idea of a 'perfect' state. Nonetheless, for her, his work represents one of the most fruitful in contemporary liberal thought in that

> ...it enables us to put the ethical dimension back at the heart of the political and to establish limits for State intervention without postulating the State's neutrality.[26]

Raz rejects individualism: his thinking brings together with liberalism a conception of the subject as a product of specific institutions and practices (he recognizes the subject as not pre-constituted). He explores, according to Mouffe,

> ... the fundamental contribution of liberalism – the defence of pluralism and individual freedom – with a conception of the subject which avoids the dangers of individualism.[27]

But Raz's quest for the 'perfect' state leads him to elaborate a notion of pluralism without antagonism, which Mouffe challenges:

> The limits to pluralism are not only empirical; they also have to do with the fact that some models of life and some values are by definition incompatible with others and that it is this very condition which constitutes them.[28]

Mouffe argues that there can be no creation of an 'us' without the designation of a 'them'. Thus at any moment antagonism is bound to be ushered in. She provides the sketch of a scenario in which the 'them' becomes the 'enemy', borrowing the 'friend/enemy' theme from Schmitt who had used it as the means of installing the notion of the collective 'body', the 'we', of the political.

Schmitt understood 'true democracy as being based on homogeneity'[29]. The problem for him was the achievement of political unity around the State. His position eradicated pluralism and was thus, according to Mouffe, 'potentially totalitarian'[30]. Mouffe adds:

> It seems to me that, while accepting this need for homogeneity one could interpret that homogeneity as being constituted by agreement on a certain number of political principles. It is identification with these principles which would provide the common substance required for democratic citizenship.[31]

Moreover, any thinking of the political, Mouffe argues, needs to recognise the limits of pluralism. Democracy in its 'pure' form must be constituted by the logic of identity and equivalence and hence is impossible when and where pluralism is admitted. Pluralism prevents complete identification and totalization: hence this prevents 'pure' democracy.

Equivalence without difference or difference without democracy are tensions which can never, nor indeed should never, be resolved. It is the existence of this tension which, as Mouffe puts it, must be 'defended not eliminated'[32].

> The political always has to do with conflict and antagonisms and cannot but be beyond liberal rationalism since it is precisely the case that it indicates the limits to any rational consensus and reveals that any consensus is based on acts of exclusion.[33]

A radical democracy can only be an alive and effective pluralism if it acknowledges that it is impossible to achieve. This is always to come. Mouffe concludes:

> It is this tension, in fact, which also shows up as a tension between our identities as individuals and as citizens or between the principles of freedom and equality, which constitutes the best guarantee that the project of modern democracy is alive and inhabited by pluralism. This desire to resolve it could lead only to the elimination of the political and the destruction of democracy.[34]

Liberal democracy is not and cannot be Utopia, it is always a site of perpetual conflict. Fuller and Januszczak attempt, in their reviews of Kitaj's work, to negate this conflict. They follow the imperative to constitute the 'we' as if it can ever be made without tension, thereby perpetuating a version of art criticism which is potentially 'authoritarian'. Indeed, much 'high' modernist art criticism has championed the 'universal' over and above the 'particular' in its elaboration of aesthetic criteria.

Clement Greenberg has been a major exponent of 'universalism' in his critical writings on modern art and in his interpretation of modernism itself. Kitaj acknowledges a particular debt to Clement Greenberg's essay 'Kafka's Jewishness' written in 1956[35]. Indeed, it can be understood to provide insights into Kitaj's own aspirations for a Jewish art as well as Greenberg's modernist solution to the problems of pluralism:

> ...Jewishness becomes the condition of Kafka's mainly to the extent
> that it emerges as its subject. To the extent that the Jewish condition
> becomes the subject of Kafka's art, it *informs* its forms – becomes
> in-dwelling form. Through his *Dichtung* – literally, his imaginings and
> musings – Kafka wins through to an intuition of the Jewish condition
> in the Diaspora *so vivid as to convert the expression of itself into an*
> integral part of itself; so complete, that is, that the intuition becomes
> Jewish in style as well as in sense.[36]

For Greenberg there can be no separation between the form and the subject of Kafka's art (as with 'high' art in general). It achieves its identity (*Jewishness*) not through the imposition of subject matter; rather, the subject defines and is itself inscribed in and by its form. Kafka's *Jewishness* is not something extraneous to its content. Greenberg's analysis of Kafka is akin to his analysis of modern painting.

In the 1950s, questions of Jewish identity and the formation of an American national culture were on the cultural and political agenda. Before the war, as Irving Howe points out in his autobiography[37], he and others of his generation felt that their position as Jews was largely subordinated to commitments to cosmopolitan culture and socialist politics on an international scale:

> The fact of Jewishness figured much more strongly than we
> acknowledged in public. We still didn't identify with a Jewish tradition,
> yet in practice we grew increasingly concerned with Jewish themes.
> There was a kind of cultural lag; a recognition behind reality.[38]

After the war, both Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg provided two major and very different contributions to the debates on *Jewishness* which centred around replies to Sartre's *Reflections on the Jewish Question*[39]. These were serialized in *Commentary*[40]. They were also a response to criticism from orthodox Jewry who described them as 'uprooted intellectuals'[41].

In 'Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism: Some Reflections on Positive Jewish-ness'[42] Greenberg pursued Sartre's categorization of the 'inauthentic Jew'- one who regards his Jewishness as a 'psychological handicap' in seeking acceptance in the Gentile world:

> The ultra-assimilationist Jew does violence to himself as a human being pure and simple, as well as Jew because he tries to make himself more typically English, French or German than any Anglo-Saxon, Gaul or Teuton ever is. He over-defines himself.....The nationalist Jew, too, always acts with reference to his Jewishness. But even though it is an ostensibly political reference, by the too great strenuousness of his effort to assert his Jewishness he likewise over-defines himself.[43]

Greenberg adopts a position similar to his 'politics of negation'. Negation, as T.J. Clarke explains, 'is inscribed in the very practice of modernism, as the form in which art appears to itself as a value'[44]. In the case of Jewish identity, 'authenticity' is placed by Greenberg in opposition to 'inauthenticity', these two positions cancelling each other out. Thereby Greenberg is able to create a space where Judaism can be understood to be embraced willingly and spontaneously on an individualistic basis:

> The problem has to be focused directly in the individual Jew and discussed in personal, not communal terms.[45]

By contrast, Harold Rosenberg criticized Sartre's no-history thesis of the Jew:

> Here in America where Jews are not the only "foreigners", nor the only target of racialism, it should be clear that being singled out by

the enemy is not the cause of our difference from others, is not what makes us Jews.[46]

For Sartre it is ultimately the anti-semite who makes the Jew. The Jew remains a Jew as an outsider. Rosenberg insisted that Jews have their own history and tradition maintained by Talmudic scholarship:

> [But] the continuity of *the modern Jew with the Jews of the Old Testament* is established by those acts which arise from his internal cohesion with his ultimate beginnings, in which his future is contained as possible destiny – the acts of turning towards the Promised Land in his crises. And these acts, not deducible from his surroundings, *make* the Jew's situation and reveal who the Jew is.[47]

Jewish identity in the modern era was for Rosenberg, a question of will based upon memory – the midrashic idea of remembrance[48], the re-creation of the past for the present, 'a net of memory and expectation'[49]. Rosenberg believed that the work of Barnett Newman confronted the problem of Jewish identity in an especially profound and immediate way. His work created a universal aesthetic filled with meaning for all people of all eras. His art transcended Jewish identity. Newman in his essay the 'Sublime is Now', (1948) described his aim in reaching for the absolute:

> We are freeing ourselves of the impediments of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth, or what have you that have been the devices of Western European painting. Instead of making *cathedrals* out of Christ, man or 'life', we are making it out of ourselves, out of revelation real and concrete, that can be understood by anyone who will look at it without the nostalgic glasses of history.[50]

Though this quote can easily be interpreted and assimilated to the idea of the avant-garde artist overthrowing tradition in order to create anew, Newmans project could also be construed as the assertion of difference from the tradition of oI painting, of humanist man, and thus as an assertion of his identity as a second generation Jew in America. It can be understood in this sense as an articulation of universalism in tension with particularism.

Greenberg championed Newman as a major abstract expressionist painter in 'American Type Painting' and described his art as 'deep and honest', consisting of ruled 'vertical bands of dimly contrasting colour or value on warm flat backgrounds – and that's all'.[51] Newman's art was used by Greenberg to demonstrate his argument that modern art was inevitably and necessarily engaged with the purification of its medium.

In 'Towards a Newer Laocoon'[52], Greenberg had elaborated his defence of 'abstract purism' and 'non-objective' art. Through his analysis of visual culture he had come to reject 'subject matter' which he described as a diversion from the purity and specificity of the medium of paint itself. If 'subject matter' is extraneous, nonetheless all art has content. Content is for Greenberg the result of the effect of a work of art.

Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock[53] have argued that Greenberg's ideas and position have been distorted, notably by Irving Sandler in *The Triumph of Abstract Expressionism*[54]. Moreover, the misreadings evident in that text have become, they argue, the authorized and legitimated reading of Greenberg's work. Sandler chose the following quote from Greenberg's 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' through which to explain Greenberg's notion of the avant-garde:

> The history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender
> to the resistance of its medium; which consists chiefly in the flat
> picture plane's denial of the efforts to 'hole through' it for realistic
> perspective space....... Painting abandons chiaroscuro and shaded
> modelling.... Primary colours....replace tones and tonality.[55]

Sandler's use of that quote was in its effects to reduce Greenberg's position to that of a latter day 'art for art's sake'. Additionally, as Orton and Pollock point out, this particular Greenberg text was not dealing with the issue of the avant-garde at all.

For Orton and Pollock, Sandler's was a reductive misreading of Greenberg's notion

of the avant-garde and one which effectively depoliticized it. They attempt to

resituate his project in the context of the Marxist culture of New York from the 1930s

through to the 1950s. The journal *Partisan Review*, a cultural magazine for which

Greenberg wrote extensively between 1936 and 1940, was attempting to negotiate

a Marxism distinct from Stalinism in the wake of the Popular Front (1935) and the

Moscow Trials (1936). This Marxism was identified with Trotskyism[56].

It was in 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'[57] that Greenberg had developed his view of the

avant-garde as a critical culture which exists in and occupies a space between the

'artist' and the 'world'. However this avant-garde project was not to be seen as a

retreat from the world (bourgeois culture) but as taking the form of *critical*

disengagement; it is this disengagement which permits a critique of that 'world'. The

methods of the avant-garde are justified by Greenberg as enabling the culture to

progress. He further elaborated his idea of avant-garde culture through defining it

against 'Kitsch', which is for him ersatz culture, easy enjoyment and passive

consumption.

Greenberg's affirmation of abstract (modernist) art along with his condemnation of

kitsch was part of a complex critical cultural strategy. The former was, he argued,

the 'necessary' form of art. The subsequent de-politicisation of his aesthetic theory

was part of the processes of the de-Marxification of American culture after the

second world war described by Serge Guilbaut in *How New York Stole the Idea of*

Modern Art; Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War[58].

By the early 1970s when late or perhaps 'pure' modernism was under attack and

what had become the dominant modes of late modernist art criticism was no longer

in ascendancy, Thomas Hess added Jewish mysticism to generate new meanings

for Newman's art:

> His image is Genesis. Reinforcement for his ideas and sensations
> which lead him to the image comes from two thousand years of
> Jewish mystical thought. It is part of his heritage, but he had cut
> himself off from its orthodoxies and taboos.[59]

Yet Hess maintained that Newman's work was universal, occupying for him the

sphere of 'world thought' and speaking to mankind:

> Certainly Newman was not involved in any orthodoxies or tribal
> customs of the Jews – no artist is less ethnic.[60]

Newman remained for Hess 'quintessentially American': a Jew without belief.

Newman's own assertion, 'world thought is the proper arena for the modern artist'[60],

was evinced by Hess as a testimony to Newman's true identity as the modernist

artist.

Hess' text is a defensive attempt to produce a commentary on Newman's work

which escapes the limitations of a reductive view of the modernist project. He

retreats from this position by maintaining the work as 'universal'. Yet as Mouffe

has pointed out, the judgement should not, nor indeed need not, amount to a

choice between 'universalism' or 'particularism' but can be formed by and in the

recognition of tensions between those two poles whereby the singularity of the work

may be said to reside.

Newman himself was rescued from the dilemma the fictional artist Asher Lev[62] must

face when his art teacher cautions him:

> Listen to me Asher Lev, as an artist you are responsible to no-one
> and to nothing, except to yourself and to the truth, as you see it...An
> artist is responsible to his art. Anything else is propaganda. Anything

else is what the Communists in Russia call art. I will teach you responsibility to art. Let your Hasidim teach you responsibility to Jews.[63]

We are here in the Cold War; freedom and equality are represented here as opposed. The 'West' affirmed the right to individual 'freedom' over and above 'equality' which was proclaimed in the 'East'. In this discourse, freedom is defined in terms of the individual's right of expression and yet, as in the case of Newman, it was argued that it spoke to all people and was universal.

Serge Guilbaut argues[64] that the cultural fate of the West in the post-war world was sealed through the protracted cultural and political debates which took place in New York during and after the Second World War. The origins of these debates lay in the 1930s, but as far as the effects on culture were concerned it was the hysterical anti-communist dialogues of 1946-47 which were to prove critical. The outcome, Guilbaut argues, was that Abstract Expressionism achieved its success not solely on aesthetic or stylistic grounds but because of the ideological uses to which it was put. Thus it was that the 'drip' of Jackson Pollock's paintings, no less than Bendix washing machines and Pall Mall cigarettes, came to be symbols of the 'freedom' enshrined in the idea of the Great American Dream.

Abstract Expressionism as an adjunct to individualism and to consumerism, quickly appropriated and re-defined the concept of freedom. Guilbaut shows that the new definitions of freedom in America were at the centre of the new liberalism set out by Arthur Schlesinger in his book *The Vital Centre* published in 1949[65]. In Britain these notions were shared by F.A. Hayek who had earlier constructed an argument which made repression synonymous with socialism. In *The Road to Serfdom* he wrote:

> There can be no doubt that the promise of greater freedom has become one of the most effective weapons of socialist propaganda and that the belief that socialism would bring freedom is genuine and sincere. But this would only heighten the tragedy if it should prove that what was promised to us as the Road to Freedom was in fact the High Road to Servitude.[66]

In this discourse, freedom became indistinguishable from the ability to buy goods and services. The freedom to choose, first enshrined in the ideas of Adam Smith in the 18th century, became the dominant definition of freedom. There was a crossing of discourses in which free choice, in the sense of purchasing power, became linked with notions of individual freedom. These effected ideas of artistic freedom and were used to supply the West with the very images of freedom.

Freedom of expression was a value totally enshrined in the ideology of American cultural practices. In a speech prepared for him by the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA, New York) to celebrate its 25th anniversary, President Eisenhower declared:

> Freedom of the arts is a basic freedom, one of the pillars of liberty in our land. For our Republic to stay free, those among us with a rare gift of artistry must be able to use their talent.... How different is tyranny. When artists are made the slaves and the tools of the state; when artists become chief propagandists of a cause, progress is arrested and creation and genius are destroyed.... Let us resolve that this precious freedom of America will, day by day, year by year become ever stronger, ever brighter in our land.[67]

The idea of a free individual in a free society was associated with the condition and form of modern art itself. Modernist art was *a priori* the free art of a free society. It was constructed by Greenberg and its adherents as pure, non-ideological, carrying within it the possibility of absolute freedom for the artist.

In art then, freedom becomes defined in terms of the artistic individualism which went along with an apolitical stance. In this discourse we find a separation between

artistic, political and cultural identities. Notions of the freedom of the individual artist

become entwined with the idea of the universal (free) subject of history.

However, can Jew in this discourse be a Jew at 'home' and an artist in the world?

Greenberg himself articulates this dilemma:

> What I want to be able to do is accept my Jewishness more implicitly,
> so implicitly that I can use it to realise myself as a human-being in
> my own right, and as a Jew in my own right. I want to be free to be
> what I need to be and delight in being, as a personality without being
> typed and prescribed to as a Jew or, for that matter as an
> American.[68]

Here Greenberg is describing the conditions and the situation he most desires.

Indeed his work can be read as a testimony to and a witness of that desire. To

achieve this desire all difference must be assimilated to identity, to total

identification. His writings promote the ideal, the universal. He celebrates the

emancipatory potentiality of modernity and thereby 'forgets' difference or, rather

cancels it out, negates it, in his pursuit of the ideal. By so doing, following the logic

of Mouffe, his writing is subject to totalization and is potentially authoritarian.

Greenberg ended his article on Kafka with the declaration:

> Kafka's Jewishness asks this question and in asking it, tests the
> limits of art.[69].
>   .

Perhaps we should reformulate this remark by using it to suggest that 'Kafka's

Jewishness' again tests the limits and ethics of liberal democracy. Greenberg had

participated in formulating an aesthetic in which difference was negated. His notion

of the universal eradicated the tension between universalism and particularism, and

in the case of Kafka between citizenship and Jewishness. To cite Mouffe again, it

is this very tension which must be maintained to save democracy from sliding into

totalitarianism.

It is here again that Lyotard's notion of 'little narratives' becomes useful. Little narratives, unlike grand narratives, can be understood as a series of heterogeneous events of narration which are resistant to assimilation. They are fragments. They cannot be incorporated into a grand scheme. These other narratives erase the totalizing manoeuvres through which the universal acquires its essentialist identity. For the *Other* cannot be reduced to the same. 'Little narratives' allow the possibility of thinking the singular, the particular. Lyotard disrupts the grand narrative of modernism, which as a project is itself predicated upon the notion of a complete rupture with the past. This break, according to modernist accounts of history, inevitably leads to the emancipation of a universal subject of history. By contrast post-modernity is for Lyotard an 'incredulity towards meta-narratives'[70], a 'crisis of narratives'[71].

Following Bill Reading's reading of Lyotard, post-modernity becomes a 'more or less confused or confusing sense that the stakes have changed' once it is realized that art, politics, history and knowledge 'don't fit together any more within the patterns of temporal succession and rational discourse established by the Enlightenment'[72]. Lyotard himself has written,

> ....the decision constituting the discourse of knowledge, constructing
> a constituting order, appears as a fact of power and power in fact.
> If 'reality' lies, it follows that men in all their claims to construct
> meaning speak the Truth, are themselves only a minority in a
> *patchwork* where it becomes impossible to establish and validly
> determine any major order.[73]

The breakdown of grand narrative proposes culture as a 'patchwork' of little narratives.

The work of Barnett Newman [fig.71] represents for Lyotard a break with grand narrative; it is not ordered around 'a sender, a receiver and a referent'. The message speaks of nothing; it emanates from no one[74] but is for Lyotard simply the one who speaks, the one that utters the *Here I am*. The message is a presentation presenting nothing save 'presence':

> Presence is the instant which interrupts the chaos of history and which recalls, or simply calls out that 'there is', even before that which has any significance.[75]

Here Lyotard presents a counter to the modernist idea of the subject (Newman) as the autonomous origin of narrative. There is for him no originary speaker. Thought is organized in a way that is akin to Judaic tradition. Lyotard suggests that we are addressees of the infinite, ineffable, nameless 'God'. This organization is one he calls 'pragmatic' and is closer to an ethics than it is to aesthetics or poetics. Newman's work initiates the face-to-face meeting akin to Levinas' description of the 'originary' encounter discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

Newman's work is for Lyotard 'evidence', a response to the originary order to *Be*. It does not offer anything that has to be 'deciphered' or even interpreted. It just *is*. Hence, Lyotard argues,

> Being announces itself in the imperative. Art is not a genre defined in terms of an end (the pleasure of the addressee) and still less is it a game whose rules have to be discovered; it accomplishes an ontological task, that is a 'chronological task'. It accomplishes it without completing it. It must constantly testify anew to the occurrence by letting the occurrence be.[76]

Thus for Lyotard, Newman's paintings take to an extreme the rebuttal that has been the central concern of avant-garde modernist practice. His reading of them take us beyond the dialectical trap: it affirms an ethics of being in which the 'I' becomes universal in and through its call to the singular.

It is the works of Lyotard along with that of Edmond Jabes, Derrida and Levinas, which Grosz argues[77] challenge (while at the same time existing alongside) the dominant Hellenic/Christian/Logocentric canons of truth, logic, authority and knowledge[78]. She privileges their work above and against Sartre's. For they collectively function as a counter tradition through and in which Jewish identity can be assumed. In many ways her argument comes close to that of Andrew Benjamin[79] in looking towards 'Jewish thought' as the mainstay of that 'identity'. Grosz mounts an opposition between 'homogeneity', which she sees as an aspect of the assimilatory project, and the production of a 'positive history' as a form of self-representation. The Jew as exile, she argues,

> ...automatically has access to (at least) two different kinds of discourse and history, one defined by exclusion from a social mainstream; and one provided autonomously, from its own history and self-chosen representations. This is a position uniquely privileged in terms of social transgression and renewal.[80]

She unproblematically affirms the Jew as different and makes this a matter of positive identity. In *Strangers to Ourselves*[81] Julia Kristeva rightly warns:

> Here, on foreign soil, the religion of the abandoned forbears is set up in its essential purity and one imagines that one preserves it better than do our parents who have stayed "back home". As enclave of the other within the other, otherness becomes crystallized as pure ostracism: the foreigner excludes before being excluded, even more than he is being excluded. Fundamentalists are more fundamental when they have lost all material ties, inventing themselves a "we" that is purely symbolic; lacking a soil it becomes rooted in ritual until it reaches its essence, which is sacrifice.[82]

To seek out the 'identity' of Jewish thought is again to miss the necessary tension between different modes of thinking and to assume a 'pure' identity for one or the other. The result may lead, as Kristeva suggests, to 'sacrifice' to an 'ideal'.

Moreover, against Grosz I suggest that such a 'post-modern' celebration of

difference needs to be grounded in a politics which knowingly articulates the limits of pluralism (heterogeneity) and recognises that it is perpetually in tension with universalism (homogeneity). Just as the attempts to 'control' difference have led to assimilation through and in which it is incorporated, digested and produced as the same, so too has the right to difference been productive of its own limitations and dangers.

The right to difference has worked to affirm the sequence: difference = equality = subordination. Difference (Jewish identity) has emerged as a form of subordination. Difference is always achieved through differentiation: it produces inequalities because the institutions of power and the power of institutions reside within particular spheres of interest. All who digress from or fall outside of those spheres are not perceived as equal or their equals (Jews, women, foreigners etc.)

It is necessary to be vigilant and distinguish between differences which do and indeed should exist and those which exist and should not. In 'Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity'[83] Ernesto Laclau argues that the 1990s present us with a 'proliferation of particularisms'[84], and universalism is increasingly represented as an 'old fashioned totalitarian dream'[85]. Instead he proposes

> The assertion of pure particularism, independent of any content and of any appeal to a universality, is a self-defeating enterprise. For if it is the only accepted normative principle, it confronts us with an unsolvable paradox. I can defend the right of sexual, racial, and national minorities in the name of particularism, but if particularism is the only valid principle, I have to accept also the rights to self-determination of all kinds of reactionary groups involved in anti-social practices.[86]

It follows from his argument that all differences cannot be accepted and protected, especially in conditions and circumstances which impede understanding of difference and where and when that difference emerges as yet another form of subordination

in respect of itself or others. After all, difference is always constituted on the basis of exclusion. Laclau and Mouffe's work demonstrates the need for the recognition of universalism and particularism as perpetually in tension. Universalism by itself can lead to totalitarianism; particularism alone can lead to unfettered individualism. Laclau extends Mouffe's conclusions and argues that this unresolved tension allows what he describes as a 'movement away from Western Eurocentrism' through which the universal dimension can be maintained and the spheres of its application widened[87]. Through this process 'universalism as a horizon is expanded at the same time as its necessary attachment to any particular content is broken'[88]. The paradox which marks Laclau's conclusion is insoluble. However it is, he argues the very precondition of democracy:

> The solution of the paradox would imply that a particular body had been found that was the *true* body of the universal. But in that case, the universal would have found its necessary location, and democracy would be impossible.[89]

He continues by arguing that democracy is possible precisely because the universal has no definite *body*. Always different groups compete and achieve a 'temporary function of universal representation'. It is the very 'failure' of society to 'constitute itself as society' which Laclau argues makes the 'distance between the universal and the particular unbridgeable' the result of which 'burdens concrete social agents with that impossible task that makes democratic interaction achievable'[90]

Kitaj himself produces his art as different. The critical establishment represented here by Fuller and Janusczak cannot cope with this or deal with difference. They try to assimilate the work to the same (universal) and by so doing they yet again expose the limits of liberal democracy. At the same time Kitaj's uncritical celebration of identity needs to be questioned.

In 'Homelands of the Mind', Jenny Bourne has argued:

> Identity politics is all the rage. Exploitation is out (it is extrinsically
> determinist). Oppression is in (it is intrinsically personal). What is to
> be done has been replaced by who am I. Political culture has ceded
> to cultural politics[91].

This preoccupation with cultural identity suggests that the distinctions between the

idea and the act, between the individual and structure, between the 'real' world and

its representations, are in danger of being lost. Eighteen years ago A. Sivanandan

cautioned:

> Creating ourselves in terms of our culture and reshaping our society
> in terms of that creation are part and parcel of the same process. To
> abstract our culture from its social milieu in order to give it coherence
> is to lose out on its vitality. And once a culture loses its social
> dynamic, identity becomes an indulgence. It becomes that is, an end
> in itself.[92]

There is a painting by Kitaj called *The Baseball Game*. Kitaj recalled, in connection

with this painting:

> One third of our people were being murdered while I was out playing
> baseball and going to movies and high school and dreaming of being
> an artist.[93]

This was also the moment when Greenberg was elaborating his version of

modernism. His ideas followed a route which led him to produce a version of the

avant-garde as an oppositional force within capitalism. The avant-garde becomes

a site of protest. The force of his argument leads him to promote and protect a

notion of high culture in the face of all else which he calls kitsch. He sees authentic

art as a space for heightened self-awareness in and through which its own practices

and procedures are constantly interrogated. The degree to which it articulates and

defends the logic of these procedures becomes the means by which the art can be

evaluated and judged. Art in this discourse is to be liberating. Freedom is here

realised by the universal subject of history in the realm of pure aesthetics.

Universalism can be understood as emancipatory or indeed as a form of enslavement; particularism can be affirmative but it can also lead to subordination and disintegration. As Lacoue-Labarthe suggests however, we should never stop questioning democracy and its limits merely because

> We do not have (too many) police breathing down our necks or that
> our labour is not (too) exploited.[94]

Lyotard disrupts the grand narrative of modernism through installing the notion of 'little narratives'. He thus enables us to think an ethics beyond aesthetics and a way of speaking beyond the dialectic presumed by universalism and particularism. Here identity and difference cannot be considered as the simple adoption of a philosophical point of view existing within a set of discursive hegemonic fields. In Lyotard's terms this means moving beyond what he perceives as the impasse of dialectics to identify the 'differend'[95] which will be considered in the chapter which follows.

1 Kitaj, 'A Passion', p.ii.
2 Peter Fuller, 'Kitaj at Christmas' *Art Monthly*, December/January, 1985/86.
3 Waldemar Janusczak, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Jew' *Guardian*, 12 November 1985.
4 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things (trans. Alan Sheridan)*, London and New York, 1970; first published in 1966 as *Les Mots et les Choses*. Foucault argues that all intellectual activities of any given period obey codes of knowledge: every epoch has its own episteme. His project was to uncover the 'positive unconscious' of knowledge and by so-doing to deconstruct history which turns difference into identity.
5 Robert Young *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, 1990, p.84.
6 *Ibid.* p.83.
7 *Ibid.* p.84.
8 Fuller, 'Kitaj at Christmas', p.12.
9 *Ibid.* p.14.
10 Sartre, *Réflexions sur les Questions Juive*, pp.65-66 (my translation).
11 Elizabeth Grosz 'Judaism and Exile: Ethics and Otherness *New Formations No.12, Routledge, Winter 1990*.
12 *Sartres'*, *Anti-Semite and Jew* was the English translation of *Réflexions sur les Questions Juive* and was published by Schoken Books, 1949.
13 Simon de Beauvoir, 'Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre' *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, Andre Deutsch and Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984, p.393.
14 Grosz, *'Judaism and Exile'*, p.82.
15 Janusczak, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Jew'
16 *Ibid.*
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*
19 *Ibid.*
20 Chantal Mouffe, 'Pluralism and Modern Democracy', lecture at the University of Kent, Canterbury 24 Feb. 1992.
21 *Ibid.*
22 Mouffe, 'Pluralism and Modern Democracy: around Carl Schmitt', *New Formations*, No.14, Summer 1991.
23 *Ibid* p.5.
24 Joseph Raz, *Morality and Freedom*, Oxford, 1986.
25 Mouffe, 'Pluralism and Modern Democracy', p.9.
26 *Ibid.* p.9.
27 *Ibid.* p.10.
28 *Ibid.* p.10.
29 *Ibid.* p.11.
30 *Ibid.* p.11.
31 *Ibid.* p.11.
32 *Ibid.* p.15.
33 *Ibid.* p.6.
34 *Ibid.* p.15.
35 Clement Greenberg, 'Kafka's Jewishness' in *Art and Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
36 *Ibid.* p.266.
37 Irving Howe, *Margins of Hope*, Secker and Warberg, 1981.
38 I am grateful to Dr. Katy Deepwell for suggesting this quote to me.
39 Published in *Commentary* in 3 parts, April, May and June 1948.

40   C. Greenberg, 'Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism: Some Reflections on Positive Jewishness', *Commentary*, November 1950.

41   *Ibid.* p.431, Greenberg in an acerbic footnote castigates Rabbi Silver who in *The Day*, 16 July 1950, had used the term "uprooted intellectuals" to criticise secular Jewish intellectuals. Greenberg reminded him that '"uprooted intellectual"' had been and continues to be 'a favourite in the totalitarian (and anti-semitic) lexicon of abuse, from Mussolini and Hitler to Stalin'. Harold Rosenberg in 'Jewish Identity in a Free Society' is also critical of the 'rootless' metaphor and argues against the 'affirmative' stance of those he calls the 20th century Sadducees who desire absolute and exclusive commitment from other Jews. *Commentary*, June 1950, p.510.

42   Greenberg, 'Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism', p.432.

43   *Ibid.*

44   T.J. Clarke, 'Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art', in *Pollock and After: A Critical Debate*, Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (ed.), London, Harper and Row, 1985, p.59.

45   Greenberg, 'Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism', p.433.

46   Rosenberg, 'Jewish Identity and in a Free Society', p.18.

47   *Ibid.* p.12.

48   *Midrash* refers to a method of teaching the oral Torah in the form of an exposition on the biblical text. See Isodore Epstein, *Judaism*, Penguin, 1973, p.114. This is a mode of thinking which provokes discovery – the discovery of meanings in a text which surpass the literal.

49   Rosenberg, 'Jewish Identity in a Free Society', p.13.

50   Barnett Newman, 'Sublime is Now', *Tiger's Eye*, Vol.1. December 1948, in *Readings in American Art 1900-1975*, Barbara Rose (ed.), Praeger, 1975, p.135.

51   Greenberg, 'American Type Painting, *Partisan Review*, 1955, reprinted in *Art and Culture*.

52   Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', *Partisan Review*, July/August 1940, Vol.vii, No.4, reprinted in *Pollock and After*, Frascina and Harrison (eds), pp.35-46.

53   Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, 'Avant-garde and Partisan Review', *Art History*, Vol.4, no.3, September 1981, pp.305-327.

54   Irving Sandler, *Triumph of Abstract Expressionism: a History of Abstract Expression*, New York, Pall Mall, 1970.

55   *Ibid.* p.84. Cited in Orton and Pollock, 'Avant-garde and Partisan Review', p.308.

56   *Ibid.* p.309.

57   Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review*, Vol.vi, No.5, Fall 1939, pp.34-39, reprinted in *Art and Culture*, pp.3-22.

58   Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art; Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983.

59   Thomas Hess, Barnett Newman, Tate Gallery, London, 1972, p.39.

60   *Ibid.* p.84.

61   *Ibid.* p.7.

62   Chaim Potek, *My Name is Ascher Lev*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972.

63   *Ibid.* p.191.

64   Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art op.cit.* p.85.

65   *Ibid.* p.198.

66   F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, London, Routledge, 1944, p.40.

67   Eisenhower, *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 1954-1958*, cited in John Hyatt, *Art Wars*, Rochdale Art Gallery, 1984, p.27.

[68]   Greenberg, 'Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism', p.434.

[68]   Greenberg, 'Kafka', in *Art and Culture*, p.273.

[70]   Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition*, p.xxiv.

[71]   *Ibid.* p.xxiii.

[72]   Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.64.

[73]   Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, p.120.

[74]   *Ibid.* p.242.

[75]   *Ibid.* p.247.

[76]   *Ibid.* pp.248-249.

[77]   Grosz, 'Judaism and Exile', p.80.

[78]   *Ibid.* p.87.

[79]   Andrew Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde, passim*.

[80]   Grosz, 'Judaism and Exile', *p.87*.

[81]   Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991.

[82]   *Ibid.* p.24.

[83]   Ernesto Laclau, 'Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity', *October*, No.61, Summer 1992, pp.83-91.

[84]   *Ibid.* p.87.

[85]   *Ibid.* p.87.

[86]   *Ibid.* p.87.

[87]   *Ibid.* p.87.

[88]   *Ibid.* p.90.

[89]   *Ibid.* p.90.

[90]   *Ibid.* p.90.

[91]   Jenny Bourne, 'Homelands of the Mind' in *Race and Class*, Vol. XXIX, Summer 1987, Vol.1, pp.1-25.

[92]   A. Sivanandan, 'Culture and Identity', *Liberator*, New York, Vol.10, No.6, June 1970, cited in Bourne *op.cit*, p.22.

[93]   Kitaj in the Ruskin lecture, cited in Fuller 'Kitaj at Christmas', p.11.

[94]   Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p.103, (author's parenthesis).

[95]   Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Manchester University Press, 1988.

Figures – Chapter 9

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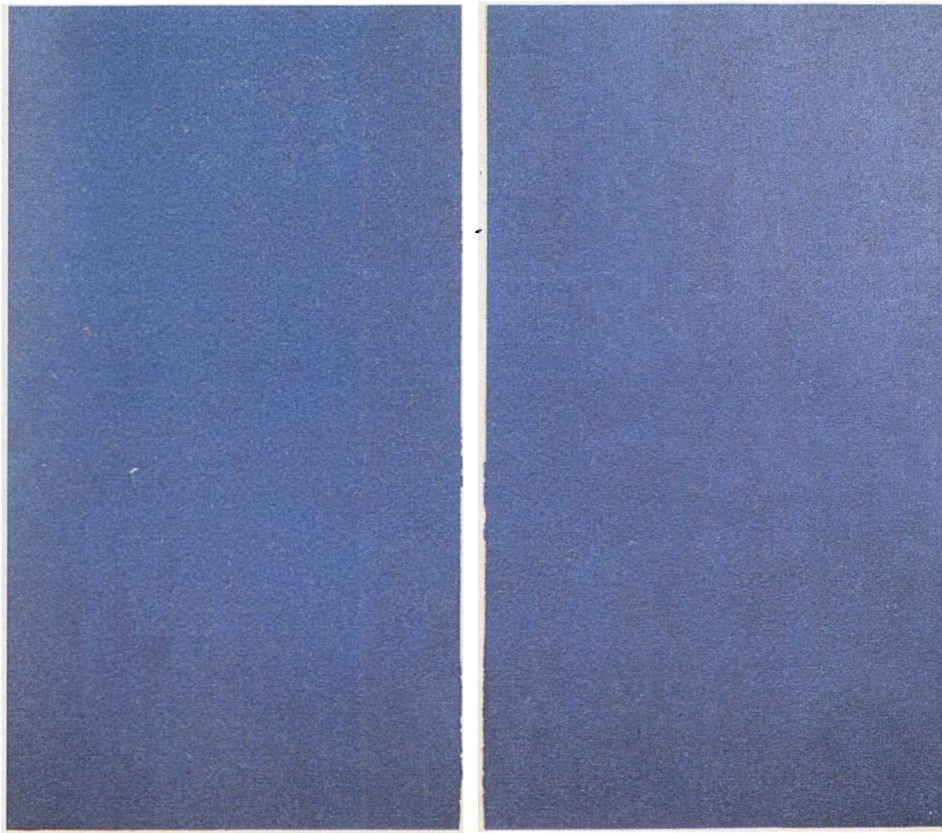
CHAPTER 10

Re-citing the Other: Other as Other

Western thought has thematized the *Other*, as a threat to be annihilated, perhaps as a potential same-to-be, perhaps as a yet-not-same. Jew becomes the 'enemy' in the body politic of the West; another who was to have been *exterminated*. But are there ways in which the *Other* can now be spoken otherwise; ways that surpass and go beyond the logic of identity-thinking?

To begin, I want to return to the issue raised earlier in Andrew Benjamin's[1] reading of Kitaj's art which described it as presenting and affirming Jewish identity. His philosophy espouses 'affirmation' as its mode of judgement. For Benjamin

> The revaluation of value – its redemption – is an artistic, literary philosophical and interpretive practice unfolding in its plurality as the avant-garde. Value – the affirmation of value – is delimited by a concern to attribute value.[2]

This is tautology. What must affirmation negate? Is he seeking affirmative consolation by attempting to find in Kitaj's art a refuge from misery? Earlier in his book[3] Benjamin had distinguished between affirmation and repetition. In this very distinction lies the nub of my disagreement with Benjamin. I have argued that in the case of Kitaj's work, viewed so far, affirmation is 'repetition'. It is the re-citation of that very discourse *Jew* which is itself constructed by, as Benjamin puts it, the 'logic of the synagogue'. Both Kitaj and Benjamin are locked in a dialectical trap, affirmation versus negation. Difference must move beyond the configuration difference=identity to a re-affirmation: to a "yes/yes", which cannot depend on the simple "yes". A single "yes" can only exist in opposition (no).

Benjamin argues that Jewish identity has, in the past, been accomplished through

negation so that

> The Jew remains the Other in order that the Same remain the Same. Otherness therefore does not pertain to self-identity but to an identity giving designation that in coming from outside serves to guarantee that from which the designation proceeds.[4]

A persecutory history of (Jewish) identity as *Other* is installed, out of which the *Other* again emerges as a form of negative projection. Yet, as we have seen, Benjamin is concerned to establish Kitaj's work as a counter to this identity. For him Kitaj's art must occupy another space in which an affirmative Jewish identity is a possibility, a becoming. But what is this affirmative Jewish identity about which he speaks so insistently? Levinas points to a paradox when he suggests 'the very fact of questioning one's Jewish identity means it is already lost'[5].

Until now I have been arguing against Andrew Benjamin, who suggests that Kitaj's depiction of the Jew transcends the image of Jew as victim. I have proposed instead that his work confirms existing images of *Jew* which have been created in and reflected by the eye of the Enlightenment and the subsequent Emancipation of the Jew. Kitaj's work focuses on the drama of assimilation. It achieves Jewish identity through a series of oppositions: Christian/Jew; Black/Jew; Arab/Israeli. The images are both accusatory and justificatory. But regarding Kitaj's painting *If Not, Not,* [fig.70] I share with Benjamin and Fuller[6] the view that something other may be taking place; although, as will be seen, our interpretations of it are somewhat different.

At first glance the scene recalls paradise: a luscious garden enclosed by a monumental building at the top of a cliff. Exotic trees and foliage are silhouetted against a brilliantly coloured sky which is heavy in the intensity of its colour. There is a pool reminiscent of a grotto. The picture harks back to Giorgione's *La*

Tempesta [fig.72], refers to a landscape passage in *Good Government* by Lorenzetti,

Gaughin even. But it is here that the pleasure stops. Looking again more closely,

the sky is too dark and black above the rooftop which now becomes full of

foreboding; the sunset is too lurid; the yellows too acid; a sour taste prevails. What

first appeared as a paradise becomes a blighted, disordered garden, a reversal of

Matisse's *Joy of Life*. The duality of the picture is like the Fall itself: nature, purity,

primitive bliss are evoked; but consolation is quickly transformed into anxiety. The

discovery of good and evil, nature and culture, mark the first diaspora.

The assimilated Jew, Kitaj, uses a pictorial language, or more accurately pictorial

languages, which has its roots in early modernism. His work harks back to Degas.

His response to the modernism of his peers has been critical. He has refused a

narrowing down to the problems of painting or a restricted view of the modernist

project. *If Not, Not* was inspired by T.S. Eliot's poem `The Wasteland`,[7] those

'fragments shored against [his] return'.

In Kitaj's picture the landscape is scattered with unrelated objects – a broken figure;

a classical head (which Kitaj describes as referring to a Matisse bust)[8] is knocked

off its pedestal. The image of the broken sculpture within the painting suggests the

fragility of art and even of representation itself. Another head emerges belonging

to a body which has been swallowed up in a stagnant swamp. There is a man with

a hearing-aid, which Andrew Benjamin suggests is the "same" man as in *The Jew*

etc.[9] and who may also refer to Walter Benjamin. Indeed the form of Kitaj's work

has been compared with Walter Benjamin's writing described as fragmentary,

elliptical and open-ended, rather than as complete and closed. The man in the

picture flees from the embrace of a nude woman. She stares intently into his short-

sighted (spectacled) eyes. Here both sight and hearing are shown as impaired. A

mutilated figure, with a bandaged arm, carries what could be a bag of explosives. The headless body of a man in the foreground creates a visual dynamic which brings us back into the picture to see again.

If Not, Not is crowned with the Gates of Death – Auschwitz; there is no redeeming angel. The painting, like the title itself, proposes a double negation, which cancels itself to accomplish another identity. *If Not, Not* exists as a constantly shifting play between aggression and counter-attack; between affirmation and negation – neither reducible to the other. The work is both dependent upon and independent of Jewish history. It has everything and nothing at all to do with *Jewish* identity. It may provoke us into thinking about the Holocaust but in terms which surpass a total identification with Jewish history. Bauman argues that the Holocaust is not a 'private property'. It is implicated in every facet of European history;

> .... the Holocaust was not simply a *Jewish problem*, and not an event
> in *Jewish history* alone. [author's italics][10]

Bauman roots the Holocaust in the mainstream of modernity, in the so-called civilising process. Once Hitler had decided to make all of Europe *Juden-rein* (Jew-free), it only remained for the technical specialists to calculate the most effective methods for otherwise mundane organizations to carry out their assigned tasks smoothly. The Holocaust was only thinkable within a modern institutionalized world. As Bauman argues in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, its exceptional character lay in dehumanizing the objects of the bureaucratic exercise so that ordinarily diligent workers would regard the victims with moral indifference:

> ....the noble creed of rationality absolved both the victims and
> bystanders from the charge of immorality and from guilty conscience.
> Having reduced human life to the calculus of self-preservation, this
> rationality robbed human life of humanity.[11]

Nazi propaganda deployed modern metaphors from gardening and medicine in its call to eliminate 'social weeds' and 'diseased parts'. Thus it was that the numerous 'low-level' perpetrators could believe that they were implementing a scientific project of social sanitation. They were beings ruled by reason:

> The lesson of the Holocaust is the facility with which most people, put into a situation that does not contain a good choice, or renders such a good choice very costly, argue themselves away from the issue of moral duty (or fail to argue themselves towards it), adopting instead the precepts of rational interest and self-preservation. *In a system where rationality and ethics point in opposite directions, humanity is the main loser.* [author's italics][12]

Bauman installs a notion of morality, which resists and surpasses personal gain, through which he claims the lesson of the Holocaust can be learnt:

> ....putting self-preservation above moral duty is in no way predetermined, inevitable and inescapable, ... The testimony of the few who did resist shatters the authority of the logic of self-preservation. It shows it for what it is in the end – a choice.[13]

The Holocaust was possible only so long as people accepted and conspired with its own logic and failed to register 'choice'. Understanding gives the command authority and supplies it with the logic which makes it intelligible but only in its own terms. Thereby there is no dispute. The world that Bauman has been describing is one where obedience is rational and rationality is obedience. He explains:

> By and large, all rulers can count on rationality being on their side. But the Nazi rulers, additionally, twisted the stakes of the game so that the rationality of survival would render all other motives of human action irrational. Inside the Nazi-made world, reason was the enemy of morality. Logic required consent to crime. Rational defence of one's survival called for non-resistance to the other's destruction. This rationality pitched the sufferers against each other and obliterated their joint humanity.[14]

Here Bauman describes a closed-world, governed by its own rules and logic, which renders everything outside it as irrational. It is a world where any connections which

may be said to exist between reason and morality are severed; in which defence of the 'self' reigns supreme and in the end annihilates both reason and ethics.

In the biblical story of Abraham, reason and ethics are dramatically figured. A ram and a bush are depicted in *If Not, Not*, evoking memories of the story of Abraham and Isaac recounted in 'Genesis' Chapter 22[15]. There is no *Jew* in this picture. Abraham himself is un-representable[16]. As Benjamin notes this is one of Kitaj's 'most dramatic biblical references'[17] and one which provokes the thematisation of obedience and obligation, the 'subject' and the *Other*, individuation and ethics. These themes have been considered also by Lyotard and Levinas.

In the biblical text, Abraham is ordered by God to sacrifice his son. The Law is invoked through a threat of imminent violence. Abraham hears: *That Isaac die, that is my law*, and he obeys[18]. God is testing Abraham so that the limitlessness of His power can be revealed. Abraham obeys.

> And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.[19]

Abraham is prepared to submit to the greater authority of another which lies beyond himself and beyond individualism. He is ready to kill his son. Just because it is an order does not mean that Abraham is not free to choose either to ignore or obey it. Action is always predicated upon choice.

Lyotard in *The Differend: Phrases in a Dispute*[20] asks if the order received by Abraham is any more 'intelligible' than the ones which ordered 'round-ups, convoys, concentratings, and either slow or quick death'?[21] He then asks how is it that we can know if Abraham is or is not a 'paranoiac subject to homicidal (infanticidal) urges? Or a fake?'[22] Then Lyotard rephrases the question so that it becomes one

of obligation rather than obedience: if we hear something resembling a 'call' are we 'held to be held by it?' he asks[23]. Lyotard argues that in order for the call to be answered or resisted it must first be understood as a call, rather than a 'fantasy'. The phrase is obligatory[24] if, and only if, its 'addressee' is obligated. Abraham only obeys "because" it is God who gives the order. As all of God's commandments are just, then Abraham is obligated to obey them. But Lyotard also demands that we rethink this (Abraham's) response:

> ...alone by itself, this implication is a crime against ethics: the people would be obligated by an order because they could understand its sense![25]

If the law is already established and known then the ethical is no longer in question but presented as fact.

Commanding and obeying, he argues, must take place as complete freedom.

> But the ethical and political question does not begin with that of freedom enjoined by the 'I'. It begins with the obligation by which the 'Thou' is seized ... with the problem to *announce* but with the other power, which in the West is regarded as a powerlessness – that of being *bound to* ..... [26]

To link ethics and politics with 'obligation' requires that the 'Thou', the command, is listened to. The receptive other hears the command and is both bound by and obligated to it. Hearing precedes reason.

Lyotard uses a notion of the *Other* derived from Levinas and quoting him directly argues[27],

> "The interiority that ensures separation must produce a being absolutely closed over upon itself, not deriving its isolation dialectically from its opposition to the Other. And this closedness must not prevent egress from interiority, so that exteriority could speak to it, reveal itself to it, in an unforeseeable movement".

Lyotard, after Levinas describes the *Other* as 'a scandal for the ego'. The ego, he argues, does not proceed from the other; the other, he says, 'befalls the ego'.

> If the ego was but the closed (abstract) moment of a dialectical alteration of the self, you could reveal nothing to me that I didn't already have in myself.[28]

In this discourse, the ego is either me or other: the *Other* can only happen to me through a 'break-in' or a 'revelation'[29]. Revelation in Judaism, according to Levinas, is received as an attitude of obedience[30]. Obedience occurs before understanding. It derives from

> ....the love of one's neighbour, a love without eros, lacking self-indulgence, which is, in this sense, a love obeyed.[31]

Levinas is concerned to establish what he calls the 'receptive ear'[32], the me that can hear the other and does not alienate the person listening. Obligation is an aspect of time rather than space and its 'organ' is the ear rather than the eye. The angel calls; Abraham hears:

> And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.[33]

This encounter marks for Levinas the 'here am I' of the man welcoming his neighbour[34]. Surely, he asks, 'our model of revelation must be an ethical one?'[35] The dilemma of Abraham (the first Jew) questions the 'rationality of reason' itself.

> And in the question, which also calls into question, do we not hear the true resonance of the voice commanding from beyond?[36]

For Levinas revelation occurs as a paradox:

> The path I am led to follow, in solving the paradox of the Revelation, is one that claims we may find a model for this relation in the attitude of non-indifference towards the Other, in the responsibility towards him; and that it is precisely through this relation that man becomes

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his 'self' (*moi*), designated without any possibility of escape, chosen, unique, not interchangeable, and – in this sense – free.[37]

Obedience here is not understood as subservience but as the necessary condition of freedom. God commands. Abraham hears. He is subjected to God's commandment and was at once rewarded for listening and for receiving it:

> And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns and Abraham went and took the ram, and, offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son.[38]

There is a form of truth that is totally alien. It is through and because of his willingness to sacrifice self-interest – to listen and to hear the Other – that Abraham is transformed. He is not already formed but formed by this occurrence. He is subjugated by the *Other* and becomes *Subject* of his own destiny. When God tells Abraham,

> Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me[39]:

only then is the meaning of revelation exposed; it is an awakening.

From the beginning Jewish revelation is, for Levinas, commandment. Piety lies in obedience to it. There is an authority beyond the 'self' and through which the 'self' is made responsible and confronts freedom and the limits of freedom.

> My very uniqueness lies in my responsibility for the other; nobody can relieve me of this, just as nobody can replace me at the moment of my death. Obedience to the Most High is defined for me by precisely this impossibility of running away; through this, my 'self' is unique. To be free is simply to do what nobody else can do in my place. To obey the Most High is to be free.[40]

Responsibility for the other gives me over to the other. For both Levinas and

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Lyotard obligation cannot result from an already legitimated authority for obligation takes hold immediately and before understanding. If this is not the case then obligation becomes a 'scandal'[41] for the one who is obligated and who is thus

> Deprived of the "free" use of oneself, abandoned by one's narcissistic image, opposed in this, inhibited in that, worried over not being able to be oneself without further ado.[42]

Lyotard restarts his interrogation of the 'subject' but now he installs the notion of a dispersed self which must free itself from nostalgia for the self. This is not, as he reminds us, to say that the 'splitting of the self' – so as to disperse it – would not also have to be abandoned for it presupposes 'a beautiful totality: the result'[43]. For Lyotard it is the fracturing of the identity of the subject, the substance or the essence that enables the message to be heard: to come from the outside.

In Lyotard's reading of the story of Abraham, God is the *Other*. He is outside, exterior. He is not a threat but is that which constitutes Abraham as the moral subject. Genesis 22 affirms obedience to God above that of self-preservation. Abraham was prepared to make a choice; reason or rationality was secondary. For, as Levinas has argued, reason only comes into play when the eruption of the Other has been experienced.

Levinas' reading of revelation and obedience suggests a different world from that of rationality and order determined by Lyotard's first question. The Talmud for Levinas is itself revelation. It is through the biblical revelation that the universal dimension necessary for an ethical universality can be understood.

Commanding and obeying in complete freedom must, Lyotard thinks, come about regardless of circumstances. The command must be 'grasped' before it is under-

stood. It must be unconditionally obeyed. Revelation is received as obedience in an ethical instance. But Lyotard, following Levinas, suggests too that some things must be refused[44]. There must be a 'sign' by which they can be recognized. The recognition of the signs which indicate dispute (the differend) is at stake.

The sign, Lyotard argues, is injustice and there can be no constant, enduring, overbearing notion of justice; it can only be judged in the fullness of the moment. Lyotard cites the case of Ishmael who will later be 'unjust'[45]. When he was dying of thirst, God chose to save him because at that moment he was neither just nor unjust; he was dying. Ethical obligation comes about not from logic and reason but from the uniqueness of the situation itself. Extreme particularism concerns universal meaning and marks the passage from individual responsibility to justice.

It is through his critical reading of the Kantian notion of the 'sign of history' that Lyotard advances the idea of the necessity to judge without determinable laws. The authorization to judge is hence in itself a problem. This question is developed throughout *The Differend*, and is the one which leads Lyotard to displace the notion of the 'subject'. For him the 'subject' becomes a situated instance within the 'universe of phrases'. The notion of a 'situation' allows him to specify the way in which the distances of a 'universe' (addressor, addressee, referent, sense) are related.

Lyotard interprets the silence imposed by Auschwitz as a 'sign':

> Myth is not speculatively soluble. It must be (non-speculatively) exterminated and so it has been. But the destruction of Nazism also leaves a silence after it: one does not dare think out Nazism because it has been beaten down like a mad dog, by a police action, and not in conformity with the rules accepted by its adversaries' genres of discourse (argumentation for liberalism, contradiction for Marxism). It has not been refuted.[46]

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Auschwitz is silenced because it has been murdered. It has yet to be proved false. Judgement in Lyotard is a critical activity, a way of determining the mode of presenting and establishing the reality (Auschwitz) rather than a re-presentation where something (a pre-constituted subject) presents something to itself. He claims the problem is twofold, given

> 1) the impossibility of avoiding conflicts (the impossibility of indifference) and 2) the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them (or, if you prefer, the inevitable partiality of the judge): to find, if not what can legitimate judgement (the "good" linkage), then at least how to save the honor of thinking.[47]

To judge is to open the abyss between phrases by analysing their *differend*: it is to find ways of phrasing the *differend*, and the critical task must be kept unresolved. Critical thought has less to do with knowledge than with its limits. For Lyotard, it is the very name to which the differend is identified which signals 'crisis'.

> If the name hidden by 'Auschwitz' is the death of the magical "beautiful death", how could the latter, which sustains the speculative movement, rise back from its death in the camps? And on the other hand, supposing that "after Auschwitz" speculative discourse had died, does it follow that it leaves place only to subjective chatter and the wickedness of modesty? It is within speculative logic that this alternative is formulated. To accept it would be to perpetuate that logic.[48]

Speculative dialectics are stuck in the 'genre of mythic narrative'. According to Lyotard the latter yields 'only identical repetition'[49].

Adorno, according to Lyotard again in *The Differend*, made the name 'Auschwitz' a model for negative dialectic: what met its end there is merely affirmative dialectics'[50]. And Lyotard tears apart the edifice of dialectics describing it as 'a magical affirmative farce'[51]. He presents the proper name of Auschwitz as an abyss where the genre of dialectics falls:

> Then, it will have awakened the despair of nihilism and it will be
> necessary "after Auschwitz" for thought to consume its
> determinations like a cow its fodder, or a tiger its prey, that is with no
> result .... We wanted the progress of the mind, we got its shit.[52]

The crime signalled by the name is real. It is not however rational. The name

marks the limits of historical knowledge and understanding. In that abyss all

narratives fail. Lyotard argues that between the SS and the Jew there is not even

a *differend* (dispute) because there is not even a 'common idiom'. The reality of the

'wrong' (injustice) Auschwitz has yet to be established because it is in the nature of

a wrong not to be constituted by consensus. The inability of dialectics to

conceptualize Auschwitz raises a general question about knowledge. Auschwitz

becomes a matter of judgement; it is a test of thought itself.

To follow Lyotard is also to argue that when Benjamin posits an 'affirmative' Jewish

identity he simply reverses the position of the *Jew*. The Jew might no longer be (for

Benjamin) the one who is 'transgressed' against, yet he remains within the logic of

identity. To affirm is to turn negation upside down. It fails to surpass and is stuck

in 'identical repetition'. Bill Reading suggests that Lyotard's work is an attack on the

negativity of theory and critique and is a 'deconstructivist disruption of conceptual

reduction'[53]. I take him to be suggesting that it enables us to think, or rather, to

rephrase the ethical or political. Lyotard asks:

> Is it possible that some kind of phrase in accordance with some other
> logic takes place "after" the anonym "Auschwitz" and which would not
> be its speculative result?[54]

He argues that speculative logic (not merely its effects) is 'jammed', condemned to

'disarrangement'. Negative dialectics stays within, does not disrupt, the logic of

identity–thinking, the discourse of the *Other* and of the *Same*. This is the trap of the

"yes"/"no".

So far from being identity-less the modern Jew is saturated with identities. He continues to be defined in opposition and in relation to the *Other* in terms of the friend/enemy dichotomy. He is identified by both another and himself but always in excess of the Other.

Benjamin suggests that what emerges in *If Not, Not* is the interplay between life and death, survival and sacrifice[55]; neither is reducible to the other and yet both are present:

> Beneath the sign of Auschwitz, beneath the reference to the biblical necessity for sacrifice, to the side of the presence of death, the Same and the Other look into each other's face.[56]

Here Benjamin is suggesting that the image contains within it the seeds of redemption; the self and the other look into each other's face. Benjamin interprets the man in this encounter as 'Jew' on the basis that it is the "same" figure as in *The Jew etc.*; he assumes that the hearing-aid is a sign for *Jew* and that the confrontation man/woman is a further contrast which reinforces their difference while at the same time keeping their relations in place. 'Sameness and difference presented as one – as co-present'[57]. This co-presence, he argues, will demand a specific form of philosophical thinking in which it is 'possible to generate an ontology of difference' where 'difference' can be understood as 'differential'. This is the moment when an affirmative Jewish identity is, for Benjamin, a possibility. (The future will of course re-read the picture but not necessarily in terms of affirmation.)

Benjamin is concerned to show that Kitaj's work is not reducible to a reflection of anti-semitism. I argue that if the Jew is to be represented then he cannot escape this identification. Kitaj's work points to the problems of representation and identity and so too to the negation or the affirmation of the *Other*. It points thus to the

paradox of assimilation/ dissimulation. This is not simply a legislative issue but one which may entail the annihilation of the *Other*.

The painting *If Not, Not* is sited within the arena of ambivalence. It is neither an image of affirmation nor of negation. *If Not, Not* provokes thinking about the Holocaust yet it is not reducible to its narration. The image brings light forth to the full darkness of day. The image is a combination of beauty and terror, and the one does not conceal the other. No-certainty, not un-certainty is its condition. Abraham is an absence whose presence cannot be presented. The *Jew* cannot be re-presented. In the allusive space between presence and absence, the subject is realised. It is not that the work itself is endlessly open but that there is an openness *within* the picture. It provokes themes – the Holocaust, the bible, ethics, European history and literature – yet prompts an awareness of the existence of the blind spot of the 'I don't know' which is reiterated to each one of those possibilities.

In this way *If Not, Not* departs from the earlier Kitaj pictures I have discussed. Michael Podro, in a critical discussion of Kitaj's art in general, has suggested:

> Painting is unlike literature because language can be part of political action and at the same time be saturated with complicated meaning. And the poet or historian can retrace the action through the language. But painting and the historical facts never engage each other so easily.[58]

While the general points may be true, they should, I think, be understood as a testimony to the difficulties and *difficultness* of painting in both its making and its interpretation. But the comments should not be understood as the negation of the possibilities of painting. Indeed at its best, in an image such as *If Not, Not*, Kitaj's work tests those limits and in this sense at least could be seen as 'affirmative'.

If Not, Not initiates a play between history and its making, between the image and the discourses which seek to speak of it. This play takes place in the hazy site of ambivalence. What history creates and what narrative dissimulates will meet in that very place. A 'history', described by Reading after Lyotard as,

> ....directed towards the immemorial, to that which cannot be either remembered (represented) or forgotten (obliterated), a history which evokes figures that haunt the claims of historical representation, haunt in the sense that they are neither present to them nor absent from them.[59]

The image *If Not, Not* is situated at the intersection of history and narrative. Like a fantasy it tells a story of what is and has been made in a tradition. It does indeed provoke and provide a site for a plurality of interpretations. Pluralism means for Benjamin the acceptance of

> .... the reality of the many and in so doing is concerned to establish criteria of judgement that do justice to the many. The future of judgement takes place without the one.[60]

Benjamin suggests that the heterogeneous is not simple difference, but demands an understanding of 'difference as differential'[61].

However surely respect for heterogeneity does not in itself deal with the problems of pluralism. Simply to acknowledge differences between a plurality of interpretations keeps everything in its place. Lyotard proposes a re-phrasing of culture in forms of 'little narratives'. This entails the 'redescription' of reading as a site of 'intervention' rather than 'cognition'. These 'little narratives' are always to be judged in ethical terms[62]. Lyotard uses Kant as the 'critical watchman' to provide the corrective to the problem of pluralism through Kant's notion of 'presentation', an occurrence. It is the concern of judgement that effects a presentation. Lyotard shows how the conjunction of two phrases establishes an object. The subject

becomes a situated instance within the universe of phrases and thus escapes 'mastery'.

According to Lyotard the law is the premise which 'gives power to speak of obligation without ever transforming it into a norm'[63]. In return for obedience to the Other, God promised Abraham, through his son Isaac, that the Jews would one day return to Israel:

> And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.[64]

The covenant with God turned the Jews into the Chosen People. Levinas warns although the idea of the 'chosen people' has been misused it, at first,

> .... expresses the awareness of an appointment which cannot be called into question; an appointment which is the basis of ethics and which, through its indisputability isolates the person in his responsibility.[65]

Each individual is a chosen one: the one who can respond to the call 'Here I am' but more with the reply, 'Here I am for the Other'. Perhaps, Levinas asks, is there not a way of 'losing one's soul' which comes from something better, or higher than the soul? He suggests that it is through the act of deference that the very manifestations of 'better' or 'higher' are articulated, and that the 'seeking, desire and questioning which come are better than possession, satisfaction and answers'[66]. Revelation is thus, as we have seen, for Levinas not 'received wisdom' but obedience and awakening.

In the biblical story Ruth, a foreigner, receives the Covenant because of her obedience and loyalty. She, a Maobite, was married to a Jew who dies. Her mother-in-law Naomi, after the death of her two sons, tells both the widows to

return to their own people. But Ruth, loyal and determined, refuses to obey Naomi and says,

> Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall* be my people, and thy God my God.[67]

Impressed by Ruth's courage Naomi concedes and allows her to stay. Ruth at first had 'disobeyed' but this very dis-obedience was a measure of her choice to stay. Here response was not pre-determined. It was not already known. She broke the command and by so doing exercised loyalty which was subsequently understood as an ethical choice.

Later in the story[68], following Naomi's desire and the Levitic marriage customs, Ruth marries the octogenarian Boaz a distant relative of Naomi. Ruth's virtues are rewarded: she conceives a child through whom the family line is perpetuated and secured. Ruth becomes the matriarch of Jewish royalty, the great grandmother of David.

Earlier, Ruth had asked Boaz,

> Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing that I *am* a stranger?[69]

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva argues the biblical narrative through the figure of Ruth reveals the significance of the 'stranger',

> .... the foreigner is there to remind those unable to read that the divine revelation often requires a lapse, the acceptance of radical otherness, the recognition of a foreignness that one might have tended at the very first to consider the most degraded. This was not an encouragement to deviate or proselytize but an invitation to consider the fertility of the other. Such indeed is the role of Ruth – the outsider, the foreigner, the excluded .... If David is *also* Ruth, if the sovereign is *also* a Moabite, peace of mind *will* then never be his

lot, but a constant quest for welcoming and going beyond the other in oneself.[70]

Indeed as she goes on to explain the Old Testament lays great stress on respect for the stranger: following the precept in Genesis 9:6 –

> Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for
> in the image of God made he man

– the commandment in Leviticus (19:18) – 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' – suggests a love for all humanity beyond ties of kinship or religion. In Leviticus (19:34) the universalism of this command is again stressed:

> the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born
> among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers
> in the land of Egypt.

Following Kristeva's reading of the Old Testament, the covenant with God is founded on a choice based on an 'ordeal'[71]. Ruth chose to stay with Naomi and by her actions proved herself worthy of the covenant. Abraham too was a 'convert'. He left his land to find the land to which God directs him, 'as does the convert who has chosen Israel'[72]. Whosoever obeys the commandments is welcome. Kristeva goes on to suggest that the privilege of being chosen is a 'hybrid conception of choice that includes heredity *and* the free joining of any individual or collective consciousness'. The integration of the foreigner is, she argues, the counterpart of the idea of the 'chosen people'. Thus, as the story of Ruth reveals, universality or 'unity can be achieved only if an exterior, an "outside of", is joined to the same'[73]. This does not mean that the *Other* becomes the same.

For Levinas it is only in the face-to-face encounter with the *Other* that the ego itself is woken from its sluggish sleep. Lyotard reads Levinas as an attack on Hegelian alterity, showing it to be a 'caprice of identity' which consequently cannot be just.

> The absolutely other, is not the other of a same, its other is the heart
> of that supreme sameness that is being: it is other than being.[74]

Levinas' work proposes a re-orientation of 'exteriority' which, he argues, is a property of space which returns the subject to itself. He attempts, as Lyotard suggests, to keep separate and distinct the 'exteriority' of the *Other* and the 'interiority' of the self. The *Other's* entire being is constituted through alterity. He proposes a notion of truth which is dependent upon the lived experience of the *Other*. The *Other* is not a threat or a negation but now a 'marvel': the one that in itself constitutes the subject as an ethical being; the 'originary' encounter is the discovery of the responsibility for the existence of the *Other*.

> The explication of the meaning that a self other than myself has *for
> me* – for my primordial self – describes the way in which the Other
> tears me from my hypostasy, from the *here*, at the heart of being or
> at the centre of the world, where privileged and in this sense
> primordial, I posit myself. But in this tearing, the ultimate "me-ness"
> is revealed.[75]

This is an encounter predicated upon violence: the violence of another which itself creates yet another. The *Other* is what I am not. This ordeal is the basis of moral consciousness, of the possibility of making promises and of future actions.

Levinas's work has been criticised for subordinating sexual difference to ethical difference. Simone de Beauvoir[76] has condemned Levinas for conceiving 'She' as the ultimate *Other*. De Beauvoir refers in particular to *Time and the Other* where Levinas had argued,

> Otherness reaches its full flowering in the feminine, a term of the
> rank as consciousness but of opposite meaning.[77]

De Beauvoir argues that Levinas deliberately adopts a 'masculine' perspective which connotes women as 'mystery'. Man is understood as 'essential', as opposed to the

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Other, the 'inessential' object.   De Beauvoir, after Hegel, contends that in consciousness itself there exists a hostility towards every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed.   For her, Levinas' 'Other' is a reassertion of masculine privilege.

For Levinas, as we have seen, the primary encounter with the *Other* is a drama, an event; subjectivity and consciousness are born of this event. It is outside of (alterior to) and different from me; the 'subject' is not master of that event. Between the 'I' and the 'you' lies mystery. Mystery constitutes alterity. Here *Otherness* in the face of mystery can be perceived as a going-beyond gender:

> The other as other is not here an object that becomes ours or becomes us; to the contrary, it withdraws into mystery.[78]

Mystery is not for Levinas either mystification or romance. It is, like revelation, itself a 'mystery' but not the kind which, as he puts it, 'banishes clarity' but 'demands greater intensity'. Mystery is the unbridgeable gulf between the self and the other. In *Time and the Other* Levinas had also written,

> In positing the Other's alterity as mystery, itself defined by modesty, I do not posit it as a freedom identical to and at grips with mine; I do not posit another existent in front of me, I posit alterity. Just as with death, I am not concerned with an existent, but with an event of alterity, with alienation. The other is not initially characterized as freedom, from which alterity would then be deducted; the other bears alterity as an essence. And this is why I have sought this alteriority in the absolutely original relationship of eros, a relationship that is impossible to translate into powers and must not be so translated, if one does not want to distort the meaning of the situation.[79]

Levinas gives us a language through which we can now begin to re-cite the other: Eros is, for him, the situation of pure *Otherness*. 'The pathos of love consists in an insurmountable duality of beings'[80]. It is a relationship with what always slips away. Eros maintains otherness. It seeks neither to consume, devour, know or possess

the other. For if one consumed, devoured, knew or possessed the other, the other would no longer be the other. Respect for the other in this sense admits difference but difference without mastery. The demands of the 'ethical' (universal) supersede and by so doing may be said to 'subordinate' gender difference (the particular).

Yet perhaps it is through this radical subordination itself, as Catherine Chalier in 'Ethics and the Feminine'[81] argues, that Levinas puts into question the 'virility of being' and transmutes it into the 'gentleness' of being for the other. Thereby, she suggests, in Levinas' writing 'natural' life is turned into 'ethical' life. The 'feminine' according to Chalier is crucial to this change and itself makes ethics possible[82]. For her, the meaning of the feminine is the 'disruption of being by goodness'[83]. To reach this conclusion Chalier draws on the story of Rebecca (Genesis 24), who she describes as 'a biblical figure of the feminine'.

Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to find a wife for his son Isaac. The appropriate woman will be one who welcomes him and offers both to him and to his camels, water from the well. The woman will say 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also'[84]. Chalier infers that Eliezer was seeking above all else a woman who shows concern for others and is 'hospitable'. Hospitality, she argues, superseded Eliezer's concern for her class or status. Chalier fails to note that Abraham had instructed Eliezer to return to his own land, amongst his own kin:

> Thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife
> unto my son Isaac.[85]

Thereby kinship, if not religion, was already inscribed in Abraham's order. Nonetheless, Rebecca welcomes the stranger; not only does she give him water from the well but she takes him to her home. Chalier suggests that it is Rebecca's 'ability to perceive the Other's demand as a demand that is meant for her' that is at

stake:

> Such is the ethical service in which one learns that the Other has a primacy over one so that natural egoism turns into the "Here I am" which is eponymous of concern to stay inside the covenant.[86]

So Rebecca was chosen because of her concern for the stranger and his animals who could not themselves ask for sustenance. Rebecca leaves her own family to marry Isaac and thus to take a new identity – 'the identity for the Other'[87].

Subsequent to *Time and the Other*, in *Ethics and Infinity*[88], Levinas himself provides a commentary in which it can be argued, he takes up the charge of sexism saying

> ....all these allusions to the ontological differences between the masculine and the feminine would appear less archaic if, instead of dividing humanity into two species (or into two genders), they would signify that the participation in the masculine and in the feminine were the attribute of every human being. Could this be the meaning of the enigmatic verse of *Genesis* 1.27: "male and female created He them"?[89]

Indeed it is impossible, according to an argument mounted by Tina Chanter[90] to pin down Levinas's account of the feminine. This is no accident; in itself, it marks both the recognition and the acknowledgement of the impossibility of raising the question of 'woman' without already having decided upon her essence.

> To fix that place would be to impose an alternative designation upon woman, but one that would still be played out according to the same rules, one ,which would still be governed by its opposition to men.[91]

Ethics figured as generosity and hospitality, occupy the sphere of the universal and surpass the particular constructions of 'man' or 'woman' in the story of Rebecca. They designate a value which is attributed to and designated as 'feminine'. Thereby the particular or singular (the feminine) is universalized (ethics).

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Levinas proposes the other outside the sphere of mastery 'rather than in relation to or a re-duplification of the self'[92]. He offers a way of thinking the other as 'responsibility for the other, being-for-the-other'. The other is always alterior, presenting a challenge to the logic of identity-thinking which, for him, is merely

> A reconciliation of contradictories: from the identical and the non-identical, identity! It is still the philosophy of the intelligibility of the Same, beyond the tension of the Same and the Other.[93]

Levinas, in Lyotard's words, attempts to 'break this reversible totality and to discombobulate speculative dialectics by reinforcing the dissymmetry of the ethical instances[94]. Indeed, Levinas himself argues that the idea of the *Other*, as an enemy of the same, is an abuse of the notion. He proposes that we should go beyond understanding which 'is equal (the same) as itself which seeks to assimilate the Other'[95], and instead think about the same as 'drowsy in identity'[96] and needing to be woken by the *Other*. The form of this awakening is obedience. Obedience is irreducible. It derives from love of the *Other*. I am linked to others by the responsibility I have towards them. Revelation/awakening/disrupting the same can never be absorbed by the *Other* in difference. Levinas' work offers a way out of 'false projection' and a way beyond the impasse that it presents.

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To re-cite the *Other* is also a concern of the work of the anthropologist Clifford Geerzt. He has proposed that 'seeing' should surrender its pretensions to absolute authority. Rather, he suggests,

> To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the

largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes.[97]

Following Geerzt, I suggest that clear sightedness emerges from a constant oscillation between nearness and distance, insideness and outsideness, the "I" and the "Thou". To respect the otherness of the other is to realize that it entails seeing and being seen, hearing and being listened to. None of the senses (particularly the eye or the ear) is to be privileged over and above the other. Homi K. Bhabha in *DissemiNation* argues,

> the subject is graspable only in the passage between telling/told, between 'here' and 'somewhere else'.[98]

He argues that the significance of what he calls the 'narrative splitting' is borne out in Levi-Strauss' description of the ethnographic act. The ethnographer demands that the observer is part of the observed, requiring that the field of knowledge must

> .... be appropriated from the outside like a thing, but like a thing which comprises within itself the subjective understanding of the indigenous.[99]

He goes on to suggest that once the 'liminility' of the nation-state is established, and a 'difference' is turned from a boundary 'outside' to its 'finitude within', the threat of difference is no longer a problem of other people. He continues

> .... so long as a firm boundary is maintained between territories, and the narcissistic wound is contained, the aggressivity will be projected onto the other.[100]

Following Freud, again in *DissemiNation*, Bhabha suggests it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people who 'love' but only so long as there are other people to receive, as he puts it, 'the manifestations of their aggressiveness'[101]. The problem is that the ambivalent identifications of love and

hate bind a community together; they occupy the same psychic sphere. The space which separates 'controlled' and 'false projection' (Adorno and Horkheimer) is marked by ambivalence, and is always unstable: it would seem forever to allow the turn of paranoid projection. But is this again to assume the inevitability of the dialectical opposition and to reiterate the 'essence' of identity?

Throughout this text we have seen that the *Other* is implicated in the formation of cultural identity and national boundaries. And there will, of course, always be categories of otherness related to and recognizable as a specific category. The *Other* has been shown as an unavoidable category and it seems to be built into the kinds of societies and cultures in which we live. It is in this sense, always inseparable from the definition and creation of boundaries. Indeed Said has described the situation in the Gulf at the time of the war (1991) in just these terms:

> My impression is that to be Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian, Saudi and so on, is a quite sufficiently important end, rather than in thinking critically, perhaps even audaciously about the national programme itself. Identity, always identity, over and above knowing and thinking about others.[102]

Again and again the *Other* is, and has been, installed and socially legitimated, to negate and to affirm.

But we all, argues Chantal Mouffe, belong to many communities[103]. Moreover she cautions against a notion of identity which reaffirms merely what already exists, and says,

> It's important to believe that our identity when we act politically should not be defined exclusively by that fact that we belong to one particular constituency.[104]

Following Mouffe, it can be argued that one cannot act as a radical democratic

citizen solely on the basis of any single identity (Jew, Syrian, Black, Woman etc.). Contained within this logic are always essentialist strands which inhibit and even exclude the possibilities of change. So can difference as otherness be affirmed but now as a re-affirmation which no longer has recourse to nationalism? Bhabha argues that today

> The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the 'horizontal' view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of people and their difference.[105]

He seems to say that there exists the possibility of severing the connection between the nation and the universal. We have witnessed the processes of forming a national identity around exclusions and the inclusive pretensions (totalizing) of national traditions. The horizons of the universal must be redefined. They must be, at the same time, narrowed and expanded.

Furthermore is it possible now to imagine non-racist, non-repressive forms of society? Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* suggests that for the first time in history a multinational society is emerging in which we must all live; in which we are without moral codes that can both include particularities and transcend them. She calls for an ethics which must be universal but a universality in tension with the particular[106]. Yet as she reminds us

> In the fascinating rejection that the foreigner arouses in us, there is a share of uncanny strangeness in the sense of the depersonalization that Freud discovers in it, and which takes up again our infantile desires and fears of the other – the other of death, the other of woman, the other of uncontrollable drive. The foreigner is within us.[107]

According to Kristeva it is Freud who can give us the courage to 'welcome' that 'uncanny strangeness'[108] which is, as she puts it, 'as much theirs as it is our own'.

To live with strangers will only be possible when we are able to tolerate the otherness which is our own.

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[1]   Andrew Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde, passim.*
[2]   *Ibid.* p.209.
[3]   *Ibid.* p.140.
[4]   *Ibid.* p.87.
[5]   E. Levinas, 'Difficult Freedom' in *The Levinas Reader,* p.263.
[6]   Peter Fuller, 'Kitaj at Christmas' *passim.*
[7]   R.B. Kitaj, 'Prefaces' in *RB Kitaj,* Livingstone, p.150.
[8]   *Ibid.* p.150.
[9]   Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde,* p.89.
[10]   Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust,* p.x.
[11]   *Ibid.* p.203.
[12]   *Ibid.* p.206.
[13]   *Ibid.* p.207.
[14]   *Ibid.* p.203.
[15]   Genesis, Chapter 22, Holy Bible, King James version, Cambridge University Press.
[16]   Abraham was called Abram: his name was changed after he received the covenant.   Abraham means 'father of the multitude'.   Isidore Epstein, *Judaism,* Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, p.14.
[17]   Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde,* p.92.
[18]   Lyotard, *The Difference: Phrases in Dispute,* p.107.
[19]   'Genesis', 10:22, *Holy Bible.*
[20]   Lyotard, The Differend *passim.*
[21]   *Ibid.* p.107.
[22]   *Ibid.* p.107.
[23]   *Ibid.* p.107.
[24]   *Ibid.* p.108.
[25]   *Ibid.* p.109.
[26]   Lyotard, 'Levinas' Logic', *The Lyotard Reader,* p.308.
[27]   Lyotard, 'Obligation', *The Differend,* p.110.
[28]   *Ibid.* p.110.
[29]   *Ibid.* p.110.
[30]   Levinas, 'Revelation in Jewish Tradition, *The Levinas Reader,* p.206.
[31]   *Ibid.* p.206.
[32]   *Ibid.* p.206.
[33]   'Genesis', 22:11, *Holy Bible.*
[34]   Levinas, 'Revelation in Jewish Tradition', *The Levinas Reader,* p.207.
[35]   *Ibid.* p.206.
[36]   *Ibid.* p.209.
[37]   *Ibid.* p.207.
[38]   'Genesis', 13:22, *Holy Bible.*
[39]   'Genesis', *op.cit.* 22:12.
[40]   Levinas, 'Revelation in Jewish Tradition', *The Levinas Reader,* p.202.
[41]   Lyotard, 'Obligation', *The Differend,* p.109.
[42]   *Ibid.* pp.109-110.
[43]   *Ibid.* p.110.
[44]   Lyotard, 'Levinas' Logic', *The Lyotard Reader,* p.286.
[45]   Lyotard, *The Differend,* p.109.
[46]   *Ibid.* p.106.
[47]   *Ibid.* p.xii.
[48]   *Ibid.* p.89.
[49]   *Ibid.* p.106.
[50]   *Ibid.* p.90.
[51]   *Ibid.* p.90.

[52] *Ibid.* p.91.

[53] Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.xxix.

[54] Lyotard, *The Differend*, p.90.

[55] Sacrifice in Judaism refers not to the needs of God, but to those of humankind. Epstein, *Judaism*, p.26.

[56] Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*, p.93.

[57] *Ibid.* p.93.

[58] Micheal Podro, 'Some Notes on Ron Kitaj', *Art International*, March 1979, pp.18-19.

[59] Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.62.

[60] Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*, p.139.

[61] *Ibid.* p.209.

[62] Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.xxiii.

[63] Lyotard, 'Levinas' Logic', *The Lyotard Reader*, p.293.

[64] 'Genesis', 22:18, *Holy Bible*.

[65] Levinas, 'Revelation in Jewish Tradition', *The Levinas Reader*, p.202.

[66] *Ibid.* p.109.

[67] 'Ruth', I:16, *Holy Bible*.

[68] *Ibid.* 3.

[69] *Ibid.* 2:10.

[70] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pp.75-76.

[71] *Ibid.* p.66.

[72] *Ibid.* p.68.

[73] *Ibid.* p.69.

[74] Lyotard, 'Levinas' Logic', *The Lyotard Reader*, p.276.

[75] Levinas, 'Philosophy and Awakening' in *Who Comes After the Subject?* Cadava, Connor and Nancy (eds), p.213. This theme is similar to that to be found in Lacan's treatment of the origin (split). See for example, J. Lacan 'The Mirror Phase' *Ecrits*.

[76] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp.16-17.

[77] Levinas, *Time and the Other (and additional essays)*, Pittsburg, Duquesne University Press,1987, p.85.

[78] *Ibid.* p.86.

[79] *Ibid.* pp.87-88.

[80] *Ibid.* p.86.

[81] Catherine Chalier, 'Ethics and the Feminine', in *Re-Reading Levinas*, Bernasconi and Critchley, Athlone Press, 1991.

[82] *Ibid.* p.119.

[83] *Ibid.* p.128.

[84] 'Genesis', 24:14, *Holy Bible*.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] Chalier, 'Ethics and the Feminine', p.127.

[87] *Ibid.* p.128.

[88] Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*.

[89] *Ibid.* p.68-69.

[90] Tina Chanter, 'Antigone's Dilemma' in *Re-Reading Levinas*, Bernasconi and Critchley.

[91] *Ibid.* pp.143-144.

[92] Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p.17.

[93] Levinas, 'Philosophy and Awakening' in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, Cadava, Conner and Nancy (ed.), p.208.

[94] Lyotard, *The Differend*, p.113.

[95] Levinas, 'Revelation in Jewish Tradition', *The Levinas Reader*, p.209.

[96] *Ibid.* p.209.

[97] Clifford Geerzt cited in Wlad Godzich, 'The Future Possibility of Knowledge', Introduction to Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p.xiv.

[98] Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' in *Nation and Narration*, p.301.

[99] *Ibid.* p.301.

[100] *Ibid.* p.300.

[101] *Ibid.* p.300.

[102] Edward Said, 'Empire of Sand', *Weekend Guardian*, Saturday/Sunday 12/13 January 1991, pp.4-6.

[103] Mouffe, 'Citizenship and Political Identity', *October*, No.61, p.49.

[104] *Ibid.*

[105] Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' in *Nation and Narration*, p.300.

[106] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p.195.

[107] *Ibid.* p.191.

[108] *Ibid.* p.192.

Figures – Chapter 10

72.   Giorgione, *La Tempesta*, 82x73cm. canvas. Accademia, Venice.

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CONCLUSION: Re-assumptions of Identity

The concern of this thesis has been to understand the category 'Jew' and to explore the assumptions of the shifting, unstable identities through which it has been, and indeed is, accomplished.   The question of identity has been understood as a problem of history and representation.   The notion of identity has been refused: either as 'natural' or 'essential'; or, as a matter of biology or culture; or, as a fixed set of customs, practices and meanings or, as enduring heritage and experiences. The text has described identity, and more particularly 'Jewish' identity, as repetitious but subject to re-definitions, negotiations, resistance and change. Moreover the text has sought to re-think the constitution of the subject and the Other so as to propose a going-beyond of *Identity*.

Now I present schematically the following as a summary of the salient issues which have arisen in this thesis so as to form the conclusion to the text:-

1.   In the name of identity the Jew has been created as *Other*.

2.   The notion of *Identity* in which the self is constructed in opposition and as a threat to the *Other* is a 'primordial' one. Whether or not identity is 'real', it is a notion that has itself constructed representations[1].   The meanings of identity are to be found in its uses in discourses and in institutions.

3.   Paradoxes and contradictions abound in the notion of *Jew-as-Other*. He, as a people, has been variously characterised as cerebral, a tortured soul, having a tendency to abstract thinking, full of angst, irredeemable, irrational, alien, threatening, as people with a religion which challenged Christianity, with a propensity for moral and ethical values, depraved, evil, and avaricious and so on and so forth.   Jew is a category available for exploitation.

4.   Not only is the *Jew-as-Other* seen as a threat to the self but is, in some

cases perceived as a threat to the nation state.

5.   Identity is made more complex by the development of the idea of people belonging to nation states and by the notion of race.

6.   The dialectical process through, by and in which *Jew* has been constructed as *Other* has subordinated the Jew as alien in the nation state.

7.   Nation states have invariably produced what has become the known, accepted and established culture in the West.

8.   *Jew-as-Other* is situated variously as: inside and outside – outside the inside – inside the outside of British culture, its institutions and discourses.

9.   The notion of rights in a liberal democracy failed to erase the *Jew-as-Other* because liberalism was based (and continues to be so) on a misrecognition of the relationships of power in institutions and discourses through which social relationships are mediated and regulated.

10.   The search is therefore for a language, for methods of thought and an ethic, which will allow us to excise the notion of identity and exorcise the *Jew-as-Other* as a threat.

Each chapter staged an 'event' through which the unstable place of the Other has been remarked upon.   'The Otherness of the Other' examined *Jew* as a sign in British culture. It took the notion of 'false projection' from Adorno and Horkheimer in order to illuminate the negative connotations attributed to the other. In 'Fried Fish and Matzo Meal' it was argued that social anti-semitism was given a voice in the evidence produced by the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, which politicized anti-semitism. The complexities of assimilation, the reinforcement of the normative culture, forms of resistance, and the different identities available to the Jews were considered in both 'Cutting the Cloth to Fit the Suit' and in 'An Ill-Fitting Suit'. The limits of assimilation were examined in 'Yids, Mods and Foreigners', and 'Mythical

Edges of Assimilation'.

Again and again, across and in each chapter, the limits of the emancipatory processes – assimilation and acculturation – have been encountered. The boundaries of liberal democracy have been drawn and re-drawn. The *Jew* has been shown to have been made and unmade. His occupation has been traced in diverse places as a racial, cultural, social and political category. Yet he is, as the processes of 'alienization' show, not simply 'outside' those categories, but may be outside/outside; outside/inside; inside/outside; inside/inside, too. Hence the Jew has been 'essential' in the mapping of ever-shifting boundaries (national and other) where he remains, at one and the same time, both *Other* and same.

Emancipation with its attendant value of universalism and processes leading to assimilation produce accounts of history in which the *Other* is made into the same. The radical abandonment of difference (universalism) creates its own forms of resistance which often take the form of nationalism (Zionism, perhaps) and the celebration of cultural difference (Jewish identity).

An affirmative identity for the Jew has been a persistent theme presented by Andrew Benjamin[2] and Avram Kampf[3] as a form of resistance to the dominant configurations of knowledge. Benjamin sought to install Jewish thought as counter to Western philosophical tradition in his discussion of the work of RB Kitaj. While Kampf used Jewish experience as a counter to modernist art history in the exhibition *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Experience of Art in the 20th Century*. Both accounts left 'inside' and 'outside' in place. The assertion of difference itself is already bound in the terms set by the logic of identity: which is produced through differentiation. Difference is structured into social life and is a form through which power is

articulated. The enunciation and articulation of difference constitutes hierarchies: people are discriminated against because they are already perceived as different ('The Otherness of the Other').

The negative connotations attributed to the *Other* do not arise purely out of ignorance and individual opinions which can be changed by education, by understanding and more positive attitudes to cultural diversity (although these initiatives have a place if only a limited role) but rather, as Levinas[4] suggests, belong in the realm of primary psychic processes which as we have seen spin around the conflictual emotions of desire and disavowal.

Difference and identity also have been understood as being about the fear of the Other. Jacques Rancière explains

> .... racism is the hatred of the other that comes forth when the political procedures of social polemics collapse. The political culture of conflict may have had disappointing outlets. But it was also a way of coming to terms with something that lies before and beneath politics: the question of the other as a figure of identification for the object of fear.[5]

Racism assumes purity. It assumes that there exists a fixed unified culture amongst each group claiming superiority for its own in relation to the *Other*. It denies contradiction and desires a state of conflict-free bliss. Racism is absorbed with its own fantasy of completeness. Fascism, argues Lacoue-Labarthe, had mobilized the 'identificatory emotions of the masses'[6]. It made itself subject in terms which were absolute: it politicized desire and fear, negated them and obliterated others in its radical synthesis.

Rancière also argues it was the very culture of Emancipation which provided a way of civilizing the fear of the *Other*. He goes on to suggest that the particular problem

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we now face is the collapse of politics:

> The new outcomes of racism and xenophobia thus reveal the very collapse of politics, the reversion of the political handling of a wrong to primal hate. If my analysis is correct, the question is not only, "How are we to face a political problem?" but "How are we to reinvent politics?"[7]

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To follow this argument is to suggest that the immediate causes of racism, if not its appearance are 'new'. The presentation of the *Other* is itself a political presentation and sets up the drive for a liberating, emancipatory politics which can be figured as an overcoming. But as Lacoue-Labarthe points out the politics of overcoming produced a solution, mastery and suppression. So can politics be rethought?

The thesis has offered ways of rethinking the political through calling on the work of Laclau[8] and Mouffe[9] and suggests that conditions may be such that the possibility of the dissolution of the categories identity and difference and universalism and particularism can be seen. But can this speculation be transformed into a possibility? Now in Europe we witness the despair which accompanies, reiterates and clings to the demands of identity and difference. Laclau and Mouffe's critical analyses of social democracy open-up a politics beyond this opposition enabling us to see identity and difference as always and inevitably in tension. Their work does not betray the desire of universal emancipation but critically deconstructs and allows a movement beyond liberalism to a re-affirmation.

Furthermore Levinas re-writes the *Other* not as a threat but as a 'mystery'[10]. Radical responsibility for the other is mine even before my freedom. His work proposes a new understanding of subjectivity and the problem of individuation. Ethical obligation arises immediately from the uniqueness of the moral situation itself. Obligation is binding because it takes place before understanding. Thus it is

that Levinas' work is a radical challenge to the classical problem of the role of ontology in the project of philosophy. The passage from individuation to ethics via Lyotard's work makes plain the challenge to thought itself of recognizing the 'sign' of history.

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In the discussions of Kitaj's work I showed how it was impossible to avoid becoming trapped within identity. The same was true of Gertler although the discourses which his pictures invited produced more unstable readings than did Kitaj's. It may nonetheless be possible to avoid the seductions and entrapments of 'identity thinking'. The possibility that this could be so is held out by Paul Celan in a poem 'Todtnauberg'[11], a poem which subverts any attempt to crystallize difference into identity. I will now draw upon this poem to enable one more reading which will provide a conclusion that should not be understood as definitive or conclusive.

In the work of Celan moral or ethical questions do not retreat into affirmative idealizations, (justification), nor fall into indictment, (accusation). In 'Todtnauberg', (the title of which refers to the place where Heidegger lived and where Celan visited after the War)[12], Celan, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, immortalized 'silence': referring to Martin Heidegger's 'silence' on the Exterminations Lacoue-Labarthe asks,

> Was this silence – the safeguarding of Germany – worth the risks for thought itself, of a (confessionless) confession of complicity with crime?[13]

Celan himself was a 'survivor' of a Rumanian work camp. Both his parents died in the internment camp at Trasnistria. Celan and Heidegger, according to Michael

Hamburger[14] shared an intense intellectual friendship which transcended Heidegger's past associations with and support of the Nazi regime.

The poem is indirect, allusive and evades decoded 'understanding'. It sets up a chain of possible associations which are not reducible to a single, certain, graspable meaning. In its own way it displays the consideration of ethical problems in the more general questions of identity and interpretation.

'Todtnauberg'.

Arnica, eyebright, the
draft from the well with the
starred die above it,

in the
hut,

the line
– whose name did the book
register before mine –,
the line inscribed
in that book about
a hope, today,
of a thinking man's
coming word
in the heart,

woodland sward, unlevelled,
orchid and orchid, single,

coarse stuff, later, clear
in passing,

he who drives us, the man,
who listens in,

the half–
trodden wretched
tracks through the high moors,

dampness,
much.

Now that the hassocks are burning
eat the book
with all its insignia.

'Todtnauberg' opens with names, the names of wild flowers: arnica and eyebright. Arnica heals bruising; eyebright calms inflamed eyes. Their combined curative powers suggest the possibilities of pain being soothed and comforted and clear sightedness being restored. These flowers are used in homeopathic medicine which seeks a holistic approach for the treatment of people. In terms of conventional (scientific) medicine, homeopathy has been seen as bordering upon the world of the irrational. The flowers can be changed into healing potions which for some is the outcome of reason and for others the outcome of superstition. The gulf between homeopathy and science is not unbridgeable.

Later in the poem orchids are referred to twice: 'orchid and orchid'. This species grows wild yet it is also one of the most highly cultivated plants. It grows at the extreme edge of nature and culture and is both subject of and subject to transformation. The same *genus* can exist in 'primitive' and highly cultivated forms. Nature and culture are always presented in this poem as unstable states. They cannot be categorized but slip and slide between the known and the knowable, the controllable and uncontrollable, the rational and the irrational: each seeping into the other. The boundaries between nature and culture (the orchid and the orchid) are not fixed but endlessly destabilise each other. Change is constantly figured in the poem. Everything which is observed can take another shape. Everything is made and made yet again and is always ambivalent.

Following 'arnica' and 'eyebright' comes the line, 'draft from the well', suggesting perhaps that there is a potion to be drunk. The well has the 'starred', or the fated above it. The 'starred' reminds us of the Jews (the Star of David). The Jews, who ill-starred bearing the stigma of the Star, will die.

The next two lines read

in the
hut

These three words float, isolated from the rest and evoke perhaps an image of the huts in the concentration camps.

The 'verse' which follows figures a book, a register. It asks who had been 'registered' there before? It provokes yet more questions – where is this book? Is it in Todtnauberg, or, in other words, in Heidegger's house?[15] What difference does it make to the writer or the 'person' in the line above? The line before this marks hope: the hope of a 'thinking man's' word that may change and come this time from his heart. Indeed for Hamburger Celan's poem is born out of the hope that Heidegger might one day break his silence and speak and acknowledge the survivor's wounds[16].

'Woodland sward, unlevelled', signals yet more ambiguity. Sward refers to the upper layer of vegetation, a thin crust of grass in a woodland. In English, it also refers to the skin of bodies and even more specifically to bacon rind. So more questions. What is here concealed or revealed by the sward? Does the unlevel land owe its shape to the bodies which it may at once conceal and reveal? Bacon is, of course, the 'forbidden' (taboo) food of the Jews.

Who is the man that drives? Indeed 'who' does he drive? Who is the 'he' and who are the 'us'? The man listens. Is his the passive listening of the one who is excluded or the active listening of the one who has heard the call? More precisely we are told that he listens 'in'. Yet he is neither inside nor outside. Does this man bear witness to the impossibility of witnessing?

The scene is set in the 'half-trodden wretched tracks' through the moorland. The tracks are incomplete. They are damp. Damp is emphasised by 'much'. It is followed by the first full stop of the poem. Damp is viscous, it is neither wet nor dry. It is a figuration of instability and insecurity. Perhaps it ressembles the listener, or, the man who drives, or, the 'stranger' or Jew. Nothing appears certain here until 'the hassocks are burning'. But burning hassocks have a double connotation both of vegetation and Christianity. They suggest a landscape pyre or piety (denoted by the cushions that Christians kneel upon to pray unlike the Jews who stand to pray and by so-doing face their God). Finally, in the poem the action is taken. There is an injunction to eat the book with all its insignia. Is this an image of Fascism inevitably devouring itself having seeded its own destruction?

Hamburger interprets 'Todtnauberg' as a work of redemption. He finds in it the possibility that the survivor's suffering might be alleviated by the word's of the thinker[17]. Celan's poem according to Hamburger represents an enactment of the desire that Heidegger might after all speak the word that would acknowledge the survivor's wound. If 'Todtnauberg' is understood as a poem in which the protagonist desires that the silence (Heidegger's) be broken so that hope can be restored it can only be accomplished through a logic of total destruction. It cannot be re-membered: it can only be burnt. But this is precipitous for Auschwitz has yet to be 'judged'[18]. The poem seeks neither answers nor solutions but provokes questions and yet more questions. It creates images which are in constant disarray. It is infused by a refusal to thematize this moment of history in terms which affirm one meaning or identity at the expense of another. The poem can offer no hope but simply the recognition that there are some things which cannot yet be said. The poem is in this sense, 'silent' and is a figuration of the unimaginable. It provides images neither of affirmation nor of negation; nor of accusation nor of justification.

Everything that has yet to happen has happened, is still happening.

Philosophy is, according to Lyotard, the West's madness. It never ceases to underwrite its quests for knowledge and politics in the name of the Truth and Good[19]. Further to Lyotard, it is only when the limitations of knowledge are disturbed that it can be recognized that our models of art, politics and history are themselves forms of identification. Unless *Identity* is rethought it will precipitate and determine a politics of total identification and a continuing 'history' of annihilation.

[1] This thesis argues that identity does not exist in an essential sense, rather it is made in, through and by, institutions and discourses. However it is lived through individual, social and political life. Hence identity may be experienced as if 'real'.

[2] Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-garde*.

[3] Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*.

[4] Levinas 'Zionisms', *The Levinas Reader*, p.279. See also the Preface of this thesis.

[5] Jacques Rancière, 'Politics, Identification and Subjectivation', *October No.61*, Summer 1992, pp.63–64.

[6] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p.95.

[7] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification and Subjectivation', p.64.

[8] Laclau, 'Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity', *October*, No.61.

[9] Mouffe, 'Citizenship and Political Identity', *October*, No.61, Summer 1992.

[10] See Chapter 10, footnote 79 of this thesis.

[11] Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, (trans. Michael Hamburger), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, p.293.

[12] *Ibid.* p.28.

[13] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p.117.

[14] Celan, *Selected Poems*, p.19.

[15] *Ibid.* p.28.

[16] *Ibid.* p.28.

[17] *Ibid.* p.28.

[18] See Chapter 10, footnote 46.

[19] Lyotard, 'One Thing at Stake in the Women's Struggle', *The Lyotard Reader*, p.118.

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