

**Almost English: Jews and Jewishness  
in British Children's Literature**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines constructions of Jews and Jewishness in British children's literature from the eighteenth century to the present. It demonstrates that this literature has often sought to determine the place of Jews in Britain, and that this endeavour is linked to attempts to define the English sense of self. This discourse is often politicised, with representations influenced as much by current events and political movements as by educational objectives.

The main focus of the thesis is on works published from World War II through 2010, with Chapter One providing a historical context for the later material and offering an overview of key motifs from the eighteenth century to World War II. Works by authors such as Maria Edgeworth, E. Nesbit and Rudyard Kipling are discussed alongside rare texts which have not been examined before. Chapters on gender, refugees, multiculturalism and heroes and villains reveal developments as well as continuities from earlier periods. The chapter on multiculturalism draws on unpublished interviews with authors including Adele Geras, the late Eva Ibbotson and Ann Jungman.

The sometimes competing and conflicting representations in literature which has been influenced by the impact of the Enlightenment, the Empire, the Holocaust, cultural diversity and 9/11 demonstrate that there has been no teleological progression over the centuries from anti-Semitism to acceptance, or from 'outsider' to 'insider'. Instead, many of the recurring themes in these texts reveal an ongoing concern with establishing, maintaining or problematising the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles. This tension is present in a substantial body of texts across age ranges, genres and time periods. It demonstrates that the position of Jews in Britain has been ambivalent, and that this ambivalence has persisted to a surprising degree in view of the dramatic socio-cultural changes which have taken place over two centuries.

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## Introduction

When the protagonist of *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966), Geoffrey Trease's novel set in thirteenth-century Nottingham, is forced to take temporary refuge with a family in the Jewish ghetto, the young scholar gains an insight into Jewish beliefs and rituals as well as the family's experience on the margins of the hegemonic culture. Solomon of Stamford, the doctor who comes to Robin's aid, was born in Spain and, he explains, by rights he should call himself Solomon of Seville. "But I was taken to Stamford when I was a youth and" – he hesitated and smiled shyly – "in England it is wiser to look as though you belong!" His son, David, responds to the comment with the bitter retort, 'A Jew can never belong! They will not let us' (28).

The exchange highlights questions of identity, belonging and exclusion for members of a minority group. Such issues have always been relevant, and remain so today; indeed, they could be said to have acquired a new urgency in the light of current debates about faith, culture and national identity in Britain. This thesis examines the ways in which these issues have been explored in relation to Jews, Britain's longest-standing non-Christian minority group, in children's literature from the eighteenth century to the present. It examines the continuities, tensions and transformations in works influenced by factors such as Empire, the Holocaust and 9/11, and demonstrates that literature for young people has engaged actively in a discourse that seeks to establish the place of Jews in Britain. In doing so, it considers the extent to which 'the Jew' has made the transition from margins to centre and the relationship between Englishness and the position of Jews in British society.

Political debates about Jews in Western Europe commonly framed issues of their status in terms such as the 'Jewish Question' or the 'Jewish Problem'. In England, the underlying question was often as much, or more, about the nature of English national identity as it was about Jews. The campaign for the removal of barriers to Jewish civil and legal equality led to the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753, or 'Jew Bill', which allowed Jews to be naturalised without taking a Christian oath. The bill was repealed a short time later after intense opposition from, among others, merchants who feared their livelihoods would be threatened by increased commercial opportunities for Jews. Unease about Jews resurfaced at other times, such as the period of large-scale immigration in the late nineteenth century and the



issue of whether a Jewish homeland should be established in Mandate Palestine. In England, the 'Jewish Question' never led to the level of persecution that took place elsewhere in Europe; at its most extreme it resulted in the 'Final Solution'.

Until the 1980s, Anglo-Jewish historians, of whom the most notable is probably Cecil Roth, constructed the narrative of the Jewish presence in modern England as uneventful and trouble free, with its Jewish inhabitants integrating with ease and becoming model citizens who made a valuable contribution to a tolerant and welcoming host culture. This perspective was reinforced in 2006 in the form of celebrations to mark the 350th anniversary of the readmission of the Jews after their expulsion from the country in 1290, with a service at Bevis Marks Synagogue attended by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair. The majority of representations of Jews in British children's literature problematise this view of Anglo-Jewish history, revealing, at times unintentionally, that the position of more recent historians such as Todd Endelman, David Feldman and Tony Kushner, that acceptance has not been as unqualified as it has often been represented, is more accurate.

It might be expected that the transformation of the global geopolitical landscape since 1945 would mark a definitive break with the past, but this has not been the case. Instead, some constructions of Jewish 'race', religion, gender and nationality in British children's literature have continued to make use of the language of otherness, while others have imposed an artificial, coercive sameness in which liberalism coexists seemingly paradoxically with older stereotypes. The strategies used to convey acceptance of Jewish difference in still other texts allude to the continuation of a discourse in which the position of Jews in Britain remains an issue.

Anthony Julius points to *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) and *Oliver Twist* (1838) as key texts contributing to the persistence of literary anti-Semitism in England even today (xli). The enduring popularity of the two works has helped to ensure that the characters of Shylock and Fagin remain alive, not just in literature but also in popular culture, continually reinforcing a perceived differentiation between Jews and the dominant culture and between Jews and other minorities. Michael Ragussis describes Shakespeare's play as 'the ur-text of the representation of Jewish identity in England' (11). Indeed, 'Shylock' and 'Jew' are at times used synonymously: the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for instance, defines a Shylock as 'an extortionate usurer. Also, a Jew, a pawnbroker' (n.p.). Charles Dickens' Fagin is a receiver of stolen goods whose crime is compounded by his use of child pickpockets

to further his trade. He appears poor, but hoards his wealth and cheats his criminal accomplices out of their due. Frank Felsenstein notes that Fagin encompasses ‘many aspects of the complex negative stereotype of the Jew that ... persisted as a feature of English popular culture’ (238). In both cases, the Jew takes advantage of the ‘innocent Christian’.

Given the ubiquitous association of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Oliver Twist* with Jews, it has come to seem almost inevitable that many children’s authors have felt obliged, in their own representations of Jews, to engage with aspects of the stereotypes contained in them. It is perhaps unexpected, then, that in the two centuries before the Second World War, many works for children contain representations of Jews that defy easy classification as anti-Semitic. Very few of these works are known today, and examination of them makes representations in some literature produced later seem regressive given its context of a commercial and educational environment that ostensibly strives to value cultural difference in children’s literature. Analysis of a wide range of texts across genres and historical periods shows that, rather than developing teleologically from anti-Semitism to acceptance of Jews and Jewishness, the position occupied by Jews in British society has been ambivalent, and although the degree of their outsidership has shifted, the ambivalence itself has remained surprisingly consistent in view of the dramatic socio-cultural changes that have taken place over two centuries. Throughout the thesis, representations of Jews are seen to act as aids to readers’ perceptions and understanding of Jewish difference and similarity.

## **Structure and methodology**

As a means of limiting the scope of a thesis which is already broad in many respects, I have focused primarily on works published by mainstream publishers for a general child readership. The bulk of the thesis is concerned with literature written after World War II; most of the material was published from the 1960s onwards. In order for representations in this literature to be analysed adequately, however, they must be seen in relation to those that came before, in specific texts and also in terms of motifs and themes more generally. Chapter 1 provides this background, beginning with the eighteenth century, when material written for children’s enjoyment increasingly

began to include images of Jews, and a time when political turmoil around the status of Jews in England intersected with the increasing liberalisation of society.

Because Chapter 1 covers a period of almost 200 years, it was necessary to take a selective rather than a comprehensive approach. Much of this literature does not feature Jewish protagonists or obvious Jewish themes. Therefore, locating the most relevant literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was achieved largely through full-text searches of databases such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO), Literature Online, Project Gutenberg, and the Internet Archive, as well as through the British Library and COPAC catalogues, and through contact with antiquarian booksellers and a collector of early children's literature. Critical texts, too, led to some primary sources: Mary Cadogan's 1988 study of Frank Richards pointed me towards the boys' magazines *The Magnet* and *Gem*, for instance, while Charlotte Hynes' 1982 MA thesis on representations of Jews in *Chums* was also helpful. Once I had amassed a sizeable body of literature, I selected a sample of texts that represented a range of genres, time periods and themes. In the course of my research I uncovered a wealth of rare material, much of which had not been examined before.

Chapter 1 is structured in broad, but not strict, chronological order. Attempts to organise the material chronologically by decade, for instance, proved unsuccessful because texts from particular genres often crossed date lines, which led to too much repetition. It was clearer, less repetitive and more productive to group texts by genre or theme instead. The chapter encompasses a wide range of genres, including moral tales, 'London Cries', conversionist literature, boys' stories, fantasy and historical fiction.

Some of the literature examined in Chapter 1 was written to entertain a mass readership, while other material was written with a more educative impulse in mind and had a smaller, largely middle class readership. The juxtaposition of these different types of literature within a broad survey serves to highlight that some tropes remain recognisable across often very different genres and eras even if they are modified to take socio-historical changes into account.

It would be useful at this point to provide a summary of some of these tropes, many of which are not only introduced, but reinforced, adapted or contested in literature examined in Chapter 1 as well as later in the thesis. These include Judaism as a misguided or outmoded religion; 'the Jew' as pious, but lacking spirituality

and/or morality, or as seemingly pious, but ‘in reality’ harsh and authoritarian; ‘the Jew’ as an avaricious and miserly moneylender or a wealthy capitalist who serves his own ends or exploits others; a Communist, loyal to an international Jewish network; a pedlar whose seemingly respectable profession conceals financially motivated criminal activity, or who appears poor but hoards his wealth; a trusted adult who takes moral or physical advantage of young people; a ‘dark’, exotic, beautiful child or young adult, often with large, dark eyes and black hair; an ugly, bent, hook-nosed, bearded elderly man dressed in a black gabardine; someone whose accent or lisp marks them as Jewish even if they were English-born.

Chapter 2 considers how children’s literature addressed the position of Jewish refugees during World War II in literature written at the time, memoirs published in the succeeding decades, and books written towards the end of the century. This chapter explores the issues of religious difference and the perceived ‘national’ difference of English as well as foreign-born Jews. It includes some literature written specifically for Jewish children in order to compare the attitude of the host culture towards child refugees from Nazi Europe with that of English Jews, whose efforts to aid their persecuted brethren have been the subject of historiographical debate in recent years. My discussion of this previously unexamined material makes a contribution to scholarship in this area by illuminating the ambiguous message given to English-Jewish children about the refugees.

Most of the mainstream texts advocate acceptance of Jews on condition that they abandoned Jewish particularity and adopted what the writers saw as superior English cultural values, while later memoirs by former refugees reveal the tensions between resisting the pressure to assimilate and the desire to do so. The imperative to educate young readers in post-Holocaust texts about the effects of intolerance leads unintentionally to fixed and simplistic constructions of Jews and Jewishness.

The texts examined in Chapter 3 were written between the late 1950s and the early 1990s. The few representations of Jews in realist children’s literature at this time reveal that the majority culture continued to have an ambivalent relationship with its Jewish minority at a time when liberal assimilationism was ostensibly giving way to multiculturalism. It demonstrates that the acceptance of British Jews as both British and Jewish was often conditional, and that Jewish difference was often constructed in exclusionary ‘racial’ terms. The chapter, which explores some

possible reasons for the relative absence of material by Jewish authors, includes original material from unpublished interviews with authors.

The first three chapters demonstrate that in literature for young people Jews were constructed in terms of difference that could be said to be national, racio-ethnic or religious in character. Some aspects of many constructions overlap, and therefore these constructions cannot be confined to a single category. A significant, additional way in which Jewish difference was constructed, in literature for adults and also in society, was in terms of gender. Such constructions often had a sexual dimension, and because literature for young people avoided the issue of sex until around 1970, earlier constructions of Jews often sublimated the sexual element in representations Jewish young people as 'exotic' beauties. Historically, however, stereotypical constructions of Jewish masculinity and femininity have been many and varied, and several of these tropes have appeared in literature for young people published since the 1970s.

It is necessary, then, to bring this major area into the discussion through an examination and analysis of the range of representations of Jewish masculinity and femininity. As the earlier chapters examine 'race'/ethnicity, religion and nationality from a variety of perspectives, and as it was impossible to integrate a discussion of gender into those chapters, it is appropriate to give this subject the consideration it requires in a chapter of its own. Chapter 4 argues that the majority of literature for young people reflects historical constructions of Jewish masculinity and femininity by representing them as other to that of normative masculinity and femininity. Some, however, use familiar tropes as a means of critiquing hegemonic culture, and many resist the simplistic dominant Jewish woman/weak Jewish man binary common in popular culture.

The final chapter considers representations of Jews in historical fiction, demonstrating that by the start of the twenty-first century, the broad post-Holocaust consensus that representations of Jews should be 'positive' fractured as part of a growing postmodern, post-9/11 sensibility that encompasses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the 'war on terror'. As part of this shift, some of this literature comes full circle, drawing on motifs and constructions of Jews not unlike those seen in the works examined in Chapter 1.

I have attempted to be comprehensive rather than indicative in my coverage of relevant literature published between 1945 and the present. The material examined

in these chapters is found in texts ranging from picture books through to teenage fiction, and includes poetry, memoirs, historical fiction and realist fiction. The only genres excluded are folktales and collections of Bible stories, either of which could form the basis of a separate research project in itself.

I located some contemporary material by searching through children's books set in the Victorian era and the Middle Ages; some of these engage intertextually with earlier constructions of Jews. I solicited suggestions from members of children's literature listservs, and searched the children's books magazine *Books for Keeps* for reviews, and publisher catalogues for new release information. The few scholarly articles on Jews in British children's literature also pointed to some material. Inevitably, I will have overlooked some texts, but I have identified and read the majority of those relevant to my subject. I have discussed nearly all of the primary texts I have located; however, the structure of the thesis precludes in-depth analysis of every title. Some of those not discussed in individual chapters are referred to in the Conclusion, in which I consider fruitful areas for further research and reflect on what the body of representations of Jews and Jewishness suggests about the ways in which British writers address cultural difference in their writing for young people. I also look at representational trends in American literature and consider whether they might point to future directions in representations of Jews in British children's literature.

### **Critical and theoretical context**

This thesis does not fit neatly into a single subject area; it includes elements of history, sociology, literary criticism, feminist theory, cultural theory, postcolonial theory and theories of multiculturalism as they pertain to children's literature. In all of these fields, Jews are often considered tangential to the main issue, if they are considered at all. Jewish Studies is itself interdisciplinary. I am therefore working in a sparsely populated field, and this provides a rare opportunity to incorporate children's literature and/or the study of Jews and Jewishness into a number of academic disciplines in which they have hitherto been relatively absent.

In the introduction to a 2003 issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn* dedicated to Jewish children's literature, Suzanne Rahn and Naomi Sokoloff point out that Jewish literature for children has received scant critical attention, and explain that their aim

in producing the issue ‘is to stimulate further inquiry at the point where Jewish studies intersects with children’s literature’ (vi). Thus far, the only response to their call has been Judith Saltman’s 2004 article in *Canadian Children’s Literature*. Several full-length analyses of representations of Jews in British literature for adults have been published, but my research is the first major study in this area to focus on such representations in literature for young people. It surveys nearly 150 texts, many of them previously unknown, particularly those written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have also discovered rare material by Victorian Jewish writers for a Jewish child readership. I begin to explore this material here; however, the bulk of it will form the basis of a separate study.

In the few relevant critical works available, British texts are included as titles in a survey rather than being examined in their own right. Pat Pinsent’s ‘After Fagin: Jewishness and Children’s Literature’ (2000) gives a brief overview, beginning with Dickens and ending with contemporary books about the Holocaust. Her chapter is included in *Christian-Jewish Relations Throughout the Centuries*; the book’s title suggests that its content might focus on theology rather than culture or ethnicity, and, in fact, much of it does deal with religious issues. However, Pinsent includes texts about World War II in her piece, a decision which foregrounds the slipperiness between Jewish ‘race’ and religion. Indeed, in some of the texts I examine in this thesis, the two are closely intertwined. In “‘Like a Star Through Flying Snow’: Jewish Characters Visible and Invisible’ (2003), the survey that begins the special issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Suzanne Rahn mentions Shakespeare, Dickens, Kipling, Nesbit and Streatfeild – works by non-Jews and with non-Jewish protagonists – before focusing primarily on Jewish-American works. Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) is considered in greater depth elsewhere by Cheyette (1993), McBratney (2000) and others.

In *British Children’s Fiction in the Second World War* (2007), Owen Dudley Edwards touches on Richmal Crompton’s attitudes to Jews in the ‘Just William’ series. Of British texts written after the Second World War, Rahn’s article makes reference only to *Return to Freedom* (1962) by Josephine Kamm and Geoffrey Trease’s *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966). Despite its title, Karen Rowlands’ unpublished MA dissertation, ‘Jews and Jewry in Children’s Prose Fiction Published in Post-War Britain’ (1976), focuses primarily on American literature. British children’s literature from the 1970s onwards is referred to only in newspaper and

magazine reviews. This can be explained in part by a paucity of primary texts, unlike in the United States, which, nevertheless, also has a shortage of critical material. The only related area to receive sustained critical attention is the Holocaust. My project's focus on England necessitates the exclusion of children's literature about the Holocaust in mainland Europe; in any case, the Shoah has been addressed in depth before, in many articles and three full-length studies (Kertzer 1999; Bosmajian 2001; Kokkola 2002). Yet it would be impossible to completely exclude the Holocaust from any study of Jews that takes in the 70 years during and after the war, whether it be literary, sociological or historical in nature. Even if such a project does not consider the events of the Holocaust directly, any examination of literature written after the war must at least acknowledge its psychological impact on the post-war literary imagination. My project does this and, more specifically, examines the Holocaust in the context of child refugees from Nazism, a subject more directly related to the broader questions of Jewish identity I address throughout the thesis. Scholarly attention to Jewish refugees in children's literature is limited; the most significant work on this area appears in Gillian Lathey's *The Impossible Legacy: Identity and Purpose in Autobiographical Children's Literature Set in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (1999), which takes a psychoanalytical approach in its comparison of writings by British, German non-Jewish and German-Jewish authors.

The majority of studies of Jews in British literature examine texts published up to the end of the Second World War, and Victorian literature in particular. Works by David Philipson (1889), Montagu Frank Modder (1939) and Edgar Rosenberg (1960) discuss stereotypes in familiar works by Marlowe, Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens and Eliot. Frank Felsenstein (1995) widens the scope to examine anti-Semitic stereotypes in popular culture of the long eighteenth century, arguing that prejudices dating from medieval times remained common until the nineteenth century. More recently, scholars have examined literature of the same period, situating the texts in their historical and political contexts and considering whether the good Jew/bad Jew binary might be more complex than it would seem. Bryan Cheyette (1995) integrates literary, cultural and postcolonial theory in *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945*. He contends that merely labelling images of Jews in literature as anti-Semitic stereotypes is unproductive, on the grounds that the figure of 'the Jew' is



indeterminate rather than fixed, and that this very indeterminacy highlights the tensions in defining the limits of the English nation. Like Cheyette, Michael Ragussis, in *Figures of Conversion: 'the Jewish Question' and English National Identity* (1995) and Nadia Valman in *The Jewess in Nineteenth Century British Literary Culture* (2007), suggest that 'the Jew' was used by non-Jewish authors as a figure against which their own as well as their nation's identity could be constructed.

This issue of the building and development of identity could be said to be particularly relevant to young people, who are at a stage of life where their personal beliefs and attitudes are almost inevitably still being formed. Furthermore, children's literature often has the aim of socialising young people into the culture in which they will play an active role as adults; it is, therefore, unsurprising that such concerns would appear in literature intended for young readers.

Ragussis contrasts nineteenth-century evangelical novels whose plots centre on the conversion of Jews with novels which 'critiqued the English national character by subjecting it to a moral re-evaluation on the basis of English attitudes toward the Jews' (13). Such a conversionist or revisionist approach is clearly discernible in much of the literature I examine. I use the term 'conversion' to indicate not only the alteration of allegiance from one religion to another, but also to highlight the potential for a further transformation of 'nation' or 'race'. This reflects the fact that some texts seek to 'convert' Jews from Judaism or Jewish 'race' to Christianity or Englishness, while others (particularly those written during the 1960s, a time of increasing immigration from the Commonwealth and of greater openness about the Holocaust) are critical of this coercive impulse, seeking instead to 'convert' to tolerance from prejudice those from the dominant culture. Lynne Vallone uses this metaphor in children's literature more generally, adopting the opposition 'conversion and resistance', and suggesting that in contemporary children's literature an 'ethics of resistance' takes an approach in which 'difference should neither be effaced nor explained away, but celebrated' (183). Vallone elides Jewish difference in her model: her description of the use of difference 'to highlight the "normative" (or white, middle-class) character's identity' (185) subsumes Jews within a dominant Christian culture in which, as I will demonstrate, they are rarely, if ever, the 'normative' character. Furthermore, there is a subtle distinction between the terms 'otherness' and 'difference', even if they are often used interchangeably. The impulse to efface or justify difference that Vallone notes seems to indicate a

reinforcement of the other/self binary, while the term 'difference' itself seeks to contest the binary and, I suggest, is a more appropriate way to approach issues of multiculturalism in contemporary children's literature.

The majority of existing critical material focuses on writing about Jews by the dominant culture, yet some studies of English literature by Jews do exist (see, for instance, Zatlin 1981; Galchinsky 1996; Lassner 2008; and Valman 2007). It might be assumed that the label 'Jewish literature' is easily defined as literature by Jewish writers, but such an assumption is problematic. In the post-war books mentioned in her article on Jewish children's literature, Suzanne Rahn includes *The Red Towers of Granada*, which features Jewish characters, though not a Jewish protagonist, and which was written by a non-Jewish author. The piece also lists nine authors who, she says, have identified themselves as Jews and are writing Jewish characters. On the list is Lynne Reid Banks, who is also included in *'In the Open': Jewish Women Writers and British Culture*, Claire Tylee's 2006 study of Jewish women writers and British culture. Yet Banks, daughter of a Scottish father and Irish mother, a Zionist who lived on a kibbutz for several years with her British-Israeli-Jewish husband, writes in the introduction to her book *Letters to My Israeli Sons* (1979), 'I am not Jewish, which means that, strictly speaking, you are not' (1). Is Michael Rosen, an atheist and anti-Zionist, a Jewish author? What about Morris Gleitzman, who had one Jewish grandparent (after whom he is named), was not raised as a Jew, and has written about the Holocaust? It could be said that one need not be Jewish to write Jewish literature, and implicit in the question of what constitutes Jewish literature is the acknowledgement that Jewishness itself is a contested area. As Emanuel Litvinoff notes in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Jewish Short Stories* (1979): 'It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reach an agreed definition of a Jew in racial, religious or social terms' (7). I have avoided this issue for the most part by focusing on Jewish characters rather than 'Jewish literature'. Still, it is inevitable that writers are influenced by their cultural heritage and ideological positions, whether intentionally or not, and when their particular background and experience has a bearing on the ways in which they construct Jews and Jewishness, I have brought these factors into the discussion.

Much of the children's literature written about Jews is by non-Jewish authors who define Jews and Jewishness in their own fairly limited terms, despite the fact that there is a plethora of ways in which Jews self-identify. The majority of this

literature focuses on ‘white’ Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, although a few texts do include ‘dark’ Sephardi Jews, whose origins lie in Spain and Portugal. Where possible, and where appropriate, I will distinguish between these two groups, but in practice differences between them of cultural and religious practice are ignored by the majority of the authors whose works are studied here.

The migration of Jews from Europe to far-flung lands, together with their biblical ties to the land of Israel, led to a view of Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as simultaneously ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’. The Jewish woman, in particular, was often constructed as an ‘exotic Oriental’. The figure of the Orientalised Jew is easily understood as a product of the colonial imagination, but the position of Jews in the field of postcolonial studies is ambivalent, because the majority resided mainly in Europe and therefore were not associated with the lands that were the focus of the Imperial project. But as Jonathan Boyarin points out, Edward Said observes that imperialism originated in ‘white Christian Europe’, yet he does not consider the position of those Europeans who were not Christian (*Storm* 78). In a later work, Boyarin suggests that Europe’s Jews were constrained by ‘internal colonialism’ (‘Postcolonial’ 69). Cheyette notes similarities between what he calls ‘semitic discourse’ and colonial discourse, and explains that the difference between them and racial discourse in general ‘is the extent to which “the Jew” could directly encroach upon the consciousness of the metropolitan white bourgeoisie’ (*Constructions* 271).

The title of this thesis, ‘Almost English’, alludes to my argument that Jews inhabit a liminal space neither wholly within nor without that reserved for those who ‘belong’. It is in part a reference to *Almost an Englishman* (1979), Charles Hannam’s memoir of the period when he had rid himself of all apparent traces of his origins as a German Jew, only to find that the exchange of one identity for another was not quite so straightforward a process as he had hoped – a realisation, reached, ironically, while he was serving in the British Army in India. Hannam realises that despite his ‘white’ European origins and English accent, as a Jew he will only ever be ‘almost’ English. The title points, too, to Homi Bhabha’s description of colonised peoples’ relation to the colonisers as ‘almost the same but not quite’ (*Location* 127); this state of unbelonging is intertwined with the position of Europe’s Jews, and particularly England’s Jews, as not-quite-coloniser and not-quite-colonised.

Both 'English' and 'British' appear in the full title of this thesis, and both are deliberately used in the course of the study. The vast majority of Jews in Britain live in England (in London) rather than in Scotland or Wales, and have always done so. The largest wave of immigration to England took place during the height of Empire; these Jews were acculturated into an Englishness which, as Bryan Cheyette points out, was an identity 'based on a fixed and homogeneous sense of self that is rooted in the past' (*Contemporary* xiii). The transition to a more diverse Britain in the decades after World War II signals a shift from 'English' to 'British' and 'Anglo-Jewish' to 'British-Jewish', and this shift is signalled in the title. However, when referring to the nation more generally, rather than to a specifically 'English culture', I do use the terms 'British' and 'Britain' even when discussing the period before World War II.

Embedded in these issues of belonging, ambivalence and identity is the further question of how Jewishness might be defined in ethno-racial terms. Jews are described as a race in some of the literature examined in this study; some of it was written before 1945, and some was published in the 1960s and 1970s. The use of the term 'race' has a particular resonance when applied to Jews because of its association with nineteenth- and twentieth-century race scientists, whose classification of those with 'Jewish blood' as inferior led down a path towards the Holocaust. The concept of race in a biological sense has been largely superseded by a sociological model in which race is understood to be a cultural and social construction. This shift is reflected in the adoption on official ethnographical data collection forms of ethnic rather than racial designations. The terms 'race', 'white' and 'black' are placed in inverted commas by authors such as Bryan Cheyette, who does so, for instance, in the title of his edited collection *Between 'Race' and Culture: Representations of 'the Jew' in English and American Literature* (1996) in order to highlight the constructedness of race and also to demonstrate its instability, for Jews have been considered 'black', 'white' or not quite either at various historical and geographical junctures. The figure of 'the Jew' is, of course, itself a construction, and is placed in inverted commas to foreground its existence as a product of the literary imagination. And yet, for all its complex associations, Steven Kaplan (2003) has found that, at times, Jews describe themselves as a 'race':

The racial identity of Jews is a *cultural reality*, which forms an important part of their social identity and self-image. Like Whites, Blacks, Asians, and other groups commonly designated as 'races', Jews are popularly identified

both by others and themselves as a group with a shared descent, history and even appearance. (81)

American scholars have resurrected the connection between Jews and race in their accounts of the transition of American Jews from a community on the margins to one perceived by themselves or others to be closer to the centre (Brodkin 1999; Goldstein 2006). In Britain, the 2006 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism* considers anti-Semitism to be a particular form of racism, and bases its definition in part on that in the *Macpherson Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (6). Silverman and Yuval-Davis (1999) point out that in Britain new paradigms have emerged which have widened the discussion of racism to include Jews and Arabs (25). While I am not concerned in this project to establish definitively whether Jews are a race or an ethnic group or to position them on the racial spectrum, many of the texts I am examining participate in a dialogue with earlier literature in which Jews were constructed in racial terms, and in evaluating these works it is essential to acknowledge this history and current perceptions of Jewish 'race' or ethnicity. This area is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. At times in my thesis I describe Jews as an 'ethnic minority', a term that has been replaced in official British government parlance with BME (black and minority ethnic). However, the preferred terminology changes with some regularity, and as a self-identifying member of an ethnic minority group, that is the term I choose to use. The government's report into anti-Semitism defines Jews in ethno-racial terms, but official data collection materials currently allow for Jews to self-identify only as a religion.

Some Jewish people, of course, do identify Jewishness purely in relation to the practice of Judaism, at least publicly, and have done so for many years. Indeed, for members of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish élite, many of whom had Sephardic origins, this was part of a strategy to gain acceptance by the majority culture and one employed as part of a widespread project to Anglicise poor Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. The varied ways in which Jews have constructed themselves in terms of difference from and similarity to other groups, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and the tensions between these approaches to interactions with the majority culture, is an area meriting further investigation, particularly in relation to its impact on children. The scale of such a project, however, makes further exploration of it impossible in this current study.

The tendency in recent years to define Jewishness in terms of religion is undoubtedly one reason why Jews have often been omitted from recent critical and theoretical considerations of multiculturalism in Britain. By contrast, scholars such as Sander Gilman (2006) and David Biale, Michael Galchinsky and Susannah Heschel (1998) are working to situate Jews within a theoretical context of multiculturalism in America. The definition of 'multiculturalism' itself is not fixed by any means. In children's literature and education in Britain, a multicultural society is often defined as one in which groups whose cultural origins lie in another country reside here, either as migrants or as British-born citizens whose families have established roots in the country; that these subcultures are different from but equal to the hegemonic culture; and that their presence enriches British society as a whole. This is the meaning I apply to my use of the term in this thesis. Beyond children's literature, 'multiculturalism' is contested in Britain, not only in the ways in which it is defined, but as a model for interaction between the cultural groups that make up the nation, its respect for cultural diversity said by many to promote separatism and intercultural strife.

Alongside 'multiculturalism', I use terms that describe other positions that diverse groups might occupy within a culture. At the opposite end of the spectrum from multiculturalism is 'assimilation', the absorption of a minority culture into the dominant culture. Assimilation leads to the abandonment of their cultural particularity by members of the minority group. I use the term 'integration' to mean that minorities adopt many of the cultural practices of the dominant group, but retain some of their distinctive beliefs and traditions; integration accepts the validity of cultural hybridity. While in the thesis I find assimilationist ideology to be problematic in relation to contemporary literature, I do not discuss these models of engagement between minorities and majority with the aim of advocating any one of them. Instead, I refer to them within the discussion of particular texts, positioning a given model within the context of the wider cultural view on the subject and demonstrating that the literature forms part of an ongoing debate in society about the relative merits of these models of intercultural relations.

Even if there is broad accord in the education sector about what constitutes a multicultural society, there is not as much agreement about the definition of 'multiculturalism' as it pertains specifically to literature for young people. Mingshui Cai and Rudine Sims Bishop explain that multicultural literature focuses on 'some

identifiable “other”— persons or groups that differ in some way ... from the dominant white American cultural group’ (qtd. in Taxel 6); precisely which others has been the subject of much debate. Kruse and Horning offer a narrow definition of multicultural literature as comprising ‘works that focus on “people of color”’ (qtd. in Cai 5), while Smith also includes issues of disability and sexuality (qtd. in Taxel 5), and Harris adds to the list ‘the elderly ... religious minorities, language minorities ... and concerns about class’(qtd. in Cai 5). Cai and Sims Bishop (1994) claim that all pedagogical definitions of multicultural literature agree that it ‘is about groups of people that are distinguished racially, culturally, linguistically and in other ways from the dominant white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, patriarchal culture’ (qtd. in Cai 5), but Taxel points out that ‘in the United States, multicultural education is often interpreted as a reference to groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans’ (5). Indeed, Cai himself concentrates almost exclusively in his book on groups considered racially non-white.<sup>1</sup>

When Jews are included in British works on multiculturalism in children’s literature, it is often on the basis of texts not originally written for children, or material about the Holocaust. Gillian Klein (1985) situates Jews in her discussion of stereotypes, using the case of the Jews as a warning from history about racism rather than including them as a group that might be subjected to racism today, while Beverley Naidoo (1992) includes *Friedrich* (Richter 1961), a novel of Second World War Germany by a German author, in her examination of British child readers’ responses to literary representations of racism. Pat Pinsent’s *Children’s Literature and the Politics of Equality* (1997), which refers to key works on equality issues before considering more recent primary texts, looks back to portrayals of Jews in *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Oliver Twist*. Elsewhere (2000), she observes that fewer books about Jews have been published in Britain since the 1980s than about other minority groups. She highlights the pedagogical function of children’s literature, suggesting that ‘perhaps the main issue today is not how to portray Jewish characters and traditions, but rather what should be done by teachers to help readers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, to read critically those books from the past that display prejudice’ (327).

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<sup>1</sup> He does mention two texts featuring Jewish characters, one of them about a girl with Jewish and African-American parentage, the other, a historical novel that provoked controversy because it included negative images of Jews.

Pinsent is correct that a teacher or other adult can help to put such representations in their socio-historical contexts. However, if child readers encounter such images without the mediation of a knowledgeable adult, and if these are the only images of Jews, or any group, that are available, what then? Some literary theory focuses on the implied reader, but behind the implied reader lies the real reader, and even if in the absence of research one can only surmise the true effect of a book's content on an individual, literature does offer a point of intersection between the reader and the culture in which it is produced and consumed and, therefore, its potential effect on child readers should not be ignored. 'Prejudice', though, is a loaded word; it is easy to see prejudice or anti-Semitism in a text from the past that contains stereotypes which today we might find offensive. Sometimes, it is indeed present; at others, authors may be reflecting the prevailing and generally accepted views of their society. There are also times when they may be drawing on an established literary or popular tradition without thinking more deeply about it.

In recent decades, some scholars have sought to establish a new vocabulary that goes beyond simple categorisation as philo- or anti-Semitism and recognises the greater complexity and instability of Western culture's response to Jews. Bryan Cheyette's term 'semitic discourse' avoids 'the inherent moralising attached to these ... terms, especially when they are narrowly applied to illustrate an individual's "hostility" or "affinity" towards "the Jews"' (*Constructions* 8). Anthony Julius differentiates between what he calls 'Jew-distrust' (351) and more insidious forms of anti-Semitism; nevertheless, he gathers the full spectrum of negative responses to 'Jews' under the single umbrella of anti-Semitism. He chooses the term 'because it assists in the resisting of a common tendency to collapse Jew-hatred into a more generalized racism' (lvii). My reading suggests that, on the contrary, anti-Semitism is not considered part of the general anti-racist discourse, even when the Holocaust is being used as a tool with which to teach about other forms of racism. Furthermore, setting anti-Semitism entirely apart from other forms of racism merely reinforces the tendency to elide the commonalities shared by Jews and other minority groups. Nor does acknowledging differences between racisms necessitate a refusal to acknowledge aspects that are shared; indeed, a more widespread consideration of anti-Semitism as racism against Jews might serve to signal the need for a place for Jews in multicultural education in Britain that goes beyond study of the Holocaust. Although in practice I attempt to resist categorising constructions and instead try to



highlight where a representation interacts with a stereotype from earlier literature, I do, at times, point out where these associations have been considered anti-Semitic. My aim in doing so is not simply to highlight anti-Semitic stereotypes in children's literature, and such classifications are often open to debate in any case.

Given the wide range of beliefs about, and literary images of, 'the Jews', it seems that a more subtle nomenclature is required, even if it is used to inform my approach rather than being directly employed to label and categorise individual representations. Cheyette's 'semitic discourse' seems not to go far enough to acknowledge the indeterminacy of the position of Jews in literature and society, despite the fact that this is precisely what he has amply demonstrated in his work. The most fitting term to apply in this particular project is 'allosemitism', a term aligned with the broader concept of 'alterity'. Used most notably by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, 'allosemitism' was coined by Polish-Jewish literary historian Artur Sandauer and refers to the practice of 'othering' Jews, thereby incorporating both philo- and anti-Semitism (Bauman 143). As Bauman describes it, allosemitism 'is essentially non-committal' (143), although the verb 'othering' does point to a more complete exclusion than is often the case.

Many of the major themes that repeatedly recur in British children's literature serve to highlight the uncertain position of Jews in England. These themes include the tensions between images of England and Jerusalem as the Holy Land, and between English Christians, and Jews, as the 'Chosen People'; the impulse to 'convert' Jews to Englishness or Christianity; the notion of being 'a Jew in the home and a man in the street'; and the related theme of 'passing' as a Gentile. Constructions of Jews in terms of 'race', religion, nationality and gender, as British-Jewish, and as 'good Jew' or 'bad Jew', illustrate a continuing concern with establishing, maintaining or problematising boundaries between Jews and Gentiles. Together, these constructions reveal a struggle to define not just Jews and Jewishness, but also Englishness, or Britishness. That this struggle is present in a substantial body of texts across age ranges, genres and time periods demonstrates that the Jewish Question has persisted, in various forms, from the eighteenth century to today.

## Chapter 1

### England, 'Jerusalem' and the Jews: the Eighteenth Century to the Second World War

In *The Holy Land in English Culture 1799-1917*, Eitan Bar-Yosef points to the 'vernacular biblical culture' of Sunday school, reading the family Bible and 'listening to mother read *The Pilgrim's Progress*' (11) as a significant force in the relocation in the English imagination of Jerusalem to England. Such an activity almost inevitably must position the tensions between 'Old' and 'New' Jerusalem and the two 'Chosen Peoples' at the centre of constructions of English self-identity. Heidi Kaufman suggests that the imagining of 'English supremacy and chosen-ness ... played a powerful role in underwriting racial and imperial ideologies' (5).

The notion of building a new Jerusalem in England was used to underpin a variety of ideologies during this period, from the Puritan John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678-84), which reinscribes the 'golden vision of the New Jerusalem in the contemporary panorama of English life' (Bar-Yosef 21), to the late-eighteenth century 'hope for a "Jerusalem" of social justice among radical circles' (2), of which William Blake was part. The idea of England as the Holy Land was often aspirational. For some, it was a secular utopian ideal of a tolerant, egalitarian society far removed from the more prosaic reality. Others envisaged a return to spirituality and devotion to God that was thought to be lacking in the liberalising and secularising modern world. These discrepancies were especially notable in depictions of a London of both opulent wealth and extreme poverty, which led some to liken the city not to Jerusalem but to its immoral, corrupt 'spiritual sister', Babylon (Madden 131). Alternatively, the 'real', geographical Holy Land could be seen as a 'natural' focus for the Imperial mission, the site of the religious conversion of the Jews, or both. These religious and secular conceptions of England, the English and Jews, explored in some literature through the metaphors of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, found expression in many other texts in more literal terms. Ideas about society and the place of Jews in it at times intersect in unexpected ways, particularly when 'the Jew' is used as a means of interrogating or bolstering apparently

conflicting constructions of English identity and the nation, which themselves are shown to be unstable.

The tensions and overlaps between Englishness and Jewishness could be said to acquire a particular significance when encountered in literature for young people, in which ideology is often laid bare as a result of its didactic mission of socialising children into their roles in their own society and the wider world. This chapter argues that ‘the Jew’ performed a central, though fluid, role in the range of ideologies that formed the discourses aimed at defining the English sense of self in children’s literature. As this chapter will demonstrate, despite the fact that they were a very small and relatively disempowered group, Jews appeared in a large number of texts for young people across a wide range of genres at this time; the pivotal function played by ‘the Jew’ helps to account for their surprising presence in this literature.<sup>1</sup>

These works are often political, their representations of Jews influenced as much by current events or broad political movements as by moral or educational impulses specific to literature for young people. Many of the texts produced during this period include tropes which sought to define and contain Jews and Jewishness within religious, ‘racial’ and/or national boundaries that differentiated them from the English. This chapter traces the commonalities and transitions in these constructions over this time period, the symbolic functions they serve and their use across diverse generic categories. It begins with the eighteenth century, when publishing for children came into its own and when Jews were being granted greater civil and legal liberties. Accompanying these freedoms was an unofficial ‘emancipation contract’ in which the Jews of Western Europe would be treated as equal to those from the dominant culture if they would confine their Jewish particularity to the home and assimilate as far as possible in wider society; the slogan accompanying the parallel Jewish-led Enlightenment movement exhorted them to be ‘a Jew at home and a man in the street’.

The chapter demonstrates that even if the boundaries between Jews and the dominant culture shift in this literature, the tensions behind the construction of such boundaries remain. The chapter serves as a point of comparison with the rest of the thesis, which examines literature from World War II to the present. As will be seen,

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<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were no more than 8,000 Jews in England and still only around 35,000 (Endelman 40, 80) a century later out of a population of 16.8 million (Jefferies 3).

some tropes and motifs continue to adapt, and some vanish but re-emerge much later in easily recognisable forms, while others never disappear at all.

## **Jerusalem or Babylon?**

The debate around the passing of the Jewish Naturalization Act, or ‘Jew Bill’, in 1753 raised the question of the extent to which Jews could or should be incorporated into the nation. The bill applied in practice to a very small number of Jewish merchants, of Sephardi background, but inspired heated opposition nevertheless. The idea that Jews – for centuries labelled Christ-killers, and thought in the Middle Ages to murder Christian children and drink their blood as part of religious rites – could be treated in law as almost equal to English Anglican citizens was seen by some as a threat to the very foundations of a nation whose identity was inextricably bound up with Christianity.

Children’s literature in the early- to mid-eighteenth century highlights the opposition between Judaism and Christianity in references to Jews more often than it includes representations of Jewish people. In ‘Praise for the Gospel’, from the frequently reprinted *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), Isaac Watts gives thanks for being born a Christian and not ‘a heathen or a Jew’ (4), while in ‘A Cradle Hymn’ he is explicit in his condemnation:

Yet to read the shameful story  
How the Jews abus’d their King  
How they serv’d the Lord of Glory  
Makes me angry while I sing. (29-32)<sup>2,3</sup>

In *An Essay on Instructing Children on Various Useful and Uncommon Subjects* (1743), John Vowler represents Jews as barbaric unbelievers:

Matthew in Africa doth Christ proclaim  
He’s by a soldier with a Halbert slain  
James minor gospel truths bravely maintains  
Till with a club the Jews beat out his brains. (23-26)

Vowler and Watts highlight theological differences between Christians and Jews with the obvious objectives of instilling the tenets and values of Christianity in child readers and of distinguishing Christianity from belief systems that the mainstream

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<sup>2</sup> Although this hymn appears in the 1715 edition, it is not in the 1716, 1735 or 1750 editions, but then reappears in every edition between 1769 and at least the end of the century.

<sup>3</sup> In his 1719 translation of the Psalms, Watts replaces references to Israel with the words ‘Great Britain’ (Bar-Yosef 40).

culture considered inferior. The behaviour of the infidel Jews is contrasted with that of the virtuous Christians, reinforcing messages young readers would have heard in church and helping them to consolidate their identity as Christians as well as to distance themselves from religious outsiders.

Isaac Watts was a religious nonconformist whose views on education were influenced by John Locke (Rivers 727). Watts' educational treatise, *A Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth* (1753), is described as 'an interesting attempt to reconcile the traditional values of the dissenting community with liberty of thought' (Rivers 728). Watts, a liberal for his time, was 'imitated and parodied' by William Blake in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) (Rivers 730). Towards the end of the century, the influence of Romantics such as Blake led to more child-centred literature. Some wrote secular tales, while others took an overtly Christian perspective.

These disparate outlooks are apparent in literature including moral tales, which aimed to teach young people the appropriate way to behave and the consequences of not doing so. Some of these works depict events in which children observe people and aspects of life not usually encountered in their daily lives. In *Maria's First Visit to London* (1818) by Elizabeth Sandham, for instance, Maria is both enchanted and horrified by the Jews' singing in synagogues, which she likens to an evening at the opera: 'Their voices were delightful; but the faces of the singers often appeared ridiculous from the distortion of their features, and there was not even the appearance of devotion in any thing we saw there' (61). The text contrasts Christian spirituality with the Jews' earthbound adherence to law and ritual. These are seen as empty gestures, as demonstrated by the Jewish mode of prayer, rather than the true religious devotion shown by Anglicans. This perceived lack of Jewish spirituality, combined with admiration of their singing, is found nearly a century earlier in John Wright's 'A Poetical Exercise on the Author's Journey into Middlesex, and to the Famous City of London', from *Spiritual Songs for Children* (1727):

The Jews are veiled whilst they do sweetly sing,  
And spread the law with mighty triumphing;  
Yet in their Gestures little doth appear,  
But Mirth and Vanity. (22-25)

These texts disapprove of Judaism even while displaying an undeniable interest in the synagogue proceedings. Although literature in which Protestant theology is foregrounded has an openly unhappy relationship with Judaism, Jews themselves are acknowledged as real people living in England. Both John Wright and Elizabeth Sandham seem torn between fascination and horror at the sights and sounds of London, of which the Jews are one. The texts are travelogues in which the attractions of London are many, but the city is equally full of temptations which must be resisted, and poverty, which cannot be ignored.

In *Maria's First Visit to London*, the young girl recounts every detail of her trip, suggesting that the beggars in her home village are more deserving of charity than those in London, and that although she is envious that the beauty of the flowers at Covent Garden market outstrips that of those at home, 'the many dirty shocking-looking women we met with in our way, was a melancholy contrast to the fresh blooming flowers' (41). In the jumble of impressions, the trip to the synagogue is not as bewildering; the Jews are not objects of pity, merely an entertaining spectacle, if a somewhat shocking one. They are embedded in the fabric of London as one of its key sights for tourists, with their house of worship seen as a theatre; they are objectified, yet in some respects desirable. Of their religious practice, Maria exclaims, 'what a mistaken notion must they have of religion, to call all that noise, which they make in their responses, worship' (70), but her mother points out that Jews are not the only ones whose idea of religion is wanting, observing that 'vain and idle superstition [that] supplies the place of real devotion' is also found in Catholicism (70). Both Sandham and Wright refer to the Jews' vanity: the flamboyance of the service, the finery of the prayer shawls and the singing, which is aesthetically pleasing but devoid of spiritual content.

The contradictions that make up London in Wright's text allow the city to be interpreted as either 'Jerusalem' or 'Babylon', the city of the Jews' exile after the destruction of the first Temple, or, perhaps, both. Wright highlights the 'mirth' with which the Jews sing, their apparent happiness even in 'Captivity' (27) suggesting that, unlike in Babylon, they are able to sing songs of joy because in England they are not in torment nor, even, perhaps, in exile.<sup>4</sup> In London, says Wright, there is 'a

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<sup>4</sup> The opening lines of Psalm 137, about the Babylonian exile, read: 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept/When we remembered Zion./There on the poplars we hung our harps/For there our captors

world of grace' (14). 'Wonders ... works of God' are on show at Gresham College (42, 44). This England may indeed be a 'new Jerusalem'. However, the verse also describes London as a city of 'sin' (10), 'villainy' (11) and 'pride' (13). The traveller witnesses the suffering of the sick and the hungry poor, and criticises those who 'of pleasure take their fill', finally concluding that, like the Jews' prayer, 'tis all but vanity' (59). Perhaps, then, the Jews' religious services, lacking true devotion, indicate that they have forgotten the 'heavenly Jerusalem', in which case they become a symbol not just of their own spiritual emptiness but of that of the city itself. The Jews may feel comfortable in a tolerant England which allows people of all religions to worship freely and apparently even to thrive, yet from a Christian perspective, what is more important is that the soul is in peril. 'London! What's London!' (1), the author asks on two occasions. The answer, it would seem, is that the city is both Jerusalem and Babylon; only spiritual renewal and a return to godliness can make it a true heaven on earth.

### **Conversion narratives I: transcendent children**

Some Puritans and Evangelicals believed that the conversion of the Jews was a necessary precursor to the Second Coming, along with their return to the Holy Land (Endelman 69-70). This belief had inspired support for the readmission of the Jews to England in the seventeenth century and the removal of civil and legal disabilities a century later. The rationale behind the new approach was that Jews would be more likely to be persuaded by kindness than coercion and that integrating Jews more fully into English society would hasten their conversion. Such an eventuality also had implications for the ultimate salvation of Christian children at home, for the mission to convert the Jews was part of the broader aim of Evangelicals to redeem a society that had become too secularised.

Organisations such as the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews produced conversionist periodicals such as *The Children's Jewish Advocate* and the *Jewish Advocate for the Young*, which urged children to join in the crusade to convert Jews, and to view them with pity rather than hostility: 'The word of life, if

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asked us for songs/Our tormentors demanded songs of joy./They said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"/How can we sing the songs of the Lord/While in a foreign land?'

prized by you, you owe to the despised Jew ... We dare not, will not, hence refuse to love, and feel, and pray for Jews' (24). At the same time, the genre of conversionist novels began and grew; many of them explore the return to Jerusalem, literally or metaphorically.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Ragussis suggests that, following in the tradition of *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*, conversionist novels focused on a widowed father whose daughter converts to Christianity, often on her deathbed (38). In texts for young people, this pattern is not so predictable; young men and women and children all convert, while deathbed conversions tend to be by a father figure. The child, either a Gentile or, more often, a converted Jew, serves as a good example to the older generation. Cutt suggests that conversionist texts for children 'give, on the whole, a favourable picture of the Jews' (92), yet this comment fails to distinguish between those Jews who convert, who are often kindly and generous, and those who do not, who are often depicted as misers, criminals, or sometimes both.

Nearly all of the conversionist texts set in England represent older Jews, usually men, as racially distinct from younger Jews as well as Christians, and they maintain this distinction even if the character converts to Christianity. The older men sport the beards of practising Jews and the texts note that their appearance makes them identifiable as Jewish even if the details are not articulated. In 'The Jew and His Daughter' (1824), for example, a story by Rev. Carus Wilson published in the Evangelical magazine *The Children's Friend*, a clergyman preaching in church sees a man with 'every mark of a Jew in his face' (169) among the congregation, and afterwards asks him if he is 'one of the children of Abraham' (170). The man had converted after his daughter's deathbed request that he 'bestow upon [Jesus] the love that was formerly mine' (172). The narrator perceives the man to be both Jew and Christian, and the visitor, too, still considers himself to be Jewish, albeit a convert. Likewise, in *Oliver of the Mill* by Maria Charlesworth (1876), an elderly practising Jew, Benoni, is brought to the brink of conversion by Naomi, 'an English child' (38) and her mother, a foreign-born convert, a 'Christian-Jewess' (118). Wracked with guilt and anxiety, however, he is unable to do so until Naomi's young son finally eases the path to conversion. Upon his death, the villagers weep 'for the pedlar Jew [who had] changed from a "man of the earth" to a saint of God' (371).

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<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Sandham, author of *Maria's First Visit to London*, wrote one of the first conversionist novels for children, *The History and Conversion of the Jewish Boy* (1829) (Cutt 92).



In these texts, young people, unlike their elders, are likely to be beautiful. In Mrs Sherwood's *Shanty the Blacksmith* (1844), the daughter of the Jewish miser, Mr Salmon, was discovered as an abandoned baby and raised as a Christian. Her features are 'exquisite, the eyes soft yet sparkling, and the lips delicately formed. The hair, of raven black, was clustered and curling, and the head set on the shoulders in a way worthy of the daughters of kings' (30). In A.L.O.E.'s *The Mine; or Darkness and Light* (1858), the beautiful Jewish child who converts is Asahel, a boy with 'long silky hair, delicate features, dark eyes' (42).<sup>6</sup> He socialises with Gentile children and converts to Christianity; his grandfather, a wealthy recluse, takes the news well:

Mr Salomons looked certainly surprised, but neither angry nor distressed at the communication. He treated Asahel's new belief as a childish fancy - a light spark which would soon die out of itself, if not fanned by opposition. To the worldly man everything unconnected with gain and gold appeared like an airy, unsubstantial bubble. (168-169)

Mr Salomons does not oppose Asahel's Christian faith, nor does he profess any attachment to Judaism. His 'Jewish' flaw is that he is too worldly and not sufficiently spiritual. The text leaves open the possibility that Mr Salomons himself will be converted by his grandson. In these texts for young people it is the children that convert, the Romantic innocent child exerting a transcendent influence on the spiritually or morally bankrupt adult. The children live rather than die, for the future of England, the Holy Land, rests with them. These texts are concerned with the salvation not so much of the individual as of the nation, and in this context, it is the example set by Christian children in this life that is important.

In conversionist literature set in England, Jewish children are identifiable by a 'darkness' which 'racially' distinguishes them from 'white' English people. This is the case even with converted Jews, for to represent them as 'the same' as English Christians would be to blur the boundaries between the two 'chosen peoples' and could conceivably destabilise the English sense of self. Texts such as *Shanty the Blacksmith* and *The Mine; or, Darkness and Light* construct Jews in terms of an Oriental beauty which both differentiates them and renders them fascinating and desirable. This darkness might be accounted for by their Sephardic background, but whether they are Sephardi or Ashkenazi in origin is never specified. The

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<sup>6</sup> A.L.O.E. – A Lady of England – was the pseudonym used by Charlotte Maria Tucker.

construction of Jews as a race apart would take precedence as the basis for representations of Jews and Jewishness in children's literature, as conversion became a much less significant concern in a society in which religious observance in general was in continuing decline.

### **Conversion narratives II: 'muscular' 'Christian-Jews'**

Bill Williams points out that 'conversionism was commonly regarded in the 1860s and 70s as illiberal, costly and fruitless' (95), and certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century, Evangelical writers for children had shifted their sights away from a metaphorical Jerusalem and towards the literal Holy Land. The Zionist movement was gaining momentum, with the return of the Jews to their biblical homeland becoming a matter of debate in political circles in Europe, and among Jews worldwide. The issue provided an opportunity for Evangelicals to promote their agenda in the context of a contemporary political concern to which the possibility of advancing the Imperial mission brought added appeal. If the Jews were to help fulfil the colonialist objective of Anglicising far-off lands, they needed to be constructed as its fitting ambassadors: strong, courageous, morally upright – traits of both the Christian and the English colonial self. For this reason, there are marked differences between representations of Jews in conversionist texts set at home and those set abroad, with the boundaries between Jews and Christians blurred in texts in which the return of the Jews to the Holy Land is imagined.

In this literature, usually historical fiction, the Jews of the Holy Land are young, strong and handsome, soldiers, sailors and active outdoorsmen; made in the mould of the muscular Christian. Indeed, the concept of muscular Judaism, introduced at the 1898 Zionist Congress by Max Nordau, was modelled on muscular Christianity's construction of a new masculinity which combined moral, spiritual and physical strength (Presner 1). In texts set in the Holy Land, Jewish men are in their early adulthood, ready to assume their role as leaders. Their mode of dress is 'Eastern' rather than 'Eastern European'; these 'Eastern' Jews are objects of desire and can be imagined in the Holy Land much more easily than those from Europe.



Fig 1.1. *The Patriots of Palestine* (1899) by Charlotte M. Yonge. Ill. by W. S. Stacey. p. 39

Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Patriots of Palestine: A Story of the Maccabees* (1899) (see Fig 1.1), for instance, retells a Jewish biblical story for Christian readers, and positions the Jews as a 'nation' in their homeland, a monotheistic people – like the Christians – fighting the Greeks who would have them worship false idols. In the text, Judas is 'the figure of a man in all the full prime of strength and beauty' (39); his arrival is awaited by a 'tall handsome youth of seventeen, whose turban with a scarlet border well set off his flashing dark eyes and the darkness of his upper lip' (13).

In literature in which the process of conversion is the focus, Jews are constructed differently. *The Slave Girl of Pompeii* (1887), by Emily Holt, and Charlotte Yonge's *The Slaves of Sabinus* (1890), feature Jewish slaves embracing Christianity either during the story or before the events of the narrative, and then converting their master or mistress. Jews are constructed in terms of Judaism – a religion that could be exchanged for another – and nationality, with their finer qualities lying dormant until the character converts to Christianity.

The focus in *The Slave Girl of Pompeii* is on the promotion of Christianity and the need to be supportive of the Jews as a nation. The family that buys the eponymous slave girl, Sophronia, is surprised and horrified to discover that she is Jewish. She had heretofore been able to pass as a Greek because she is 'very fragile and delicate in appearance, with regular features, very white and thin' (9). Sophronia is already a convert to Christianity, while Esdras, the Jewish slave in *The Slaves of Sabinus*, is not. Esdras is a 'slender, delicately made youth, with well-moulded features of an aquiline cast, dark blue eyes, and short auburn hair' (2).

When a Gentile woman makes a sign of Christian fellowship, the meaning of which he cannot discern, he feels that 'as a son of Abraham [he is] far above brotherhood with a Gentile woman' (70). Neither Sophronia's nor Esdras's Jewishness is



Fig 1.2. *The Slaves of Sabinus* (1890) by Charlotte M. Yonge. Ill. by C. J. Staniland. p. 87

signalled through the usual trope of Jewish ‘darkness’; it is Esdras’s ‘cast of countenance [that revealed] to what nation he belonged’ (70).<sup>7</sup> In many conversionist texts set in the Holy Land or Roman Empire, a young person’s Jewishness or Christianity is discernible by nothing more than a facial expression that reveals the inner character. However, in the illustration that accompanies the reunion of Esdras with his sister, already a convert to Christianity (see Fig 1.2), Esdras is represented as a dark, ‘Eastern’ Jew despite the textual description of him as fair, while his Christian sister is shown as fair, and fair-haired, even though the text describes her as having hair that is ‘golden auburn like her brother’s’. Unlike Esdras’s eyes, there is a wonderful sweetness and purity’ in his sister’s (89).

The contrast between Jews and Christians is primarily one of attitude: Jews are arrogant, vain, proud and intransigent, while Christians are humble, spiritual and pure. The ‘Jewish’ traits accompany an attachment to Judaism; once they adopt Christianity their character improves, and their expression along with it. The blurring of ‘racial’ boundaries in these texts demonstrated by the ‘English’ complexion of Jews that convert to Christianity signifies the twinned destinies of the two ‘chosen peoples’, the English and the Jews, and begins to acknowledge that Jews were perhaps not as fundamentally different from Christians as they had been considered in the past. That such ‘racial’ overlap was uncommon in the children’s literature of the time is apparent from the illustration of Esdras, which departs from the text and adheres to the more common trope.

### **Enlightenment voices**

Children’s literature written by those influenced by Enlightenment values often takes a more progressive approach to Judaism and to unconverted Jews than that by Evangelicals. Dennis Butts points out that moral tales, many of which were written by dissenters, ‘stress the importance of kindly treatment of the poor and unfortunate, especially servants, African Americans, and animals’ (95). Although this is also true of texts by writers from Evangelical and other religious perspectives, representations of Jews in literature that displays an ethos of rational tolerance are more often relatively free of the patronising tone which often accompanies literature that aims to teach young readers how to behave towards their ‘inferiors’. Evangelical texts

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<sup>7</sup> Frank Felsenstein notes that material published around the time of the Jew Bill debate refers to ‘the generally held belief that the Jews are born with “an unfortunate Cast” in the eye’ (86).

approach the subject from a position of Christian superiority, while Enlightenment authors more often take the view that all humankind is essentially equal.

In the parable ‘The Compassionate Jew’, from *The New Children’s Friend*, (1797) (translated from the German, author unknown), for instance, a group of young men is travelling on a boat next to a Jewish man and a hungry soldier. The men are eating ham. They do not offer any to the soldier, but taunt the Jew by asking if he would like some. To their surprise, he accepts, and pulls out a biscuit so that they can put the ham directly onto it. The young men accuse him of hypocrisy for being willing to eat ham but not to touch it. The Jewish man gives the ham to the hungry soldier and chastises the group: ‘Gentlemen, have you not learnt compassion from Jesus and his Apostles? Thank God – I have been better instructed by Moses and the Prophets’ (55). In the text, a Jew adheres to the law, yet also displays the ‘deeper’ virtue of charity. The text encourages readers to focus on what the two religions have in common rather than on what divides them. In contrasting the behaviour of the intolerant Christians and the kindly Jew, it points out that individuals may be morally upright – or not – regardless of their religion. The text subverts the message of earlier works, suggesting that the Jewish bible contains lessons that Christians could learn from, and admonishing those who would treat others in a way not in keeping with their Christian faith.

Like *The New Children’s Friend*, Christian Salzmann’s *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children; With an Introductory Address to Parents* (1790) is translated from the German. The translator, Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), was influenced by rational dissent, or Unitarianism, an ‘optimistic, humanistic creed with a strongly intellectualist flavour’ (Taylor 997). In Salzmann’s text, the Jew Ephraim cures a Christian boy’s toothache, while ‘Shadrach the Jew’, in William Fordyce Mavor’s *Youth’s Miscellany* (1798), settles a poor farmer’s debts in order to save him from the workhouse. Particularly noteworthy in these two stories is the balance of power between the characters. The children are not being exhorted to pity the poor, inferior Jews. Instead, Jews and Christians interact socially, with the Jew even being in a position to help the Christian. There is a surprising degree of equality and friendship in the interaction between neighbours. The egalitarian treatment of Jews in these moral tales may have been influenced in part by authorial sympathy for the campaign for the removal of

Jewish civil and legal disabilities, a process still underway for nonconformists themselves, and completed for Jews in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Enlightenment revisionism noted by Michael Ragussis and highlighted in the Introduction, in which the nation is judged on the basis of its attitudes toward the Jews, appears not just in fiction but in texts about English history itself. In *The Little Historians* (1824), Jeffrey Taylor debunks the myth of a tolerant England through a brief digression to address its treatment of the Jews. Two boys, bored by the history books they are reading, are instructed by their father to produce their own, which they do, accompanied by occasional interjections from their father. Lewis, recounting the history of England's kings and queens, expresses sympathy for the Jews, who 'were sadly used and persecuted [under King Edward] as they had been when Richard was king' (52). The boys' father explains that the Jews were banished from the kingdom and hated by its people for lending money for interest: 'This is not thought wrong now, any more than it is thought wrong for a man who lives in another man's house, to be obliged to pay him rent for the use of it' (52). In *The Little Historians*, Taylor criticises the un-Christian behaviour of even the king. He presents Jews not as actual villains, but as people perceived to be villainous, and in contrasting the difference between attitudes in the past and present, demonstrates the progress society has made.

However, Ragussis suggests that there was a demarcation between progressive 'revisionist' portrayals in literature by Dissenters and followers of Locke and Rousseau, and 'negative' 'conversionist' images in Evangelical literature, but this is not always the case, for 'negative' images of Jews were often found in texts with an otherwise rational tolerant sensibility. M.O. Grenby points out that John Locke 'had been adamant that nursemaids' stories used to frighten children into good behaviour did much more harm than good' (68). Many of these stories referred to a bogeyman that would kidnap children if they were naughty; not infrequently the bogeyman was a Jew. According to Dennis Butts, Maria Edgeworth was 'primarily interested in promoting rational and ethical values' (93) in her work. She planned a series of educational manuals and stories with her father (Labbe 18), a friend of Thomas Day, writer of the popular work for children *Sandford and Merton* (1783-1789), and a Rousseauist (Butts 93). In addition to her work for young people, Edgeworth was also a popular writer for adults. In her adult novel *Harrington* (1817), Edgeworth uses the trope of the Jewish bogeyman to critique her own use of

anti-Semitic stereotypes in her work for children. *Harrington* opens with an extended recollection of a boy being traumatised by his nurse's tales of naughty boys being kidnapped by Jews. When, after frequent repetition the power of the nurse's stories was lessened, the narrator says, '[s]he proceeded to tell me, in a mysterious tone, stories of Jews who had been known to steal poor children for the purpose of killing, crucifying, and sacrificing them at their secret feasts and midnight abominations' (5). He then compares the 'enlightened' present, with its developments in education (6), with the irrational past: 'it may appear incredible that any nursery-maid could be so wicked as to relate, or any child of six years old so foolish as to credit, such tales; but I am speaking of what happened many years ago: nursery-maids and children, I believe, are very different now from what they were then' (6).

Ragussis suggests that by recognising the anti-Semitic tradition she had adopted in her writing, Edgeworth was able 'to subvert it in *Harrington* and to articulate for future writers the way to move beyond it' (57). The catalyst for the author's change of heart was a letter from a Jewish-American teacher, Rachel Mordecai, inquiring of Edgeworth after reading her novel *The Absentee* (1812), 'How can it be that she, who on all other subjects shows such justice and liberality, should on one alone appear biased by prejudice: should even instill [sic] that prejudice into the minds of youth! ... Can it be believed that [Jews] are by nature mean, avaricious and unprincipled? Forbid it, mercy' (qtd. in Manly 298). In *Harrington*, Edgeworth self-reflexively admits her own culpability, using Mordecai's words: 'I have met with books ... written expressly for the rising generation, called if I mistake not, *Moral Tales for Young People* [1801]; and even in these ... [Jews] are invariably represented as beings of a mean, avaricious, unprincipled, treacherous character' (176).<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, in one story in the collection, 'The Good Aunt', the Jewish jeweller, Mr Carat, is 'extremely cunning', but also 'profoundly ignorant' (19). He speaks with the crude representation of a 'Jewish' accent that was common in theatrical and satirical representations of Jews by the mid-eighteenth century (Felsenstein 79): "Dat king wash very grand fool, beg his majesty's pardon," said the Jew, with a

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Manly points out that Edgeworth refers intertextually to *The Merchant of Venice* in her adult novels. A character in *Castle Rackrent* refers to his avaricious wife as 'my pretty Jessica', while the Jewish coachmaker's demand in *The Absentee* for 'the bond or the body' recalls Shylock (8).

shrewd smile' (Edgeworth 19). Later, Mr Carat seeks to persuade a boy to proceed with a business transaction that Charles, the boy, wishes to postpone, saying, 'O my dear young gentleman, no day in de Jewish calendar more proper for de purchase' (20). By specifying the Jewish calendar, Edgeworth deliberately links Judaism with a 'Jewish' propensity for shady business dealings. Charles helps to bring the unscrupulous Mr Carat to justice for his running of an unlicensed lottery with the jewels of Charles's aunt, which he has acquired illegally. Carat's outsidership is signalled to the reader through his religious and national difference. With his 'humorous' name, caricature lisp and insincere obsequiousness to social superiors, the characterisation of Mr Carat demonstrates that elements of popular culture made their way into literature that sought to 'improve' children. Edgar Rosenberg claims that 'The Good Aunt' is the text that *Harrington* was written to counteract (Manly 8).

Edgeworth's engagement with Jews and Jewishness is more ambivalent and less hostile in her other work for children. In 'The Prussian Vase,' also from *Moral Tales for Young People*, Solomon the art dealer appears in court as a witness in a trial, whereupon the narrator explains, 'it was justly observed, that his having the misfortune to be a Jew was sufficient to prejudice many of the populace against him, even before a word he uttered reached their ears' (230). It transpires that Solomon himself has framed a man for treason in revenge for his mockery of the Jews in the army, one of whom is Solomon's son: '[T]he Christian dog has made the corps of Jews his laughing-stock ... I'll be revenged upon him some time or other' (250). Solomon is not associated with unscrupulousness until it is revealed that he has committed a crime. A clear motive is supplied, and one that, as with Shylock, may elicit some sympathy in the reader. However, this is diminished by the revelation that Solomon failed to pay an artist for her work, despite her need of an income to support her elderly parents. The text elicits conflicting responses to Solomon: sympathy when he is introduced; betrayal when he is identified as the criminal; renewed sympathy when the reasons for his crime become clear; and finally, disgust that he has behaved dishonourably towards an honest worker.

Edgeworth's 'Murad the Unlucky', in *Popular Tales* (1804), a book for older children, chronicles the downfall of the eponymous hero after he gets into debt as a result of his addiction to opium. In this context, the function of the Jewish moneylender, Rachub, is to highlight the flawed character of the hapless Murad, who



flees in order to avoid having to repay the debt, and after unexpectedly meeting him again, is 'vexed by Rachub's insolence' (236) in asking for it to be settled. Montagu Frank Modder says that Rachub is portrayed as 'a heartless villain who tries to kill his enemies by spreading plague germs in old clothes which he sells to the victims' (132), but this overstates the case, for Rachub seeks vengeance for Murad's insults and his attempts to avoid repaying his loan. As Rachub says, 'if a Turk loved opium better than money, this was no fault of his' (Edgeworth 237); the story's focus is really on the poor judgement of Murad and the consequences that befall those who succumb to temptation. Indeed, the sympathy of readers is no more likely to lie with Murad than with Rachub, for Murad, 'a Turk', is himself an Orientalised foreigner, as distanced from English readers as is the Jewish Rachub.

While these texts all include a Jewish villain, the differences between them are marked. The construction of Solomon in 'The Prussian Vase' is rather more complex than the other stories, eschewing an inherent 'racial' element to Jewish criminality. Solomon is an outsider subjected to prejudice even though he pursues a loftier profession than moneylending and his son serves in the army as a loyal citizen. In contrast is the foreign – albeit living in England – avaricious Jewish criminal in 'The Good Aunt', while Rachub is the type of 'shady foreigner' who appears frequently in nineteenth-century adventures. The texts are, variously, almost-liberal, colonialist and populist, with each perspective accompanied by slightly different allosemantic constructions of Jews and Jewishness.

Michael Ragussis points out that Sir Walter Scott's project of representing the Scottish people sympathetically 'depended on the model of Maria Edgeworth, as Scott was happy to acknowledge on more than one occasion' (98). Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), published two years after *Harrington*, makes reference to *The Merchant of Venice*, both overtly, in its use of a passage from it in an epigraph, and implicitly, in its rewriting of the widowed miser and his daughter who converts, in the form of Isaac, the miser whose love for his daughter outweighs that of his money, and Rebecca, the daughter whose loyalty to her father and her religion are unshakeable. The text explores the limits of nationhood, with the Saxon Cedric finally able to accept the Norman king and the two antagonistic groups eventually forming an alliance through the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena. The Jewish 'others', Isaac, and Rebecca, whom Ivanhoe might have loved in other circumstances, are unable to find a place in the nation and must be exiled to Spain. Ragussis suggests that Scott's

novel was ‘meant to function as a historical frame for understanding the modern anti-Semitism that Edgeworth had just anatomized in *Harrington*’ (98). *Ivanhoe* broke with biological theories of Jewish ‘race’ and suggested that social forces, including anti-Semitic persecution, led to behaviour such as Isaac’s. Suzanne Rahn suggests that ‘of all the Jewish characters in English-language fiction, Sir Walter Scott’s Rebecca undoubtedly did the most to make Jewishness a positive attribute in the imaginations of readers young and old alike’ (305). Whether or not Rahn’s claim is true, it is certain that *Ivanhoe* was popular with young people, and as will be seen in Chapter 5, it was used as the basis for several historical novels written for children between the 1960s and 2005.<sup>9</sup>

As Ragussis implies, despite the fact that Scott’s approach was considered ground-breaking, Edgeworth had explored this area two years earlier in *Harrington*. Furthermore, she and other authors had begun to address it even earlier in literature for children. In *Practical Education* (1798), for instance, which she wrote with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, she makes an attempt to distinguish between biology and behaviour: ‘There can be nothing inherent in the knavish propensity of Jews; but the prevailing opinion, that avarice, dishonesty and extortion are the characteristics of a Jew has probably induced many of the tribe to justify the antipathy which they could not conquer’ (248). It is this kernel of an idea which she begins to explore in ‘The Prussian Vase’, though it remains only partially developed. In Mavor’s story ‘Shadrach the Jew’ (1798), the narrator likewise apportions some of the blame for these faults to the treatment of Jews by Christians, while in Salzmann’s text from 1790, Ephraim himself answers the little boy’s charge that many Jews are dishonest:

If our nation cheat, the Christians themselves are the cause of it. They despise us and do not allow us to gain our livelihood in an honest way; so many Jews become cheats because they think they live among enemies; but there are many good Jews who tell the truth and give money to the poor and such men deserve our love, whether they are Jews or Christians. (63)

In these texts, Jews have names and agency. They are about ‘real’ Jews co-existing in a Christian society, not about Judaism, or ‘Jews’ as a concept.

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<sup>9</sup> The American magazine for children, *St. Nicholas*, which was also published in London, featured a competition in June 1902 in which readers chose literary characters to invite to a dinner party. Among the winners’ guests were *Ivanhoe*’s Rebecca and Mirah from George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (Rahn 305).

Mary Howitt's 'The Little Jew Merchant', in *The New Year's Gift and Juvenile Souvenir* (1829), bears many of the hallmarks of the genre of Evangelical literature, which it pre-dates. The conversion here, though, is of culture or nation rather than religion. Like the beautiful Jewish children in A.L.O.E.'s *The Mine* and Mrs Sherwood's *Shanty the Blacksmith*, fourteen-year-old pedlar Benoni Leucada has a face 'of extraordinary beauty' (135) which lacks 'that sinister expression' common to Jews (134-135) such as Esdras before his conversion in *The Slaves of Sabinus*. Invited into the home of a well-to-do Christian customer, Benoni recognises her jewelled ring as one that belongs to him but has been lost, having been pawned on the death of his family by a Jewish man who then absconded with the money. The woman's son takes the ring back to the shop whereupon the boy is reimbursed, sets himself up in business and becomes a successful merchant with the support of the woman and her friends. The representations of Jews in this story are more sophisticated than those in many other works for children from this period. That Benoni is a devoted son who remembers both of his parents as loving and generous is a break with representations of a Jewish child living with a lone, elderly, and usually miserly father or grandfather.

The source of Benoni's rehabilitation is the Gentile family that facilitates the restitution of his funds, invests it for him and finds him employment until he is able to start his own business. Benoni's good looks, moral rectitude and friendship with English Christians all confirm that he will become an upstanding member of English society. The sympathy shown by the family towards the downtrodden Jewish boy and their role in his elevation to a respectable role in society demonstrates the moral satisfaction gained by being a guiding, civilising influence on the deserving poor, particularly those of 'other' nations. The unassimilable outsider is not Benoni but, rather, the unscrupulous Jewish man, 'held in high esteem in the synagogue' (143), who pretends to help the boy and then steals his money. The villain's Jewishness is bound up with his crime, which is exacerbated for being perpetrated on a child, a motif found in Edgeworth's 'The Good Aunt' and dating back to the medieval blood libel. However, the happy ending in 'The Little Jew Merchant,' in which a Jew becomes a financial success as an honest businessman, is a rare subversion of a standard trope in literary and popular culture. It displays a type of Enlightenment liberalism which Bryan Cheyette describes as 'a spurious universalism which assumes that "the Jew" will be transfigured in a higher realm' (*Constructions* 5), but

taking its date and the historical context of its publication into account, the story is strikingly egalitarian. The theme of ‘secular conversion’ of which Cheyette writes would become more common in children’s literature in the years around World War II, and will be discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Men in the street: pedlars and criminals**

While John Wright’s concern was for the transcendental possibilities of Jerusalem in England, William Blake’s was for the here and now. Like Wright, Blake twins Jerusalem and Babylon – ‘I behold Babylon in the opening Streets of London/I behold Jerusalem wandering about in ruins from house to house’ (qtd. in Barfoot 60) – but unlike him, does so out of a secular concern for the social ills of society. This London is a city of extremes: the poor live as little more than slaves, and criminal activity flourishes in the narrow streets, but alongside the poverty there is vast wealth and materialism. The descriptions of Jews in literature – greedy, usurers, cheats, avaricious, miserly, vain, worldly – are also applied to the city itself. Deborah Madden describes the self-styled prophet Richard Brothers’ criticism of eighteenth-century London in just such terms: it is ‘decked in fine fabrics and jewels ... enriched through greed, avarice and lust’ (132).

Much popular literature makes no such critique nor employs such metaphor: London is neither Jerusalem nor Babylon, but simply England’s living capital city. Sympathy towards Jews in late-eighteenth century politics arose out of the Enlightenment, but this increased tolerance did not always transfer to reading matter or to real life. The Enlightenment ‘emancipation contract’ was supposed to have led to Jews being seen as men in the street, but while Jewish pedlars were certainly in the street, they were not the sort of men anyone had had in mind. According to Frank Felsenstein, the image of the poor Jewish pedlar, first caricatured by Hogarth in 1757, became the most common representation of Jews for a century (56-57). The street traders were neither acculturated nor middle class, and even if their religion was kept behind closed doors, their ‘racial’ and ‘national’ difference from the English was displayed far too publicly for comfort.

Street trading was the most common occupation of Jews in London in the late eighteenth century, and poor street traders, of whatever cultural background, were known to buy stolen goods and to give counterfeit coins to customers as change

(Endelman 44-45). Literary images of unscrupulous Jewish criminals were ubiquitous in part because they were felt to be a reflection of real life: indeed, as is well known, Charles Dickens' Fagin is said to have been based on Ikey Solomon, a high-profile London fence of the time.

Dickens' desire for social reform led to the expression in his work of a progressive concern for the conditions of the poor. But although *Oliver Twist* stemmed in part from the author's social conscience, it was also a work of popular fiction. Rather than marking the start of a literary tradition, Fagin 'the Jew' was rooted in one that already existed, and it is in this context that Fagin has endured and inspired imitations. Dickens' miserly Jew, who gave the appearance of poverty but hoarded his wealth and trapped children in a life of crime, was a symbol of some of the worst problems of the city. The author insisted that he was not anti-Semitic, and wrote in response to a Jewish woman's complaint about the characterisation of 'the Jew', as he was often referred to in the text,

I have no feeling towards the Jewish people but a friendly one. I always speak well of them, whether in public or in private, and bear testimony (as I ought to do) to their perfect good faith in such transactions as I have ever had with them. (Modder 220)

Dickens changed the signifier 'the Jew' in the text to 'Fagin' or 'he' in later editions (Felsenstein 243), an action which Suzanne Rahn suggests might have made an impact on readers: 'the increased invisibility of Fagin's Jewishness may have appreciably decreased the probability that they would absorb anti-Semitic associations from him' (305). The gesture, however, seems more likely to have been ineffective: in writing *Oliver Twist: Charles Dickens for Boys and Girls* (1910) some seventy years after the original (see Fig 1.3), Alice Jackson entitles Chapter 3 'At the Jew's', and describes Fagin as 'a very shrivelled old Jew with a villainous face' (34),

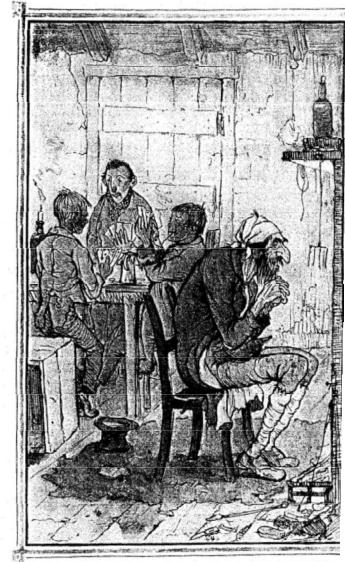


Fig 1.3. Fagin in *Oliver Twist Retold for Boys and Girls* (1910). By Charles Dickens. Abridged by Alice F. Jackson. Illustrated by F.M.B. Blaikie. p. 110

the only adjective missing from the original phrase being ‘repulsive’ (Dickens *Oliver* 50).<sup>10</sup>

Although children were among the readers of *Oliver Twist*, it was not written specifically for them, and in popular fiction for young people that preceded Fagin, ‘the Jew’ is commonly a figure of interest, an often comic oddity of the London scene, somewhat larger than life. In literature for children, it is Jewish ‘racial’ and ‘national’ difference that is conveyed to the child reader: Judaism is nowhere to be found. ‘The Jew’ in this material is usually a street pedlar, most often an old-clothesman;<sup>11</sup> hunched, hook-nosed, bearded, accented, wearing a hat, dressed all in black. Someone children should be wary of, he is a less sinister relative of the bogeyman that gave Harrington nightmares: indeed, in that book, the subject of the nurse’s frightening tales of the child-snatcher is the old-clothesman who regularly calls at the family home on his rounds. Portrayals of Jewish pedlars, mainly old-clothesmen, appeared in various collections of ‘London Cries’, engravings and verses based on the slogans of street traders, as well as in other works intended for amusement rather than edification. In ‘Old Cloaths to Sell, Any Shoes, Hats, or Old Cloaths’, from Francis Newbery’s popular version for young people, *The Cries of London* (1775), the verse accompanying the caricature of an old-clothesman reads:

This dirty son of Israel’s race,  
While wealthy folks are sleeping,  
You up and down the town may trace,  
In every area peeping.  
But ah! beware, ye men and maids,  
His bargains you’ll repent;  
Remember well the varlet trades

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<sup>10</sup> Dickens sought to make amends for Fagin not just in alterations to *Oliver Twist* but also in *A Child’s History of England* (1852), in which he describes the massacre of Jews at the coronation of Richard the Lionheart: ‘A dreadful murdering of the Jews took place, which seems to have given great delight to numbers of savage persons calling themselves Christians ... they ran madly about, breaking open all the houses where the Jews lived, rushing in and stabbing or spearing them, sometimes even flinging old people and children out of window into blazing fires they had lighted up below’ (138). Dickens goes further than Jeffreys Taylor, who had earlier expressed sympathy for the poor treatment of Jews historically; Dickens represents them unequivocally as victims, a position very infrequently found in children’s literature of this time.

<sup>11</sup> An exception is *Figures of Fun or Comical Pictures and Droll Verses, for Little Girls & Boys* (1833), published by Charles Tilt, which contains an illustration of a Jewish old-clothesman alongside a verse in which there is no indication that the pedlar is intended to be Jewish. ‘The Orange Merchant’, in the text, is Jewish: ‘Look well to your change, have an eye to a cheat./But come take your choice of these oranges, pray,/If you eat up the Jew there’ll be nothing to pay.’ In the illustration that accompanies this verse, however, the merchant is beardless and not dressed in traditional ‘Jewish’ clothing, which might be expected given the text’s reference to his ‘long beard’. These discrepancies suggest that the Jewish old-clothesman was so ubiquitous in texts of this kind that the illustrator found it difficult to accept the Jew as an orange seller rather than old-clothesman.

At least for cent per cent. (Shesgreen and Bywaters 4)

Shesgreen and Bywaters suggest that texts such as this would have made the harassment of Jews more acceptable to the general public (4), but it is just as likely that such texts were a reflection of the London version of the Shylockian Jew rather than an influence on it. Harassment of Jews, including children, was not uncommon in any case: Jewish children in London were taunted by groups of their non-Jewish peers, with one chant, ‘Get a bit of pork, Stick it on a fork, And give it to a Jew boy, Jew’ noted in 1792 and in use for over a century thereafter (Opie and Opie 346).

The pedlar in ‘Old Cloaths!’ in *The Moving Market or, Cries of London: for the Amusement of Good Children* (1815) speaks in a representation of the accent of a Jewish immigrant: ‘Coats or preaches do you vant? Or puckles for your shoes? Vatches too me can supply - Me monies von’t refuse’ (25). In a similar vein is *Frank Feignwell's Attempts to Amuse His Friends on Twelfth Night* (1811), in which the main character entertains his friends by playing various roles, one of which is an itinerant Jewish pedlar who speaks in a Yiddish accent and has a lisp. In the early nineteenth century, it was not uncommon to find characters in plays and music hall dressing up as Jews, either for comic effect or to carry out a criminal act (Modder 123). Here, Frank/the Jew serves both functions:

Den in my basket take a peep: dere! Now for vat you call?  
Dat pretty vatch is vat you vish,  
Dere, take it if you’re villing;  
You vant de change?  
Den dere it ish (vid only tree bad  
shilling). (14-15)

The mention of watches in both works is significant. Jewish pedlars dominated the market in poor quality watches to the extent that they were known as ‘Jew watches’ (Endelman 43). In *The World Turned Upside Down, or No News, and Strange News* (c.1860) (see Fig 1.4), a Jewish pedlar is again used as a character for comic effect when a goat turns into an old-clothesman

The Yiddish accent is used to turn ‘good’ – here ‘goot’ – into a pun on ‘goat’:

’Tis always my vay,  
To cheat ven I can,

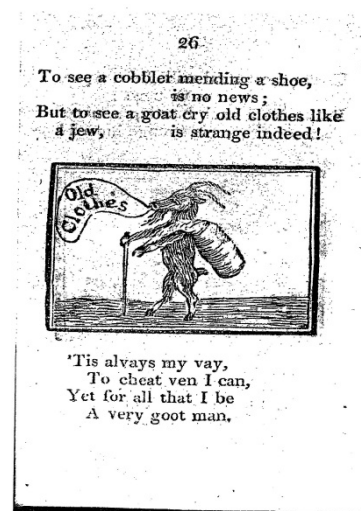


Fig 1.4. *The World Turned Upside Down, or No News, and Strange News* (c.1860). J. Kendrew. p. 26

Yet for all that I be  
A very goot man. (5-8)

This verse plays on a perceived resemblance between goats and Jews in the form of the goatee beard worn by both. Such a comparison is not unusual; the Jewish moneylender in Bracebridge Hemyng's *Jack Harkaway at Oxford* (1872), for instance, is called an 'old goat' (209), while the Brothers Grimm's 'The Jew in the Thornbush' (1815) features 'a Jew with a long goat's beard' (505). Ruth Bottigheimer points out that the goatee links Jews with the devil, 'according to hallowed iconographic traditions' (139) and also identifies them as scapegoats (142).

Of texts featuring London's Jews, 'Any Old Clothes?' from *The New Cries of London* (1803) by Jeffreys Taylor's sisters, Ann and Jane, is a rare example that refrains from referring to Jewish appearance or criminality and from constructing Jewishness as an intrinsic source of amusement for Christian children. Nevertheless, it will be obvious to readers that Levi is Jewish by his name and profession:

When boys and girls are sleeping sound,  
Old Levi takes his early round;  
From street to street he wanders wide,  
Well stor'd with clothes on either side.

Now, maids, produce your tatter'd store,  
And sell them quickly at the door;  
Then go, contented with your gains,  
And thank old Levi for his pains. (Alderson 75)

'Any Old Clothes' seems almost to be a deliberate revisioning of the Newbery verse above. The Taylors contest the frightening/amusing image of the Jewish old-clothesman who skulks about the streets while the city sleeps. Rather than reinforcing the historical association of Jews with usury or its updated stereotype of financially related crime, they stress the useful role of Jewish pedlars in the economic life of the city: old Levi is engaged in a legitimate business transaction and deserves to be thanked for the service he provides. Of representations of Jews in 'London Cries', only here is there no assumption of a power imbalance; 'the Jew' is both 'Jew' and 'man in the street', and there is no sense of the English child reader being defined in opposition to him.<sup>12</sup> These short verses provide only a fixed snapshot of the Jewish pedlar in the public sphere, but the text by the nonconformist

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<sup>12</sup> Brian Alderson notes that there is some speculation that the first of the two volumes of *The New Cries of London*, of which 'Any Old Clothes?' is part, was written by William Darton and polished by the Taylors. (75).



Taylor sisters, entirely serious in tone, less closely resembles other 'London Cries' than it does moral tales such as Mary Howitt's 'The Little Jew Merchant', in which the hard-working pedlar boy grows up to become a successful, honest merchant.<sup>13</sup>

The inclusion of 'the Jew' in popular texts, even if not for an obviously didactic purpose, nevertheless does implicitly teach child readers that Jews are a part of the fabric of London life. Such constructions are often full of tensions. The Orientalised Jewish street trader is a source of entertainment for the English child: foreign, at times menacing, and someone whose role in society straddles the respectable and seamier sides of life. The fear a reader might feel upon encountering them, however, is diffused by the image of them as figures of fun. These constructions of Jews as comic-grotesques render Jewish adults inferior to child readers from the dominant culture. Jews are objects of fascination, deemed of sufficient interest for children to read about in their leisure time. They are undeniably embedded in London's economy in the texts, yet viewed from across a divide. These literary relations of Shylock and Fagin – and Fagin himself – point to a society attempting to accommodate or critique some of the transformations it is witnessing. The second half of the thesis, and Chapter 3, in particular, will explore the functions of stereotype in contemporary children's literature, looking at how familiar images such as the ones above are employed as a framework for understanding how Jews were perceived in the past, and how such literary stereotypes continue to affect the ways in which Jews are portrayed and understood in contemporary Britain.

### **Agents of Empire or alien capitalists?**

The texts examined thus far suggest that the majority of Jews residing in England by the mid-nineteenth century were some combination of foreign, 'dark', working class, unacculturated, criminal, materialistic and ungodly, or, alternatively, converting in large numbers to Christianity. In fact, the majority of English Jews were English-born and acculturated or assimilated by the time emancipation was completed, and many were also middle class. It might be assumed that this transition would be welcomed as the vindication of the policy of granting Jews civil and legal equality,

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<sup>13</sup> In other moral tales, however, such as the 'it-narrative' *Adventures of a Silver Penny*, 'the Jew' is held up as an example of the terrible fate that befalls a child who is too fond of money. Master Abraham Moses Isaac Jacobs, son of the 'honest Jew', a counterfeiter who cheats his crooked business associates, is 'highly delighted with himself whenever he could cheat or over-reach a play-fellow' (97). Eventually he turns to crime and is finally transported to the colonies.

but some found it difficult to accept 'the Jew' as an Englishman even though religious observance was not as deeply rooted in society as it had been. The ability of modern, acculturated Jews to pass unnoticed among 'real' Englishmen was perceived by some as a threat to English identity, and this threat required the strenuous assertion of a boundary between 'the Jews' and 'the English'. This boundary was redrawn in terms of 'race' and 'nation' rather than religion, with Disraeli, who at the age of thirteen had been converted by his father from Judaism to Anglicanism, represented as "the secret Jew" who invades England through the passport of conversion in order to undermine English culture' (Ragussis 13). David Feldman notes that Disraeli was Orientalised by those who opposed him (94), particularly when Disraeli supported the Muslim Turks in a war against the Christian Russians (94).

A short time later, notions of Jewish difference found convenient expression in the image of the poor-yet-wealthy immigrant that accompanied the influx of Ashkenazi refugees in the wake of pogroms in Russia in 1881.<sup>14</sup> The wave of immigration to London's East End called into question the status of middle-class English Jews, for it focused attention on an already crowded, dirty part of London populated by a poor underclass. Some took pity on the refugees and sought to help them; others objected to their presence. Evangelical publishers for children responded to the refugees' situation by encouraging Christian charity towards them. In 'A Few Words on Modern Jews' (1882), *The Girl's Own Paper* begins its appeal to child readers by addressing the stereotypes that had long dogged the Jewish community: the hooked nose, the shabby clothes, the reputation of being unscrupulous in their business dealings, and of being wealthy but miserly. The author, Constance Finn,<sup>15</sup> tackles each stereotype in turn:

Firstly, *Jews are not all rich*. The wealthy Jewish families are not too many to count. The majority of Jews, even in England, are industrious, thrifty, sober, but *poor* people. Secondly, *they are not all money-lenders*, either here or abroad. (110)

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<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Alderman notes that Lloyd Gartner's 1960 study *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914* exposed as 'a fairytale' the notion that the majority of Jewish immigrants at this time were refugees from persecution in Tsarist Russia: 'The majority of Jews who settled in Britain from Eastern Europe did not come from the "pogrom" districts of Russia at all' ('The Canon').

<sup>15</sup> Constance Finn's father was the British Consul in Jerusalem and she was born and raised there. Mary Eliza Rogers' *Domestic Life in Palestine* (1863) recounts her 1855 tour of the city in the company of Finn, who was a child at the time (Bar-Yosef 129).

The text stresses the poverty of Jews, not just in order to represent them as worthy of charity, but to contest the continuing association of Jews with wealth, a view the article implicitly acknowledges is held by many of the paper's readers. Finn points out that not all Jews look alike and that they are not all dirty, going on to say that Jews are loyal, domestic and supportive of their needy – traits which are rarely, if ever, attributed to Jews in children's literature. A follow-up report ten months later includes a letter from a Jewish reader who tells of her own experience of being verbally abused by children from the majority culture: 'I have often been insulted in the streets by children coming out of the Sunday schools, and could not forbear asking them whether their teachers tell them to despise us or not' (Finn 'Update' 811).<sup>16</sup>

The debates about the rising Jewish population which led to renewed constructions of Jews as 'pre-modern' ghetto inhabitants led eventually to the 1905 Aliens Act, which was specifically aimed at restricting Jewish immigration. During this same period, English Jews were working on behalf of the Empire in the Boer War. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, variations on older constructions of Jews emerged in children's literature as a result of anxieties about Empire and the state of the nation. The extent to which Jewish men could play a role as servants of the Empire depended in large measure on how the financial role of Jews was perceived, for Jewish wealth was seen as intimately bound up with the war effort. For some, the Jewish financier was merely a moneylender of old in modern dress, wielding a controlling power through an international network bound by 'racial' rather than national loyalties. For others, such 'Jewish wealth' could be harnessed for the benefit of the Empire, a position which, nevertheless, often contained an element of 'racial' mistrust. For others still, Jews were considered to be a group who should be subjected to the Empire's civilising influence rather than belonging to the group that was doing the civilising. Many of these positions contain elements of overlap. All are apparent in the children's literature of the time, which continues to implicate 'the Jew' in constructions of England and Englishness.

In popular adventures, the Imperial project is enacted in encounters in far-off lands, with some Jews portrayed as irreducibly alien 'Oriental' heathens, and others

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<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy that the writer specifically links the children's insults to their attendance at Sunday school, suggesting that theological objections to Jews were still being widely disseminated.

– generally women – having the capacity to acculturate to Englishness. In *Jack O'Lanthorn: a Tale of Adventure* (1884), by Christabel Rose Coleridge writing as Henry Frith, a group of Spanish prisoners on a voyage includes a man 'of somewhat Jewish appearance, looking as yellow as a kite's claw and with his rather large nose not unlike a bird of prey' (103), his 'yellow' complexion identifying him as 'racially' non-white and the bird of prey imagery marking him out as predatory and potentially dangerous. One of the English boys aboard the ship insults the man by calling him 'Methusaleh' and speaking to him in a patronising tone. Jack is surprised when the man responds quietly and in good English, and explains that his name is not Methusaleh. The text assumes that a person who speaks a language other than English is subordinate and entitled to be named by the representative of the superior, civilising culture. That Lorenzo does speak English is not, however, an indication that he can be subsumed into English culture, for his appearance reveals what his speech disguises: he is a disreputable trader masquerading as an innocent bystander. When his true identity is discovered, the mood of the crowd turns ugly and his goods are destroyed, his entreaty for the soldiers to come to his aid going unheeded, as 'too many of those he addressed had at one time or other suffered from his extortions and those of his kind to be very particular now. Besides, the British private had a very good idea of paying "Shylock out"' (138).

In contrast, the man's daughter, Bianca, is 'a pretty little girl, a dark-complexioned little thing' (100). That Bianca is a Jew who can cross the 'racial' divide from a 'black' Jew to an English self is pointed to by her name, which means 'white' in Spanish. Indeed, she ultimately becomes a nurse and marries an Englishman. Though her 'darkness' sets her racially apart, she is the desirable Oriental Jewess familiar in nineteenth-century literature, the figure that bridges the discourse of the unassimilable Jew with that of a universalising liberalism that would seek to erase difference.

Although Rudyard Kipling thought Jews 'among the "lesser breeds" who might, potentially, undermine the foundations of Empire' (*Cheyette Constructions* 80), he also believed that at times they could work to benefit the nation; he espoused the useful role of Jewish financiers, for instance, in opposition to those Socialists and Liberals who believed the Boer War had been caused by them (55). In *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), stories of the contributions made by various groups over the centuries form a collective narrative of nationhood. In the final story, 'The Treasure

and the Law’, Kipling expresses sympathy for the historical treatment of Jewish people, as Dickens and Taylor had done, and he also credits them for playing a part in the building of the nation, and yet he does not accept them unequivocally as ‘hybrid subject[s]’ (McBratney 135), one of which he was himself.

‘The Jew’, Kadmiel, is portrayed as having been largely responsible for ensuring that King John signed Magna Carta, his service to the country in medieval times used to demonstrate the potential benefit of Jews to the Empire. Kadmiel explains to the modern-day children Dan and Una that he has paid 200 gold pieces to change the wording of Magna Carta from ‘to no free man will we sell, refuse or deny



Fig. 1.5. ‘The Treasure and the Law’ in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) by Rudyard Kipling. Ill. by H.R. Millar. p. 299

right or justice’ to ‘to none will we ...’ (296), thereby giving Jews, and other excluded groups, rights within the law. In the character of Kadmiel, Kipling combines several constructions of Jews: he is moneylender, Wandering Jew, victim of prejudice, and majestic biblical prophet, ‘like a Moses in the picture-Bible’ (297). He stands to his ‘full towering height’ (286), a stark contrast to the frequent image of the ‘cringing Jew’ such as that in the illustration from the text shown in Fig 1.5, and his grey beard is not a foreign oddity but a ‘splendid’ (284) reminder of his biblical forebears. He bows down to the children, but later cries out ‘triumphantly’ (286), a word used disparagingly in relation to the Jews’ ‘spread[ing]’

of the law in prayer in the verse by John Wright (29). In Kipling’s text, Kadmiel spreads not Jewish law, but English law.

Suzanne Rahn describes Kadmiel as ‘heroic’ and notes that in sinking the treasure and putting it out of the king’s reach, he subverts the literary trope of the moneylender (309). She seems reluctant to acknowledge the extent of the author’s ambivalence towards Jews, however, admitting only that Kipling ‘does not deny that Jews may seek power through the control of wealth’ (309) and suggesting that ‘Song of the Fifth River’, the poem that precedes the story, is about ‘the economic forces that drive the rise and fall of nations’ (311). Given the subject matter of ‘The Treasure and the Law’, however, the poem’s understanding of these forces to be specifically Jewish is obvious; Cheyette’s reading of the poem, which ‘postulates a divine “Jewish” relationship to the “Secret River of Gold” or the world’s money

supply' (*Constructions* 77), is more precise. In the story, the 'divine' link is made explicit through the use of biblical imagery similar to that in 'Song of the Fifth River': the Jews' devotion in exile is not to God, says Kadmiel, but to 'Power-Power-Power! That is *our* God in our captivity' (Kipling 293). The text claims not that Jews *may* seek power through their control of the world's finances, as Rahn suggests, but that they invariably do.

As in the text by John Wright, the question arises as to whether the Jews are in Babylon or Jerusalem. Unlike in Wright's verse, where the narrator refers to the Jews as being in captivity, here it is Kadmiel, whose admission that they worship power rather than God points towards the reason for their exile. In Kipling's poem, the Jews' 'brood[ing] on that River bank' (281) comes close to echoing their weeping by the River of Babylon in the biblical psalm, yet, unlike in the psalm, in 'Song of the Fifth River' after they ponder they act, using their prophetic powers to control every land. In this text it is God himself who has given the Jews sovereignty over gold. It is the use to which they put this control that determines whether the Jews remain in exile or are restored to the Holy City, and this question underlies Kipling's contradictory response to them. That the ingathering of the exiles takes place on English soil, and that Kadmiel privileges English law suggests that the Holy Land is England.<sup>17</sup> The English are the true 'chosen people', their vision of themselves as a 'light unto the nations' brought to fruition through their Empire. The Jews, says Kipling, can be redeemed only by using, or withholding, their wealth for the good of the English nation rather than for their own selfish ends. It is the English, then, that are the agents of the Jews' redemption and restoration to the 'Holy Land'.

John McBratney suggests that Kadmiel 'resists assimilation' (154), but this misses the point: Kadmiel himself does not resist assimilation; it is Kipling who believes that assimilation is not an option, and that Jewish integration must be contained within a limited, economic role. Furthermore, even if Kadmiel is heroic, any interpretation of him must be made alongside a reading of the story's modern-day Jewish character. For Kipling, Meyer represents the dangers of the Jew who attempts to transcend his 'natural', circumscribed position in society. Meyer participates in the very English sport of hunting, but he does not fit into the group.

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<sup>17</sup> The term 'Captivity' is used in texts in which the English are the agents of a more literal return of the Jews to the Holy Land. These include *Prince of the Captivity* (1902) by Sydney Grier and *A Prince of the Captivity* (1933) by John Buchan.

He dresses inappropriately and accidentally shoots someone in the leg. Kadmiel is amazed that the incident is resolved with a payment of gold; in his day, the Jewish man would have been tortured. That Meyer is able to buy his way out of trouble is seen as a positive development by Kadmiel, yet Meyer uses his money not for noble purposes, as Kadmiel had done, but to evade the legal justice that he is entitled to by virtue of Kadmiel's negotiations on behalf of his people. McBratney suggests that the character of Meyer 'forces the reader to see that the business of constructing a nation out of diverse elements is still unfinished' (154), but this is not the case: rather, Meyer illustrates Kipling's belief that some people will never fit into that nation. Kipling differentiates between Kadmiel, who sacrifices his personal wealth in a noble cause, and Meyer, the present-day interloper who has the potential to destabilise the English way of life, even to undermine its law, by using his God-given talent with money for his own rather than the collective good. The author reinterprets motifs of 'racial' and national difference commonly used to marginalise Jews in order to demonstrate that those like Kadmiel, who know and accept their role, can contribute to the British Imperial vision. As the beneficiary of the English liberal tolerance that had granted Jews civil and legal equality Meyer is more obviously integrated into society, but he can be assimilated only up to a point, and his unwillingness to adhere to English law renders him unfit to represent the Empire abroad. Kipling is suggesting, therefore, that to attempt to weave Jews like Meyer into the fabric of the nation is to risk tearing it.

Hilaire Belloc's stance on the Boer War, and the Jews' part in it, was the opposite of Kipling's, but despite their political differences their writing reveals a similar perception of the contemporary Jew as a faux Englishman. While Kipling believed this 'type' of Jew to be potentially dangerous, Belloc felt he was certainly so. When a Liberal MP, Belloc opposed the Boer War, which he claimed was 'openly and undeniably provoked and promoted by Jewish interests in South Africa' (*Cheyette Constructions* 156). According to Cheyette, Belloc believed that 'the Jew' signified 'the alien, catastrophic capitalism of the contemporary world' (154). In 'Rebecca Who Slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably', from *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907), Rebecca Offendort is the daughter of a wealthy banker. The illustrations by 'BTB' are crudely stereotypical, with Rebecca's father having a large nose, heavy black eyebrows and thick lips; Rebecca herself has a large hooked nose. Both are very well dressed; the text informs readers that they live at a smart

address in Bayswater. The moral of the verse is applicable to all naughty children, though the details of the story also make it a fantasy of wishful thinking about the fate of the Jews, for Rebecca finally slams one door too many and a bust of Abraham falls on her head and kills her. The implication is that if wealthy ‘alien’ Jews seek to infiltrate English culture, their racial difference will ultimately be revealed and will lead to their demise, the construction of Jews as inherently un-English opposing a liberal tolerance that would incorporate them into the nation.

E. Nesbit participated in an anti-Jewish political discourse which bore some similarities to the stances taken by Belloc and Kipling, although the objection by Nesbit, a socialist, differed in that she disapproved of Jews as ‘innate capitalists’ rather than as ‘alien capitalists’. Nesbit’s biographer, Julia Briggs, observes that ‘her prejudices reduce individual characters to despised stereotypes’ (292) in relation to servants and Jews. While Nesbit’s socialist anti-capitalism might indicate such constructions of the latter, it would seem contradictory in relation to the former, and indeed, her ideology is often inconsistent, with tensions within and between texts, including in her representations of Jews. In *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), the Bastable children believe Mr Rosenbaum to be a ‘Generous Benefactor’, but he is really a greedy moneylender who conforms in almost every respect to stereotype, being ‘a little old gentleman with a very long black coat and a very long white beard and a hookey nose - like a falcon’ (Nesbit 142). The children visit Mr Rosenbaum to obtain money for their father, whose business is in difficulty; unbeknownst to them, Mr Bastable has already been to see the moneylender. Mr Rosenbaum agrees to lend the children a pound but is too entranced by the glittering coin to be able to part with it, instead giving them fifteen shillings and a bottle of cheap perfume. Despite the stereotype, there is a degree of ambiguity in the representation. Mr Rosenbaum tells the children they should be at school, not thinking about money. He pays for the children to take a cab to the station and writes a letter to their father about the incident, which Mr Bastable describes as ‘very kind’ (147).

Mr Rosenbaum is described physically as a traditional ‘foreign’ Jew located in a dark room surrounded by books, in contrast to the dark, large-nosed, lisping florist, Mr Rosenberg, of *Harding’s Luck* (1909). Though his profession is outside the financial sector, his focus is on money; he attempts to brush off a delivery error by blaming the customer for not paying in advance: ‘Cath down enthureth thpeedy



delivery' (Nesbit 65). In contrast, his non-Jewish colleague understands the appropriate way English merchants should behave towards their customers and apologises for the mistake. The lisp is a common feature in constructions of acculturated Jews of the time; their native language may be English, the texts imply, but they are nevertheless unable to speak it properly. This construction of Mr Rosenberg coexists in the book with a curiously philosemitic scene which Briggs describes as 'embarrassingly didactic' (292):

The sense of romance, of great things all about them transcending the ordinary things of life – this in the Jews has survived centuries of torment, shame, cruelty, and oppression. This inherited sense of romance in the pawnbroker now leapt to answer Dickie's appeal (Nesbit *Harding* 100).

The pawnbroker is well spoken – even correcting Dickie's pronunciation – and there are no clues, visual, linguistic or otherwise, that he is intended to be read as Jewish. While Nesbit's other Jews are Rosenbaums and Rosenbergs, the pawnbroker's name is never given, highlighting his function as 'every Jew' in the 'romantic' story of the Jewish 'race'. The pawnbroker's origins are revealed only when he admires Dickie's *chutzpah* in pawning a gift he himself has given the boy: 'If you don't beat all! ... You should have been one of our people!' (99).

Nesbit, like Kipling, Dickens and Edgeworth, had contradictory imaginings of the 'historical' and the 'modern' Jew, but her constructions of the Jews in *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) are consistent and clear. The queen of Babylon travels through time to modern London and is shocked by what she finds. She sees the poor and assumes them to be slaves: their treatment is far worse than that of slaves in Babylon. She conjures up a feast for them and proceeds to order her guards to 'kill the dogs' (201): the men of the Stock Exchange. Although in the late nineteenth century only five per cent of the members of the Stock Exchange were Jewish (Feldman 80), in this scene the majority of them are: Lionel Cohen, Henry Hirsh, Rosenbaum, Levinstein. Pat Pinsent says that even if Nesbit uses the stereotype of Jews as wealthy exploiters of the people, 'to her credit she does not identify these characters as Jewish other than by their names' ('After Fagin' 315). There are, however, other obvious clues to identify the men as Jewish: the queen refers to the ones 'with the beautiful long, curved noses' (Nesbit *Amulet* 199). The men's colleagues compliment them on their fine appearance in Babylonian dress. 'Old' Levinstein laments the waste of good food on the poor in a 'Yiddish' accent: 'I think

it is chust a ver' bad tream ... along Bishopsgate I haf seen the gommon people have their hants full of food – *goot* food. Oh yes, without doubt a very bad tream!' (199-200). One of the men – Rosenbaum, the same name as the moneylender in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* – observes the scene and decides he must be mad, but his partner tells him, 'It's a judgement on you, Rosy ... I always said you were too hard in that matter of Flowerdew' (201). Both Irene Wise (333) and Julia Briggs (292) describe the massacre of the members of the Stock Exchange as 'a pogrom', which becomes merely a dream when one of the men wishes it so.

The scene has elements in common with Belloc's comic verse, with both envisaging the punishment of moneyed London Jews precisely because they were moneyed, Jewish and believed that they were English, even if their financial dealings 'proved' they were not. Nesbit's concern is for the social inequalities in a London that is more decadent than Babylon, with the destruction of the City echoing the destruction of the Temple prior to the exile of the Jews. It is a 'biblical' judgement specifically on Jewish capitalists, 'the pillars of this unjust society' (251), who, the text suggests, would line their pockets while others go hungry. Nesbit's vision of a new Jerusalem was one of social equality at home. Her politics had little in common with those of Kipling, but both reserved their worst criticism for the same 'type' of modern Jew: those who wielded their control of the 'fifth river' for the benefit of their international 'racial' network rather than the wider good.

In some texts, Jews are compartmentalised into different 'types' and constructed accordingly. In contrast, the boys' paper *Chums* (1892-1941) at times reinforces contradictory constructions, while in its positioning of Jews as agents of Empire it makes an attempt to reconcile them, acknowledging that Jews socialise with Christians and play their role for Queen and country, even though it also imagines them as a race apart. The periodical uses England's treatment of the Jews to demonstrate its standing as a moral nation that grants freedom to her own citizens and acts as a guiding hand to nations of the world. An article from 1904 entitled 'Jew Chums at School' notes the skull caps worn in the photo of schoolboys at their desks, observing that in England they are free to do so, while in some other countries Jews are 'despised and oppressed' (131). In England, the article says, 'all professions are open to [Jews], and not a few of the great men who have upheld the glory of the Empire have been of the Hebrew race. Training in British ideas and privileges have made the Jews in many cases not only law-abiding but patriotic' (131). The text does

not admit that all Jews, or even most of them, are good citizens, but the use of the word ‘law-abiding’ indicates that the periodical had progressed beyond the seemingly inescapable association between Jews and unethical or illegal financial activity. In at least some respects, *Chums* was in accord with Kipling’s view of Jews who adopt English values and laws as acceptable servants of the Empire.

### **Integration and Empire: stories for boys**

Like *Chums*, other literature for boys explores and negotiates the boundaries of Jewish integration, situating Jewish boys and men, most of them English-born, among their Gentile peers in the places they were most likely to meet – at school and in the workplace. The portrayal of Moses Manasses in *Jack Harkaway at Oxford*, part of the popular series by Bracebridge Hemyng, juxtaposes well-to-do, acculturated English Jewishness with a telltale ‘racial’ Jewishness that renders full acceptance impossible. Manasses wants nothing more than to assimilate into the English upper class. No expense has been spared to furnish and decorate his house; what strikes the visitor is ‘the refinement with which everything was selected and arranged’ (61), including Old Masters and antique oak furniture. Manasses adopts much the same lifestyle and tastes as any other Englishman of his economic means, without the flamboyance and vulgarity often attributed to Jews. Manasses is desperate for his daughter Hilda to marry an Englishman, preferably an aristocrat. Hilda’s ability to be assimilated is signalled by her blonde hair and blue eyes; visually she has more in common with texts about the conversion of the Jews abroad than with the Orientalised literary ‘Jewess’, though, like them, she is ‘exquisitely lovely’ (33).

Manasses invites Jack to his house for an evening of cigars and claret, but when his plan for Harkaway to marry his daughter is rejected, her father’s response reveals his true ‘Jewish’ nature:

‘Father Abraham!’ exclaimed the Jew, holding up his hands. ‘I lend my money; I do not press him; he creeps into my house like a viper, and he stings me through my daughter ... I’ll have my monies ... It is my right. The law will give me my gold’. (82-83)

The text both associates Manasses with Shylock and reverses the Shakespearean plot, for it is the Jewish girl’s father that wants her to marry a Gentile man. However, it suggests that English or not, Jews have particularly ‘racially Jewish’ qualities. This

is reinforced by Jack's response to Manasses's retort that Jack will pay the penalty for rejecting his daughter, 'Then I'm Jew'd, that's all' (100). However, when Manasses is assaulted by a group of drunken students, he ceases to be the Jewish outsider using his wealth to try to worm his way into English culture and becomes instead a victim. Harkaway's own sense of honour and fair play come to the fore and he assists Manasses, asking, 'Is a man to be attacked and bullied, half killed, in fact, because he is a Jew?' (130). Later, Jack rescues Hilda, who has been kidnapped by the drunken students, and her father asks him to be friends, for

'I've got few enough.'

'Why?'

'Because I'm a Jew, and lend money, that's all.'

Jack shook him cordially by the hand ... 'If you're a bad Jew, all I can say is, I've met many a worse Christian'. (155)

Manasses occupies a range of opposing positions: he is socially integrated and outcast; powerful and powerless; generous and miserly; English and foreign; grateful and vengeful; and comic and tragic; and Jack holds conflicting attitudes in response to these contradictory constructions. Ultimately, the text highlights the duty of a good Englishman to behave honourably towards Jews – and others – even if they are unlikeable. Furthermore, it subverts the view voiced by Jack's friend that 'Jews show Christians no mercy in money matters; they are all Shylocks' (61) by having Manasses leave Jack £10,000 in his will.

Juliana Horatia Ewing engages more thoughtfully with the ambivalent status of acculturated Jews in the two-part *We and the World: a Book for Boys* (1881). The Jewish character, the articulated clerk Moses Benson, works in a law office with the protagonist, Jack, who would rather run away to sea. The smell of drains in the office makes everyone ill except Jack's uncle and Moses Benson, who: 'said he smelt nothing; which shows that one may have a very big nose to very little purpose' (Ewing 128-9). Benson is 'sallow, [with] a big nose ... [his hair] was thick and very black ... the curls were more like short ringlets' (129). Benson is articulate and English-born. He speaks without a foreign accent, and only occasionally lapses into a telltale 'Jewish' lisp. His Anglicised surname points out his cultural similarity to that of the other clerk, Burton. Benson is constructed as almost entirely culturally English. Benson is baited by Burton, who is disdainful of 'the Jew-boy' (130). The phrase is in inverted commas in the text and voiced by the unsympathetic clerk, serving to distance its usage from both author and readers, although Jack himself

refers to Benson as 'the Jew-clerk' (136). Burton taunts Benson with stereotypes, which are accepted, but also subverted, in the text:

'You Jews are always so sly. That's how you get on so, I suppose.'  
'You Gentiles,' replied Moses (and the Jew's voice had tones which gave him an infinite advantage in retaliating scorn), 'you Gentiles would do as well as we do if you were able to foresee and knew how to wait. You have all the selfishness for success, my dear, but the gifts of prophecy and patience are wanting to you.' (131)

Benson is secure enough in his position to retaliate; he shows Burton what it is like to be seen not as an individual, but as a stereotype, responding to 'You Jews' with 'You Gentiles'. He deconstructs the binaries in which Jews are sly and manipulative and Christians straightforward and honest, and constructs new ones in which Christian jealousy, selfishness, lack of foresight and impatience are set against the foresight and patience that sees Jews rewarded. Ewing blends a contemporary 'Jewish' propensity for success with biblical qualities of patience and prophecy; this notion of Jewish financial ability having a prophetic quality is similar to that in Kipling's 'Song of the Fifth River'. The text's engagement with the contemporary discourse is made plain in the suggestion that Benson's eloquence might one day lead him to a seat in Parliament, a right only granted to Jews some two decades before the publication of the novel.

Jack, though friendly with Benson, is ambivalent towards him. He admits that the clerk has been 'kinder and kinder' (137), but finds himself unable to defend Benson against anti-Semitic slurs. He does not hold such views himself, yet he fails to castigate his brother Jem for

stigmatising the Jew-clerk as a dirty beast. I really dared not tell him that Moses grew more familiar as my time to be articulated drew near; that he called me Jack Sprat, and his dearest friend, and offered to procure me the 'silver-top' (or champagne) ... of the first quality and at less than cost price. (138)

Ewing highlights the uncertain position occupied by middle-class British Jews who, even while integrated economically into mainstream society, remain unaccepted socially. Jack recognises that calling Jewish people unkind names 'stigmatises' them, but cannot defend Benson because the admission that he associates with a Jew would be to risk his brother's good opinion of him. By acknowledging the acquaintance, Jack would be destabilising his own position.

Eventually, Jack runs away to sea, stopping at a second-hand shop in Liverpool to buy suitable clothing. He encounters the proprietor, who on first glance

he mistakes for Moses Benson. Moses Cohen is older, poorer and dirtier than the clerk, but he speaks gently and has the same smile as Benson. Where Benson mingles with non-Jews in the office, Cohen serves them in his shop. This proprietor is contrasted with Moses Benson's father, who sells second-hand watches in his own shop and is 'said to have money, though the watches did not seem to sell very fast' (129). The reference to the second-hand watch trade reinforces the familiar association of Jews with criminal activity, but while the stories about Benson's father are merely hearsay, the description of Moses Cohen is based on Jack's interaction with him, and this first-hand observation serves to cast some doubt on the veracity of the rumours about Benson's father. Furthermore, the deliberate juxtaposition of Moses Benson and Moses Cohen results in a poor Jewish old-clothes seller being humanised and extends readers' perception of Jews as individuals rather than monolithic stereotypes. Moses Cohen also facilitates Jack's embarkation on a new life as a sailor, and not through the use of wealth, for he has none. Cohen makes an honest, positive contribution to the Empire that contrasts with the common construction of 'foreign' Jews engaging in dishonest business activity and encountered by English sailors abroad.<sup>18</sup>

The ideology that puts the onus on boys and young men to show fair play to others at all times comes to dominate later in the century, particularly in boys' magazines, which at the same time reveal the continuation of multiple and competing constructions of Jews in literature and popular culture. *Young Israel* magazine (1897) complains that 'readers of *Tit-Bits* cannot have failed to notice that that journal has lent itself rather frequently of late to this species of "joke" against our people' ("Jokes" Against Jews).<sup>19</sup> *Boys' Realm* responds to letters complaining about its stereotypical Jewish characters with 'an apology' (qtd. in Hynes 138), albeit a rather half-hearted one, which explains that such images are 'the generally accepted idea of the Jew' (138). It makes the point that 'there are noble, intelligent, upright and honest Jews, just as there are noble, intelligent, upright and honest

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<sup>18</sup> Eight decades later, the kindly dealer of second-hand nautical clothing in Leon Garfield's *The December Rose* (1986), plays a similar role. Solomon Levy works hard, takes great pride in his work and always gives a fair price. Both Cohen and Levy contribute to the Empire through their supply of suitable clothing to young men joining the Navy. However, although Ewing is concerned with the position of Jews in particular, towards the end of the twentieth century, Garfield is preoccupied with portraying a range of marginalised individuals, particularly children, and Levy is part of this impulse.

<sup>19</sup> In his essay 'Anti-Semitism in Britain' (1945), George Orwell notes that 'the "Jew joke" of the ... comic papers was almost consistently ill-natured' (310).

Christians' (138), but then goes on to castigate 'oversensitive' Jews for objecting to representations in the publication: 'This type of protest has a hollow sound' (138).

*Chums* features stories of the intelligence services, the foreign legion, pirates and motor racing, giving a glamorous picture of the life awaiting the future leaders of Empire. The November 1907 issue includes a gallery of 'Chums here and there', with images of a Zulu postman, a school in China and 'a Hindoo juggler' (292). In this context, 'the Jew' is just one of many untrustworthy foreigners in tales of intrigue, and they are most often depicted as foreign, almost always cunning, and occasionally sinister. However, they also appear in school stories, mainly as figures of fun.

In *The Smashing of a Trust* (1907), three Jewish schoolboys known as 'Shylock and Co.' – a reference to Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* – represent various aspects of the contemporary literary Jew: Keppell is 'furtive-looking; Hearn (whose father's name was originally Hohne) represented the short, fat, and sallow-faced type; and Lowenstein was endowed with the least pleasing characteristics of the Hebrew race' (Wentworth James 415), traits which are never detailed. Worse, 'the playing-fields knew them not, except at rare intervals' (415). However, the text then retreats from its racial association of the boys with 'Jewish greed' by pointing out that, although they act as moneylenders to the other boys, they charge a fair interest rate and are generally respected by their schoolmates. The boys embark on a business venture which goes awry. The narrator is neutral, almost sympathetic even, rather than gleeful, in detailing the boys' downfall, explaining that

there often comes a time, however, as the records of the business world prove, when the prosperous, cautious merchant, dazzled by the prospect of sudden riches, forsakes his well-tried methods and plunges wildly into some roseate-hued speculation, which ends in disaster and despair. (416)

In this instance, the trio buy the school tuck shop and charge exorbitant prices to their classmates, who get revenge by frog-marching them to the shop and forcing them to eat their merchandise until they are sick, refusing to show mercy when the boys say they will lower the prices, and ceasing the punishment only when they offer to give the food away. The story links the boys' Jewishness with their business acumen, but it does so rather more gently than is often the case, presenting the incident as a fairly standard schoolboy scrape. The impression is that the characters must be made to be Jewish simply because stock characters in such a plot invariably

are. Lowenstein, initially described vaguely as having the ‘least pleasing characteristics’ of Jewish people, is then described as a ‘cautious merchant’. That the prospect of sudden riches dazzles him suggests that he is not rich, nor is he infallible with money, which undermines the construction of Jews as having an innate head for business. In the end, too, the boys’ comeuppance is harmless rather than vengeful, and has no racially motivated element attached to it.

*Young Israel*, the Jewish alternative to these boys’ magazines, assumes that its readers would be going to school and probably socialising with their non-Jewish compatriots. Yet several articles acknowledge that their peers considered them to be ‘racially’ different, and that this difference disqualified them from Englishness: ‘A Jewish boy at a public school was once asked, “Which would you sooner be – an Englishman or a Jew?” His answer was, “I am both” and it was the right answer’ (‘To Our Readers’ 2). The magazine judges the position of Jews to have improved immeasurably under Queen Victoria, and compares the years of her reign to earlier periods, which it assesses harshly: ‘Jews, throughout every grade of society, were, if not ostracised because they were Jews, at best gallingly tolerated by those who made the toleration a point for boasting of their liberality and broadmindedness’ (‘Our Queen’ 83). The content of *Young Israel* attests to the fact that even at the end of the nineteenth century, English Jews were not considered wholly English, that popular magazines used them as the butt of jokes and that Jews were unpopular, all of which caused the editors some consternation. Contributors to a debate about the latter included some readers, Jewish and non-Jewish, who attributed long-standing racial stereotypes to Jews, while others, including a non-Jewish nurse, blame ‘a certain class of periodical in whose pages those nightmare illustrations of what a facetious buffoon calls “Ikey Mo” appear’ (McKay 97) for intolerant attitudes which she sees as out of step with tolerant middle-class views.

In the years before the First World War, Jews became the object of suspicion regardless of where they were from, with those that anglicised their names being accused of attempting to ‘pass’ as English when they were ‘really’ foreign, even if their families had long established roots in England. The anglicisation of ‘Hohne’ to ‘Hearn’ in the 1907 issue of *Chums* is an allusion to growing anti-German sentiment at the time. Some boys’ magazines contest the anti-Jewish feeling in society before, during and after the war, even while acknowledging that many of their readers continued to associate Jews with old stereotypes and, indeed, in some instances



doing so themselves. Jewish characters joined the school in *Magnet* ('The Schoolboy Outcast', 1912, see Fig 1.7), *Gem* ('The Jew of St. Jim's', 1915, see Fig 1.6) and the *Nelson Lee Library* ('The Jew of St. Frank's', 1920). Each story in which one of the three Jewish boys – Monty Newland, Dick Julian and Solomon Levi – is introduced begins with dissension in the form upon the announcement that a Jewish boy is

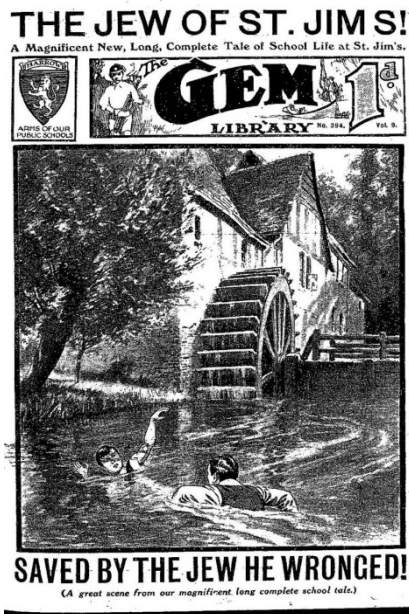


Fig 1.6. 'The Jew of St. Jim's' by Martin Clifford. *The Gem Library*. 9: 394. 28 Aug 1915.

coming to join them. In 'The Schoolboy Outcast', Bulstrode greets the news with, 'They oughtn't to let the chap into the school at all – a blessed Sheeny!' (1), while in 'The Jew of St. Frank's', Fullwood says, 'Jews oughtn't to be allowed to mix with decent people; they are a swindling, thieving crowd! If I had my way, all the Jews would be chucked out of England! They're a rotten disgrace to the country' (17). Nipper, captain of the Remove form at St. Frank's, counters an objection to Levi's presence on the grounds that he is Jewish with 'Levi can't help being a Jew, and there's no disgrace in it, anyhow. We're not living in the Middle Ages!' (3). He urges his peers to 'remember that you're British. Set this Jewish kid a good

example – be sportsmen' (5). In 'The Jew of St. Jim's,' Arthur August D'Arcy tells the hostile Lowther, 'When you weflect, Lowthah, that there are many Jews now at the fwont fightin' for their countwy, I wondah that you are not ashamed of yourself' (4).

Those opposed to Dick Julian and Solomon Levi joining the form devise pranks aimed at getting them to spend as much money as possible. Monty Newland is mercilessly taunted as a Shylock and a moneylender, while Lowther tells Dick Julian that he will pay interest on the money he had borrowed from Julian during the prank – 'cent per cent, you know' (17) – and Mellish joins in the joke with 'Shent per shent, shentlemens' (17). The comparisons to a moneylender are the last straw for both the schoolboy outcast and the Jew of St. Jim's. Both boys stand up for their honour, fighting and triumphing over their opponents. Julian's good sportsmanship is contrasted with Lowther's refusal to shake hands after his defeat and reinforced when Julian subsequently saves Lowther from drowning. Monty Newland is equally

heroic, forcing a moneylender to cancel the interest on a debt which would have resulted in the ignominious departure of the headmaster from the school, while in 'The Jew of St. Frank's', Levi pushes a man out of the path of an oncoming car and is himself nearly run over for his efforts.



Fig. 1.7. 'The Schoolboy Outcast' by Frank Richards. *The Magnet Library*. 30 March 1912.

joining the school, he is not offended by it.

Solomon Levi, the only one of the three to have an obviously Jewish name, is also the only one to himself be a budding businessman; his decision to sell a bicycle for a profit when he has not yet bought it from his schoolmate is met with a very mixed response from the other boys. However, the narrator's interpretation of the incident settles the issue: the deal, which 'proved that [Levi] was as keen as mustard when it came to business matters' (29), is viewed with respect, with Levi's capitalist gamble judged to be resourceful and even courageous. This is a notable development: capitalism, mentioned as a fact of contemporary life by Jeffreys Taylor in 1824, is here genuinely accepted to be so. Jewish engagement in business deals is seen as neither indicative of an alien threat to the nation, nor as something which must be put to use for the national good.

These texts construct English-born Jews as both English and Jewish, honourable, brave, good sports and good sportsmen. They are the sort of boy a reader might aspire to be: they are English gentlemen. As Nipper of St. Frank's says, 'These narrowminded asses don't seem to realise that there are thousands of Jews walking about with fair hair and snub noses, and other characteristics of an ordinary Englishman. Jews aren't like the caricatures you see in the comic papers!' (11). 'The Jew of St. Jim's' does, however, make mention of the local moneylender, Mr Moses,

Unlike the 'hypersensitive' readers of *Boys' Realm*, the Jews of St. Jim's and St. Frank's can take a 'joke'; they are good sports when their peers needle them about money or call them 'Ikey' or 'Abraham'. Julian tells Lowther, 'If you don't like Jews you can't help it ... It's a bit unreasonable, but nothing to worry about' (20), while Solomon Levi tells the headmaster that, having expected such a reaction to his

while the villain of 'The Schoolboy Outcast' is Mr Levinski, who is the very sort of caricature referred to by Nipper: "I have a leetle pizness with the Headmaster, mein poy", Mr Levinski said with an oily grin. "Shoost a leetle pizness" (17). The texts encourage readers to distinguish between the miserly villainous moneylender of literature and 'real' Jewish boys, who nowadays are just like other boys and even number among the readers of these very papers: the editor of the *Gem Library* exhorts Jewish readers to 'kindly hand his copy ... to a non-reading Jew chum' (3). Stories for boys worked hard to contest stereotypes in relation to contemporary Jewish children. That they felt it necessary to do so demonstrates that the assumption that all Jews were unscrupulous, miserly moneylenders of one sort or another was still common among the readership of the boys' papers in the years around World War I.

A new construction appeared in boys' magazines in the wake of the Russian Revolution, and continued for some years afterwards: the 'Jewish Bolshevik'. Charlotte Hynes notes that the Jewish Communist and the Jewish capitalist were 'happy partners in the plot to topple western democracy' in stories in *Chums* of the interwar years such as 'They Who Laughed' (1928-9) and 'Captain Robin Hood, Skywayman' (1932-33) (121). The contrast between constructions of English Jewish boys and those of 'dangerous, foreign Jews' indicates that the position of Jews in relation to the English sense of self had altered in some respects, but alongside these developments, older stereotypes endured.

## **Conclusion**

Eitan Bar-Yosef recounts childhood reminiscences from the mid-nineteenth century and as late as the 1940s in which the Holy Land is relocated to the English landscape (43-44). This biblical imagery is also employed in constructions of England in children's literature from the eighteenth century through to World War II, used in texts concerned with religiosity, morality, social justice and Empire. The construction by the English of themselves as the 'Chosen People' is endorsed in some texts and critiqued in others. Both points of view lead to encounters with ideas about the 'other' Chosen People, the Jews, with the tensions and contradictions in representations of Jews revealing both the instability of their place in English society and the insecurity of English identity itself.

The Enlightenment was accompanied by an unwritten agreement whereby Jews would be seen as ‘men in the street’ if they kept their Jewishness hidden within the confines of the home. The literature reveals, though, that whether or not they abided by this agreement, Jews were often merely tolerated rather than accepted as Englishmen. The boundaries between the Jews and the English were regularly repositioned as more Jews were English-born and acculturated, and as the English image of themselves and their nation shifted. Only if and when Jews, usually women or children, were ‘converted’ to Englishness were they regarded as equals in this literature.

A central factor in the continuing construction of Jews, first in terms of religious difference, and later ‘racial’ and ‘national’ difference from ‘white’ English citizens, was the centuries-old association of Jews with worldly goods, as encapsulated in Kipling’s construction of the Jews as divinely empowered to manipulate the world’s wealth. Kipling believed that such power could be harnessed for good or ill; others were not as ambivalent. Across a wide range of literature during this period, Jews were constructed as pedlars who, while seemingly poor, were concealing wealth they had acquired through illegal financial activity. They were wealthy merchants attempting to infiltrate the upper echelons of society, moneylenders charging exorbitant rates of interest, financiers of the Empire, or alien capitalists whose ties to a powerful global financial network or Communism threatened the very foundations of English society. Even when represented as English schoolboys, and even if these schoolboys were generous with their money, that they had wealth was never in doubt.

That this notion of an intrinsic relationship between Jews and money was deeply embedded in children’s literature and assumed to be part of the vernacular of the child reader is demonstrated by the frequency with which the phrase ‘rich as a Jew’ and variations thereof appears in a wide range of texts. In *The Friend of Youth* (1788) by Mark Anthony Meilan, for instance, one character says, ‘I should have been rich as any Jew if I had only taken sixpence or a groat for every consultation’ (13). In ‘Eton Montem’, from volume six of *The Parent’s Assistant* (1800), by Maria Edgeworth, a character says: ‘You’ll pay Finsbury for me, you rich Jew?’ (200). The hero of Frederick Marryat’s adventure, *Peter Simple* (1832), finds himself in a crowd of angry women who empty his pockets, count his money and exclaim, ‘Why, Peter, you are as rich as a Jew’ (134). In Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies*

(1863), ‘At last he grew as rich as a Jew, and as fat as a farmer’ (289-290). In Talbot Baines Reed’s school story *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* (1881), a small boy’s interest in applying for a scholarship meets with the response, ‘Well, why don’t you, you avaricious young Jew?’ (10), while in Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* (1899), Stalky groans, ‘You’re a cold-blooded Jew’ (108) when a classmate to whom he owes money demands payment with interest.

The unthinking perpetuation of such constructions seems to disregard the possibility that Jewish children would be among the readers of these books, which undoubtedly they were. The British Library holds a copy in Yiddish of *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde, demonstrating that the established Anglo-Jewish community was introducing its immigrant children to English culture at the earliest opportunity. In his article ‘Boys’ Weeklies’, George Orwell points out that letters to *Gem* demonstrate that it is read by boys ‘in every corner of the British Empire’, including ‘Palestine Jews’ (97), while a letter to the magazine *Young Israel* laments that the bookshelves of middle-class Jews held the works of Eliot, Scott, Dickens, Lewis Carroll and the Arabian Nights, rather than specifically Jewish material (‘What Jews Read’). Carroll himself had copies of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* printed for distribution to children in hospital, and wrote in response to a query about whether he wished the patients at a Jewish hospital to have the book, ‘Why in the world shouldn’t little Israelites read *Alice* as well as other children?’ (Lewis n.p.). That Jewish readers noticed and were hurt by stereotypical representations of Jews and Jewishness in literature and on the streets is apparent from their letters to the *Girl’s Own Paper*, *Boys’ Realm*, and the authors Maria Edgeworth and Charles Dickens.

Despite the gradual acknowledgement of Jewish integration into English society, the stereotypes of the Jewish moneylender, miser and criminal continued to appear in children’s literature in the years before World War II. Beatrix Potter’s *The Fairy Caravan* (1929), originally published in the United States under her married name of Beatrix Heelis, features the disreputable starling Ikey Shepster, a theatrical impresario who, like the falcon-like Mr Rosenbaum in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* and the ‘bird of prey’ Lorenzo in *Jack O’Lanthorn*, hoards glittering items. In Richmal Crompton’s ‘William Helps the Cause’ from *Sweet William* (1936), William and his gang pretend they have been kidnapped and then write a ransom note to William’s older brother, Robert, demanding £200. Robert believes the letter is a blackmail demand from a moneylender:

A Jew probably. All money-lenders were Jews. He'd seen one in a play once done by the Hadley Amateur Dramatic Society – a greasy old man in a dressing-gown, counting over his money in a squalid little room by the light of a flickering candle stuck in the mouth of a bottle. He was a miser. All money-lenders were misers, of course. (82-83)

Robert believes his younger sibling's poorly written communication to be a genuine threat, yet although the text satirises his gullibility and the 'of course' points to the fixedness of the literary image, that image, drawn in some detail, is itself intended to contribute to the scene's comedic effect.<sup>20</sup>

*The Fairy Caravan* and 'William Helps the Cause' are not even implicitly about Jews or English identity; instead, they employ a stereotype from popular culture to make a point in a way that will be easily recognised by readers. As has been shown, however, much children's literature published between the eighteenth century and World War II does engage in a discourse that explores, whether explicitly or implicitly, the boundaries of English identity. In doing so, it asks many questions, among them: is Englishness inextricably bound up with Christianity? Should contemporary society focus on this life or the next? Should the nation focus on the Empire or a domestic agenda? How should those from outside the hegemonic culture be treated at home and abroad? Can minority groups ever really be English? As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, some of the constructions of Jews that are embedded in the attempts to answer these questions are modified over the course of the twentieth century, as are the questions themselves. However, as will be shown, whether such shifts are incremental or more substantial, the tensions revealed in the discourse remain.

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<sup>20</sup> It was not until 1986 that the publisher altered the text, omitting the words 'a Jew probably. All money-lenders were Jews' (Simon 21).

## Chapter 2

### **‘Conversion’ to Englishness: Refugees and Belonging**

Less than sixty years after the Russian pogroms of 1881, the subject of Jewish refugees once again became a hotly debated issue in Britain. Although there was widespread disapproval of the discrimination Jews were suffering under the Nazi regime, the feelings of many towards Jews as a group remained ambivalent. During World War II, as they had in the past, ‘the Jews’ tested and helped to define the English sense of national identity.

In his 1945 essay ‘Anti-Semitism in Britain’, George Orwell illuminates the complex and often contradictory range of beliefs about Jews held by a wide cross-section of society at the time, and maintains that the war led to an increase in anti-Semitism and a simultaneous unwillingness to admit to it (307).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a 1939 survey found that some of the 15% of those opposed to World War II did voice the belief that Jewish financiers were to blame for the war, an opinion also common during the Boer War. Army recruits had the same view four years later (Kushner, ‘Paradox’ 83). Those sympathetic to the plight of the Jews made an effort to sway British public opinion by challenging longstanding stereotypes about them when, as war drew near, a rescue operation for Jewish children was underway via the Kindertransports and the numbers of Jews seeking refuge in Britain in the immediate future was uncertain and could conceivably rise.

Publications such as *You and the Refugee* (1939), part of the topical Penguin Specials series, sought to convince the general public of the moral, political and economic arguments in favour of allowing refugees into the United Kingdom, and suggested that anti-Semitism itself was irrational:

It is perfectly true, of course, that some Jews are very rich (most of them are desperately poor), as some Gentiles are; some are successful in banking (very few, most bankers are non-Jews), or in science or medicine or music or literature or journalism as some Gentiles are.

Suppose that by some magic, on some Monday night, every Jew’s nose could suddenly be straightened, his hair and complexion made blond, and the knowledge of his ancestry completely destroyed. We should then have on the Tuesday exactly the same men and women doing exactly the

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<sup>1</sup> Orwell points out that although anti-Semitism had increased during the war, it was ‘probably less prevalent in England than it was thirty years ago’ (309).

same things, committing exactly the same offences that they were doing or committing on the Monday. But these acts now would engender an entirely different order of feeling in the community. (Angell and Buxton 114)

Six decades after Constance Finn wrote her defence of ‘modern Jews’ in *The Girl’s Own Paper*, Angell and Buxton were again countering the assumption that all Jews were wealthy. Their parenthetical reference to the fact that most bankers were non-Jews points to a widely held view that any association between Jews and money was still tainted by the link to ‘immoral’ moneylending, and was therefore unacceptable, whereas there was no objection to the engagement of English Gentiles in the same profession.

The children’s literature of the period, too, engages with the political debate about refugees, exploring the place of Jews in British society both as a practical issue and as a means of defining the nation at a time of specific external threat to it and its values. The first part of this chapter examines texts for young people published between 1935 and 1946, arguing that literature by writers from the dominant culture separates foreign-born Jews into those that are unassimilable and those that could be accepted on condition that they ‘converted’ to Englishness. Many novels written shortly before and during the war reflect essentialist views of Jews and Jewishness; however, these constructions, while more obviously stereotypical than those in texts written decades later, more often engage with the slipperiness of Jewish identity than some recent representations set during the same period. These constructions were influenced by historical images which often existed in modified form alongside those that attempted to positively shape young readers’ beliefs about Jews. Later memoirs by former refugees reveal the tensions between resisting this pressure to ‘convert’ to Englishness and the desire to become part of the dominant culture.

In more recent literature, a post-Holocaust sensibility underpins representations of Jewish refugees in wartime, but the imperative to educate young readers about the effects of intolerance often leads to fixed and simplistic constructions of Jews and Jewishness. These later texts, which overtly advocate acceptance of Jewish difference in an ostensibly multicultural society, often instead minimise this difference, leading to a universalising assimilationism not dissimilar to that found in novels dating from the war years.



## Figures of fun

Chapter 1 demonstrated that those Jews who were judged to be unassimilable – those too obviously ‘foreign’, usually men – were constructed as figures of fun. Despite the fact that ‘humorous’ constructions of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s differ dramatically from those of pedlars in nineteenth-century ‘London Cries’, the impulse of neutralising through humour a perceived threat to an ostensibly coherent, monocultural national identity remains the same. As in the earlier material, too, the comic image of ‘the Jew’ is employed here at times simply to entertain.

George Orwell notes that ‘after 1934 the “Jew joke” disappeared as though by magic from postcards, periodicals and the music-hall stage, and to put an unsympathetic Jewish character into a novel or short story came to be regarded as anti-Semitism’ (‘Anti-Semitism’ 308).<sup>2</sup> Yet Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig describe the humour of Richmal Crompton’s ‘Just William’ series as ‘firmly in the music-hall tradition’ (*You’re a Brick* 209), and both the William stories and Evadne Price’s ‘Jane’ series, which Cadogan and Craig calls ‘the female equivalent of “Just William”’ (217), do poke fun at Jews, including refugees, during this period. Had it been written even five years earlier, ‘William and the Nasties’ (1935) (see Fig 2.1) would have been received as a story in the same vein as ‘The Smashing of a Trust’, the 1907 story from *Chums* magazine discussed in Chapter 1 in which three entrepreneurial schoolboys are dubbed ‘Shylock & Co.’. Both stories feature Jewish sweetshop owners who get their comeuppance for their lack of generosity, but the publication date of Crompton’s story renders aspects of ‘William and the Nasties’ in more questionable taste. Although she pokes fun at the Nazis, William and his gang are attracted to the idea of a political movement which would allow them to take as many sweets as they want without being punished: ““Crumbs!” said William with a deep sigh of ecstasy, as there came to him glorious visions of chasing Jew after Jew out of sweetshop after sweetshop and appropriating the precious spoils’ (118-119). The gang decide to lock the shop’s new owner, Mr Isaacs, in a cupboard in order to

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<sup>2</sup> Noel Streatfeild’s *Curtain Up* (1944) features a music hall performer whose comic rendition of ‘the Jew’ has made him a star. That Mose Cohen performs this role after it had apparently disappeared, and that he is Jewish himself, may suggest that Streatfeild was attempting to problematise this characterisation or, perhaps, a distinction was made at the time between ‘the Jew’ as a source of ‘harmless’ entertainment and portrayals that were acknowledged to be unsympathetic. Mose Cohen’s act is clearly presented in the text as a performance of a cultural image of Jews that bears no relation to ‘real’ people. The novel also makes clear that a Jew can be a patriotic Englishman without denying his Jewishness, a very rare stance in mainstream children’s literature of the time.

take the sweets, but when they get there they find that a burglar has already broken in and tied him up in his store room. The boys unintentionally capture the thief and rescue Mr Isaacs. Cadogan and Craig call 'William and the Nasties' 'a startlingly tasteless episode' (*You're a Brick* 211), a view also held by Owen Dudley Edwards, who judges the story to be 'startlingly callous' (550). The most troubling aspect of the story is that the boys never repent and, indeed, are rewarded for their actions, as William's vision of seizing the contents of a Jewish-owned sweet shop comes true. The story was, however, reprinted several times during the war (550), which suggests that its intended readership was not offended by it.



Fig 2.1. 'William and the Nasties' in *William the Detective* (1935) by Richmal Crompton. Ill. by Thomas Henry. p. 130

Mr Isaacs (see Fig 2.1) conforms in many respects to the literary 'Jew', being an older 'hook-nosed little man' (Crompton, 'Nasties' 117) who weighs out fewer sweets than the children have paid for and speaks with a comic Yiddish accent. That he is apparently clean-shaven and works on Saturdays suggest that he is acculturated. The text ridicules the Nazis but situates the boys' behaviour alongside that of both the burglar and the looters of Jewish shops in Nazi Germany. The tone of the story is not sympathetic to Jews, but a series featuring a protagonist who is 'not particularly truthful',

'acquisitive, belligerent and opinionated' and 'bigoted' (Cadogan and Craig, *You're a Brick* 206, 214) would be more likely to be satirical than sympathetic in tone regardless of the author's views. The text, in any case, is ambivalent rather than anti-Semitic. At its conclusion, Mr Isaacs proves himself a fitting successor to the previous shopkeeper. He shows his gratitude through an impressive display of generosity, disproving the children's earlier judgement of him as mean, and does not retract his offer even in the face of the children's inveterate greed:

'Take vatever you vant. You can have as much as you can carry,' [Mr Isaacs] went on with reckless generosity. 'See how much you can carry.'

The Outlaws, roused by this challenge, set to work, and even Mr Isaacs was somewhat surprised at the amount his rescuers could carry. 'And ven you come to spend your Saturday pennies here,' he said, 'you will find that I still have not forgotten'. (Crompton, 'Nasties' 132-133)

Evadne Price's *Jane Gets Busy* (1940) is more sharply satirical than Crompton's story. Price's prime target is those who would exploit Jewish refugees while praising themselves for giving them shelter. Jane's mother is a busybody, snob and do-gooder, president of the Women's Association of Loving Kindness, known as 'the Walks'. She decides to bring some refugees to the village as domestic servants: 'the thought of Austrian servants who ate hardly a thing and wanted half the wages of the average English help and didn't mind being on their feet from dawn till midnight, was very alluring indeed' (55). Mrs Turpin hires Fritzi Wasservogel, who is not underfed, sorrowful and grateful, as she expects, but plump, demanding and in exceedingly good spirits. Furthermore, Fritzi proves inept at all of the household chores, complains about the accommodation and manages to make her requests for luxuries understood despite her tenuous grasp of English. Soon Mrs Turpin's charitable spirit wears thin: 'for a woman who had been hounded and persecuted by Hitler, Fritzi seemed singularly unappreciative of everything that had been done for her in England, the land of the free' (63). The story culminates with a slapstick scene in which Fritzi chases a neighbour's servant – a Nazi who sports a swastika badge on her lapel – around the table with a large kitchen knife while Jane watches from the sidelines but remains neutral. Owen Dudley Edwards complains that the characterisation of the refugees in *Jane Gets Busy* gives the message that they are 'tiresome, useless troublemakers best left where they are' (552), but *Jane Gets Busy* is a farce in which everyone is lampooned – Nazi, Jew, and especially Mrs Turpin and her cronies, about whom Price is particularly caustic.

In looks, manner and name, Fritzi is the antithesis of both the common literary image of 'the Jew' and the perception of refugees as subordinate in social class.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, had the text not identified her as Jewish, she would be more likely to be identified by readers as a stereotypical German or Austrian: her first name evokes the nickname for Germans in general, while the majority of literary Jewish characters have recognisably Jewish surnames and Fritzi does not. Her accent is German – as the accent of many refugees would have been – although, as seen in

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<sup>3</sup> Barry Turner's study of the Kindertransports and attitudes to them found that 'there were those who, almost despite themselves, equated refugees with second-class citizens. Not for them the comfortable life; they might get ideas above their station, which was to devote themselves to hard labour and be grateful for small mercies' (1990: 121). 'One young refugee remembers: when asked what I wanted to be I said a doctor. The woman who was filling in the form said: "I can't put that down – you must remember you are a refugee."' (179).

Chapter 1, pre-war literary representations of Jews often portrayed them as having a more generalised 'Jewish' accent. Fritzi's refusal to be forced into a subservient position is a rare display of Jewish agency that further breaks with these rigid images; her anarchic behaviour, however, renders her unassimilable. The primary judgement in the text is not so much of Fritzi and other Jewish refugees as of Mrs Turpin, who gets her just deserts for exploiting them.

### **'English' Germans**

According to Bryan Cheyette, liberal ideology validates Jews 'on the basis of their conformity to the values and manners of bourgeois English society' ('Jewish Stereotyping' 13). In several adventures and school stories written during the early years of the war, German Jews, or those with Jewish ancestry, are welcome in England provided they have, or can be 'converted' to, 'English values'. Mainly youths, they can immediately play an active role in support of the nation rather than being presented as 'refugees', whose ambivalent reception in England complicates straightforward opposition to Nazi ideology.

In *Out of the Nazi Clutch* (1940) by Major Charles James Louis Gilson, for instance, the protagonist, Walter, is a young Englishman studying in Germany, where he befriends a boy who has been set upon by a group of older classmates. After pointing out to the assailants, with an English sense of fair play, the injustice of six boys attacking one, Walter rescues Otto Spohr and asks him, 'Are you a Jew? ... You don't look like one' (30). Otto has 'good features about which there [is] nothing Semitic' (30). The text's suggestion that physical attractiveness is incompatible with Jewishness conforms to the common construction of Jewish men as ugly, while Otto's handsomeness is in keeping with the literary image of the beautiful Jewish child who is more 'naturally' English and/or Christian. Indeed, he responds to Walter's question by confirming that he has Jewish ancestors but is not Jewish himself:

[N]ot by religion, though I have got Jewish blood in me. But my father's mother is a Jewess ... All the rest of my family are Hamburgers and good Lutherans. I'm not ashamed of my grandmother; why should I be? She's one of the kindest old women in the world. (30-31)

Whereas George Orwell suggests that discrimination towards Jews led to their feeling embarrassed or ashamed to admit to their Jewish heritage in public ('Anti-

Semitism' 310), in this text, Otto is neither; he is matter-of-fact, even defiant in affirming it. His friendship with Otto notwithstanding, Walter does view Jews in terms of stereotype, thinking that the boy's father, a grocer, 'had not inherited from his mother the Jew's capacity for making money' (Gilson 35). Nevertheless, despite holding rigid ideas about Jewish 'racial' characteristics, he does not judge them negatively and he acknowledges, as he does with Mr Spohr, that not all 'real' Jews conform to stereotype. When Walter and the Spohrs are captured, Otto shows courage and ingenuity in freeing them all, and, having proven his worth, is rescued and taken to England with his father. These refugees are shown to be assimilable: they are not fully Jewish 'racially', they are Christian by religion and they possess the key British traits of courage and loyalty. Furthermore, Otto, an avowed German patriot before the war, is ready to transfer his allegiance to England. A potentially conflicting loyalty to the 'Jewish nation' is not at issue. Having abandoned their Jewish particularity, the Spohrs would be an asset to their adopted country, which, unlike their homeland, has no racial laws that would insist on their separateness.

In *The Schoolgirl Refugee* (1940) by Olive C. Dougan, the only conditions necessary for a welcome in England are courage and opposition to the Nazis. Jewishness is not a problem to be transcended, categorised or minimised. Trudi, the non-Jewish, half-English German girl, is forced to flee to England because her brother Karl's links to the resistance have brought him unwelcome attention from the Gestapo. Karl's best friend is Ernst Strauss, a Jewish resistance leader whom Karl is trying to smuggle out of the country. Ernst is never seen in Germany in the text, while Karl appears just once, as a fugitive. Both young men reject their German identity before the German state rejects them; both Jew and non-Jew are refugees. The doubling of the two young men, together with their bravery and loyalty to one another, problematises the boundaries between Germanness, Englishness and Jewishness, and describes people simply as pro- or anti-Nazi. Once Ernst and Karl arrive in England near the end of the story, Trudi's English cousin and his friend pose as the German duo in a successful ruse to catch the Nazi spy, the German, German-Jew and Englishmen becoming interchangeable to the outside observer. The Jewish Ernst is constructed as a hero; he arrives in England already, in effect, an Englishman.

## Refugees at boarding school

Like Victorian women writers eager to bring Jewish children into the Christian 'home', and colonialist women writers who had used the image of mother as a metaphor for Britain as protector of her own children and those of other nations (Grenby 123), women writers during the war used literature in order to explore issues of nationhood and belonging. According to John Rowe Townsend, a boarding school is a self-contained environment in which the child acts as a fully fledged citizen (*Written* 85), while M.O. Grenby points out that 'the internalisation of a school's ethos was the central theme of most of the classic school stories of the nineteenth century' (100). Grenby's illustration of this point with a text published in 1933 demonstrates that this theme retained its prominence into the twentieth century. During World War II, the boarding school story was used to demonstrate the integration of refugee children into the welcoming new home that was England.

In *Strangers at the Farm School* by Josephine Elder (1940), the school must expand and modernise to cope with demand from parents who appreciate its progressive education and country setting. When a pupil worries that the new students' unwillingness to eat milk and meat together will cause difficulties, the school's flexible outlook is demonstrated in the response that they would 'be able to manage' (20). Johanna, who, with her brother Hans, has come to the school on a Kindertransport, wistfully recalls boating holidays on the Rhine while on the cramped ship to England. She sees London as a 'noisy, ugly town of narrow streets and grimy buildings' (35) and rapidly makes the transition to contented farm worker. She is a 'natural' English country girl, but Hans takes longer to acclimatise to the new environment. He sees the English not as saviours but as enemies who had killed their uncle and wounded their father in the Great War, and views his assignment to work with the pigs as an insult to him as a Jew. Hans at first clings to both his German nationality and his Jewishness.

His potential to be a good English citizen is eventually signalled by his assumption of the role of beekeeper, a position he inherits from the school's head girl. His affinity with the bees symbolises Hans's ability to work hard as part of a team, his position in charge of them an indication that he is capable and responsible; he has acquired English values and at last feels at home. Eventually, Johanna and Hans's parents arrive at the school, their mother having managed to get their father

released from a concentration camp. The children are now part of the welcoming party and it is their parents who are the strangers. They, too, will benefit from the healing effect of the Farm School: Hans asks his father to help with the bees, while Johanna tells him, '[Y]ou will get better, here. This is the happiest place, I think, in the world!' (256).

The text, like the school's educational approach, is progressive, suggesting that Jews can be part of the modern world and still remain Jewish – even if what this Jewishness actually consists of is not made clear, for the children's dietary needs are never discussed once they arrive, and the family seems in all other ways to be assimilated. Johanna, excluded in the school playground in Germany, is invited to play hockey with the girls at the Farm School. The sport's association with girls' public schools signifies Johanna's acceptance as one of the team in terms of class, ethos and sporting ability.

Acceptance of the refugee is not as immediate in *Gretel at St. Bride's* (1941) by Mary K. Harris (see Fig 2.2). The arrival of Gretel Hartz is announced by a boarder with the words 'There's a kind of new girl' (11), signalling both Gretel's difference from the usual pupil and the inability of Bianca to categorise her: 'It's difficult to explain. But she doesn't look like us' (11). Told shortly afterwards that the mysterious stranger is a Jewish refugee, the other girls are confused:

'She doesn't look a bit like a Jew,' Libby was saying. 'She hasn't got a great hooked nose. It's quite small and just droops a little at the end.'

'But she isn't a Jew,' demurred Jane, turning crimson at the sound of her own voice. 'She told me; only her grandfather was a Jew. Gretel is just like us.' (26)

Gretel's indeterminate Jewishness is illustrated by Bianca's insistence that she is different, Jane's assertion of her similarity and Libby's perplexity at her failure to conform to fixed notions of 'Jewish' appearance. Bianca believes that Gretel looks different in some indefinable way, but the other girls judge her to be 'just like us': she is Christian, speaks good English and comes from a middle-class, educated family. Libby's inability to reconcile Gretel's apparent Jewishness with her observation that she 'doesn't look a bit like a Jew' is resolved by the explanation that Gretel's family practises Christianity; that she could be a Christian and resemble her Jewish grandfather does not seem to be a possibility. In the text, religious conversion from Judaism is accompanied by 'racial' conversion from Jewishness, as was the case in nineteenth-century conversionist literature featuring young people. The

literary image of ‘real’ Jews is left intact here, judged applicable to those who self-identify as Jews.

The inclusion in *Out of the Nazi Clutch* and *Gretel at St. Bride’s* of a character with one Jewish grandparent is almost certainly a deliberate reference to the Nuremberg law that classified anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent as a *mischling*, or someone of mixed race. That this point is made is an indication of the development in English culture on this issue, for as Todd Endelman notes, in the nineteenth century the desire to construct Jews as a race distinct from the English led to converted Jews and their Christian children and grandchildren still being referred to as Jews, a tendency which became particularly pronounced during Disraeli’s

premiership (68). In *Gretel at St. Bride’s*, the eponymous heroine follows her explanation that she had just one Jewish grandparent with ‘and for that we were condemned’. This, coupled with the girls’ acceptance that Gretel is not Jewish, leaves readers in no doubt about the text’s attitude to Nazi racial policies, but Gretel’s words ‘for that’ are ambiguous, seeming almost to suggest that the family’s condemnation if they were ‘really’ Jewish might be more acceptable, or at least more understandable. The text’s ambivalence leaves open

the question of whether the other girls would have been as welcoming had Gretel been a practising Jew, and therefore ‘racially’ Jewish in the text’s terms. Even after the clarification of Gretel’s racial status, the girls remain uncertain about her capacity to integrate into the school:<sup>4</sup>

‘She’s different,’ said Philippa, with unusual indulgence.

‘But Jane, who seems to know *everything* about her, has just said she isn’t different,’ said Bianca, opening her eyes wide.

‘She is – and she isn’t,’ said Libby. She felt she had made a very wise remark and looked round for applause. (Harris 27)



Fig 2.2. *Gretel at St. Bride’s* (1940) by Mary K. Harris. Ill. by Drake Brookshaw. Frontispiece

<sup>4</sup> A survey of Kindertransport children some years later found that 16% were actually Christian, though whether by birth or conversion is not known (Turner 260). Anne Karpf points out that the Home Office criteria in selecting refugees favoured those ‘whose “desirability” seemed greater the less they resembled the Eastern European Jewish immigrants of a generation earlier’ (175).



Gretel's position mirrors that of the assimilated Jews of Germany, and of Britain: she is not quite self and not quite other. Gretel is soon accepted as part of the school by all but Bianca, who persists in identifying her as Jewish and bullies her on account of it:

The money you never spend – not that we think that is a mystery; we all know Jews hoard ... I know all about how Jews are treated in Germany. That's why you've come sneaking over here. In England we're nice to everybody – until we get tired. (47-48)

Bianca is the only one of the girls to cast doubt on England as a place of tolerance. Eventually, however, the two girls collaborate to bring to justice the criminal masterminds of a forgery ring operating from the house next door. Gretel, the outsider, is shown to exemplify the ethos of the school and, by extension, the nation. She causes the bully to mend her ways and takes the lead in foiling the threat posed by a more powerful, aggressive neighbour. The obvious message is that if Britain offers a refuge to Jews, its tolerance will be rewarded with loyalty, good citizenship and a 'conversion' to British values. For real-life refugees, the conversion had to come first: Home Office guidelines for newcomers made clear the expectation that they 'remake themselves in a British image' (Lassner 9).

These adventures and school stories are preoccupied with categorising Jews and Jewishness, and demonstrate the difficulty of doing so. Those who have adopted 'English' traits such as courage, honour, team-working and loyalty to the Crown, or who are capable of doing so, can be integrated into the nation. The possibility of remaining Jewish and being English is somewhat more complex, for Englishness is still bound up with Christianity, and in this literature the most easily Anglicised refugees are those with Jewish ancestry who are themselves Christians rather than those who are practising Jews. That German Jews are seen as Germans rather than simply 'Jews' demonstrates to child readers the virtue of English tolerance, but logic dictates that in that case English Jews should be seen as English, a point almost entirely avoided in this literature. The attempt to divorce English beliefs about Jews from Nazi ideology leads to the beginnings of a shift of perceptions of Jews as a separate race to constructions of Jewish difference in terms of religion.

However, despite the ideology of tolerance in these texts, Jewish particularity is viewed with ambivalence. In *Strangers at the Farm School*, Johanna and Hans's Jewishness is referred to but then swiftly glossed over, in keeping with the liberal

impulse towards sameness, while Hans's insistence that he is a Jew and a German makes him appear churlish, as though he is spurning English hospitality. Not a 'team player', he is in greater need of 'conversion' than his sister. 'Unassimilable' Jews are often constructed in the literature of the period much as they had been in the past: they are hook-nosed, miserly, sneaky, lazy and have an innate ability to acquire wealth. Yet in some of the texts, these constructions are made more complex by being voiced by unsympathetic characters, or reinforced, but acknowledged not to apply to all Jews, or reinforced in part, yet in a neutral tone.

In the years leading up to World War I, boys' stories attempted to persuade young readers that English Jews could make a positive contribution to the nation. The literature of World War II goes further, constructing not just Jews, but foreign Jews, even refugees, as assimilable. This literature does essentialise a certain 'type' of Jew, and its desire to 'convert' some Jews to Englishness means that it is less than wholly accepting of Jewishness, but the intention is nevertheless progressive. This is particularly apparent when the material is seen in relation to historical fiction about the same subject written decades later, and works by former refugees which confirm the negative attitudes towards Jews described by George Orwell and in surveys at the time. Texts such as *Out of the Nazi Clutch* and *Gretel at St. Bride's* make a genuine attempt to explore the boundaries and overlaps between Jews and Gentiles and between German and English young people, using stereotype as a fixed point against which to measure the more complex 'reality' of the Jews in the texts. The relationship between stereotype and the textual representation of cultural hybridity and its formation will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### **Anglo-Jewry and the war**

If children from the dominant culture were reading stories during wartime that aimed to convince them that Jewish children from abroad could be assimilated into middle-class English society, a 1943 Mass Observation survey showed that the majority of the population still believed that English Jews themselves were essentially alien (Kushner, 'Paradox' 80). That at least some of the Anglo-Jewish community felt its own position in the country to be unstable during the war is reflected in 'At the Seder Table' from *Storytime: A Jewish Children's Story-Book* (1946), a collection of twenty-six stories by Arthur Saul Super and Joseph Halpern, some of them originally

published in *Young Jewry*, a series of publications for Jewish children published by the Joint Emergency Committee for Jewish Religious Education in Great Britain. While the text makes clear that foreign-born Jewish children certainly could become English, it does not suggest that they should.

The refugees in the story live in a hostel, as had many in reality, the refugee committee having been unable to find them a foster home or boarding school that would accommodate them. The hostel is a way-station, and indeed, the Kindertransport children were taken in on the condition that they would re-emigrate after the war (Turner 261). The boys in the story quickly acclimatise to their environment: 'they had settled down well, and could speak English fluently ... You would accept them as born in England were it not for the foreign accent in their speech' (Super and Halpern 209). Neither are they 'pitiful' refugees:

One might have imagined they would have been crushed by the weight of the miseries their parents and relatives were enduring, that they would have wrung their hands in sorrow at the thought of the tragic Passover 1942 that they would be celebrating. But no. In their words one could catch the indomitable spirit of the Jew. (212)

At the Passover *seder* commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, each boy recounts his own flight to freedom in England. Their Promised Land, however, is not England: it is the land of Israel, as the *seder* reminds them. They have no need of a new Jerusalem, for it is the original Holy City that is their homeland. For the boys, England is merely a continuation of the wilderness where the Jews wandered after being freed from captivity. The story ends with a strong Zionist message, with one boy telling the others that 'No enemy can drive us from [Israel], as we were hounded from Germany, as these refugees were driven from their homes in the *Galut*' [diaspora or exile] (213). Their loyalty, which was to the nations of their birth, lies now with the Jewish nation. Although the ease with which they have adapted demonstrates that they are capable of becoming British, they choose not to do so: Jewish particularity triumphs over the British universalism that seeks to erase it.

The story praises England for taking in the refugees but does not extol the virtues of the English way of life. At the time, English Jews felt the need to be seen to be English first and Jewish second, and this is reflected in the curious ambivalence of the text by Super and Halpern. Richard Bolchover suggests that communal leaders felt that a more visible campaign on behalf of the refugees would only inflame anti-

Semitism at home (xxv) and, in fact, the Anglo-Jewish community was criticised subsequently for not campaigning more vocally on behalf of Europe's Jews.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the apparently mixed welcome given to the refugees by the Anglo-Jewish community during World War II was a repeat of its equivocal response to those fleeing the 1881 pogroms in Russia. One refugee noted a cultural gulf between themselves and Anglo-Jewry, for instance, saying that 'The English Jewish community is still ... very Orthodox. To them we seemed hardly Jewish at all' (Gershon 104). This uneasy relationship between the Anglo-Jewish community and the refugees is absent from the text, as is any acknowledgement of ambivalence on the part of the dominant culture towards English Jews. However, in what is mentioned, and even more in what is left unsaid, the text does contest the myth of Britain as a haven for Jews. This tension is addressed explicitly in memoirs by former child refugees.

### **Colonised subjects**

During the war, Britain was engaged in a process of constructing its own national myth, and in 1991, the image of the British as saviours was made concrete in the form of a statue erected at London's Liverpool Street Station in commemoration of the Kindertransports. Yet despite the fact that the lives of 10,000 children, most of them Jewish, were saved by the actions of the British government, the psychological toll on the Kinder, as revealed in their memoirs, demonstrates that the narrative presented from the British perspective did not tell the whole story.

The nature of the children's experience of migration necessitated the transition from German- or Austrian-Jewish to something else, whether English, Anglo-Jewish, or, perhaps, 'not-German', 'not-Austrian', 'not-English'. The cultural transformation effected by forced migration and inscribed in the literature produced by Jewish refugees endows their memoirs with some characteristics of diasporic literature, which, Roderick McGillis explains, 'does not set out to preserve cultural identity so much as it works to negotiate that identity' (xxvi). The position with regard to Jews is somewhat more complex, for the homeland in this case is not the putative ancestral homeland, Israel, but the diasporic homeland of Germany or Austria, for modern Jewish identity is almost always hybrid by definition.

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<sup>5</sup> See Berghahn 142-143; Bolchover 12-20; Karpf 174-175; Lassner 9-10.

Equally, regarding Jews as a colonised people is not straightforward, for the middle-class and largely secular Jewish communities of Austria and Germany considered themselves part of the mainstream dominant culture in Western European

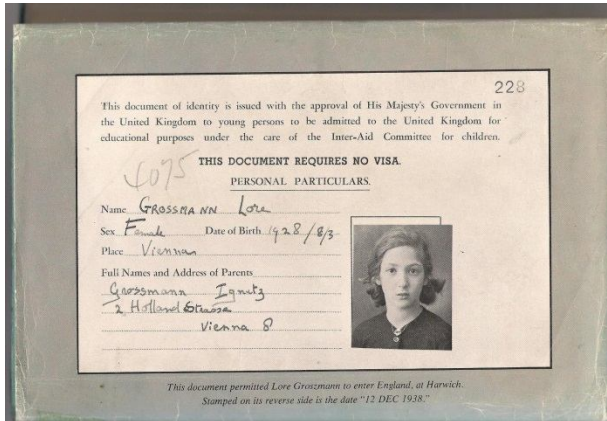


Fig. 2.3. Back cover of *Other People's Houses* (1964) by Lore Segal. Photograph of the permit allowing Lore, then Grossmann, to enter England on 12 December 1938.

countries. However, in some respects they were colonised, for the coloniser casts the colonised subject as subordinate, and therefore inferior whether in race, culture, nationality, religion or gender, or a combination of these identifies. Even if colonised subjects may internalise the construction of themselves as other, accept their subjugated position and seek to adopt the ways of the coloniser's 'superior' culture,

they are never fully accepted. The early stages of Nazism transformed the Jews into colonised subjects, and for the refugees, the process continued in England; as Homi Bhabha says, 'to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English' (*Location* 87).<sup>6</sup>

For the child refugees in the texts and in reality, the process of becoming and then being refugees forced a foregrounding of themselves as Jewish, as well as a realisation that to others, first under the Third Reich and then in England, they were 'foreign' and 'Jews', a rupture resulting in a threat to their sense of self. In Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses* (1964) (see Fig 2.3), for instance, Lore periodically sees herself as a participant in a drama, distancing herself from her own subjectivity: 'I remember feeling, "This is me going to England"' (29). Marianne, in *Remember Me* (2000) by Irene Watts, sees herself as the object of other people's gaze, observing that photographers are taking pictures of the children arriving at Liverpool Street as if they are 'animals at the zoo' (3). These memoirs reconstruct subjectivities that are in a state of flux in response to changing circumstances.

<sup>6</sup> In recent years, scholars have begun to consider Jewish experience from a post-colonial perspective. See, for example, 'Jewish writing from the Anglophone diaspora – postcolonialia' in Stahler, Axel, ed. *Anglophone Jewish Literature*. London: Routledge, 2007, and a special issue of *Wasafiri*, 'Jewish/Postcolonial Diasporas' (vol. 24, no. 1, March 2009).

Works such as *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971) by Judith Kerr and *Almost an Englishman* (1979) by Charles Hannam, formerly Karl Hartland, demonstrate not a negotiation of identity but a desire to exchange one identity for another; it is primarily in the margins or the paratext that the authors' continuing ties to their Jewish heritage are apparent. Both Anna, Judith Kerr's fictionalised persona, and Karl, whose story begins in *A Boy in Your Situation* (1977),<sup>7</sup> remain part of their familial German-Jewish refugee community, but Karl attempts to shed both sides of the hyphen, as does Anna's brother Max, while Anna herself is ambivalent. Anna presents the story of her family's migration as a success story of integration into first French and then English culture. The relative silence about the fate of the Jews of Europe in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* is cause for complaint for both Zohar Shavit and several German critics, who argue that all literature about the period should have a specifically anti-fascist standpoint and provide information about the concentration camps (Lathey 234-235). As Gillian Lathey points out, though, Kerr's trilogy is concerned with 'personal history, family relationships and the formation of a new identity in exile' (235), and she suggests that, as a Jewish writer, Kerr should be exempt from the type of criticisms applied to non-Jewish writers. Shavit and Lathey are both correct, up to a point. It is true that the positioning of trauma outside the main body of the narrative results in what Cadogan and Craig describe as 'a family story with embellishments', its relatively 'bland' (*Women and Children* 241) tone undoubtedly contributing to its long-lasting appeal to child readers. And while I do not agree that the simple fact of an author's Jewishness should exempt him or her from criticism when writing about the Holocaust, there is, nevertheless, a greater complexity at work in this text than is immediately apparent, and one that tells a rather different story from the one criticised by Cadogan and Craig. As Naomi Sokoloff notes, 'traces of horror, unresolved grief, and ongoing trauma find their way into and cast ironic light on the inspirational stories that are offered up to children' by Holocaust survivors (179). This is the case, too, in Kerr's trilogy.

When, in *Bombs on Aunt Dainty*, newly arrived refugees tell Anna and her mother that they 'don't know what it's like' (Kerr 28), Anna responds by 'clos[ing] her mind automatically. She never thought about what it was like in Germany' (28). Lathey reads this scene as an indication of Anna's rejection of her German identity

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<sup>7</sup> The memoirs by Hannam and Segal, which detail the ambivalent experiences of the teenaged refugees candidly and without didacticism, were originally published for an adult readership.

(98). However, it is apparent that Anna is referring specifically to the situation of the Jews, and that she is not rejecting her German-Jewishness but finding its consequences too terrible to contemplate. The horror suffered by the Jews is, for Anna, what German-Jewishness means, and therefore it is no surprise that much of her memoir concentrates on her adaptation to her new life. On the few occasions that the concentration camps are referred to explicitly, Anna acknowledges and simultaneously resists knowledge of them: 'Supposing it had been Papa in the concentration camp ... It did not bear even thinking about' (*Bombs* 192), she says; and upon seeing the newsreel footage of the camps, 'It was all terrible, she thought, terrible, but no more terrible than what she had tried for years not to imagine' (326). Yet her attempts at self-denial fail. She wonders, 'Why was everyone so surprised? She had known about concentration camps since she was nine years old' (326).

Kerr's story of those years is documented in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, and the admission that she was preoccupied with such thoughts at the time suggests in retrospect that the almost relentless optimism of the earlier book reflects the author's desire to protect readers from being exposed to knowledge that she herself had struggled to come to terms with. In both *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *Bombs on Aunt Dainty*, moments of trauma rupture the protective veneer, only to be suppressed. It is only in *A Small Person Far Away*, originally written for adults, that the trauma not just of the Holocaust, but of exile and the accompanying loss of self, is acknowledged and explored.

Louise Sylvester suggests that 'When considering Kerr's work it is important to note the context of a silence that was particular to the British Jewish community' (18). But while Sylvester is correct in that there *was* a silence particular to the Anglo-Jewish community, as it was known at the time, and the nature of its silence and Kerr's have common roots, there was also a difference between them. Kerr was a member of the German-Jewish refugee community and never became part of the Anglo-Jewish community; her silence, in addition to being a sign of suppressed trauma, reflects her desire to become part of the dominant culture – a desire born in part from the pressure by the dominant culture on all outsiders to conform to its ways, rather than on the particular pressure on English Jews to minimise their differences.

The impact of this pressure is demonstrated most forcefully in the novel *Sisterland* (2003) by Linda Newbery. The German-Jewish refugee, Sarah,

internalises the anti-Semitism she experiences in Germany and the anti-Semitism and anti-Germanness she suffers at the hands of her English classmates: 'Everyone hates us, even here in England. Why must we still do Jewish things?' (117) she asks her friend. Eventually, unable to withstand the constant abuse, she buries her Jewish past and reinvents herself and the facts of her life, even becoming anti-Semitic herself. For Sarah, to be English means to be converted both literally and metaphorically so that she assimilates until there is no trace of her former self.

Memoirs of teenage years reveal resentment at the attempts by the dominant culture to lower the refugees' social position. Karl Hartland (see Fig 2.4) is sent on a Kindertransport to England, where he is to go to school; instead, he finds himself doing manual labour on a farm with other refugees and some English boys. The farm seems to be a borstal; there is to be no school after all. The Jewish boys attempt to resist their reduced status: 'It's stupid work, good enough for morons like the English boys' (176), says one boy. 'They are the dregs of society and we have to work with them. I was going to be a medical student; I had already taken my pre-med exams and now this' (176). Karl does eventually go to boarding school, where he works hard to lose his accent and to regain the class position he had had when he left Germany. His sister, on the other hand, is permitted to enter England only as a domestic servant. She arrives at the station wearing the same outfit as the woman for whom she is to work: 'I don't think she has liked me ever since that moment' (164). It is she who manages to obtain funding from a distant relative for Karl to go to a school near where she lives. When he does, she leaves to find work elsewhere, telling him it would be embarrassing for people to know 'that your sister is a skivvy in the same town' (198).

Older girls such as Karl's sister, as well as women or married couples, were able to obtain visas to work in England as domestic servants, when in Austria and Germany, many had themselves employed servants. This class demotion kept older girls and their parents' generation from achieving anything like their former status in their new lives. The texts reveal the ways in which English women – for it was they who ran the home – constructed Jewish refugees as inferior, for in order for them to be seen as being in need of protection and pity, they had to be perceived to be weak, subservient and, if children, passive.

In *Remember Me*, Mrs Abercrombie Jones, the wealthy woman who takes Marianne in, is perturbed to discover that she is not yet fourteen and therefore is



required to attend school rather than be a full-time servant. When Marianne asks the guests at a social tea for help in getting a domestic visa for her mother, Mrs Abercrombie Jones is mortified:

‘You embarrassed me, *and* my friends. What you did is like begging.’

‘Is it wrong to try to save my parents?’ Marianne asked softly.

‘Don’t exaggerate, Mary Anne. They must wait their turn like other refugees. It is not a question of saving, but of good manners’ (Irene Watts 49).

In *Other People’s Houses*, Lore’s parents obtain visas to be a live-in cook and butler. Lore’s mother is an accomplished pianist. She sees the piano in the drawing room at the house where she works and tells Mrs Willoughby that she had had a fine piano and studied at the Vienna Academy. Mrs Willoughby tells her that she can play ‘when everyone is out’ (78). When Mrs Groszmann explains that her husband had been a senior accountant like her employer, she is given a schedule of chores by way of response (78). These texts, and in particular the characterisation of Mrs Abercrombie Jones, provide an interesting parallel to that of Mrs Turpin in *Jane Gets Busy*, written in 1940, in which wealthy socialites employ refugees in reduced circumstances as virtual slave labour and then praise themselves for their altruism. Condemned by Owen Dudley Edwards as ‘anti-Jewish’ (553), the portrayal of the society ladies in that book is strikingly similar to more recent texts, and although the construction of the refugees differs in keeping with the overall satirical tone of *Jane Gets Busy*, in all of the texts they attempt to resist the attempt to be constructed as belonging to the lower orders.

The memoirs show that opportunities for the younger girls, too, are limited, with the exception of Lore, who goes to university. Anna goes to secretarial school while her brother goes to Cambridge. In *Kindertransport* by Olga Levy Drucker (1992), Olga is bitter over the lack of support for her academic development in England, but tries to be understanding: ‘Except for Miss Carter, none of my benefactors had had much schooling themselves. So how could they help me?’ (126). Eventually she leaves school to accept a job as a nanny to a young family.

## **A sense of belonging?**

The process of integration in this literature reveals young people caught between two worlds. In *Other People's Houses*, Lore Segal, then Lore Groszmann, begins to feel distanced from the culture of her birth and from refugees of her parents' generation: 'The manners I had learned from my parents no longer felt adequate or proper. These people seemed to me underbred. They laughed too loud. They moved restlessly around the house' (162). Karl Hartland, too, rejects the refugee community as he begins to assimilate: 'He detested their bad English; their mixture of German, Yiddish and English words seemed to him alien. They talked with their hands and they wore continental clothes' (Hannam, *Almost* 11).

Karl, and Max, the brother in Judith Kerr's trilogy, are desperate for life to resume the path it was taking before exile disrupted it. Karl's determination to become English is born out of a desire to fit in, but also because he admires England and English values. Karl and his fellow refugees 'had a strong impression that England was a place where justice and fair play meant something' (160). Both Karl and Max want to play their part in serving the Empire and then go on to university. Karl 'wished more than anything that he need not be a foreigner any longer. He wanted to disguise himself with a perfect Oxford accent, a pipe and a commission in His Majesty's forces, a lovely uniform and perhaps the spread wings of a pilot on his chest' (33).

For Karl, the final step towards becoming an Englishman is the Anglicisation of his name. For Max, the impulse to join the armed services stems from a simple desire to belong:

All I want ... is just to be allowed to do the same things as everyone else. I'm not a particularly warlike person and God knows I don't want to be killed – but I'd a thousand times rather be in the Army with George or in the Air Force with Bill. I'm sick to death of always having to be different! (Kerr, *Bombs* 108)

By assimilating and passing as 'white' Englishmen, the young men resist colonisation. Their transgression of the boundary between colonised and coloniser reveals the constructedness of the colonised subject.

Karl moves from rejection of his former life, to ambivalence, to a qualified acceptance. He begins to understand that he does, after all, have an identity as a Jew, and he articulates a Jewishness that is cultural rather than religious or racial,

crucially claiming the Jewish refugees as ‘his own’: ‘However critical of his own, Jewish, people Karl was, he was also amused and moved by their humour and their stories’ (Hannam, *Almost* 11).

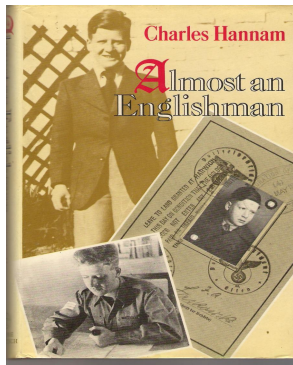


Fig 2.4. *Almost an Englishman* (1979) by Charles Hannam, showing his entry visa to England as Karl Hartland on 20 May 1939, and a photograph of him in the British Army.

Finally, in the army, he experiences the arrogance of the English towards colonised peoples. He despises the racism of his fellow soldiers towards Indians and Indian culture, and is relieved that they do not discover that he is Jewish. The price Karl must pay in order to be accepted as an Englishman is silence about the fact that he is something else as well. This is what Louise Sylvester is referring to when she writes about the particular silence of the Anglo-Jewish community: in order to be accepted as English rather than merely as Anglicised foreigners, Jewishness must become almost a guilty secret, to be acknowledged only in the company of those who share it. To voice it is to ‘other’ oneself in the eyes of the dominant culture. This dilemma, which demonstrates ‘the Jew’ to be a construct, recurs at the book’s conclusion. Karl, who has not revealed his Jewishness, encounters anti-Semitism from a colleague at the school where they both teach. The other teacher has recently finished serving in the Palestine Police, where some of his colleagues were killed by Jewish militants. Gravell tells Charles,

‘Hitler had the right idea, should have gassed the lot, then they couldn’t have killed my mates. Yes, gassed the lot.’

Karl wanted to say, ‘Look here, I am a Jew, you can’t say things like that.’ But then he felt it was too late. He had concealed his origins, and now he would either have to leave or have it out with Gravell. He felt utterly depressed.

‘Is it ever going to stop?’ he wondered. (206)

The lack of closure in the book’s final line indicates an ongoing process, one which is confirmed by the dual persona of Karl/Charles. In the preface to *A Boy in Your Situation*, Hannam says that he writes in third person and calls himself Karl because he was a different person then. However, he continues to claim Karl as part of himself, writing, ‘only many years later was it possible to accept *all* aspects of my personality, the Jewish, the refugee and the English part’ (10).

Like Karl, Anna also reaches the stage when she no longer needs to prove to herself how English she has become. After witnessing newsreel footage of the concentration camps, she thinks, 'at least now the English will understand what it was like' (Kerr, *Bombs* 326). For the first time, Anna distances herself from 'the English', one of whom she has tried so hard to become. It is a startling moment, and one that is significant because Anna separates herself in order to share actively in Jewish collective experience.

Both Judith Kerr's and Charles Hannam's autobiographical trilogies demonstrate the correlation between the pressure put on cultural minorities to abandon their particularity in order to be accepted and the seeming eagerness by members of cultural minorities to do so out of a desire to belong. Kerr has spoken of how 'People here were so good to us in the war' ('Portrait' n.p.), yet she wrote *Bombs on Aunt Dainty* because 'I wanted to tell it like it was. Being a refugee wasn't all jolliness' (n.p.). The two statements demonstrate a tension between gratitude towards the majority culture and an admission that life in Britain was perhaps not as rosy as Kerr had presented it. What is particularly striking is that *Bombs on Aunt Dainty* begins three years after the family arrives in England at the end of *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. The conflict between the desire to demonstrate a happy integration into a welcoming Britain where 'people were so good to us' and the lack of jolliness in that initial period of coming to England cannot be reconciled in the text, so far from telling it like it was, Anna's experience as a new immigrant in England and her process of integration are expressed in a deafening silence located between the end of one book and the start of another. Those three years also coincided with Anna's adolescence, a period likely to be of particular interest to the book's intended teenaged readership. The silence problematises the surface message of Britain as a welcoming haven for refugees and Anna as a successful product of it. It is broken by a brief acknowledgement near the start of *Bombs on Aunt Dainty* that life in England had not always been easy. Examining her face in the mirror, she judges herself to 'look intelligent':

Clever, they had called it at the Metcalfe Boarding School for Girls. That clever little refugee girl. She had not realised at first that it was derogatory. Nobody much had liked her at Miss Metcalfe's ... I need never have gone [there], she thought, if only we'd had a home. (Kerr 8)

Gillian Lathey describes the scene somewhat unsympathetically as a 'mood of self-pity' which Anna 'does not allow ... to continue for too long' (145). Indeed, she does not, for this would undermine the message in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *Bombs on Aunt Dainty*: that England had given an unequivocal welcome to Jewish refugees.

Jenny Koralek's later novel *War Games* (2002) recognises this pressure to assimilate and casts a critical eye on the motives behind the attitude of the English towards Jewish refugees. The refugee, Hugo, is made welcome by Holly's father and grandparents, but her pacifist aunt is the only one to question their failure to foster, or even acknowledge, his cultural heritage:

'What is best for him?'

'Surely to fit in,' said Phoebe. 'So he need never feel an outsider.'

'You mean to be absorbed into your imperial, Christian world?' said Connie.

'Well, darling, of course he should not be allowed to forget his own world.'

'Was he brought up religious?' Connie asked. 'Has anybody thought to ask him? Well, never mind. Even if he wasn't there must be so many other things he misses – we wouldn't even know what – attitudes, atmosphere. For all we know he may be starved for hugs and kisses – and jokes we don't know, let alone understand the humour of. I bet he wasn't always such a solemn little boy ... and I bet he misses *Kuglhupf* and *goulash* and caraway soup.' (170-171)

The well-meaning assimilationist perspective of some of the characters in *War Games* reflects those of novels written in the 1930s and 1940s such as *Gretel at St. Bride's* and *Strangers at the Farm School*. Judith Kerr's autobiographical trilogy, *Out of the Hitler Time*, and *The Story of Peter Cronheim* (1962), by Kenneth Ambrose, also a former refugee, promote the same view of a liberal, tolerant Britain as a haven for assimilable Jews as the novels written at the time from the perspective of the dominant culture. *The Story of Peter Cronheim* concludes optimistically, shortly after Peter's arrival at an English boarding school: 'Suddenly a pillow landed on his head. He grabbed it and hurled it across the room at Peter Taylor who was now halfway through the door. Peter Cronheim jumped out of bed and chased after him, laughing – into a new, happy day...' (Ambrose 159). This view of a generally happy and straightforward integration process is maintained in texts written in the 1990s such as *A Candle in the Dark* (1995) by Adele Geras, *Escape From War* (2005) by James Riordan and Irene Watts' *Finding Sophie* (2000), in which a half-

Jewish girl would rather remain with her Gentile foster mother in Britain, which has become home, than return to Germany with her Jewish father after the war.<sup>8</sup>

However, while many earlier works considered the question of whether, and in what circumstances, Jews could be ‘converted’ to Englishness, those written post-1990 start from the assumption that they could. The issue is not simply how Jewishness must be modified in order for Jews to be accepted, but also the appropriate way for the English to treat others: in effect, their ‘conversion’ from xenophobia to an acceptance of multiculturalism. This is akin to the ‘revisionism’ described by Michael Ragussis in relation to the critique in nineteenth-century literature of prejudice by the dominant culture towards its Jewish minority, but does not go as far as the ‘ethics of resistance’ advocated by Vallone in relation to contemporary literature, in which difference is celebrated. The vague characterisations of the Jews in these texts are unsurprising, therefore, for the focus is not so much on them as on how their presence reveals tolerance, or the lack of it, by the British. In Joan Lingard’s *The File on Fraulein Berg* (1980), for instance, the narrator atones for the way she and her friends ‘persecuted’ (8) their German teacher, who, they subsequently discover, is a Jewish refugee and not a spy as they had assumed. Although the girls’ attention is focused on Fraulein Berg, they never really ‘see’ her, and nor does the reader.

Historical fiction often seeks to convey a message of hope, and through their memoirs some former refugees seem to be attempting to locate meaning in their experience of enforced migration which they have been unable to find in real life. What comes through instead is ambivalence – towards their Jewishness, their Germanness, their refugee status, and England. Heartfelt gratitude fails to conceal disillusionment, while indebtedness is acknowledged amidst bitterness or resentment. This is reflected in the foreword to *I Came Alone*:

Britain offered entry visas to ten thousand children from three months to seventeen years. This was an act of mercy, not equalled anywhere else in the world. It was also in part to make up for their refusal to open the doors of Palestine, which could have saved a large number of European Jewry. (Leverson and Lowensohn 8)

Surprisingly, this ambivalence is also seen in texts for even relatively young

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<sup>8</sup> The potential conflict is avoided when Sophie’s father obtains a permit to remain in Britain.

children. Olga Levy Drucker makes periodic authorial interventions in *Kindertransport* (1992), yet the afterword, rather than imposing a coherent meaning on what has gone before, instead reveals tensions that remain unresolved. Her attempt to weave the events of her life into a meaningful whole is rejected by the text, which becomes unstable to the extent that Drucker is unable finally to praise or condemn. She criticises the internment of refugees on the Isle of Man, saying, ‘They were not mistreated, but there is no getting around the fact that they were imprisoned’ (143). Yet immediately, she forgives: ‘In less than a year, however, the authorities must have realized their mistake. They let the Jewish Germans out’ (143).<sup>9</sup> Even the hopeful messages contain a note of pessimism. Drucker situates the writing of her text during the Gulf War and prays that those who become refugees ‘will be taken care of by strangers, as I was, even if they profess another religion. And that other children, when they have the chance to get to know them, will be kind to them – as were many of the children who met me, *though not all* [emphasis added]’ (146).

### **Post-Holocaust sensibilities: from ‘race’ to religion**

The initial shock as the full horror of the Holocaust became public knowledge in Britain led to a lengthy reluctance by official bodies to address the subject; as Tony Kushner points out, the subject of Britain and the Holocaust was ‘too sensitive ... to explore in the 1960s’ (*Holocaust* 14). Although *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank was published in Britain in 1952, Kushner identifies Jeremy Isaacs’ 1975 television film *Genocide* in the ‘World at War’ series as the start of the process of bringing the Holocaust to wider public attention in Britain (256). As early as 1977, American author Eric Kimmel identified a typology of Holocaust novels for children, beginning with resistance novels (the least disturbing for young readers), moving through refugee literature, occupation novels and, finally, books set in concentration camps (85ff). By this time, Kenneth Ambrose had written *The Story of Peter Cronheim* and Judith Kerr had published *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and

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<sup>9</sup> The author’s use of ‘Jewish Germans’ is the only instance I have found of the continuing assertion of the primacy of the Germanness of German Jews. This is not only a contrast to those texts that refer to German Jews, but to nearly every other text, whether memoir or fiction, in which the refugee disavows his or her German identity.

*The Other Way Round* (republished as *Bombs on Aunt Dainty*), based to varying degrees on their own experiences in Nazi Germany and as refugees.

In the 1980s, the Holocaust was incorporated into the British school curriculum as part of a growing interest in multicultural and anti-racist education which, according to Kushner, was ‘intimately connected with the move from a liberal assimilationist ideology to a more pluralistic vision of British society’ (*Holocaust* 261). In 1990, Holocaust education was made part of the National Curriculum in all state secondary schools in England and Wales (Short 180) and the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1995 prompted intense interest in the Holocaust from the British media (Karpf 289). Naomi Sokoloff describes the considerable increase in books for young people about the Holocaust beginning in the 1990s as an ‘avalanche’ (176).

Like other Holocaust literature for children, books about the Kindertransports are often preoccupied with conveying a message of tolerance and hope that privileges the universal over the particular, demonstrating that the Holocaust occupied an uneasy position in the move from liberalism towards cultural pluralism noted by Kushner. Adrienne Kertzer criticises David Russell’s references to “‘the besieged human spirit” and “the baseness of humanity”” (55) in his article about the Holocaust in children’s literature; this outlook, she says, ‘differs strikingly from those who do not share his belief that the “ultimate significance” of the Holocaust is a universal lesson about human nature’ (55). Kertzer, Hamida Bosmajian and Lydia Kokkola have all written full-length studies which criticise the strategies and effects of children’s literature that seeks to inform children about the Holocaust while also minimising trauma. My concern here is to consider the effects of the wider aims of these texts on the constructions of Jews and Jewishness within them.

It is no surprise that texts focusing on an overarching message at times do so at the expense of nuanced characterisations. Children’s literature that sets out to promote tolerance in relation to ‘the Jews’, therefore, might be thought to require a straightforward, coherent, notion of what, exactly, a Jew is, for complex characterisation might be seen to undermine the clarity needed to convey the intended message of the text. The idea of Jews as racially different was the normative view in Britain until after the war, and is found in many texts written during it, whereas, in a notable shift, recent historical fiction abandons the notion of Jewish ‘race’ in favour of the simpler and more politically correct construction of



Jewishness in terms of religion. In these later texts, the belief that Jews are a race is confined to those non-Jewish characters that subsequently come to learn that ‘everyone is the same underneath’.<sup>10</sup> The move away from defining Jewishness in terms of race is accompanied by fewer details in descriptions of Jewish characters, resulting in texts that are concerned to avoid perpetuating the stereotype of ‘Jewish’ appearance, yet make little attempt to resist it. Furthermore, the few details that do appear often conform to the conventional image of Jewish ‘darkness’: ‘sad black eyes’ (Riordan 20); ‘dark, [with] long plaits’ (Geras, *Candle* 52); ‘thick dark hair’ (Taylor 19); ‘long black hair’ (Ross 13). In Eva Ibbotson’s *The Morning Gift* (2003), the hero finds it ‘hard to believe’ (34) that fair-haired, snub-nosed Ruth is half-Jewish; she explains that she resembles her Aryan, ‘goat-herding’ (34) grandmother. It is striking that the golden blond hair of the adult refugee in Geoffrey Trease’s *Tomorrow is a Stranger* (1987) is not referred to as an aberration.

The desire to avoid perpetuating stereotypes is noted by Bosmajian in relation to authors’ unwillingness to repeat the Nazis’ anti-Semitic rhetoric in books more directly about the Holocaust: ‘the language of hate against the Jews, its terrible power of definition, is thus avoided; the child is spared both the definition and the power to define’ (138). Bosmajian finds the resulting information gap problematic even if understandable, as does Geoffrey Short, whose research found that a lack of knowledge about areas such as anti-Semitic stereotypes and Christian theological anti-Semitism did not lead to beneficial lessons in citizenship, as intended, but instead left students ‘at a loss to know why the Holocaust happened’ (181). Lydia Kokkola goes so far as to describe the absence of information ‘perhaps even dishonest ... the decision to withhold information walks the thin line between the desire to protect the child reader and confusing them’ (27). This is the case in *Escape From War*, which tells the story from the point of view of Frank, an English evacuee, and Hannah, a German-Jewish refugee. *Escape From War: Hannah’s Story* gives an implied readership of white Christian children the message that Jews are believed to be different in appearance from them in a way that is never specified: “‘You don’t look very Jewish”, was her next remark, after looking me up and down.

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<sup>10</sup> The exception to this is Stewart Ross’s *I Can Never Go Home Again*, part of the Coming Alive series, which, according to the cover blurb, ‘puts the story back into history’. Although Anna refers to persecution because of ‘my race’ (21), this may be because of the text’s definition of anti-Semitism as ‘a form of racism’ (49), a definition which appears in the factual section after the fictional narrative and within the narrative itself: ‘Barbara and her allies [...] called Anna racist names like “Yid” and “Jew-baby”’ (36).

How were Jews supposed to look?’ (Riordan 51). There are at least three ways in which this may be interpreted: that Jews do not look a particular way and the person making the comment is in error; that the Jewish girl does not look like other Jews; or that the girl is ignorant of how Jews ‘really’ look. The reluctance to address the subject more specifically results in an ambiguous message.

Memoirs, in contrast, directly confront the issue of Jewish ‘racial’ appearance. In *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr, Anna’s friend says to her, ‘I thought Jews were supposed to have bent noses, but your nose is quite ordinary’ (6), while Lore in *Other People’s Houses* subverts the intentions of Nazi racial laws, noting that her foster father has brown eyes, ‘not alien, chilly, Christian eyes like Albert. I knew that Mr Hooper was Christian, too, but not blue-eyed Christian. To all intents, Mr Hooper and Gwenda were Jewish; I adopted them’ (Segal 103). In *Almost an Englishman*, Karl internalises Nazi ideology:

If only he had not been a Jew all would have been well, and what seemed to him so unfair was that he, after all, was not one of those ‘typical’ Jews the Nazis caricatured in their party papers. Was his hair not fair and straight, his eyes blue and his nose uncrooked? (Hannam 11)

These texts problematise the notion of Jews as a race, setting anti-Semitic stereotypes against the reality of their own, or, indeed, ‘Aryan’ appearance, rather than giving a vague and potentially confusing message.

The transition from Jewishness as race to Jewishness as religion results in an impression in texts for young readers, including *A Candle in the Dark*, *Faraway Home* (1999) by Marilyn Taylor, *Escape From War* and *The Story of Peter Cronheim*, that the victims of Nazism, including those that escaped to Britain on the Kindertransports, were all practising Jews. This imposition of a limited, religious identity on Jews is paralleled by the depiction of Jews in Key Stage 3 textbooks (Short 181). Geoffrey Short’s research into Holocaust education found the ‘worrying’ (181) development that Jews were often depicted ‘in monolithic terms, stereotyping them not just as a religious community (committed to Judaism) but as a wealthy one’ (181).<sup>11</sup>

The texts’ inscription of Judaism as the definition of Jewishness is in some respects merely an exchange of one simplistic form of representation for another; it

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<sup>11</sup> In *I Can Never Go Home Again* by Stewart Ross, Anna’s family is wealthy not just in Germany, but in England. In Germany, they have ‘money and contacts’ (17); in England, they live in an ‘expensive flat in Chelsea’ (17).

also exposes the extent to which the texts themselves tolerate or genuinely accept difference. In *Escape From War: Frank's Story*, Frank insists that his Anglo-Jewish neighbour cannot be on the same side in the war because he is 'a Jew boy' (20). Sam's retort, 'Jesus was a Jew boy' (21), is met with incredulity tinged with self-doubt: 'What a cheek. Jesus was *ours*. He couldn't be a Jew boy, could he?' (21). It is only when the teacher confirms the veracity of Sam's claim that Frank comes to accept Sam, and especially Hannah:

I felt my face reddening. Jews like Hannah were responsible for our Bible; and, if Hitler was against the Jews, she was on *our* side ... and we had to be on *her* side.

... I pictured myself in Germany. The question nagging at me was whose side would I have been on? In my mind's eye I could clearly see little Sam Rubinstein. To my shame I remembered how I'd taunted him, joined in with others to call him 'Jew boy!' Why had I disliked him so? Yes, I know why. I'd hated Sam Rubinstein because *others* hated him. (83-84)

The text awkwardly attempts to negotiate a position between liberalism and pluralism, locating Frank's treatment of Sam on a spectrum that might have led to the Hitler Youth, while at the same time disavowing Jewish particularity, favouring a message that highlights the similarities between people rather than the differences. In doing so, an inequality between the two boys is created. Instead of dismissing Frank's questioning of whose side he is on as ludicrous, Sam feels the need to justify his claim of loyalty to Britain, and he does so not on the basis of shared British values but through a point of similarity that is important only to the boy from the dominant culture: in terms of Judaism, Jesus is irrelevant. As Hugo, the refugee in *War Games* notes, 'We sing hymns about someone called Jesus. Well, they sing. I don't' (Koralek 67). Hugo is more concerned with his inability to recall the words of the Hebrew prayer, the *Shema* (205).

Hugo's response is one of just two instances of active resistance to assimilation in these novels from the 1990s and 2000s. The other occurs in *A Candle in the Dark* by Adele Geras. For Clara, the school nativity play becomes the site of this conflict between assimilation and the preservation of religious integrity. The teacher explains to the class that it is appropriate for Clara to participate in the nativity play because Jesus was Jewish, but for Clara herself the matter is not so simple. The girl writes to her mother of her predicament:

I tried to explain to her that although we are Jewish we are not a very religious family, and that we always enjoyed the preparations and ceremony

of Christmas, as well as those of Hanukkah ... I don't know what to do, Mama. I think that not to join in would seem rude, but I don't want anyone to think that I'm not properly Jewish any more; that I've turned into a Christian. (50)

Clara agrees to sing 'Silent Night' in German at the nativity play, but at the last minute has a crisis of conscience and sings a Chanukah song instead. By highlighting Jesus's Jewish background, this text, too, gives non-Jewish readers a message of similarity between Jews and Christians, yet Clara's reaction validates difference for its own sake while also acknowledging a spectrum of Jewish religious observance. In *Escape From War*, acceptance of Hannah and Sam is contingent upon the demonstration of their essential similarity to the dominant culture; in *A Candle in the Dark*, Clara, partially assimilated, has the opportunity to choose sameness but opts for difference.

Given the construction of Jewishness in terms of Judaism, it is perhaps surprising that *The Story of Peter Cronheim* and *Faraway Home* are the only texts in which Jewish religious observance is actually witnessed by the reader. In *Faraway Home*, the Passover meal is invoked as a reminder 'of the Jewish people's miraculous deliverance from slavery in ancient times' (Taylor 191), with the obvious parallel to the children's exodus from Nazi-occupied Europe and the poignant uncertainty over their families' future. The Sabbath meal is an opportunity for one of the refugees to point out to a volunteer on the farm the ritual's connection to the children's former lives. Here, unusually, the uncomprehending child is not Christian but a Jewish Dubliner, Judy, who sees a small boy crying and wonders if he is ill. One of the older children replies, 'Yes, of course he is sick – sick for his home and his parents, like all of us. The Sabbath song reminds him' (99). The text challenges the equation of intolerance with religious ignorance, for Judy is suspicious of the refugees not on the grounds of their Jewishness, but because she is too self-absorbed to consider that their situation might have an impact on their emotions. Furthermore, the refugees' Northern Irish Protestant friend is less concerned with Jewish difference than with religious conflict closer to home, asking, 'Are you Protestant Jews, or Roman Catholic Jews?' (20).

Published in 1962, *The Story of Peter Cronheim* is the earliest example of a Kindertransport narrative for children by a former refugee, and although it focuses almost entirely on the events leading up to Peter's escape from Germany to boarding

school in England, it is positioned both chronologically and ideologically between texts written in wartime and those written with decades of hindsight. It is also largely fiction rather than memoir. Like the later texts, Peter's Jewishness is represented in terms of Judaism: 'Being Jewish, as he understood it, was only his religion, and part of the history of long ago' (Ambrose 18). One might read this statement as an indication that the text's position is that Judaism is outmoded and irrelevant, and Karen Rowlands seems to take this view, complaining that 'there is no suggestion of any religious conviction or Jewish philosophical outlook' (74). However, the very fact that, as Rowlands points out, they 'gather around a Friday night table resplendent in gleaming white tablecloth and shining candlesticks' (74) for their Sabbath meal is evidence of the family's continuing commitment to Judaism, or at least to Jewish tradition, and that the history to which Peter refers continues to have meaning for the family. In some texts written during the war, representation of Jewish religious observance would have signified a difference which would render the Jewish characters unassimilable, but *The Story of Peter Cronheim* sees no such conflict. It gives a positive sense of Judaism as a living faith:

There was no feeling of awe in the synagogue. People came in happily, to find a refuge from the cares of daily life and to remember that their own troubles were small and temporary compared with the long and often sad history of their people [...] The Sabbath, so the Rabbi had explained to Peter in scripture lessons, was greeted by the Jews like a bride at a wedding. That was why Peter liked the Friday evening service best of all. (Ambrose 128)

The book's culturally authentic descriptions of Jewish practice are educative for Christian readers and normalise Judaism for Jewish and non-Jewish readers alike. Because the novel concludes shortly after Peter's arrival in England, it does not take note of any attempt Peter might make to practise Judaism in England; the change of the author's name from the German-Jewish Kurt Abrahamson to the Anglicised Kenneth Ambrose (*Imperial War Museum*) is an indication that the realities of integration for German-Jewish refugees were somewhat more complex than the narrative would suggest.

In texts from the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, then, the transition of constructions of Jewishness from mainly racial to almost entirely religious merely exchanges one fixed notion of Jewish identity for another, and therefore the multiple possibilities of Jewish self-identity are acknowledged hardly more than they were in texts published as many as sixty years earlier. This literature makes little or no

allowance for either the varying degrees of religious observance or the secular or even Christian upbringing of the numerous German or Austrian child refugees who were officially considered Jewish. The texts' focus on the Jewishness of Jesus attempts to bridge a religious divide rather than accept religious difference; in any case this difference is constructed so that it is minimised and therefore acceptable to the dominant culture. Acceptance of Jews, therefore, remains conditional in some texts, and it is perhaps not so surprising after all, then, that the observance of Jewish religious practice is seen in so little of this literature, for this would undermine the very similarity that the texts are attempting to demonstrate and the universalising message that they seek to convey. Furthermore, this literature avoids confronting the issue of anti-Semitism within Christianity itself; readers might therefore believe that the intolerance shown by Christians towards Jews had its basis in a generalised notion of religious difference rather than specifically in anti-Judaism.

The exceptions to this pattern are *War Games* and *Remember Me*. In *War Games*, when Holly asks what Jewish refugees are and why they are coming to England, her mother's attempt to explain reveals her own anti-Semitism: 'You could say the Jews killed Jesus' (Koralek 54). When Holly protests that Hugo wasn't there at the time, she replies, 'It's very complicated... Their ways are not our ways and their God isn't our God. Well, He is and He isn't' (55). *Remember Me* is also explicit in its depiction of anti-Semitism based not on ignorance but on anti-Judaism. When Marianne is evacuated to Wales, she encounters hostility in the home for unmarried mothers where she is billeted: 'Margaret crossed herself and Dilys gave a scream of horror. "Christ killer," Dilys said. "You did that." And she pushed Marianne forward and forced her to look at the picture on the wall that showed Christ hanging on the cross' (Irene Watts 120-121).

Memoirs problematise a Jewish/Christian binary, acknowledging that some refugees were uninterested in or ignorant of Judaism. Religious observance, the lack of it, or even an interest in Christianity, does not necessarily affect their identification of themselves as Jews. At the same time, the theological divide between Judaism and Christianity is not elided, as it is in some historical fiction, and tensions are acknowledged from a Jewish perspective. In *Other People's Houses*, Lore is asked by the English women from the refugee committee if she is Orthodox. Lore responds in the affirmative without knowing what the term means. Her father opposes the placement and writes, 'begging' her to go elsewhere, for staying in the

Orthodox home would mean ‘following laws I knew nothing about’ (Segal 150). She does quickly learn to observe the religious laws without any resentment, but nevertheless does not fit in, and when she goes to visit her parents, who have obtained visas allowing them to work in Britain as domestic servants, she is told by the Levines not to return.<sup>12</sup> It is her parents who find a new home for her in a working-class Christian family. They have never had any interest in religion, her mother telling her long ago in Austria that she ‘must make up [her] own mind’ (150). For Lore, religious practice, whether Jewish, Christian or none at all, is largely a matter of following along with the people she happens to be with.

In *Kindertransport*, Olga Levy, now Drucker, has no experience of Judaism until she is sent to a Jewish school as a result of the anti-Jewish racial laws in Germany. Once in England, she is housed first with a Jewish family and then a Christian one, until finally, she is sent to boarding school, which leads to an interest in Christianity. She asks a friend about the picture on the wall of ‘the fellow with that lamb in his arms’ (Drucker 79), and when the girl tells her that Jesus ‘takes care of us as if we were his little lambs ... if you believe in him’ (79-80), Olga is fascinated by the picture: ‘The Good Shepherd’s big brown eyes seemed to be looking straight at me. He must not have noticed that I was Jewish’ (80). Unlike *Other People’s Houses*, which is for a young adult readership, *Kindertransport* was written for younger children; therefore, while Segal recounts her experiences without mediating them for readers, Drucker is careful to present her flirtation with Christianity in a wider ideological context:

I came by myself to this strange, new country, learning a new language and new customs. I also learned a new religion along with everything else. For a while this new religion served me well enough. But deep down in my heart I always knew I was Jewish. I never forgot. (81-82)

In *The Morning Gift*, Ruth explains that her Jewish father did not follow Jewish religious traditions: ‘His religion was to do with people ... with everyone trying to make themselves into the best sort of person they could be’ (Ibbotson 34). Similarly, in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, religion has no bearing on the family’s Jewish identity. A friend of Anna’s distinguishes her from their other Jewish classmate, pointing out, ‘You don’t go to a special church on Saturdays like Rachel Lowenstein’ (Kerr 6), to which Anna replies ‘That’s because we’re not religious. We

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<sup>12</sup> Live-in domestic servants were not permitted to have their children living in the house with them.

don't go to church at all' (6). Despite their lack of religious observance, Anna's father tells the children that they are Jews and 'no matter what happened my brother and I must never forget it' (6). Although he never defines for Anna and Max what it means to be Jewish, and they had not heretofore been aware of it as a factor in their lives, their father's injunction suggests that it means more than just a religion that he does not observe, and that he wishes his children to value their Jewish heritage.

In contrast, Karl Hartland is raised in a family that is acculturated rather than assimilated.<sup>13</sup> They retain some aspects of religious observance – Karl has a bar mitzvah, and they light Chanukah candles – yet they do not keep any dietary laws and also nominally celebrate Christmas. Karl is sent to a Jewish summer camp, where he does not understand the prayers: 'here Karl's crime seemed not being Jewish but not being Jewish enough' (*Boy* 84). Karl quietly becomes an atheist and when a teacher at his English boarding school asks him about Judaism, he thinks to himself that it 'is meaningless to me' (*Almost* 20). Later, when he joins the army, he refuses to have any religious affiliation inscribed on his identification tags. He thinks, 'I am sick and tired of being asked about and labelled with a religion I do not believe in. I don't believe in God' (150).

### **Finding meaning: 'the survivor'**

The story arc in contemporary historical fiction featuring Jewish child refugees falls into a broad pattern: the events of *Kristallnacht*, ostracism at school, the train journey, the smiling British policeman, the process of integration, including tense relationships with a British foster family and/or classmates, eventual acculturation in Britain and, often, a reunion with at least one parent.<sup>14</sup> These texts are less overtly assimilationist and ostensibly more accepting of difference than those written during the war years, but in some respects their messages are surprisingly similar to these earlier 'conversion narratives'. Like those written in the 1930s and 1940s, many newer texts seek to minimise Jewish difference in order to make the Jewish character

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<sup>13</sup> Gillian Lathey describes Karl's family as 'orthodox' (76), but there is no evidence of this in the text. As Lathey notes, Karl celebrates his bar mitzvah in Germany, but a family that eats ham and celebrates Christmas, as the Hartlands do, could in no way be considered Orthodox.

<sup>14</sup> The smiling policeman has become a motif of Kindertransport literature to the extent that Barry Turner's non-fiction study of them for an adult readership is entitled *...and the policeman smiled*. Although the majority of children's literature about Jewish refugees, including memoirs, includes a reunion with at least one family member, in reality only 10% ever saw a parent again (Drucker 141).



easy to identify with for a readership from the dominant culture, and to make the message of tolerance more easily absorbed as a result.

Although the refugees are victimised in these texts, they are not represented as ‘victims’, which is perhaps not as surprising as it might seem, when one considers the desire for Holocaust texts for children to provide an ultimate message of hope; of children surviving and moving on with their lives. Kertzer points out that what Bosmajian describes as an ‘enabling rhetoric’ results in optimistic literature with a focus ‘on the exceptional: the survivor story, the rescuer story’ (324). In such literature, Jewish characters become the embodiment of the ultimate message of the texts: they have courage and fortitude, are hopeful in the face of despair and overcome difficulties to start afresh: they are not ‘real’ children, but symbols: ‘survivors’.

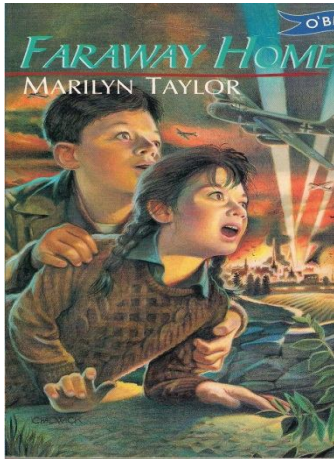


Fig 2.5. *Faraway Home* (1999) by Marilyn Taylor. Cover ill. by Kevin Chadwick.

In its afterword, Marilyn Taylor’s *Faraway Home* (see Fig 2.5) refers to the ‘courage and determination’ (216) of the Jewish refugee children. The mentor of Karl, one of the novel’s protagonists, seeks him out during the Passover *seder* to tell him that ‘without hope, we have nothing’ (209). As in the 1946 story for Jewish children, ‘At the Seder Table’, the *seder* symbolises the exodus of Jewish child refugees from persecution, but with a crucial difference. Initially, Karl is determined to return to Europe to locate his family, ‘perhaps even now huddled in a train rumbling towards an unknown destination’ (209). However, he quickly abandons his quest, recalling Yakobi’s words, and decides that rather than focusing on the past, he must ‘carry on trying to make a new life’ (209). Whereas in ‘At the Seder Table’, England is merely another land of exile en route to Jerusalem, in *Faraway Home* it serves as the Promised Land, offering not just survival but new beginnings.

Texts for younger children, including those by former child refugees such as Judith Kerr and Kenneth Ambrose, portray migration as an exciting event, with a focus on the refugee’s independence and sense of adventure. However, the compulsion in children’s literature to find meaning or a message of hope while avoiding the more disturbing aspects of cataclysmic events can lead to oversimplification, which is compounded when combined with the need to ‘[teach]

children that they do have agency' (Kertzer 281). In *Escape From War: Hannah's Story*, moral message and agency are united in a way that distorts the meaning imparted to the reader. After *Kristallnacht*, Hannah's father is incarcerated in the local theatre with the other Jewish men, who have been rounded up from their homes and the streets. Her father refuses to jump on a chair and beg like a dog as the other men do and is whipped for his disobedience until he is bleeding and unconscious. Hannah is proud of his defiance: 'That was my papa lying there. He hadn't given in. He showed them up for what they were: bullies and cowards. I vowed I'd try to be like him, always' (Riordan 18). Her father is later beaten to death in a concentration camp for demanding that the inmates be treated with dignity. This episode seeks to demonstrate that not all Jews were meek victims who made no attempt to resist; it privileges the decision to die bravely over the decision to try to survive. Hannah's pride in her father has the unfortunate effect of suggesting that there was a 'right' way to respond to the Nazis. It leads to an implicit judgement that the majority of Jews were weak-willed and 'chose' to demean themselves, disregarding the fact that none of them had any genuine choice.<sup>15</sup>

Later still, in England, Hannah and her friends discover a German bomber who has crash-landed in a field. Hannah must decide whether to try to stop the bleeding of the badly injured soldier or let fate take its course while her friends go for help. Many children's books about the war feature a 'good German soldier' – *Summer of My German Soldier* (1973) by Bette Greene, *The Machine Gunners* (1975) by Robert Westall and *Tomorrow is a Stranger* (1988) by Geoffrey Trease, to name just a few – and an attempt in children's literature to avoid demonising all Germans is understandable. The soldier here, however, is not a 'good German', but a Nazi: he carries with him anti-Semitic literature calling for the murder of all Jews. Despite this, Hannah decides to help him, seeing his delivery into police hands as her contribution to the war effort, and then reasoning, 'If I didn't try to save his life, would I be any better than the Nazis who'd killed Papa?' (74). Hannah's decision is intended to show that, like her father, she is morally superior to the Nazis, but the example the author has chosen makes a disturbing moral equation between Jewish victim and Nazi perpetrator.

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<sup>15</sup> In *A Boy in Your Situation* by Charles Hannam, 'Karl hated his grandfather, he was crawling like a caricature of a ghetto Jew. Why didn't he stand up to them?' (121-122). The difference here is that readers understand that Karl is a self-centred, immature boy; his adult self realises that his grandfather is trying to buy the family's safety and knows the possible consequences if he fails to do so.

The only text not by a former refugee to eschew a heavy-handed message of hope or tolerance is *War Games*, a novel ostensibly for eight- to twelve-year-olds, but likely to be of greater interest to teenage or even adult readers because of the complexity and lack of didacticism with which it treats its subject. Despite a family connection with the genuine case of ‘the exceptional’ on which her novel is based, Koralek takes her uncle’s real-life efforts to acquire exit visas for hundreds of Czech-Jewish children as the basis for a text that is more domestic story than adventure, and which has more in common with memoirs than with historical fiction about the Kindertransport. At the end of *War Games* there is no reunion with a family member and no final settling in of the refugee in England. There are no vague references to a train journey to an ‘unknown destination’ (Taylor 209). Instead, Hugo and reader together learn the horrifying truth: that his family has died in a concentration camp, probably Auschwitz. He is to be uprooted again and sent to France, to the home of an aunt he has never met. After his departure, his friend Holly is unable to comprehend her parents’ attempt to impose some normality on the day:

‘All I can think of is Hugo and his parents. They’re dead. Dead. And you’re all sitting here eating your supper as if nothing had happened ... Next thing you’ll be saying “Life goes on. Life goes on.”’

‘Well, it does, you know,’ said her father.

Holly ignored him, because she knew it was true and she just couldn’t bear it. (Koralek 212)

There is no attempt at reassurance, or to impose meaning on the events; just a response to them and an acknowledgement that choice isn’t always possible. Endurance, here, is not a cause for hope but a matter of necessity. Being ostensibly a children’s book, though, there is a qualified attempt to offer hope: when Holly mournfully observes that nothing lasts, her friend responds, ‘I think love might’ (214). For Hugo, however, there is no possibility of closure, and nothing to mitigate his trauma; only another departure. There is no paratext advocating tolerance, only a terse end note: ‘About 10,000 Jewish children were brought to safety in Britain as refugees’ (217) – not even the more active, emotive ‘rescued’ is used – and ‘It would take a year to read out all the names of the one and a half million Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust’ (217). The facts are conveyed in unemotional terms and leaves readers to make of them what they will. This refusal to impart some

greater significance is indicative of the text's interest in seeing the individual in the collective rather than in using 'the Jews' as a teaching moment for the majority.<sup>16</sup>

Even Linda Newbery's *Sisterland* (2003), a novel for teenagers, is unable to resist didacticism, although it does separate its characterisation from its moralising message.<sup>17</sup> Chapters from the past are interspersed with those from the present day. One of the granddaughters of former refugee Sarah Reubens becomes part of a group of neo-Nazis who attack a gay teenager, while the Palestinian boyfriend of the other girl finds her interest in her newly discovered Jewishness threatening. The parallels between past and present intolerance are heavily drawn, but a love-across-the-divide conclusion offers hope for the future. Yet both as Sarah and, later, when she has buried her Jewish past and become English Christian Heidi Thornton, the character is petulant and irritating; the text demands readers to acknowledge that being subjected to persecution does not automatically lead to saintliness of character.

## **Conclusion**

Many representations of Jewish refugees in children's literature written in the years around the Second World War reflect liberal assimilationist ideology, in which acceptance is conditional upon 'foreigners' minimising or abandoning their difference. Memoirs by former child refugees reveal the impact of such a universalising impulse on those it sought to 'convert' to Englishness. The image of England as a welcoming, tolerant nation is reflected by authors who internalised the ideology of the colonisers, but despite this, moments of resistance, ambivalence and trauma break through narratives of successful integration. Other memoirs by Jewish refugees demonstrate the effects of liberalism from the perspective of the colonised, confirming that the incidents of anti-Semitism and class division represented humorously in books for relatively young children during the war years were a fairly accurate reflection of attitudes towards German and Austrian Jews at the time, at least in the experience of these writers. These texts by the dominant culture and those written by the marginalised refugees combine to tell both sides of the same story.

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<sup>16</sup> Perhaps this interest arose from Koralek's own enduring friendship with the child refugee rescued by her uncle and sponsored by her grandmother.

<sup>17</sup> *Sisterland* is the only text to posit a vision of a pluralist Britain; its linkage of anti-Semitism towards refugees in wartime Britain with present intolerance towards other groups is also a feature of Richard MacSween's *Victory Street* (2004).

Unsurprisingly, a shift in the ways that Jews and Jewishness were constructed in British children's literature about World War II occurred between the 1940s and 1990s; however, this is not the straightforward development that might be expected with the benefit of hindsight. By the last decade of the twentieth century, texts written by those from the dominant culture construct Jewishness almost entirely in terms of a religion that is hardly ever seen. These texts reveal a post-Holocaust reluctance to include any material that could be misunderstood as a perpetuation of anti-Semitic ideology. Although they criticise constructions of Jews and Jewishness in terms of otherness, the desire of this literature to impose a greater meaning on the Holocaust and present a message of tolerance results in didactic historical fiction in which Jewish refugees are represented in terms more simplistic than in the texts written during the war itself. These representations do not begin to acknowledge the many and varied forms of Jewish identity: Jews are one-dimensional symbols rather than individuals, and Jewish identity is imposed on the margins by the centre. It is almost always in memoirs for older children and teenagers that Jews appear as well-rounded individuals and that there is any genuine Jewish subjectivity present. This is also the only literature in which Jewishness itself is demonstrated to be complex and fluid, and to have different meanings for different people, although the novels written during World War II do begin to consider a more varied understanding of Jewishness, even if this is often set against existing stereotypes.

Many texts which ostensibly convey a message about accepting difference in fact elide this difference so that universalism is endorsed over particularity. As part of this process, the literature constructs a collective refugee experience rather than recognising the individual within the collective. In some senses, this avoidance of the idea of Jewish difference, this vague, generalised sense of an outsidership that is never really articulated, raises the question of what, or who, exactly, readers are being asked to tolerate. Jews become, in most historical fiction, 'those who are persecuted', but in keeping with the message of hope and survival, they are not usually constructed as passive victims. The refusal to acknowledge a Jewish culture that is different from or more than religion – and some Jews, of course, identify with neither culture nor religion – or, indeed, a history beyond the Holocaust, makes it effortless for readers to show tolerance because they do not encounter anything so unfamiliar as to cause their tolerance to be tested. Judaism is made similar to

Christianity, Jewish culture is largely ignored, 'race' goes unaddressed, and apart from in *Sisterland*, the children are all brave and kind.

In a sense it is paradoxical to advocate acceptance of difference without then attempting to articulate the nature of that difference. Perhaps, though, this is an unavoidable by-product of writing about the Holocaust for children with an anti-racist agenda: the minimisation of specific detail about the Holocaust leads to the minimisation of specific detail about Jews. It is the novels with a concern for the specific experiences of refugees rather than the use of refugee characters as a way to address broader themes of the Holocaust in which a clearer picture of Jews as ordinary people emerges. One might expect this most recent literature to offer the most nuanced constructions of Jews and Jewishness, but this is not the case; these are found in the memoirs for young adults, *Other People's Houses* and *Almost an Englishman*, while the only subtleties in the construction of Jewishness in a recent text appear in *War Games* from 2002.

Finally, then, the majority of British children's literature set against a backdrop of refugees from Nazism does not make a gradual transition from English liberal assimilationism to modern British pluralism in line with the trend in British society identified by Tony Kushner. The impulse to 'convert' Jews from difference to similarity, which 'ultimately deprives difference of the right to be different' (Boyarin and Boyarin 88), remains surprisingly common today.

## Chapter 3

### **British-Jewish Identity: the Hyphen Problem**

In the introduction to his anthology of British- and Irish-Jewish literature, Bryan Cheyette claims that Anglo-Jewish writing has been influenced historically by the pressure either to universalise Jewish experience or to particularise it in line with constructions of ‘the Jew’ which have ‘saturated English national identity’ since medieval times (*Contemporary* xxxiv). As a result, he contends, until recently it was ‘deformed ... into tame satire or crude apologetics’ (xxxiv). Cheyette cites Rosemary Friedman and Maisie Mosco as authors writing in the 1980s who deliberately sought to replace with more positive constructions the images of Shylock, Fagin and Svengali that continue to dominate representations of ‘the Jew’ in British culture (xxxiv). Some writers, he notes, have found alternative strategies, while ‘countless’ others instead ‘fell into silence’ (xxxv). Cheyette’s anthology contains work by nineteen British- or Irish-Jewish writers and he refers to a further eleven in the introduction. It would be impossible to produce such an anthology of children’s literature, however: the silence has been more pervasive among British-Jewish authors for children than among those writing for an adult readership, and remains so.

Between the late 1950s and the early 1990s, Jews were a small part of the discourse of multiculturalism in British children’s literature. During this period, in which increasing attention was devoted to issues of class, race, gender and culture in film and literature, Jews were seen in children’s literature as either a potent symbol of the dangers of racism or an example of a positive cultural pluralism. One might expect Jewish children’s writers to begin producing increasing amounts of literature in which British-Jewish characters feature as a part of contemporary life in Britain, but in the period from the end of World War II to today, only Leila Berg (*A Box for Benny*, 1958), Michael Rosen (poetry from the 1980s and 1990s) and Jonny Zucker (*Dan and the Mudman*, 2008) have written such works. The few other texts to do so are by non-Jewish authors: *The Longest Weekend* (1969) by Honor Arundel, about the fraught relationship between a teenage mother and the Jewish father of her child; *My Darling Villain* (1977) by Lynne Reid Banks, in which a naïve girl is torn between two men, one working class, the other Jewish; Jean Ure’s *See You*

*Thursday* trilogy (See *You Thursday*, 1981; *After Thursday*, 1985; *Tomorrow is Also a Day*, 1989), about the relationship between a class-conscious teenager and her blind, Jewish boyfriend; and *Dance on My Grave* (1982) by Aidan Chambers, which focuses on the relationship between the romantic Hal, and his promiscuous, bisexual Jewish boyfriend, Barry.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter argues that this body of literature reveals the difficulties the majority culture had in accepting Jewish difference at a time when ‘conversion’ to Englishness was ostensibly no longer required in a society that was making the transition to multiculturalism. The attempts to construct ‘British-Jewishness’ reveal, both intentionally and inadvertently, the tensions between the two sides of the hyphen for Jew and Gentile, on and off the page. The chapter suggests that the very limited size of the corpus of material that can be classed as broadly ‘multicultural’ points to the difficulties inherent in attempting a literary construction of contemporary British-Jewish hybridity and explores the reasons behind the paucity of material. It will demonstrate that, in some key respects, the constructions in these texts mark a definitive shift from those written before the Second World War, with Jews now represented as part of a society which ostensibly fully accepted them as Jews. However, there is a notable distinction between texts by Jewish and non-Jewish writers, with the former demonstrating an authentic Jewish subjectivity, while in the latter, some fixed ‘racial’ constructions familiar from earlier literature can be seen in modified form. Some representations in this group of novels may appear lacking in nuance, but in comparison with some more recent works that will be examined in Chapter 5, they begin to acquire greater complexity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jewishness is not the only diversity represented in these texts, and is often not mentioned in reviews. Out of those in *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *Books for Keeps* of *The Longest Weekend*, *My Darling Villain*, the *See You Thursday* trilogy and *Dance on My Grave*, the only time a character’s Jewishness is mentioned is in Isabel Quigly’s review of *See You Thursday* in *The Guardian* (though it mistakenly refers to him as ‘unattractive’ (18)); his blindness is referred to in *The Observer* and *Books for Keeps*. *The Guardian*’s rather patronising review of *Dance on My Grave* mentions that the book deals with ‘homosexuality and a teenage obsession with death’ (Nettall, ‘Teenage’ 11), but does not specifically refer to either character.

Other novels set contemporaneously include Jewish characters, but although they contain some messages of tolerance, the aim is not specifically to be anti-racist or to engage in the multicultural discourse. *All Change* (1961) by Josephine Pulein-Thompson includes a new country landlord whose Jewishness is the reason that one of the locals is opposed to his presence in the village. In *End of Term* (1959), a school story by Antonia Forest, Miranda is ‘extremely rich’ (32) and has a ‘clever little Jewish face’ (33). There is a lengthy discussion about whether, as a Jew, Miranda should be permitted to take part in the nativity play. Forest herself was raised as a Reform Jew – her real name was Patricia Rubenstein – but converted to Catholicism as an adult (‘Antonia Forest’ 29).



## **Politicised Jews: multicultural constructions**

Writing in the late 1950s, Iona and Peter Opie note that ‘children colloquially refer to a Jewish person as a Yid, Shylock, or Hooknose’ (346), suggesting that even after the Second World War the long-held view of Jews in Britain in terms of racial stereotype had not fundamentally altered, at least for some. This is perhaps not altogether surprising, for notwithstanding the 1952 publication in Britain of *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and information about the concentration camps made available in newsreel footage of their liberation, the Holocaust had not yet become part of the mainstream cultural discourse, and therefore there was not thought to be a pressing need for sensitivity towards Jews. Britain was, however, in the process of evolving from Empire to multicultural society, and issues of race and relationships between majority and minorities began to acquire some urgency, beginning in the latter part of the decade.

The political and popular discourse about race in which the position of Jews was considered to be a ‘problem’ or ‘question’ was moving on to other groups, whose difference was more visible. Race riots in Notting Hill in 1958 were followed by legislation limiting immigration from the Commonwealth and, later, legal measures to outlaw racial discrimination. Racist and anti-immigration views were promulgated by even mainstream politicians, notably the Conservative Enoch Powell, who made his infamous ‘rivers of blood’ speech in 1968. The fascist group the National Front made inroads with the electorate in the 1970s; Jews marched against them with the Anti-Nazi League (Stratton 105).

During this period, authors began writing about their experiences as refugees from the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> Charles Hannam links his own experience of anti-Semitism with the continuing effects of racism on a younger generation, observing in the preface to *A Boy in Your Situation* (1977) that, ‘There have been black children who suffered from discrimination and persecution and who began to believe that they were not beautiful and talented, and I am told that some Navaho [sic] youngsters watching a Western film cheered the cowboys rather than their own people, who were being slaughtered’ (3-4).

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Two for an examination of some of these texts.

Although the large Jewish community that had lived in the East End of London shrank significantly after the war, when embourgeoisement led many to migrate to north and north-west London, there was still a Jewish presence in the area in the 1950s, and writers with East End working-class origins, such as Arnold Wesker, Bernard Kops and Wolf Mankowitz,<sup>3</sup> found popular success with Jewish-themed work at the time. Many East End Jews were associated with radical political movements, some with roots in the Eastern European Jewish workers' socialist group, the Bund, while in the 1930s many young people became attracted to the Communist Party, some not because of a strong affinity with Communist ideals but because the party was felt to offer the only resistance to the fascists who posed a threat to Jews in the area (Smith 61). Issues of equality were embedded in left-wing politics, and politically aware, even if not politically active, Jews were concerned not just with their own rights but with those of other oppressed minorities. Miriam Metz, whose story is included in a social history of Jewish women Londoners, points out the fellow feeling across ethnic boundaries among the descendants of immigrants:

There were things like the Notting Hill riots at the time I was at school – 1958. By then there were a few black girls in the school, but lots of us were Jewish or Greek Cypriot, immigrants or daughters or granddaughters of immigrants. Nobody ever had any doubt that that was the same thing, that we felt solidarity and support for black people, that they, like our families and us, experienced racism. (Jewish Women in London Group 223)

Leila Berg, author of *A Box for Benny* (1958), grew up in a similarly politicised environment, in Greater Manchester, the region with the largest Jewish population in the UK after London. In the novel, a simple story with a working-class urban setting, the eponymous protagonist is a boy aged around six, in search of a shoebox to use for a street game played by neighbourhood children. He trades a series of everyday items until finally he obtains the box.

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<sup>3</sup> Wolf Mankowitz's *A Kid for Two Farthings* (1953) was not originally written for children, but was followed in 1955 by a film for family audiences and in 1958 by an illustrated edition in the New Windmills imprint for young readers. In an interview with the *Jewish Chronicle* that year, Mankowitz distinguished between the close-knit East End Jewish community with which he was familiar and an Anglo-Jewry which was more obviously eager to acculturate, if not assimilate. Mankowitz was unable to write about Anglo-Jewry, he said, as he would 'be forced to attune himself to the "dead, flat rhythms of the English vernacular"' (Cheyette, *Contemporary* xxviii).



Fig 3.1. *A Box for Benny* (1958) by Leila Berg. Ill. by Jillian Willett. In the illustrations, Benny has the ubiquitous black hair of literary Jews.

Berg's rendering of Benny's poor Jewish neighbourhood in Salford is highly atmospheric. Set during the period of her own childhood, the book's then relatively recent temporal setting, ethnic minority characters, true-to-life events and working-class environment make it generically closer to realist fiction than to historical fiction. There is virtually no explanation of the cultural setting for the implied reader who, in this case, will probably be no more than eight or nine years old and, in all likelihood, unfamiliar with any of the Jewish and/or class particularities represented in the book: the games the children play in the street; the chickens in the small city garden; the name Benny calls his grandmothers, 'Bobby, because that is what people in Fern Street say for Granny' (56); the description of Saturday afternoons as 'the time for visiting people and having wine and sponge cake' (58). 'Bobby' is a variation on 'bubbe', the Yiddish for grandmother, while Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath: wine is drunk as part of the prayer before the meal. Benny eats bagels; it would be decades before they were available in British shops as an ordinary type of bread. There are Yiddish inflections in the speech. When Benny tells Mrs Taylor he must exchange the stamp she has given him, she replies, 'All right!' Exchange it! Let Joey Samuel get rich! Let Eli Jacobs get rich! You'll get rich with your shoe-box! Should I worry who gets rich?' (33).

Although in the illustrations (see Fig 3.1), Benny is characteristically 'dark', in the text Benny has no recognisable ethno-racial characteristics and no apparent accent, signalling that despite his difference, he also shares a cultural background with other readers; John Townsend describes Benny in the *Manchester Guardian* as 'an individual, living child' (*Moral* 6). Benny's mission, to find a box for his game, is one with which many children would empathise regardless of their ethnicity. This suggests that Berg's aim is not so much to instruct readers about Jews or Jewishness, but to normalise cultural difference and to demonstrate that it is an ordinary, positive, part of life in Britain.

This view is unsurprising given the author's political radicalism. A member of the Youth Front against War and Fascism, and the Young Communist League, she wrote newspaper articles about class and racism (P. Berg n.p.). One, published in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1963, explicitly links British anti-Semitism during

World War II with contemporary racism towards West Indians (L. Berg 7). In the early 1970s, she devised the Little Nippers series for young readers, for which she commissioned black authors and illustrators (P. Berg n.p.). In *A Box for Benny*, Berg blends particularity and universalism in a story that implicitly advocates a multicultural Britain to child readers at a time of ongoing debate over race and immigration.

A confident Jewish subjectivity is constructed in *A Box for Benny* in part because of its location in a poor, urban neighbourhood with a strong sense of Jewishness which is itself constructed from the author's own culturally authentic experience. This subjectivity emerges as a result of the privileging of the minority side of the majority-minority hyphen, a strategy adopted by Michael Rosen in some of his poems for children, many of which are based on domestic incidents from his 1950s childhood in a suburb of London. 'Don't Tell Your Mother' (1993) describes the collusion between father and sons on occasions when their mother is out at evening classes and their father makes dinner for Rosen and his brother. The poem is essentially a description of the process of making *matzo brei*, a mixture of matzo and eggs which is then fried. The food is Jewish; the Yiddish words *hinner schmaltz*, spoken by the father, are understood in context. The mother's cultural ambivalence is apparent in her distaste for 'that greasy stuff ... it's bad for you' (33) coupled with her lack of objection to its English cousin, the [fried?] 'egg on toast' (33) that the boys tell her they were given. Thus, a few Yiddish words and some Jewish food become potent cultural symbols: 'Perhaps my father, with his acute sense of class and solidarity, relished the *haimishe* quality of the dish and its humble origins' (Rosen, 'Materialist' 204). His mother's escape from the 'greasy stuff' reflects 'her emancipation from a predetermined sex role as a Jewish housewife, and part of what she saw as her emancipation from the obscurantist aspects of Judaism' (204). Embedded in this simple poem are issues of history, geography, culture, class and gender that are particular to Rosen's family's experience of being Jewish and British.

Like Leila Berg, Rosen's Jewish identity and his desire to promote equality through his involvement in multicultural education are tied to political activism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rosen discusses the relationship between his politics, multiculturalism and 'Don't Tell Your Mother' on pp 207-10 of 'A Materialist and Intertextual Examination of the Process of Writing a Work of Children's Literature'.

Children will understand ‘Don’t Tell Your Mother’ as a poem of father-son bonding, ‘boys against girls’ and breaking rules – experiences shared by children of all cultural backgrounds. It contests the idea of biological race, demonstrating that Jews are, simply, people who are Jewish, just as the children listening to Rosen perform the poem are not ‘Indian’ but Indian and not ‘black’ but black. The poem does, though, acknowledge cultural difference. The foreign words and food in the poem will be unfamiliar to most of the children hearing or reading the poem, but they might know a food from their own cultural background which would evoke a similar response from their mother. As Berg had done in *A Box for Benny*, in ‘Don’t Tell Your Mother’, Rosen successfully negotiates the boundary between universalism and particularity, situating Jewishness within a broader context of British multiculturalism. Both Rosen and Berg employ an approach similar to the ‘ethics of resistance’ identified by Lynne Vallone, even if their attitude to multiculturalism is not so much celebratory as matter-of-fact.

### **‘Old and hunched and beaky’: image versus ‘reality’**

The social mobility that came with the move of Jews to the suburbs was accompanied by a decline in religious observance, increased entry to the professions, the virtual disappearance of Yiddish as a living language, a decline in political activism, and greater social integration, particularly with the majority culture. There were, of course, many exceptions to this trend, but the result was that to the casual observer there was now little or no apparent difference between white, middle-class, British-born, politically centrist Gentiles and ‘white’, middle-class, British-born, politically centrist Jews.<sup>5</sup> Such a view is too simplistic, for greater cultural integration destabilises the relationship between the two sides of the hyphen for a minority culture, necessitating its active renegotiation as boundaries of class and cultural identity shift along with those of place. Rather than seeing the hyphenated identity as a sign of a wholly positive multiculturalism, Berel Lang suggests that it ‘could be seen as a weighty symbol of the divided life of Diaspora Jews’ (11). Both

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<sup>5</sup> Although Jewishness was no longer the racial issue it had been from the eighteenth century through to the Second World War, ambivalence and anti-Semitism did not entirely disappear. In 1978, William Frankel wrote in *The Times* of the distribution of pamphlets denying the Holocaust, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, the persistence of quota systems for Jews in schools and the exclusion of Jews from private clubs (‘How Real’). These last points demonstrate that their attempts at invisibility did not lead to unequivocal acceptance of Jews.

positions are discernible in works which advocate diversity in its many forms but at the same time expose the divisions of which Lang writes.

For the majority culture or other ethnic minorities to exclude Jews from the discourse of multiculturalism on the basis of their perceived 'whiteness' is to ignore that not all Jews are of European ancestry and that 'white' as a category often signifies someone who is Anglo-Saxon and Protestant, a member of the hegemonic group to which subgroups are acculturated. The racial designation 'white' has at least as much to do with religion as it does with skin colour, and those in Europe who are middle class but 'not-Christian' are also in some respects 'not-white'. The question of how one defines an acculturated Jewish identity might be answered differently by each of the quarter of a million self-identifying Jews in Britain. There is no data available on British Jews' perception of their Jewishness in relation to their whiteness, but American research found that non-Orthodox respondents 'felt that they occupied a middle position on the racial spectrum and that this position was exclusionary because it did not fit white or black' (Blumenfeld 15). Research has, however, been carried out on the feelings of British Jews about their Britishness versus their Jewishness, a distinction implying cultural rather than religious difference. Eighteen per cent of respondents 'felt "more British than Jewish"', 54 per cent that they felt "equally British and Jewish", and 26 per cent that they felt "more Jewish than British"' (Iganski and Kosmin 9). The 2001 UK census offered no option to Jews to self-identify as ethnically Jewish; 96.8 per cent identified themselves as 'white British', the remainder as 'white other' or 'other' (Graham, Schmool and Waterman 5). The inclusion of a question on religion in the 2001 census did allow Jews to self-identify as Jews in at least one respect, albeit one imposed by the majority culture and one not applicable to those who consider themselves ethnically Jewish but religiously non-practising. This definition of Jews as a religious rather than an ethnic group was concretised in 2009, when the UK Supreme Court ruled that the Jews' Free School had broken race relations laws by refusing admission to a boy on the grounds that his mother was not Jewish by birth, thereby separating Judaism from Jewish 'race'/ethnicity and privileging the practise of Judaism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The child's mother had converted to a denomination of Judaism which the Orthodox school did not recognise as legitimate, and therefore it did not consider him to be Jewish.

Clearly, then, defining Jewishness is complex, varied and contested, even among Jews. Defining Jews and British-Jewishness textually therefore can be fraught with difficulties and is more likely to be so when the Jewish characters are not the protagonists, as is the case in the novels by non-Jewish authors examined in this chapter.<sup>7</sup> The reader does not have access to his (in these cases) thoughts, and therefore both protagonist and reader must rely on other information that identifies the character as culturally British but also Jewish. This leads to a surface appearance of sensitivity to Jewish culture or a dismantling of stereotypes which is then undermined by the inclusion of inaccurate detail or essentialist constructions that, by virtue of their contemporaneity, the reader is encouraged to read as 'authentic'.

These novels contain visual cues that identify a character as Jewish: Rebecca Daniels of *My Darling Villain* by Lynne Reid Banks has 'curly black hair and incredible liquid eyes' (18); Abe Shonfeld, of Jean Ure's *See You Thursday* trilogy (see Fig 3.2, p. 112), has 'dark, cropped, curly hair' (28), while Barry Gorman in *Dance on My Grave* (1982) by Aidan Chambers has 'jet-black hair' (16). The characters are attractive, with the accompanying image of Jewish exoticism and 'darkness' seemingly inescapable. It appears in Chapter 2, in books written in the 1990s and 2000s that attempted to demonstrate Jewish similarity to the majority culture, functioning metonymically as 'Jew' in order to avoid making more explicit that which might undermine the aim. It appears here in novels which seek to do the opposite: to illustrate and accept difference. The image is inoffensive, but it does point to the difficulties that even well-meaning authors have in breaking free of historically ingrained representations.

In *The Longest Weekend*, for example, Joel's surname is Brown and he has a 'snub nose' (154), both of which are intended to make him invisible as a Jew. However, he is 'very dark' (49), has black hair, is intense and flamboyant, is studying to be a doctor, and chooses to spend time with his mother instead of his girlfriend. These are obvious stereotypes of contemporary Jews and Jewishness; that

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<sup>7</sup> While the ethnic minority character's position as sidekick or lover may be something of an irritant to groups who rightly want to see themselves in the position of hero from time to time, the Jew as love interest was nevertheless a development in literature for young people. A relationship with a Jew was not only acceptable, it could even be seen to be desirable, and these texts did not require the Jewish boyfriend to forsake his culture, religion or heritage as had been the case in earlier literature (when the Jewish lover had more often been an 'exotic Jewess'). Moreover, such partnerships were a reasonable reflection of social reality: in 1975, Jewish intermarriage was estimated to be as much as 30% (*The Times*) and was particularly prevalent among Jewish men.

he is a medical student is both a departure from the ubiquitous textual construction of the Jewish man as a financier, and a contemporary cliché.

With its persistently 'racial' images of 'the Jew', it is often difficult to discern the difference between the position of author and character in *My Darling Villain* although, interestingly, of the four novels under discussion, it contains the most varied constructions of Jewishness. The protagonist, Kate, has an Orientalist view of Jews, and an image of Jewish men, in particular, as both exotic and erotic. She is unable to revise the image even while acknowledging it as a fantasy: '[Leo's coat] hung open rather like a cloak. It sounds so silly to say he looked like some kind of beautiful sheikh standing there in the shadows' (Banks 192). The historical stereotype of Jewish men as hypersexualised is more deeply embedded in the textual construction of Leo's father, Mr Daniels, who, despite his family's 300 years in Britain, has 'this *foreignness* about him' (136).<sup>8</sup> Kate 'never really feel[s] at home with him' (136); this unease is perhaps due to a vague perception of Mr Daniels as an eroticised Oriental 'other'. Certainly, it is implied that he may have unorthodox sexual interests. When the French au pair accuses his son of fathering her child, an accusation Leo denies, Mr Daniels seems almost to approve of the possibility; a thirteen-year-old girl then suggests that the father is Mr Daniels himself, for 'he was definitely the sensual type who went after young girls' (144). Kate finds this thought abhorrent, yet the thirteen-year-old admits that she encourages the sexual advances of her adult male piano teacher. This forces the reader to acknowledge the possibility that some might agree with her and judge seventeen-year-old Kate to be rather unworldly. Rather than exonerating Mr Daniels of sexual impropriety, the text suggests that he might indeed prey on teenage girls, but that this should not necessarily be seen as problematic.

The authors seem unaware of their own acceptance of some stereotypes; however, they do recognise that older literary motifs persist in contemporary popular culture and they problematise this in the texts. In *See You Thursday*, Jean Ure

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<sup>8</sup> As with many stereotypes, this one was paired with its opposite; if not hypermasculine, Jewish men were constructed as effeminate and/or homosexual. See Chapter Four for a discussion of Jews and gender.



attempts to make Marianne's ignorance plain to readers without resorting to direct authorial intervention. Stereotypical literary images immediately spring to Marianne's mind when she is told that her mother is taking in a lodger named Shonfeld:

She saw him as being very old and hunched and beaky – a sort of cross between Shylock and Svengali – Shylock and *Fagin* and Svengali – with a heavy German accent and dark glasses for his eyes and shiny black suits that smelt of moth-balls. She only hoped to God he wouldn't turn out to be maniacally religious. That would be more than she could stand. (Ure 25)

Marianne imposes historical literary constructions of Jews on 'real' Jews.

*The Longest Weekend* takes the opposite approach, acknowledging, to an extent, that 'race', as a social construct, is not always visible, and overtly contesting the notion of 'the Jew'. Nineteen-year-old Eileen does 'not go around asking people their racial origins, or their religious or political beliefs. She considered others, as her parents always insisted, as people in their own right' (Arundel 122).<sup>9</sup> Eileen is surprised to discover that Joel, the father of her child, is Jewish. She had once, in a fit of anger, employed every epithet against him that she could muster, including 'kike' (88), without knowing it to be an anti-Semitic term of abuse. Joel assumes that, having used the word, Eileen must not only be aware of his Jewishness but that she must also be anti-Semitic, responding to her surprise at the news with, 'You mean you have never noticed my eyes, melancholy with five hundred years' persecution, my hooked nose, my cranium packed with avarice and guile?' (122). Joel highlights the contrast between 'invisible' Jews such as himself and the rigid stereotypes that continue to accompany the label 'Jew' despite changing socio-historical contexts.

At times, the Gentile protagonists themselves see the Jewish people they know in such terms. Marianne, Kate and Barry all foreground their Jewish lover's similarity to themselves – their Britishness – and when confronted with their difference – the Jewish side of the hyphen – find it difficult to accept. When Abe returns from holiday sporting a beard, for instance, Marianne objects, and only in part because of an aversion to facial hair. Abe jokes that the beard makes him look like 'an old rabbi' (Ure, *See You* 96) and Marianne thinks that 'it undeniably did

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<sup>9</sup> The anti-racist stance of the book is unsurprising, given that Honor Arundel herself was a member of the Communist Party. Her obituary in *The Times* calls her a woman of 'deep political convictions' ('Honor Arundel' 21).

make him look older, *and* more Jewish’ (99). Abe has a ‘gorgeous profile’ (76) – a none-too-subtle way of saying that he does not have a ‘Jewish nose’ – yet the beard does not make him look Jewish, it makes him look *more* Jewish; the implication is that he could be identified as Jewish on the basis of his appearance even without the beard, although Ure does not explain what these signifiers might be. Marianne is discomfited by Abe’s appearance; clearly, she would rather he did not look older or more Jewish. Perhaps the beard evokes the images of Fagin and Shylock, with all their accompanying associations, which had sprung to mind when she first heard Abe’s name. Abe himself seems at ease with his new, more Jewish look – which, being blind, he is unable to see – but he nevertheless complies with Marianne’s wishes and shaves off the beard. In doing so he accepts the limits imposed by the dominant culture on the visibility of Jewishness in public.

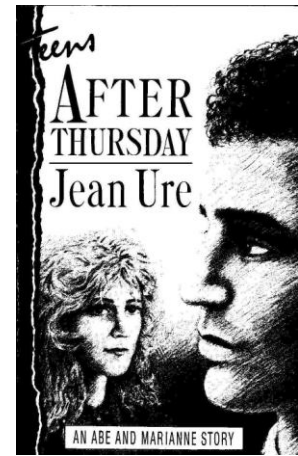


Fig 3.2. Abe Shonfeld, the dark, curly-haired Jewish boyfriend of Marianne in *After Thursday* (1985) by Jean Ure. Methuen Teens edition, 1989. Cover ill. by Derek Brazell.

In *Dance on My Grave*, when Barry is killed in a motorcycle accident, Hal cannot understand the haste with which the funeral is taking place nor the upset he is causing Barry’s mother by asking if he can view the body. It takes a cultural outsider, a Norwegian girl, to enlighten both Hal and readers as to the reasons for both the haste and the reaction to his request:

‘Barry was Jewish, Hal, you must have known that!’  
‘I knew, I knew. But he wasn’t practising. He didn’t go to church, I mean synagogue.’  
‘That has nothing to do with it.’  
‘Of course it does! He was like me. We didn’t believe in religion. Or in God come to that.’  
‘So?’  
‘So why should out-of-date customs he didn’t believe in matter now?’  
[...]  
‘Isn’t [it] rather obvious, as he made you swear to dance on his grave? Which also means he expected to be buried, not cremated, wouldn’t you agree?’ (Chambers 193-195)

The non-Jewish protagonists impose on their Jewish lovers a view of Jewishness that they themselves are comfortable with, eliding difference rather than accepting

the validity of the individual ways in which they self-identify as British-Jewish men. The texts make plain the Jewish characters' ambivalent position in a contemporary Britain that purports to see difference as equal.

### **Acculturation: exoticism and ambivalence**

Cultural theorist Jon Stratton describes the decision by some to conceal their Jewishness as 'a subaltern tactic to escape the threat posed to you by the dominant population' (101). Michael Rosen's poetry demonstrates his ease with his own Jewishness, but admits that at times he has rendered in English words he would ordinarily have written in Yiddish: 'Had I done this to make myself more acceptable? Probably' (*You Are* 5). In addition to revealing the Gentile characters' ambivalence towards Jewishness, the texts in this chapter show, from the Jewish characters' perspective, the negotiation between the two sides of the hyphen and the choices they make about how, or whether, to identify themselves as Jewish in the public sphere.

In *The Longest Weekend*, Joel does not hide the fact that he is Jewish, but neither does he volunteer it. He gives Eileen no verifiable information about his family and makes up outlandish stories about them: they are, variously, 'Highland peasants, spies, and opera singers' (Arundel 142). When Eileen discovers that he is from Golders Green, a part of London with a large Jewish population, she interprets his desire to spend time working in Africa as 'a reaction against his respectable middle-class background' (142). Missing from her explanation is the word 'Jewish'. Joel's parents are 'very respectable pillars of the Jewish community' (142). His father, he explains, 'is a hard-working, conscientious doctor, and my mother adores him and runs coffee mornings for famine relief and so on. She adores me too' (142). Joel ostensibly wants to reinvent himself to escape his 'typical' Jewish family, and yet there is no denying its influence. He is following his father's career path, and his liberal politics are clearly in line with those of his parents. His background, far from being exotic, is simply dull and suburban. Joel chooses not to reveal his Jewishness most of the time, but when he does so he is neither ashamed nor embarrassed. He has assumed that Eileen was aware that he was Jewish, so rather than hiding it, his silence is more to do with there being no need to raise the subject.

In his pragmatism about his Jewishness, Leo, in *My Darling Villain*, is rather like Joel. When Kate tells him he is ‘sort of exotic’, Leo replies, ‘Idiot! I’m not exotic in the least. I’m just Jewish’ (Banks 173). Leo’s sister Rebecca, on the other hand, positively embraces the perception of herself as an ‘exotic Oriental beauty’. She flaunts her cultural hybridity, arriving at a party,

wearing a Laura Ashley number of mulberry-and-cream cotton, with a heavenly oriental-looking silk embroidered shawl-thing flung round it and a marvellous big silver ornament on a chain round her neck that looked like something out of a North African bazaar. (39-40)

Rebecca’s costume constitutes her construction of herself as ‘English Sephardic Jew’,<sup>10</sup> and it is, in essence, a fancy-dress outfit based on representations of biblical Jews, as a jealous girl observes: ‘She looked like Hedy Lamarr in that awful film of Samson and Delilah I saw the other night on TV’ (75). Rebecca claims and reinvents the Orientalist construction of the ‘exotic Jewess’, while Leo rejects the image in relation to himself. At the centre of Rebecca’s outfit, though, is her Laura Ashley dress, a quintessentially English brand. Her clothing can be seen as a metaphor for ‘Englishness’ and ‘Jewishness’ – it can be worn separately or together, as accessories or a central feature, sometimes on public display, at other times kept in the closet.

Both Marianne, and Hal in *Dance on My Grave*, are unwilling to consider that their boyfriend’s Jewishness might inform his identity. Neither Abe nor Barry is interested in religion, and Marianne and Hal see their unexpected adherence to Jewish tradition as a threat to the perfect unity they had imagined. It causes Marianne considerable consternation when Abe announces that he will be celebrating Passover with his family. When she asks him what Passover is, he replies, ‘If I know that your lot guzzle Easter Eggs at Easter, I should have thought you might have known what my lot do at Passover!’ (Ure, *After Thursday* 130). Marianne ‘didn’t like it when Abe talked about “her lot” and “his lot”’. They’d both

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<sup>10</sup> Sephardic Jews have different cultural and religious traditions from Eastern European Ashkenazic Jews, who are greater in number in the UK. *My Darling Villain* is the only one of the texts to recognise these different cultural traditions.

of them already agreed that they weren't into that sort of thing' (130). Indeed, Abe goes to synagogue only rarely and does not believe in God; however, he observes Passover not for its religious significance but as part of his cultural heritage, and is unexpectedly irritated by Marianne's failure to understand the complexities of Jewish identity.

In these texts, Jewish characters' Britishness – their cultural similarity – usually remains unarticulated, as it would be by the majority culture. They may experience their Jewishness as integral to their Britishness, but to those from the dominant culture, even those closest to them, it is on occasion seen as a disruptive force which renders them only 'almost English', and in recognition of this their Jewishness, too, remains unspoken at times.

The texts advance two possible positions: the first, embodied in the character of Rebecca, is that 'British-Jewishness' is varied and subject to change; it is up to British Jews to determine their own manner of self-identification and it is their right to be both British and Jewish publicly and in whatever way they choose, regardless of the majority culture's response. The second is that regardless of what British Jews feel about their identity or how they define it, British-Jewishness is not a right, it is a gift to be bestowed by white, Christian, British non-Jews; as Jon Stratton says: '[the Holocaust] forced the recognition that assimilatory acceptance, and tolerance, like Othering itself, belong to the dominant, national group. It is theirs and the state's, to offer and to withdraw' (10). Such acceptance is conditional upon the requirement to privilege Britishness on demand, even if it means denigrating oneself as a Jew or one's Jewishness in public. This makes acceptance of British-Jewishness only ever partial. The adoption of the first standpoint is a refusal to participate in this agreement, an insistence upon the right to assert one's own subjectivity. The existence of the two positions in the novels highlights the tension between an impulse towards a 'revisionist' pluralist multiculturalism and an inability, regardless of intention, to move beyond a 'conversionist' liberal assimilationism.

The second stance is illustrated in the texts when Joel and Abe pre-empt potentially negative reactions to their Jewishness by framing themselves in terms of stereotypical images of Jews, a strategy also employed by Barry in *Dance on My Grave*. Barry semi-ironically performs 'Jewishness' when he says that he works in his family's record shop because, "I like music. Like people. Like selling." He grinned, aping greed. "Like money" (Chambers 70). This reflexive strategy reveals

the hyphen to be Lang's 'weighty symbol of hybridity'. Another example is in the collusion of characters with Jewish jokes; for instance, at one point, Abe and Marianne are out with his friends, one of whom makes a disparaging comment about the other, who is Welsh. Abe's apology to the Welshman is met with mock anger:

'Don't you apologise for me!' thundered Bernard. 'I am a White Man, sir!'

'That's right,' said Gwyn. 'You get back to your ghetto. Come in here, shaking your sidelocks...' (Ure, *Tomorrow* 64)

Abe's attempt to align himself with Gwyn by presenting himself as a polite English gentleman is rejected not just by Bernard, the instigator, but by Gwyn, whom Abe was seeking to defend. Bernard asserts his hegemonic authority and Gwyn promptly claims his own position as, if not English, then at least 'authentically British', by calling Abe 'old Shlomo' (65). He names Abe as 'Jew' and implies that he is an intruder whose rightful place is on the margins of society. Marianne is disgusted, but notes, 'They all, including Abe, seemed to find it hilarious' (64), not realising that in order to be accepted, Abe must participate with good humour as his Jewishness is ridiculed.

The issue of collusion with and origination of Jewish jokes by Jews is not new. In 1897, *Young Israel* magazine denounced Jewish people who 'seek to ingratiate themselves with those of other faiths by regaling them with "Jokes" against Jews' (29). Homi Bhabha refers to Freud's 1905 observation that 'the most apt instances of tendentious, self-critical jokes "have grown up on the soil of Jewish popular life"' ('Joking Aside' xvi). Bhabha suggests that minorities 'have no option but to engage in the demeaning dialogues or discriminatory conversations that determine their everyday existence' (xvi). Bhabha's point, and the textual examples which support it, are corroborated by authors Ann Jungman and Michael Rosen. Jungman recalls that as a child, she was 'very good at fitting in. I let people make jokes about Jewishness and made them myself and then I realised it was very damaging' (Interview), while Rosen's poem 'New School' (1986) describes his own experience as the only Jewish child in his school:

So they did the jokes:  
You know,  
Throwing a penny on the floor to see if I'd pick it up  
...  
Sometimes I'd go along with it  
And I'd put on what I thought was

a Jewish voice  
and say things like ‘Nice bit of *shmatte*.’  
...  
It’s like I was saying,  
‘Yes, I’m a Jew  
But I’m not like other Jews,  
I’m an OK-Jew.’  
But I wasn’t.  
For them I was just  
Jew. (30-31)

In the manuscript draft of the poem, an additional line is inserted after ‘*shmatte*’: ‘It makes me sick to think of me doing it’ (Rosen, *Seven Stories*). The type of psychological trauma described by Rosen and Jungman is never apparent to readers of *The Longest Weekend*, *See You Thursday* and *Dance on My Grave*, who observe the character’s apparent collusion with demeaning stereotypes but, in the absence of the character’s thoughts and feelings may, like the non-Jewish protagonist in the text, fail to understand it as a culturally conditioned response to ambivalence.

Even the positively multicultural *A Box for Benny* acknowledges such ambivalence, albeit in a manner suitable for its much younger readership which, like Benny, will be unlikely to have learned either anti-Semitic stereotypes or the ways in which Jews are conditioned to respond to them. Benny goes to a Jewish school, but at his previous, mixed one, ‘the children used to sing strange songs about Jewish children eating babies for dinner’ (63). Benny listens to the songs from a position of incomprehension. Perhaps the singers themselves have no understanding of the context from which they emerged: the blood libel dating back to medieval times. The songs are ‘strange’: cruel, certainly, but also puzzling. With Benny as focaliser there is no authorial intervention, either to mediate the scene for readers or to impart a didactic message about tolerance. The anti-Semitism is not an isolated occurrence – the past perfect tense indicates that this event has been repeated, and other incidents may have taken place – but this is the only example of racial disharmony in the text. It is also, however, the only example of intercultural interaction. Significantly, too, the word ‘Jewish’ appears in this scene and nowhere else in the book. The children see Benny as ‘Jewish’ rather than just Benny, and in hearing them voice their ‘strange’ ideas about Jews, he sees himself as they see him: a stranger. It is no surprise, then, that Benny is ‘glad’ (63) that he now attends a Jewish school. The reaction to the children’s songs is extratextual: rather than forcing her young son to adopt strategies in response to anti-Semitism, his mother

removes Benny from the integrated environment. After admitting to the reality of tensions between Jews and Gentiles, though, the text immediately goes on to highlight the positive aspects of multiculturalism. Having said he is glad not to attend the school anymore, Benny admits that he is also

sorry because of the tinned bread. 'Tinned bread' was the sort of bread the other children brought to school [...] Benny always brought 'black bread', or 'cake bread'. The black bread wasn't really black, more like a grey colour, and it had little long seeds inside it, and it was a round sort of shape. And the cake bread was golden yellow, because it had eggs in it, and tiny round seeds scattered all over it.

The other children liked eating Benny's bread, and he liked eating theirs, so everyone was happy. But now he went to a different school where everyone else ate black bread and cake bread too, so there were no exchanges.

He was just very slightly sorry about this. (63)

Clearly, the children's anti-Semitism is due to ignorance or thoughtlessness rather than malice, for all are 'happy' with the cultural exchange: sharing, eating communally, enjoying new food, having a change from what, to them, is mundane. Indeed, Benny himself is ambivalent about leaving: he is not just 'sorry', he is sorry twice over, even if the second time he is somewhat equivocal.

## **Silent voices**

It is striking that in a period when children's publishing began to include a range of voices from beyond the centre, so few Jewish voices have been among them, particularly given that, unlike some other minority groups, Jewish authors have been publishing works for young people. There has been no practical need for the dominant culture to speak on behalf of the Jewish minority, and yet, rather than finding strategies for representing Jews and Jewishness, as did some of the authors included in Bryan Cheyette's anthology, Jewish authors for children more often lapsed into silence about British-Jewishness, writing about Jewishness mainly in the context of the Holocaust or earlier periods in history. Their reasons for doing so have much in common with those writers for adults who found themselves unable to continue writing about Jews and Jewishness, but I suggest that there are also some differences.

According to Cheyette, 'It is almost as if Jewish writers in Britain have had to combat an all-encompassing Englishness throughout their careers, and, quite often, Englishness wins' (xxxv). The implication is not only that Jewishness and



Englishness have been, and continue to remain, incompatible, but that the choice between the two necessitates a struggle. Undoubtedly, this is often the case; some authors, though, may simply have found Englishness a more attractive option. Since 2004, author Ann Jungman has written books about the Holocaust, a collection of Jewish folk tales and a picture book about the friendship between Jewish, Christian and Muslim boys in fifteenth-century Spain, but for many years she was ambivalent about her Jewishness: 'I always wanted to be English. I hated being Jewish. It's easy to hate being Jewish here ... The English ruled the Empire, were decent people, understood the rule of law, and you wanted to be one of them' (Interview). Jungman's ambivalence is apparent in her books about *Vlad the Drac*, the first of which was published in 1982. She maintains that the vampire, her best known character, is Jewish. This Jewishness, however, is invisible to readers:

I feel Vlad the Drac's quite influenced by, say, Groucho Marx. Rude and confrontational and incomprehending and bloody-minded and all those things. I've always felt that Vlad was an assimilated Jew. I think that's where he came from, with a long identity problem. He wants people to like him, and on the other hand, he doesn't want to lose his vampire identity. It took me a long time to realise this.' (Interview)

The late Eva Ibbotson, too, was hesitant about making her Jewishness visible in print. She said that the heroine of *The Morning Gift* (see Fig 3.3), originally written for adults but republished in an edition for teenagers, was half-Jewish because she had 'not yet had the courage to have a Jewish heroine, a properly Jewish heroine'. Asked why not – 'Because of your own insecurity about it? Because it's too personal? Because non-Jewish readers might not accept a Jewish heroine?' – she replied, 'For all the reasons you mention' (Interview).

To an extent, pressure to assimilate and ambivalence are also experienced by other minority groups; there are, however, some differences. The first is to do with the particular circumstances in which Jews have lived in Britain: persecuted and expelled in medieval times; having their civil disabilities removed during the Enlightenment on condition that they would confine their Jewishness to the privacy of their home; arriving in numbers after persecution in Europe and discovering that the English,

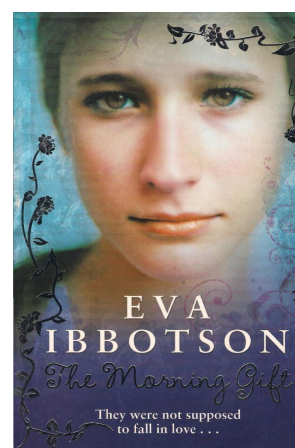


Fig 3.3. Ruth, the half-Jewish heroine of *The Morning Gift* by Eva Ibbotson. Young Picador Edition, 2007. Cover image Ron Levine/The Image Bank/Getty Images.

too, felt themselves superior to Jews. The cultural memory handed down through centuries is that British-Jewishness is synonymous with effacing one's Jewishness in public. In contrast, groups arriving after the Second World War were entering a Britain and a world that had changed – one that was slowly, and despite many false steps, nevertheless attempting to carve out a different relationship with its more recent ethnic and cultural minorities. The relationship with its Jewish population, because already established, was not renegotiated.

Secondly, because most Jews were 'white', it was and has been possible for them to pass as non-Jews and to blend into the dominant culture in a way that many other groups simply cannot. Jews had the option of 'converting' to Englishness, to sameness. The ambivalence shown to them up to and including a time of ostensible acceptance of diversity suggests that those for whom 'whiteness' was a possibility were expected to choose it. If they did not, they were felt to be setting themselves apart from the dominant culture, which many from that culture simply could not understand, particularly if the Jews were not religious. Equally, after a history of exclusion, to be accepted as 'white' was, for many Jews, a welcome development which it would be foolish to reject.

Finally, the age-old images of Jews as Shylock and Fagin continued to exert a stifling influence on 'real' Jews and the perception of them. This point, and the one that precedes it, are contradictory and yet also strangely symbiotic. The idea of Jewish invisibility as a threat to the majority which can only be contained by the overwriting of Jewish indeterminacy with reified constructions of Jews as outsiders was common in the Victorian era and throughout World War II, as seen in Chapters 1 and 2.

The silence of Jewish writers, then, has been, in many cases, a manifestation of the impact of allo-Semitism upon British Jews: the ambivalence, the invisibility or 'passing', the sense of apology, all of which have been embedded in and defined British-Jewishness itself. Thus, the silence by British-Jewish writers about British-Jewishness is a reflection of their speaking position as Jews in Britain. It may also in some cases be a strategy of resistance, a refusal to engage with the definitions of Jews and Jewishness created and imposed by the dominant culture.

There are, of course, other factors that influence a writer's decision not to choose Jewish subject matter: the desire not to be pigeonholed as a Jewish author, a

feeling that books about Jews don't sell,<sup>11</sup> a simple lack of interest, the feeling that a children's book about Jews should be a book 'about' Jews rather than merely featuring them as individuals, and, crucially, the question of how one could represent Jewishness in a children's book given the multiple and varied ways in which Jews construct their own identities.

Leon Rosselson, whose book *Rosa's Singing Grandfather* was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal in 1991, would find it impossible to define a contemporary British-Jewishness: 'If you're religious, there's no problem. If you're not, what? A few Yiddish phrases and maybe fasting on Yom Kippur do not Jewish characters make. So in what would the 'Jewishness' of Jewish characters consist?' (e-mail).

Adele Geras, whose Jewish-themed work includes a novel about the Kindertransports and historical fiction set in Jerusalem, says, 'It would have to be a very simple story for quite young children if I wrote it. People write about what they know and I don't know very much about life in a British Jewish community' (Interview). Eva Ibbotson agreed: 'Because this whole Jewish thing is very complex to me, it doesn't lend itself to any of the relatively simple approaches. I think if you're dealing with Jews for children it's got to be a little bit black or white' (Interview). Keren David has a similar perspective; the protagonist of her first two books is Catholic. She did not consider writing a Jewish character 'because Jews are not mainstream in the UK [so] there would be a lot of explaining to do' (e-mail).

Underlying these comments are several concerns: the need to convey an authenticity authors feel ill-equipped to provide, and a corresponding desire to avoid superficiality; the difficulty of representing cultural hybridity; and the perceived need to define Jewishness in a way that can be understood easily by child readers alongside the acknowledgement that the reality is much more complex. Some of these issues are of particular importance in literature for children, and its educative impulse runs through these tensions. Many Jewish authors, with the benefit of their own varied experiences, seem to see the textual representation of a British-

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<sup>11</sup> This observation by both Ann Jungman and Adele Geras was corroborated by Jane Winterbotham of Walker Books, who said, 'It isn't something that we have been asked for from customers/teachers/librarians in the same way that we have for books about other BME groups ... We don't get asked specifically about religious groups, but yes about Black, Asian, even Romany stories' (e-mail). Winterbotham's comment confirms that Jews are defined by the dominant culture solely as a religious group, which helps to explain their exclusion from the discourse of multiculturalism.

Jewishness that in reality is fluid, multifaceted, or, perhaps, barely discernible, as difficult or even impossible.

That these concerns are valid is obvious from the cases in which representational strategies are used unsuccessfully. Michael Rosen describes his parents' use of Yiddish as 'a way of stating identity, but an ambivalent contradictory one. They were classic examples of what ... Jonathan Miller described in *Beyond the Fringe* (1960) as not being "a Jew - but Jew-ish"' ('Materialist' 207). The use of Yiddish is the central device employed to construct a contradictory Jewish subjectivity for Barry in *Dance on My Grave* and Abe in *See You Thursday*, but the characters are acculturated and of a generation far removed from the Yiddish-speaking inhabitants of East London. Furthermore, in Chambers' and Ure's novels, the Yiddish is used clumsily or incorrectly. Barry concludes phone calls with 'shalom', and when explaining to his boyfriend Hal why he has been out all night, tries to 'pass it off by lacing the story with jokes against himself. He'd felt uneasy leaving the poor goy (!) [Chambers' punctuation] lying there with all that money because someone might happen along and rob him' (106). 'Poor goy' is obviously a pun on 'poor boy', but as *goy* is a word to describe a non-Jewish person and is often meant negatively, the suggestion that this is a joke against Barry himself is in error.<sup>12</sup>

In *See You Thursday*, Abe asks Marianne to locate some sheet music for him and wishes her *mazel tov*, which the reader, presumably, will understand to mean 'good luck'. While this is how the phrase is translated literally, its meaning in the vernacular is 'congratulations' and is generally used on the occasion of major life events such as births and weddings. Abe jokingly adopts a Yiddish accent (his mother is English) that is rather closer to a stereotypical rendition of Italian-accented English: he tells Marianne, 'My mother want to know who this *shiksa* we sending all the postcards to?' (Ure, *See You* 95). *Shiksa* is Yiddish for a non-Jewish girl, but it has somewhat pejorative connotations, and it is, therefore, unlikely that Abe would repeat it to Marianne. Theoretically, the use, misuse and decision not to use Yiddish could be a strategy to demonstrate the dilemma of hybridity – the Jewish subject

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<sup>12</sup> It would be remiss not to point out that Chambers, whose novel was written sixteen years after Arundel's, though within the same time frame as Ure's, at times problematises or subverts stereotypes, such as the association of Jews with greed, and for Chambers, Barry's Jewishness, like Hal's homosexuality, is a matter of fact rather than an 'issue'.

caught between two cultures and unable to speak his 'own' language properly – but it is much more likely to be simply a case of the authors making use of a cultural symbol with which they are not sufficiently conversant.

The manner in which Abe conveys to Marianne his mother's curiosity about her could, perhaps, be the precursor to a conversation about their relationship being problematic to Abe's family. Nowhere in the text is this possibility suggested, however, nor is it in *The Longest Weekend*, in which Joel says that his traditional Jewish parents will be delighted to discover that he is marrying the non-Jewish woman he has never told them about and with whom he has had a daughter: 'My mother will be furious that I have deprived her of three years of being a doting granny and my father will bring out his disgusting sweet wine and hope that it will be a boy next time' (Arundel 142). *My Darling Villain* is the only novel to acknowledge potential Jewish objections to intermarriage. Perhaps Banks, a non-Jewish woman married to a Jewish man, has a greater understanding of the issue. Seen from the perspective of the majority culture, marriage between Jew and non-Jew is a welcome sign of an increasingly tolerant society in which barriers between cultures are being dissolved. The view from the margins, in contrast, is somewhat different; it is encapsulated by a 1973 headline in *The Times*: 'Jewish fear that intermarriage will threaten tradition' (12).

### **'Boutique multiculturalism' or cultural authenticity?**

The failing of narrative strategies intended to convey an authentic representation of Jews and Jewishness, such as the use of Yiddish, raises the question of how a cultural identity can be constructed without resorting to images of that culture which, in order to be recognisable to readers, rely on racialised images from the past. Lissa Paul describes inaccurate attempts by white authors to present 'other' cultures authentically as 'Eurocentric' (90) and warns that the majority of readers would be unlikely to recognise 'fake multiculturalism' (90) unless they had direct knowledge of the culture being written about. Paul explains Stanley Fish's concept of 'boutique multiculturalism' as 'the multiculturalism of costume and food' (89), based, according to Fish, on 'superficial or cosmetic relationships to the objects of its affection' (qtd. in Paul 89). This concept is straightforward when seen as the representation of a culture in order for it to be easily 'understood' and 'experienced'

by the majority culture, or when ‘multicultural’ features are used inaccurately, but it is more complex when seemingly superficial signifiers become, with the passage of time, fundamental components in the transmission of a culture which has been altered by the condition of hybridity.

Much theoretical work on multiculturalism in children’s literature has focused on issues such as the parameters of the term itself, the need for more authors from a range of backgrounds to write characters that reflect themselves and their culture, and the question of whether culturally diverse characters should only be written by authors from those cultures. Literature that includes any representation of non-hegemonic culture is often grouped into an amorphous mass labelled ‘multicultural’ without differentiation between spatial or temporal setting or consideration of a text’s aim – for instance, whether it is indeed multicultural or whether it is, instead, anti-racist. An anti-racist text might be aimed primarily at a readership from the dominant culture in order to educate about the dangers of prejudice. Difference may be elided so that ‘the other’ is made to seem ‘the same’ as the majority culture. This was the case in the Holocaust texts examined in Chapter 2, which revealed that such an approach can be problematic. Multicultural literature, in contrast, can be said to take a positive approach to difference in keeping with the ‘ethics of resistance’ identified by Lynne Vallone, in which difference is celebrated.

Mingshui Cai has created a framework into which multicultural literature may be subdivided: by cultural specificity, which includes books about growing up in minority cultures, ‘world literature’, about non-Western cultures, and ‘cross-cultural literature’, about ‘interrelationships among people of different cultures without apparent focus on the unique experience of any one culture; some books in this category deal with interracial marriages and dating’ (23-24).

There is still in Britain a tendency to view multicultural children’s books as a generalised category without taking the nuances of multiculturalism into account. In March 2010, for instance, a librarian at a secondary school in England asked the members of a British children’s literature listserv for suggestions for ‘a list of fiction dealing in some form with “other” religions and beliefs’ (Bentley). The suggested titles included *All of a Kind Family*, by Sydney Taylor (1951), set in early twentieth century New York City; *Saving Rafael* (2009), a Holocaust novel by Leslie Wilson; *Sisterland* (2003), by Linda Newbery; *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2006), by Randa Abdel Fattah; and *The Breadwinner* (2001), by Deborah Ellis. The questioner

did not specify whether she was looking for books focusing on Islam and Judaism (and other religions) or whether books about Muslims and Jews that did not focus on religion, but which might include a few scenes of religious observance, were acceptable. The suggestions did not appear to consider the overlap between religion and culture. Was the point to find good literature, a representation of a ‘different’ child a reader can relate to, no matter when or where it was set, or a fictionalised guide to religion? Was historical fiction or realism required? What effect, if any, was the textual experience of an Australian-Lebanese Muslim or an Afghani Muslim intended to have on readers’ perceptions of British Muslims? Underlying the question and the responses was the impression that a snapshot of a culture was sufficient for children from the majority to ‘understand’ this other culture, and also a failure to recognise that non-hegemonic cultures are as complex as the dominant culture. This approach, I suggest, is another manifestation of boutique multiculturalism.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard suggests that the purpose of multicultural literature ‘is to help liberate us from all the preconceived stereotypical hang-ups that imprison us within narrow boundaries’ (qtd. in Cai 28). Emer O’Sullivan takes a different perspective, defending the use of literary stereotypes on the grounds that they function in cognitive social psychology ‘as tools which each one of us uses to help us cope with the welter of heterogeneous impressions with which we are continually confronted’ (18). In support of her argument, O’Sullivan cites Edgar Rosenberg, who in 1960 wrote,

It is idle to pretend that, for the purposes of literature, Jews share all qualities with all men, and that therefore whatever is peculiar, eccentric, individual about them ought to be suppressed. Unless the Jew in fiction is in some sense recognizably Jewish (he need not either have a long nose or parade his cosmic fatigue) the writer ought not to have bothered to make him one. (25)

By 1990, though, when O’Sullivan was writing, increasing globalisation and intercultural interaction were beginning to make any perceived need for a limited impression of an unfamiliar culture seem outdated.

Cai worries that a stereotype’s ‘misrepresentation of reality ... perpetuates ignorance and bias and defeats the purpose of multicultural literature’ (38). He seems to suggest that an entire culture has only a single reality, though his central point is to do with the need for representations to be based on knowledge or experience of a culture. Kathryn Lasky disagrees, pointing out that ‘just because an

author is from a particular ethnic group does not mean that the book is automatically good or that it is necessarily authentic' (qtd. in Fox and Short 91). Writing in *The Horn Book* magazine, Anita Silvey explains that 'Those who fight for artistic freedom and license [believe that] no one should prescribe what a writer or illustrator attempts, and creative genius allows individuals to stretch far beyond a single life and to write about lives never lived or experienced' (132).

Much of this debate has taken place in the United States, for in Britain, the majority culture writes about minorities to a much greater extent and this is rarely seen as problematic. An American text in Cai's category of 'world literature' takes for granted that children from that background are also American. In Britain, the attempt to respect other cultures is at times accompanied by the unwitting failure to accept hybridity, and a focus on people from ethnic minorities as being from 'somewhere else', even if they are British and it is their cultural origins that lie elsewhere. Given the very different histories of the two countries, it is unsurprising that Britain lags behind in this respect, but it does point to the difficulties that can occur when one culture writes about another.

Cai describes 'culturally generic' books somewhat disapprovingly as including 'members of ethnic minorities but with few features to distinguish them apart from physically' (24). I would argue, however, that culturally generic books serve a valuable purpose, at least in Britain. Criticism of books in which characters that are 'white' in all but the colour of their skin, their mode of dress or their name should also take into account the nature of the text. In a school story which is not also an 'issue' novel, for instance, the characters function in a 'British' public space and participate in events which do not require a culturally specific response. The British side of the hyphen will most likely be privileged unless some element of the plot requires the minority culture to be highlighted. This normalises a range of ethnicities as British and embeds cultural hybridity within children's literature. This contrasts with a text located in a domestic space and featuring a character from a minority background, which would be expected to show the minority side of the hyphen in greater detail.

The difficulty of balancing the two sides of the hyphen in a construction of modern British-Jewishness is one reason that authors from different cultural backgrounds have refrained from representing modern Jews and Jewishness in British children's literature. Jonny Zucker is the only Jewish author to attempt to do



so since Michael Rosen. His novel *Dan and the Mudman*, which is part realism and part time-slip fantasy, focuses on a boy who moves from London to the north of England and is subjected to anti-Semitic bullying, which is resolved with the aid of the Golem of Jewish folklore.

The descriptions of Dan and his family are of contemporary Jews who are not merely ‘Jews’. Dan has a buzz haircut and oval brown eyes (5), his mother is not an overweight housewife but a nursing manager, ‘slim with deep blue eyes’ (10), and his father is not a doctor but a six-foot-two, hazel-eyed electrician (10). Dan is not a weakling but an accomplished runner, nor is he academically inclined. Dan is an ordinary boy living in an ordinary family. Like Michael Rosen, Zucker resists the idea of a ‘racial’ Jewishness:

I have quite a few Jewish friends who do slightly off-the-page jobs – write, or music, or whatever – so I thought of us: all the youth movement people, all the middle- to left-of-centre people who aren’t necessarily lawyers and housewives. Not everyone lives in a massive house in Hampstead Garden Suburb. It’s a stereotype. I hadn’t seen a character like Dan before, but I didn’t write him thinking, ‘Wow, I’m breaking new ground.’ (Interview)

Dan’s Jewishness is represented in terms of culture. It is made visible only when he is asked whether the reason he does not eat meat at school is because he is a vegetarian, and he responds that it is ‘Because ... I’m Jewish’ (14). Although Dan ‘outs himself’, he hesitates because he is wary of a potentially negative reaction and, indeed, despite Zucker’s intentions, the book is not so much about a Jewish boy but ‘about’ anti-Semitism: it is a didactic, anti-racist text which contains some multicultural elements.

It might be argued that the book effaces Jewish difference, but Zucker’s construction of Jewishness in terms of keeping kosher, a tie to Jewish history and experiencing anti-Semitism is a valid representation of a contemporary British-Jewish hybridity rather than an example of ‘boutique multiculturalism’. It demonstrates that their ethnicity, rather than defining Jews in the narrow terms employed by some, instead informs their subjectivity, and it acknowledges, too, that there are varied ways in which Jewishness is constructed and experienced by Jews, Leon Rosselson’s misgivings notwithstanding.



Fig 3.4. *Dan and the Mudman* by Jonny Zucker (2008).

It is an undeniable risk that having a limited number or type of texts available about a group will indeed efface an ethnicity or reduce it to stereotype. This is one reason why more books featuring contemporary Jews and Jewishness are necessary, and as subjects rather than objects. The more, and more varied, representations there are, the more child readers will question damaging images when they encounter them. The likelihood of a notable increase in representations is slim, however, for it is often said that because the Jewish community in Britain is small, the UK market for Jewish books is small. This assumes that only Jewish children should read books about Jewish children – an argument that runs counter to the inclusive aims of multicultural children’s literature, which are that children should see themselves reflected in the books they read and also that child readers should encounter characters from the range of cultures that make up British society. The lack of interest in material about Jewish children also suggests an underlying feeling that ‘we already know about Jews’, which, as the majority of the texts examined in this thesis demonstrate, is simply not the case. Jonny Zucker’s *Dan and the Mudman* serves the dual purpose of teaching non-Jewish readers something about Jews and Jewishness while giving Jewish readers an image of themselves which they might be able to recognise. The failure of most literature to succeed in doing the latter must lead one to question the extent to which the former aim has been achieved in these texts.

If readers are confused by Dan and his family, reading them as culturally indeterminate and therefore not ‘recognisable’ as Jews, that is partly the point. Dan’s classmates – and the reader – know that Dan is Jewish only because he says he is; this is an accurate reflection of the reality of the very common experience for Jews of ‘passing’ and ‘coming out’. The characters, based in an authentic cultural hybridity, more closely resemble ‘reality’ than the more familiar images readers have come to see as signifying ‘Jew’. As Kimberley Reynolds says, ‘Until young people are able to begin their introduction to the world free from obsolete and often damaging stereotypes, we will be trapped in a cycle of acquiring destructive attitudes which must then be confronted and challenged’ (38).

What is needed for any writer constructing Jewish characters is a consideration of the Jew as subject, with a focus on character, not characteristics. Characterisation should be as nuanced as one would expect characters from the hegemonic culture to be. Any details signifying Jewishness should be drawn, if not

from first-hand experience, then from research, rather than from assumptions or the perpetuation of literary stereotypes. Such details should be recognisable to Jews as having a basis in authenticity. The distinction made by Michael Rosen in 'New School' is telling: he puts on 'what [he] thought was a Jewish voice', replacing his own, genuine, Jewish voice with a constructed one which he believes will be more easily understood by others even if he does not quite recognise it himself. The focus should be on the representation itself, not the concern with making it recognisable to the reader, for such an approach will make it impossible to break free from the damaging cycle of which Kimberley Reynolds writes.

## **Conclusion**

After the war, assimilationist liberalism began to give way to the acceptance of diversity in its own right, in a process that was slow and at times painful. Beginning in the late 1950s, children's authors participated in the growing discourse around multiculturalism in British society, using the long-established Jewish community as an example of a successfully integrated minority group in literature which increasingly contained images of a Britain diverse in class, race, culture and sexual orientation.

In their constructions of British-Jewishness, authors follow Jewish writers who, in their memoirs of wartime written in the 1960s and 1970s, began to portray Jews in terms of ethnicity rather than race, and Jewishness in terms of culture as well as religion. These texts, set in a Britain of the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, begin to acknowledge that identities can be multiple and fluid, and that cultural hybridity is a condition marked by ambivalence, and in this they are a notable development from earlier texts. This ambivalence is repeatedly demonstrated through Gentile characters' incomprehension of Jewishness or their insistence upon constructing Jews and/or Jewishness in terms of stereotype. It is also shown through the response by Jewish characters to the understanding that at times they are seen in terms of rigid literary images rather than encountered as living individuals. Jewishness is constructed differently in domestic and public spheres; these differences are most clearly illustrated in Michael Rosen's poems 'New School' and 'Don't Tell Your Mother'. The texts demonstrate that British-Jewishness is formed

both by individual circumstance and the collective experience of a hybridity that is particular to being Jewish and British.

These works can be read as a postcolonial advocacy of Britain's need to welcome the increasing diversity of its population. In line with this position, the authors construct some characters that go against type, and they make an attempt to create characters that are individuals who are British and Jewish, rather than 'Jews'. However, they are unable to resist employing stereotypes in their own constructions of Jews and Jewishness, even if these are somewhat disguised by their adaptation for a modern readership. There is, therefore, at times an unintentional reinforcement of the very images they seek to transcend.

The historical context of these texts' production cannot be ignored, however; such ambivalence is found in other children's literature published in this era with overt anti-racist intentions. As Pat Pinsent points out, books such as *The Cay* (1970) by Theodore Taylor, *Slave Dancer* (1973) by Paula Fox, and *The Trouble with Donovan Croft* (1974) by Bernard Ashley, all won awards at the time for what was judged to be sensitive treatment of black characters, but were later criticised for portraying them in terms of age-old stereotypes (*Children's* 93-6). Pinsent suggests that in the 1990s, authors 'found it more interesting to depict the positive qualities of a variety of ethnic backgrounds than to concentrate only on anti-racism. Negative aspects tend to be included in these only where they are relevant to a complete rounded picture' (96-97). Pinsent's wording suggests, even if unintentionally, that fixed attributes can be assigned to ethnic groups, that stereotypes are a reflection of reality, and that the majority culture has the right not only to define the 'qualities' that make up another culture but to judge them against its own norms. It implies that the focus should be on using a character to present a point of view about an ethnic group or culture rather than writing characters as individuals, as would almost always be the case in books featuring white, British, Christian characters. The statement unwittingly reinforces the point that acceptance of minorities is in the gift of the dominant culture.

In any case, the aim behind these works is to promote an anti-racist or positive multicultural message, even if, with hindsight, the message of most of them is more equivocal than was intended. It might be suggested that the educational aim of much children's literature requires a message that can be conveyed in such a way that it can be easily understood, and that Jewishness is too unstable and complex to

be effectively explored in such texts. However, this claim cannot be supported, for *A Box for Benny* and 'Don't Tell Your Mother' – texts that include autobiographical experience – though much simpler in many respects, also contain a level of detail that makes their representations of Jewishness more authentic and more successful than the novels for young adults.

One reason for this is the number of layers that the reader must negotiate in the novels for older children: the Jewish character asserts his 'Jewishness'; it is met with incomprehension by his partner, and the reader must interpret the text's position on the interaction. Furthermore, the textual transmission, reception and understanding of 'British-Jewishness' are all constructed by authors whose own knowledge of it is based on something other than their own subjectivity. Readers must piece together 'Jewishness' from the complex intersection of performance, assumption, interpretation and observation of which it is comprised in the texts. Because these novels for older readers are realist fiction set at or near the time they were written, readers might also conclude that the constructions in them are 'true' representations of reality, even if they understand on some level that no literary work can be wholly so.

This is not to say that diversity should only be represented by someone with first-hand experience of the particular group they are writing about, for insider cultural knowledge does not necessarily make a book culturally authentic; nor does the absence of it mean that the text must by definition fall into the category of 'boutique multiculturalism'. However, it is undeniable that when someone from the hegemonic culture writes of a minority background, they are imposing a definition on that group rather than allowing its members to define themselves. Often, the result is that Jewish readers see themselves represented not as they are, but as the dominant culture imagines them to be. This can lead to a replication of encounters such as those between the Jewish and non-Jewish children that the Opies observed in the playground and between Benny and his classmates; the childhood experiences of authors Michael Rosen and Ann Jungman, forced to engage with jokes about Jews by children at school; the images employed self-mockingly by Joel, Abe and Barry.

The period in which Jews were seen in texts set in contemporary Britain was so limited because the cultural moment that made the production of such texts possible came to an end. In the 1980s, Jews were beginning to be seen by non-Jews

primarily in terms of the Holocaust; beginning in the 1990s, it became a subject which could be used in children's literature to teach lessons about tolerance to young people, and the lesson it taught could be presented simply and powerfully. Furthermore, as the title of a 1986 education pack by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) – 'Auschwitz: Yesterday's Racism'<sup>13</sup> – made clear, anti-Semitism, and its effects, were thought to belong to the past. The focus of 'today's racism' was black and Asian groups. Increasing sensitivity about the concept of 'race' itself led both to its abandonment in favour of the term 'ethnicity' and a reductive redefinition of Jewishness solely in terms of religion. Somewhat ironically, this transition to 'ethnicity' was accompanied by a definition of multiculturalism solely in terms of skin colour.

Along with the variety of migrants settling in Britain came a shift in the perception and self-perception of Jews – largely acculturated and middle-class – from occupying a space near the margins to one closer to the centre. Although many Jewish children's authors opted for silence about the British-Jewish experience at this time, they did write about the Holocaust in its widest sense or historical fiction set abroad, both because it was simpler to locate Jewish characters in places and times in which Jewishness had more clearly defined parameters, and because damaging, specifically British, cultural images were not part of those settings. Perhaps, too, in comparison with the more acute issues facing more recent arrivals, there was a feeling that in terms of Jews in contemporary Britain, there was nothing much to say.

The sole author to break this silence in recent years has been Jonny Zucker. To an extent, *Dan and the Mudman* takes the simple approach suggested by Adele Geras and Eva Ibbotson, and it is surprising that a greater variety and complexity of British-Jewishnesses has not featured in recent novels for teenagers as it has in novels for adults by Naomi Alderman, David Baddiel, Lana Citron, Amanda Craig, Linda Grant, Jeremy Gavron, Howard Jacobson, Charlotte Mendelson and Will Self, among others.

The realist literature for young people that is available, as well as that which is not, reveals that the acceptance of British Jews as both British and Jewish has

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<sup>13</sup> This pack was discussed in the House of Lords and later withdrawn because it contained material that was considered offensive, such as the comparison of the policies of Margaret Thatcher's government with those of Adolf Hitler.

often been conditional, as it was in earlier periods, when England self-identified as a monocultural nation. This literature both deliberately and unwittingly illuminates the ambivalence with which Britain continued to relate to its Jewish minority at a time when liberal assimilationism was ostensibly giving way to multiculturalism. In so doing, it demonstrates that for British Jews, in literature and life, the hyphen has at times been a weighty symbol indeed.

## Chapter 4

### **Mother, Monster, *Mensch*: Jews and Gender**

Many of the texts examined in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 create, reinforce, shift, transgress or contest boundaries, 'real' or imagined, between Jews and Gentiles. Through a framework that is broadly postcolonial – at times implicitly and at others more overtly – these chapters consider how British children's literature addresses Jewish difference and similarity, and, in doing so, illuminates the interplay between power and powerlessness as it applies to Gentiles and Jews in these texts. Chapter 4 is similarly concerned with boundaries, Jewish difference and power relations. It draws in part on Judith Butler's theory of performativity and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to explore themes such as 'passing' and 'coming out', being a Jew in the home and a man in the street, and the idea of the ghetto, the 'Jewish' space, as abject and gendered as feminine. These themes, applied specifically to constructions of Jewish masculinity and femininity in this chapter, can also serve as metaphors for ideas addressed across the thesis as a whole.

This chapter examines interactions among Jews as well as between Jews and non-Jews, and explores the degree of agency, or the lack of agency, that Jewish boys and girls, and men and women, have within the family and/or society. In British and American popular culture, the Jewish mother is often the butt of jokes that construct her as overbearing, an image exemplified by one of the most high-profile representations of Jewish femininity in recent decades, the character of Beattie, star of a series of television advertisements for British Telecom in the late 1980s and early 1990s. That the character was Jewish was never explicitly mentioned, but the casting of the well-known Jewish actress Maureen Lipman in the role, and Beattie's focus on 'cooking, shopping, nagging' (Rozmovits 714), meant that viewers could hardly fail to recognise her as a stereotypical Jewish mother, and her husband and son as stereotypically henpecked Jewish men. Such representations are a contemporary manifestation of long-standing constructions of Jewish femininity and masculinity as other to that of the dominant culture.

Although ideas about what constitutes specifically 'Jewish' gender characteristics have evolved over time along with the gender positions of Jewish men and women relative to hegemonic masculinity and femininity, elements of the



historical images of the feminised Jewish man and the overbearing Jewish woman remain embedded in the popular imagination, as the Beattie campaign demonstrates. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, constructions of Jewish femininity and masculinity often contained sexual overtones, and the stereotype of the feminised Jewish man was at times accompanied by the suggestion of sexual deviance. Literature for children, however, refrained from making overt reference to sex, representing young Jews, male and female, in terms of exotic, usually 'dark', beauty, and adult men as old, emasculating them metaphorically.<sup>1</sup> It is in constructions of gendered appearance that parallels can be drawn between this earlier material and that written from the 1960s onwards, when the teenage market began to emerge, when sex and sexuality were addressed more openly in literature for young people, and Jewish masculinity and femininity were constructed more self-consciously as a result.

This chapter demonstrates that in the majority of this literature for young people, Jewish masculinity and femininity and Jewish gender roles are constructed as other to that of normative masculinity and femininity, reflecting the images prevalent in popular culture. In these texts, however, the constructions often fulfil a specific ideological function. Jewish masculinity frequently plays a key role in a larger critique of hegemonic power, and familiar tropes are used in order to subvert the negative image of the Jewish man or to interrogate the construction of the hegemonic man as the masculine ideal. Furthermore, the majority of the texts do not employ a simplistic dominant Jewish woman/weak Jewish man binary. Such representations of the Jewish mother do feature from the 1980s onwards, and Jewish women characters are more likely to conform to 'negative' stereotypes than representations of Jewish men; nevertheless, some texts also view the stereotypical Jewish mother as a product of historical repression by men and, as part of a spectrum of Jewish femininities, the Jewish woman is at times constructed as strong and assertive. A small number of texts attempt to resist the notion of specifically Jewish masculinity and femininity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish mothers were almost entirely absent from material by non-Jewish writers unless the mothers were converts to Christianity, and even then, they appeared very rarely.

## **The Jewish man: at home and in the street**

Daniel Boyarin notes the association of Jewish men with ‘woman’ in late antiquity (82), while Hillel Kieval dates the gendered discourse about Jewish males to the Enlightenment (142) and its Jewish equivalent, the *Haskalah*. The idea that one should ‘be a Jew in the home and a man in the street’ – that Jewishness should be restricted to private life – was embraced by Jews in favour of greater integration with the wider community. Yet it could hardly be expected that after centuries of being separated from the rest of society, whether physically or socially, Jews would be accepted immediately as a part of it. In order to *be* a man in the street, a Jew had first to *become* a man in the street. The emancipation of the Jews, therefore, had obvious implications for notions of Jewish masculinity, for acceptance by the dominant culture required Jewish men to minimise their difference, and that meant modifying their behaviour so that it resembled, as far as possible, that of heteronormative Christian males.

The ideals of the *Haskalah* seem on one level to be a curious self-denial of Jewish masculinity. If a Jew is ‘a man’ only when he is performing that role in the public sphere, what does that make him at home? According to Daniel Boyarin, for European Jews, the ideal man was a great scholar, and a ‘soft man was the central and dominant cultural ideal, not a marginalized alternative’ (23), as it was to the majority culture. The Enlightenment phrase seems to be an acknowledgement by Jews of a fundamental difference between Jewish masculinity and hegemonic masculinity; possibly, even, that the two are essentially incompatible. Its tone, which seems to celebrate the newfound possibility of being considered ‘a man’ rather than ‘a Jew’, suggests not just that Jews should become men, but that they should be happy to do so. Such a position disregards the potential difficulties in adopting a new type of masculinity. The assumption that they could apparently choose to perform different types of masculinity at will is in line with current understanding of the fluidity and constructedness of gender, but does not recognise that a profound adjustment to masculinity requires repeated and sustained performance. For Jews to be *seen as* men would have entailed mere gender masquerade; for them to *be* men would require a more fundamental process of transformation from their own cultural norm to the Western model of masculinity.

Despite attempts by Jewish men to become accepted by hegemonic males, the stereotype of the feminised Jewish man persisted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the work of such writers as Otto Weininger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud (Robertson 23, 28). Max Nordau called for a 'muscular Judaism' in 1898, with the aim of promoting a new type of virile Jewish masculinity (Presner 1). Thus, says Boyarin, '*mentsh* as Jewish male ideal became largely abandoned for a dawning ideal of the "New Jewish Man", "the muscle Jew"' (65). This gender shift, however, does not occur in the majority of contemporary literature for young people, which continues to privilege a dominant 'soft' Jewish masculinity over the hegemonic norm.

### **The abject man**

Julia Kristeva defines the abject as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (4). Abjection, located outside the symbolic order, is often gendered as female. Christine Wilkie-Stibbs suggests that 'all who are infantilized in and by any such forms of dominant [sic] are similarly implicated in abjection, not merely as a psychoanalytic necessity, but also as a social reality' (75). If the abject is a 'female' space beyond a subject's physical borders, then 'the Jew' – at times situated beyond the borders of the 'I' and historically associated with the feminine – is a prime example of abjection. The association of Jewish males with the feminine is reinforced by visible signs of Jewish difference, with his circumcised penis signifying, for hegemonic males, not just the emasculation of Jews, but the threat of their own castration and corresponding loss of power. However, while Jewish men at times occupy a feminine position, their ability to 'pass as men' means that, at others, they occupy queered gender positions on a spectrum between 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

In historical fiction for children, Jews are regularly associated with spaces of abjection. *The Star and the Sword* (1965) by Pamela Melnikoff, *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966) by Geoffrey Trease, and *Feast of Fools* (2003) by Bridget Crowley take place in medieval Britain, when Jews were forced to live in ghettos, literally beyond the boundaries of society. If society can be read as the body of the subject, then ghetto inhabitants can be understood in these texts as the object that has been

expelled from the body and relegated to the realm of the feminine. Because Jews were confined to the ghetto only at night, Jewish men were able to mingle with Christians during the day, potentially transgressing the boundaries of patriarchy's symbolic order and destabilising it. Perhaps it is not surprising that the medieval blood libel originated at this time, for the horrific image of 'the feminine' eating children would have aided the 'body' in its expulsion of that which is 'not-I'. In *Feast of Fools*, the blood libel leads directly to the expulsion of the Jews from England.

These texts reflect the borderland position occupied by Jewish men in relation to normative masculinity, with the ghetto a space of abjection that is literal and metaphorical, psychological and political. In *The Red Towers of Granada*, the Gentile protagonist, Robin, takes refuge in the Jewish ghetto in Nottingham after he is misdiagnosed with leprosy, cast out of his own community and rescued by a Jewish doctor, Solomon. Robin is a scholar, and Solomon's son, David, rails against the patriarchal society in which his Jewishness denies him access to similar opportunities: 'I cannot fight, I cannot hold land, I cannot work with my hands, I cannot do business or study or teach – since last year I could not even heal the sick' (29). Throughout the novel, his rage at his emasculation is apparent: he 'thunder[s]', is 'furious', 'quickly [reaches] boiling point'; he 'hisses', glares, speaks 'in a vicious undertone' (36), his voice 'vibrant with fury' (41). David wants to be admitted into the symbolic order that he simultaneously resents for excluding him. Gilbert and Gubar note, in relation to Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, 'If it is degrading to be a woman, it is even more degrading to be *like* a woman' (277). David, too, is rendered a man-but-not-a-man, his lowered status imposed as a result of his abjection. His gender position between 'masculine' and 'feminine' is illustrated in the physical description of him: 'If David ben Solomon had been a girl you would have called him beautiful. He was very like his sister in feature, finely moulded and sensitive, but ...David was hard and lean, with nothing else girlish about him' (23). David's androgynous appearance mirrors the other visible markers of his difference: the yellow cap and badge that Jews were forced to wear. But these indicators of his association with 'the feminine' are merely superficial, for the text constructs David's gender primarily in terms of heteronormative masculinity: 'He flung about the house like a caged lion. I think he would have liked to barricade the ghetto and defend it like a fortress. He was a lost warrior, pining to fight under a banner that did not exist'

(47). David's 'natural' gender is that of the 'man in the street'; it is his Jewishness that confines him to 'the home' and prevents him from being recognised in society as a hegemonic man. The borderland space, the ghetto, is a reflection of David's own ambiguous attitude towards his Jewishness: it is both domestic enclosure and surrogate nation, simultaneously signalling exile and refuge; somewhere he resents, but would rush to defend.

Other texts, too, present the spaces inhabited by Jews in terms of ambivalence. In *The Star and the Sword*, the ghetto is perceived as a place of safety, representing home and community for twelve-year-old Benedict and ten-year-old Elvira. It becomes one of abjection, however, when its borders are transgressed by representatives of the patriarchal law, who burn the Jews in their own public square, including the children's parents and younger brother. Thus, the horror associated with 'the Jew' is imposed by society in a process of othering the part of itself which must be expelled in order for self-definition to take place.

Abjection is signified in these texts by the symbols of their Jewishness that are imposed upon Jewish males. In Bridget Crowley's *Feast of Fools* (2003), the disabled chorister John becomes acquainted with Reuben and his son Aaron, who makes plain the parallel functions served by the Jews' yellow badge and John's disabled leg: "My father said ... you were a marked man too, like – like us" ... He tapped his yellow badge' (104). Gilbert and Gubar suggest that in literature, 'Crippling injuries to the feet signify symbolic castration' (272); thus, John, like Reuben the Jew, symbolises a threat which must be kept at the margins of society. Ultimately, John understands that his mark precludes him from ever becoming a full subject and accepts his ambiguous status, choosing to leave the country along with the expelled Jews. His decision to embrace his own position as an adolescent who will never become a representative of hegemonic manhood is presented in the text as a valid, positive gender choice.

Although the majority of these writers are women, in all of these texts it is the Jewish man rather than a female character that is the oppressed and marginalised figure. The Jewish man occupies an ambivalent space between 'man' and 'woman', with the association of Jews with the domestic space and disempowerment resulting in a deliberate connection between Jews and the feminine. This gives the texts some points of comparison with novels of female development. Annis Pratt explains that, in literature, when women 'seek an identity based on human personhood rather than

on gender, we stumble about in a landscape whose signposts indicate retreats from, rather than ways to, adulthood' (6). In this literature, Jewish men can only become 'adults' if they adopt the dominant gender – a position in most cases unavailable to them. Like women, the attempt to become a subject based on their personhood is met with confinement in the domestic space or other enforced separation from the hegemonic authority. In these texts, as in novels of female development, the story does *not* conclude with the acceptance of the Jewish protagonist or his Gentile double into the symbolic order, with the exception of *The Red Towers of Granada*. In this novel, Robin's marginalising 'disability' is only temporary, while David is the only Jewish character in these texts to focus on his objectification rather than his agency as a Jew. This is also the only book in this group to be written by a man, and the difference in perspective in this text is striking. Perhaps the women writers create a positive alternative Jewish subjectivity because they themselves occupy a position outside the paternal authority, while the injustice of being barred from hegemonic power is a more obvious concern for the author who has at least the potential to be a part of it.

Pratt's analysis of nearly three centuries of women's novels examines many texts in which women 'consciously reject their societies and declare themselves persons in spite of it' (11). Similarly, the Jewish men in *Return to Freedom* and *The Star and the Sword*, and the non-Jewish protagonist of *Feast of Fools*, all ultimately choose to separate themselves from the hegemonic culture, their display of agency leading to the development of their own subjectivity. In *The Star and the Sword*, Benedict and Elvira escape the massacre in the ghetto, disguise themselves as Christians, and participate in a mission to help rescue the king alongside Robin Hood and a Crusader knight. Afterwards, the children travel back to London with Sir Edward, the knight. They view the city at first 'with awe-filled eyes, as though it were Jerusalem' (124). Yet despite the fact that it is a 'fine city' with 'magnificent' buildings (124), and the children feel at 'home now' (131) amidst the wealth and opulence of court, Benedict eventually realises that, for them, London is not Jerusalem, after all, but Babylon, the decadent land of exile. Sir Edward and his wife wish to adopt the siblings, but Benedict declines the offer, choosing instead to join the children's aunt and uncle in the Oxford ghetto 'with our own people. Not here, among strangers' (131). Benedict's subjectivity is attained through his willing entry

into the domestic enclosure, a move which definitively closes off the opportunities for development in society.

Had Benedict been a woman, such a conclusion would certainly have been met by readers with bemusement, and some readers may find it surprising in any case. Yet Benedict is an agent making his own decision, one he also makes on his sister's behalf. He chooses to go to Oxford because he sees the ghetto as a Jewish space in which the family is valued: their own Jerusalem in England. Benedict's decision is vindicated in the text when 'their new family [becomes] their own family' (139). Rather than converting to Christianity and/or the dominant culture, as do characters such as Esdras in Charlotte Yonge's *The Slaves of Sabinus* (1890), and Hans in Josephine Elder's *Strangers at the Farm School* (1940), in literature examined in Chapters 1 and 2, Benedict resists conversion. That he chooses the Jewish ghetto – a space associated with domesticity and gendered as female – is, after all, a logical conclusion to a text which subverts the gender hierarchy in which the masculine sphere is privileged.

### **In and out of the closet**

The division between the Jew at home and the man in the street has particular resonance when seen from a historical perspective, for between the late thirteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, the practice of Judaism was illegal in England. The few remaining Jews, and those that settled in England after the Spanish Inquisition, were forced to conceal their Jewish identity in public. Thus, Jewishness was erased 'in the street'. This situation is addressed in *Return to Freedom* by Josephine Kamm (1962), and *Plots and Players* (1988) by Pamela Melnikoff, which use the example of crypto-Jews – those outwardly professing Christianity but practising Judaism in secret – in order to critique the treatment of its minorities by the majority culture. Jews are also required to masquerade as Christians in Pamela Melnikoff's *The Star and the Sword* (1965), which is set in an earlier period. The Jewish males in these three novels are what Gilbert and Gubar (1994) describe as 'male male impersonators' (321) for, like those



Fig 4.1. *The Star and the Sword* by Pamela Melnikoff (1965). Ill by Hans Schwarz. With his curly dark hair and girlish features, the illustration of Benedict conforms to the stereotype of the beautiful Jewish boy. p. 20

female characters that masquerade as men in order to have autonomy in male society, 'feminine' Jewish men had to pass as 'real men' – Christians – in the public sphere.

*Plots and Players* focuses on the growing friendship between aspiring actor Robin, a crypto-Jew, and William Shakespeare, and Robin's increasing difficulties in keeping his Jewishness secret. His 'real-life' performance of hegemonic boyhood is mere role play, while the female part he performs in a play seems to come from within: 'all at once he *was* this proud Italian girl ... when Romeo looked at him pleadingly he turned away with a taunting smile and a graceful toss of his head' (21). Shakespeare confirms that he is 'a natural' Rosaline (22), but Robin realises that showing his 'female' self in public could jeopardise his genuine masquerade. When Shakespeare unwittingly unmasks the family, his father says: 'My son does not need to act in your theatre ... As a secret Jew he is acting a part all his life' (65). Robin's desire to appear in public dressed as a girl mirrors his desire to appear in public as a Jew, but when he expresses this wish to be 'out' in society, one of the older men replies: 'Live openly as Jews? My dear boy, men will fly to the moon first' (18). The likening of Jewish experience of being in or out of the closet to that of homosexuals has been recognised by scholars such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who calls the Biblical story of Queen Esther, who saves her people when she proclaims her Jewishness to her non-Jewish husband, 'a highly potent imagining of coming out and its transformative potential' (75). Cultural theorist Jon Stratton takes a slightly different position, considering 'coming out' and 'passing' to be 'part of the discourse of assimilation' (12), related to but not synonymous with transformation.

The pattern of Jewish men passing as hegemonic males until they are outed or come out as Jews is repeated in *The Star and the Sword* (see Fig 4.1) and *Return to Freedom* (1962), in which the declaration in the patriarchal space of the aspiring subjects' Jewishness is accompanied by a crisis of communication. Christine Wilkie-Stibbs points out that if, as Judith Butler says, language is the primary means of the subject's acceptance into the symbolic order, then the loss or lack of language 'marks out the subject as powerless, silent or silenced, by extension "feminized"' (90-1). In *The Star and the Sword*, Benedict has been successfully masquerading as a Gentile, but finally finds that he is unable to reconcile his status as both subject and object, and must choose between them:



Benedict took a deep breath and clenched his hands to keep them from trembling. The time had come, and there was nothing he could do about it.

He heard himself speak in a voice he did not even recognise as his own.

‘We’re Jews,’ he said. (82)

Benedict hears this voice speak as if it belongs to someone else. It speaks from the ambiguous position of the Jewish subject, for when he comes out as a Jew, Benedict is choosing a feminised gender position; one that is ‘I’ in its own right, but decidedly ‘not-I’ in relation to heteronormative males. Sander Gilman makes a specific parallel between the language of the Jews and that of women, with their ‘supposed false and manipulative use of language, their faulty logic, and their substitution of mockery and satire for true humor’ (qtd. in Hyman, ‘Gender’ 139). Benedict’s trembling hands and the strangeness of his own voice reflect the loss of control that accompanies abjection and his difficulty in making his voice understood from the position of the non-subject. Revealing that he is Jewish enables Benedict to claim his real name, but it is this name that marks him out as one outside the paternal authority. It is the alias that enables him to enter patriarchal society as a man. Benedict knows that he must expel his Jewish self in order to become a subject, but is unable to do so. This new voice, which distances him from his hegemonic subjectivity, represents the coming together of object and subject and the crisis that this threatens to precipitate.

A similar scene occurs in *Return to Freedom*, but with one crucial difference. Andrew, who has masqueraded as a Christian his whole life, does not make his own decision to reveal that he is Jewish. Instead, when he meets Oliver Cromwell to deliver a secret message, Cromwell outs him by referring to him by his real name rather than the one he uses in society. Andrew jumps to his feet, ‘trembling in every limb. [Abraham Anes] was his name, but no one but his father had ever used it and then only in the greatest secrecy. “I am called Anson, Your Highness,” he faltered, “Andrew Anson”’ (44). The voicing of his true name reveals Andrew’s abjection and threatens him with expulsion from society, a position reflected in his trembling body and faltering speech as he struggles to reclaim his public ‘masculine’ self. According to Roberta Trites, ‘someone self-named or who names other things displays more agency than whatever or whomever receives the name’ (31), and indeed, Benedict, who self-names in *The Star and the Sword*, has more agency than Andrew in *Return to Freedom*. Later in *Return to Freedom* the Jewish men are outed, but rather than

denying the fact or shamefully admitting it, they name themselves immediately and defiantly: 'I am ... a Jew and 'tis proud I am to admit it' (153). Unlike Andrew, their outing occurs in a place of relative safety, the private home that doubles as a synagogue. Unlike both Andrew and Benedict, the adults have already acquired status in the paternal authority because they have long passed as 'men in the street', while the position of the boys in the texts is in greater jeopardy.

In *The Star and the Sword*, Benedict's successful performance of hegemonic masculinity is symbolised by his ability to ride the fine horse he is given by the knight, Sir Edward, but his accompanying physical discomfort mirrors his psychological unease at adopting a false gender position: "I'm just not cut out to be a man of action," he thought. "Or a hero. It's a good thing I'm going to be a physician when I grow up" (62). After he has admitted to Sir Edward that he is Jewish, Benedict risks his life on a dangerous mission, and the knight says of the courageous act, 'It's not even as though you were a true Englishman', to which the boy responds, 'Maybe not. But I'm a true Jew' (100). A binary is set up between 'Englishman' and 'Jew', with both characters accepting that a hybrid identity is impossible, for the hegemonic Englishman is encoded in terms of 'power, self control, restraint of reckless impulses' (Mosse 15), while 'Jews and homosexuals were the primary countertypes of the social norm' (70-71). Significantly, the text goes on to problematise the distinction between Englishman and Jew, demonstrating that marginalised men can be courageous: Sir Edward tells Benedict that though still a child, and a Jew, he is 'a man already ... and a better man than most' (102). Furthermore, the text suggests, hegemonic masculinity is itself a performance, even for those for whom it is ostensibly 'natural': the knight confesses, 'Don't tell anyone, but I don't even like hunting very much' (82).

### **'Patriarchs' and patriarchy**

As the influence of second-wave feminism made an impact on children's literature, characteristics of non-hegemonic masculinity were embedded in constructions of disabled boys, boys with magical powers and other outsiders as a positive alternative to the cultural norm. Peter Bramwell notes that historical fiction that privileges women's experience sometimes 'parod[ies] rigid masculinities, or ... present[s] "feminized" male characters' (110). Daniel Boyarin sets the *mensch*, 'an upright,

honorable, decent person' (Rosten 240), in opposition to rigid constructions of hegemonic masculinity and the 'muscle Jew' based on it, despite the fact that the definition of the word does not indicate any particular position on the spectrum of masculinities. He describes research which found that students, too, believed that 'a gentle, studious, sweet man [could] only be imagined as old and nearsighted (i.e. castrated?) and could not possibly be attractive sexually' (xiv). Many representations of Jewish males in children's literature take a similar position, with some constructions of biblical forefathers, including the Patriarchs, contesting the notion of Jews and Judaism as intimately linked with the concept of patriarchy, particularly as understood by feminists.

Deborah Philips points out that Lynne Reid Banks's fiction for both children and adults features the 'recurrent trope ... of the attractiveness to women (both Jewish and gentile) of the exotic, sensitive and often damaged Jewish man' (50). This is true in *Sarah and After* (1974), which tells the story of the biblical forefathers and foremothers from the perspective of the women. Rebecca contrasts Esau, a 'ruffian' and 'savage fighter' (78), to Jacob, who is 'gentle, gentle as the harmless deer that this mighty hunter, here, takes such pride in slaughtering' (78). Leah, too, favours her feminised sons, saying that while Joseph would sit with the women in the evenings, the others were 'like a tribe of young wolves ... picking and despoiling where they would' (150-151).

The text is more ambivalent towards a 'softer' masculinity when the Jewish man is a husband, however, for the attitudes of the women characters concur with Boyarin's research in which gentle men were seen as sexually unattractive. Sarah, 'bred and trained to a role of patience and submission' (9), wishes Abraham had defended her during a kidnap attempt rather than avoiding conflict; she wishes he had been 'more of a man'. When Leah's husband Jacob fails to persuade her to bear his twelfth son, he tries to use force to convince her instead, but she is merely amused by his unsuccessful attempt to imitate normative masculinity: 'Jacob had never pitted his strength against any, even as a young man. A ravisher – he? I could almost have laughed at the very notion' (129).

In this text, the men favour a construction of masculinity more akin to the dominant model over their own non-normative gender. The gentle Isaac criticises Jacob because, 'He would rather stay in the tent and help ... with the cooking, than go out hunting' (78). He prefers Esau, the more 'manly' of his offspring, exposing

the contradiction between the man he is and the kind of man he thinks he should be: ““My heir was a man from the beginning,” [Isaac] would say. Esau was, from the first, the stronger and more masculine of the two. Even as a young boy, hunting was his chief delight’ (77). When Rebecca points out that Jacob is more like his father than Esau, Isaac simply ignores her, responding that Jacob ‘shows but few signs of approaching manhood’ (79). He equates manhood with the ‘masculine’ pursuits that he himself had never enjoyed. In order for Jacob to become Isaac’s heir, he must perform masculinity by pretending to be Esau. Lori Lefkowitz reads the biblical scene as one in which Jacob must pass ‘as the kind of man who can inherit the patriarchy’ (92):

The donning of animality (an artificial assumption of virility), the particular pretense [sic] of hunting an animal for fresh meat, Jacob's distinctive voice (which has also become susceptible to the interpretation of compromised masculinity), and patriarchal blindness (a Freudian figure for castration or male impotence) become gender-marked features by the middle of the nineteenth century. (92)

The constructions in *Sarah and After* reflect Lefkowitz’s reading of the Jewish forefathers as the antithesis of what the word has come to mean: the ‘patriarchalism’ of Banks’s patriarchs is merely a performance.

Ursula Sygne’s novel set in biblical times, *The People and the Promise* (1974), observes that gender formation is a product of culture, and here, too, ‘soft’ masculinity is the preferred model. Moses is unable to train the Jews to become fighting men and refuses to take them into Canaan as a result. Aaron asks whether he must tell them they are being punished ““because they are not warriors?” Yet even as he spoke he knew in his heart that it was true ... [the men] carried their spears clumsily, they had no care for weapons at all’ (163).

Judith Plaskow points out that non-Jewish feminists often link ‘the image of the jealous and dominating God of the “Old Testament” [with] the notion that this God is responsible for the death of the Goddess’ (103). Thus, alongside and in contrast to a weakening of the connection between hegemonic manhood and patriarchal values came a growing association of Jewish men with patriarchy. If Judaism was thought to be the cause of the move from a matriarchal to a patriarchal society, then those who disapprove of patriarchy might also be critical of the patriarchs who, in their view, were to blame for the situation. This transition period is the subject of *The People and the Promise*, which constructs sympathetically those

men who are less than wholehearted in their adoption of ‘patriarchal’ monotheism, but is unsympathetic in its depiction of Moses, who has ‘hardened his heart’ (70) and has frightening, ‘fanatical eyes’ (96). Geraldine McCaughrean takes the same view in *Not the End of the World* (2004), representing Noah’s son, Japhet, the boy who doubts monotheistic religion, as a feminised, positive example of masculinity in contrast to the men, who are harsh religious fanatics. Japhet’s decision to remain on the ark rather than escape with Timna is read as an unhappy fate, for he will have no alternative but to become a patriarch himself. Extreme gender positions such as those of Noah and his sons are often embedded in representations of ‘the Jew’ as ‘victim’ or ‘villain’, constructions which will be examined in Chapter 5.

The representations in *The People and the Promise* and *Not the End of the World* of Jewish men as either hypermasculine or feminised was a common opposition in the nineteenth century, with feminised Jewish men often constructed as homosexual, and hypermasculine Jewish men being ‘pictured with their passions out of control’ (Mosse 70). Sander Gilman points to the continuing association of Jewish men with ‘sexual deviance’ in a series of comic books from the 1980s, starring an anthropomorphised phallus: ‘the Jew is depicted as masturbating, committing an “unnatural” act (while all of the other phalluses are depicted having a potential female partner) while reading a financial journal’ (123-124). Images of the homosexual and/or hypersexual Jewish male appear in literature for young people written in the 1970s and 1980s and set in the twentieth century; unsurprisingly, the latter construction is more common in texts for teenagers than for younger children.

In *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981), which takes place during World War II, Zach, a Jewish evacuee, ‘look[s] like a girl’ (108). He has a family background in the theatre (a profession often stereotypically associated with homosexuals), dresses in flamboyant clothing, has long hair and uses ‘queer words’ (118). Although the village children are initially unwelcoming to Zach, his implied homosexuality and Jewish faith are problematic not in themselves but because they make it all too plain that he is from London, and they view all ‘city people’ with distrust. Ultimately, however, it is this very difference that enables Zach to help the other evacuee, Willie, recover from the emotional and physical battering inflicted by his mother, a religious fanatic and anti-Semite.

The centrality in the text of a love affair between two young men in Aidan Chambers’ *Dance on My Grave* (1982) makes it apparent that here, as in Chambers’

later *Postcards from No Man's Land*, homosexuality and bisexuality themselves are not 'issues'. Hal, the non-Jewish protagonist, is the more passive, romantic, and feminised character, while his lover Barry's gender position is more fluid. Because he is Jewish and attracted to boys, Barry is feminised; however, he also has sexual relationships with women, is dominant in his relationship with Hal, and rides a motorbike, a symbol of male heterosexual power. Chambers problematises the correlation commonly made between gender and sexuality, for Barry may sleep with men, but in other ways he is more closely aligned with a hegemonic male. As in earlier constructions of Jews with uncontrolled passions, Barry is a sexual predator, telling Hal, 'I want to get into as many different things as I can ... as many different people. One is never enough. Not for me' (173). The suggestion that Jewish men are sexually predatory also appears in *My Darling Villain* (1977) by Lynne Reid Banks. The protagonist and her friend wonder whether their neighbour, Mr Daniels, preys on underage girls, with the friend taking a keen interest in such a possibility. These texts construct Jewish masculinity according to stereotype, but the ways in which they view these gender constructions are more complex, taking into account changing attitudes towards gender and sexuality and finding homosexuality, bisexuality, promiscuity and even what might be considered paedophilia to be within the bounds of sexual and gender normativity.

### ***Mensch* or new Jewish man?**

Although Daniel Boyarin's model of the *mensch* may have dominated in pre-modern European Jewish communities, a simple equation between '*mensch*' and 'feminised man' in more recent times becomes increasingly problematic. For Boyarin, it seems that being a *mensch* must, by definition, be incompatible with such pursuits as enjoyment of sport or the outdoors, and it must also demand an affection for books. Some texts for young people grapple with the tensions between this popular construction of the *mensch*, and that of the 'muscle Jew'. In Alan Gibbons' *Street of Tall People* (1995) and Jonny Zucker's *Dan and the Mudman* (2008), for instance, Jewish boys are portrayed as active sportsmen but also victims of anti-Semitism, simultaneously 'strong' and 'weak'. The two Jewish boys in Gibbons' novel are boxers, tying them to an Anglo-Jewish tradition dating back to the late-eighteenth

century English boxing champion Daniel Mendoza.<sup>2</sup> In other texts, authors construct a complex 'new' Jewish masculinity that more obviously problematises the opposition between 'Jewish' and hegemonic masculinity.

*Voyage* (1995), by Adele Geras, is a narrative of migration set in 1910, located literally between Old World and New: on a ship taking refugees from Eastern Europe to the United States. Women and men are both freed by the possibilities afforded by a future in New York. When his parents arrange a marriage to a young woman he does not love, Yasha listens to them discussing the wedding, while his inner voice tells him to 'Run away ... before it is too late' (21). He does just that, justifying his decision to assert his agency by telling himself, 'I never chose her ... they chose her for me' (19). The text demonstrates that culture impacts upon the choices and gender roles of both men and women.

Yasha thinks that in America, 'a person can do something, be someone, make a proper life' (21). His description of himself as 'a person', not 'a man', is significant, indicating that he is leaving behind his initial aspiration to hegemonic masculinity, and coming to understand that both his own gender and that of the women around him are somewhat more complex than he had realised. When introduced to Rachel, he initially finds her 'pale and skinny and look[ing] as if she hasn't two words to rub together' (18). It is when she rebuffs his attempts at flirtation and responds person-to-person rather than woman-to-man that he abandons his superficial construction of his own masculinity and, with it, his desire for the 'type' of woman he imagines to represent normative femininity. Though he had carried with him a postcard of a woman which to him symbolised the desirable and sexually available American woman, 'Suddenly, he had no desire to look at that painted mouth and those silky legs' (34). Yasha still wants to fulfil the traditional male role of protector and breadwinner, but he does so in order to demonstrate his love rather than to wield authority. When Rachel tells her father, 'We will both work. We are young, and strong,' it is apparent that the egalitarian relationship Yasha will have with Rachel in the New World will lead to the continuing evolution of his new Jewish masculinity.

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<sup>2</sup> Although *Hero* (2001) by Catherine Johnson also depicts a Jewish boy boxing, Daniel loses to his stronger female cousin.

In Philip Pullman's *The Tiger in the Well* (1991), a mystery involving the Jewish immigrant community in late nineteenth-century east London, no dominant set of characteristics can be applied consistently to any of the Jewish boys or men. According to historian David Feldman, British trade unionists in the late nineteenth century blamed their lack of success in establishing unions among Jewish immigrants on 'their want of manly virtues' (qtd. in Hyman 'Gender' 149). Similarly, police at the time noted that Jews were 'not men enough to be rough' (141). The text critiques this common characterisation of Jewish men as weak or passive, juxtaposing exploited refugees with a group of Jewish gangsters, toughs and political activists. The social roles of the various groups are deliberately contrasted with their expected gender roles. Jonathan 'Kid' Mendel, for instance, a gangster with a keen fashion sense, 'looked like a scholar of some kind, with his balding head, his intelligent eyes; but a tough, worldly one. [Sarah-Jane] couldn't place him at all' (364). When the Jews are under threat of attack, a group gathers to defend the community: 'small traders, craftsmen; scholars ... a feeble, timorous, uncertain bunch' (346-347), yet all, regardless of class or level of education, are prepared to use force to defend themselves and their families. Even the scholar, who has come out without his glasses and is therefore virtually unable to see – a metaphorical indicator of emasculation – wields a stick and asks his neighbour to 'tell me when to strike' (346).

Many readers of *The Tiger in the Well* will be familiar with the intrepid Sally Lockhart through two earlier novels, *The Ruby in the Smoke* (1985) and *The Shadow in the North* (1988). The central Jewish figure in *The Tiger in the Well*, Daniel Goldberg, is an intellectual, but he is not feminised. He is a muscle Jew, but also a *mensch*. Focalised through Sally's eyes, the reader's first impression of Goldberg is one of strength and vitality.

He was strongly built, with powerful shoulders and hands that looked capable of tearing one of those official reports in half; and his expression made her think he'd enjoy doing it. His eyes were dark, the network of laughter-lines around them already complex. His nose was powerful, with flared nostrils, and his mouth was wide and mobile. He was hardly handsome; but he was more alive than anyone she had ever seen. (199)

In this short description, the word 'powerful' appears twice; it is an adjective rarely associated with Diaspora Jews unless connected with anti-Semitic stereotypes of 'powerful' Jews controlling the world's economy or governments. Herself an



outsider who transgresses social and gender norms, Sally knows Goldberg ‘at once, and without any qualification, to be her equal’ (205).

*The Tiger in the Well* is focalised primarily from the perspectives of both Daniel and Sally, and also that of Daniel’s protégé, Bill, who is unsure of his cultural heritage but chooses to identify as a Jew. Bill sees the respect that journalists, scholars and political activists have for Goldberg and wants to emulate him: Goldberg is a *mensch* in the eyes of Bill and many others, but he also has no qualms about enlisting criminals in aid of the overall good, and to the villains of the text he is a dangerous political agitator. Because Goldberg’s subjectivity stems from his own agency rather than in response to external forces, as it does in earlier texts such as *The Star and the Sword*, he is a more traditional hero than the Jewish men in other texts.

Goldberg is not just physically powerful, however; he is multilingual and a skilled orator. His facility with language represents a challenge to the notion of the Jew’s inability to master the language of men. According to Sander Gilman, the Jew is represented as having ‘no language of his or her own; of having a hidden language which mirrors the perverse or peculiar nature of the Jew; of being unable to truly command the national language of the world in which he/she lives’ (*Jew’s Body* 12). The Jewish voice is both too Jewish and not Jewish enough; it speaks in a private code, and in public it is not quite fluent. In *Return to Freedom*, this is typified by Andrew Anson’s faltering speech when he is outed as a Jew. Goldberg, by contrast, claims his position as a Jewish subject primarily through the use of his voice. He has a greater command of the language of the three countries he has lived in than do their indigenous inhabitants; he prevents a pogrom by telling the would-be rioters a story, and his persuasive logic convinces the capitalist Sally to change her political views.

The representation of Jewish masculinity in Lynne Reid Banks’s *Broken Bridge* (1994) is as complex as in *The Tiger in the Well*, although characters are not as secure in their gender positions as those in Philip Pullman’s novel. As in *Sarah and After*, some of the men in *Broken Bridge*, which is set in modern-day Israel, find it difficult to reconcile the men they are with those they believe they should be.<sup>3</sup> The construction of the Canadian-born Noah, in particular, departs from ‘the new

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<sup>3</sup> This difference in approach may well be because *Broken Bridge* was written several years later than Banks’s works for adults set in Israel, and her political position may have been somewhat different in the more recent text, leading to a change in her construction of the ‘ideal’ Israeli man.

courageous Israeli manhood forged in war' (19) that Claire Tylee identifies as characterising her work for adults. Noah leaves his desk job in Canada to emigrate to a kibbutz only to find that he is completely unsuited to outdoor life and the army. He judges himself to be 'weak and a failure, as an Israeli, as a soldier, a husband, a father – everything' (92), and returns to Canada, able only to resettle in Israel when he no longer feels he has to conform to a gender role with which he is uncomfortable.

The long picture book *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1998) (see Fig 4.2), by Shirley Hughes, problematises the idea that heroism must conform to characteristics used to define hegemonic masculinity. Jewish evacuee Lenny Levi is eight or nine years old, frightened to be away from home and bullied by the other children for wetting his bed. Mick, a young war veteran who has lost his leg on the battlefield, tells Lenny that he had wet his own bed when he was in the army hospital after the injury. The fears of the 'weak' Jewish boy are presented as legitimate, his courage as equal in its own way to that of the war hero.

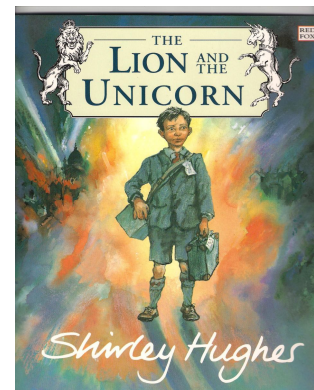


Fig 4.2. *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1998), written and illustrated by Shirley Hughes

This small group of texts constructs a range of Jewish masculinities, some sharing features with normative masculinity, and others problematising the very notion of such a concept. Some of these boys and men play the role of hero, particularly, but not exclusively, those who most closely exhibit the qualities of the Western Christian male ideal, acknowledging their 'Iron Johns, knights, hairy men, and warriors within' (Boyarin xiv). The development of constructions of 'the Jew' as hero will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

### **The enclosed woman**

If many of the Jewish men in novels for young people are feminised, where does that leave the women? Although Jewish males occupied a feminine gender position relative to white Christian males in the hegemonic culture, within the Jewish community they were usually 'the men of the family'. This is underlined in *The Star and the Sword* by the return of Benedict to his community on the eve of his bar mitzvah, the ceremony marking his assumption of adult responsibility in matters of Jewish ritual and law. In this and the other texts in which Jews are abject, *Return to*

*Freedom, Plots and Players* and *Feast of Fools*, the men occupy an ambivalent gender position which differs from that of the hegemonic male, but there is nothing to distinguish the women from other literary women: there is no gender construction that is specific to 'the Jewish woman'.

The absence of Jewish women from the public gaze is reflected in their relegation to the background of most of these texts, where the mother is mostly silent, silenced or absent. In *Feast of Fools*, she is a shadowy figure, 'a woman's voice ... from inside the house' (104). She is unnamed; her words are unintelligible to the reader. In *Return to Freedom*, she is silent, unable to offer words of support or consolation when her husband forbids their daughter to make a marriage deemed unsuitable. In *Plots and Players*, she rebuffs Frances when the girl objects to an arranged marriage to a boy she does not love: "Thousands of women do it," replied mother calmly, "so why not you?" (114). The emotional retreat of these mothers may indicate a lack in their own lives. Frances's mother admits that she did not love her husband when she married him, but, she says, 'now I am as merry as the day is long. Indeed, I am too busy to be anything else' (114). Curiously, she does not give the stock response: that she grew to love her husband over time. Instead, she says that she fills her days so that she does not have time to dwell on the absence of emotional fulfilment. Her comment points to the different expectations of the two generations of women. If the older women characters fulfil their traditional gender role seemingly without complaint, at least there *is* a Jewish mother in these texts; *The Red Towers of Granada* and *The Telling Pool*, both by men, follow the nineteenth-century literary tradition of the Jewish widower raising his offspring.

Some of these texts could be considered feminist novels, not in their treatment of women, but in their treatment of men. Their plot lines involving girls engage to various degrees with feminist issues, but ultimately resort to the young women's assumption of traditional roles. In *Return to Freedom*, Rose shows agency when she challenges her father's refusal to give his blessing to her marriage to a non-Jewish man. However, she is ultimately unable to resist opposition by not just one, but two authority figures – the young man's clergyman father is also against the union. Prevented from making a positive decision, her only available course of action is resistance; if she cannot make her own choice, she says, she will not marry at all. From this point on, Rose does not speak; her silence suggests submission to the paternal authority rather than incipient rebellion, however, for it emerges that she has

been introduced to a young man of her own faith who she will most likely marry. The settlement of her future is relegated to a brief note in the epilogue. In view of the lengthy arguments against intermarriage put forward by the two fathers, the conclusion to Rose's story, while not an outright success, is nevertheless presented as a positive outcome, for in putting the wishes of others before her own, Rose has done 'the right thing'.

That the issue of arranged marriage is resolved somewhat more to readers' satisfaction in *Plots and Players* is unsurprising given that it was published sixteen years after *Return to Freedom*. The text is clearly aligned with the perspective of the girl who is to be married. Frances is vocal in her opposition to her arranged marriage: she 'complain[s]' (114) about it to her mother and wonders if another woman was 'forced' (34) to marry her husband. Eventually, events put paid to the marriage plans, and the unsuitable suitor is replaced by Anthony, a fiancé in whom Frances takes a very keen interest. The romantic element is maximised and the ideology downplayed in a much more contemporary conclusion to her story. Nevertheless, the novel stops short of allowing Frances subjectivity. She might have married Anthony had she been given a choice in the matter, but she hasn't; the match is merely good fortune. Furthermore, the attempt by the novel's token girl character to break free of the marriage plot fails. In order to save the life of the Queen's physician, Dr Lopez, Frances, like many fictional heroines before her, appears in public dressed as a boy. But when Queen Elizabeth sees her, Frances faints; her female identity is exposed, and her appeal to another woman is unsuccessful, for the Queen respects her effort but rejects her appeal. Frances learns that assertiveness will get her nowhere.

Roberta Trites points out that some feminist characters 'recognize and rely on traits that gave their literary foremothers strength: compassion, interconnectedness and communication' (5). In *The Star and the Sword*, Elvira's display of these characteristics is the crucial factor that enables the children's quest to be completed successfully. Her compassion leads Robin Hood to leave some Jewish merchants unharmed, and, later, to the Crusader knight's reassessment of his attitude towards Jews. This privileging of Elvira's 'feminine' traits takes place in the public space. As soon as Benedict considers returning to the ghetto, Elvira's voice is interrupted or goes unheard. Benedict wonders what her decision would be, but he never involves her in the decision-making process and her thoughts on the matter are not revealed. When she and Benedict arrive at the Oxford ghetto, first Uncle Isaac, then Benedict,

tell their stories. Elvira, never given a turn, speaks only in the silences when Benedict pauses for breath. At his bar mitzvah, Benedict, like all the men, gives a speech; Elvira offers the guests food.

Geoffrey Trease's text, *The Red Towers of Granada*, features the most active of the young women. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that Trease's historical novels broke with tradition by presenting the lives of ordinary people and those on the margins of society whom official history tended to ignore. Susanna speaks 'mischievously' (66) and is 'spirit[ed]' (91, 135). She challenges her brother's authority by suggesting that she may have found someone outside the ghetto to marry – in other words, a Christian – and she is intensely interested in hearing Robin's stories about life in the wider world, which she is prevented from experiencing herself. Like Frances in *Plots and Players*, Susanna's abjection is signalled by her body's rebellion. In the interstitial space, the ship taking them from England to Spain, she 'shake[s] convulsively' (82), suffers 'violent spasms' (82) and vomits. Once in Spain, she acts with more autonomy. Using the men's concern for their women's safety for her own subversive ends, she convinces her father that she will be safer accompanying the men on a dangerous mission than she would be left home alone. However, despite the author's progressive politics, Susanna's story too, comes to a conventional conclusion, for after she meets her handsome cousin, Daniel, she chooses to remain at home. Robin realises that she is 'quite ready to abandon the quest ... and hunt something easier and nearer' (136). Unlike both Rose and Frances, Susanna makes her own choice of husband; nevertheless, the contrast between Susanna's ending and that of the woman Robin meets in Spain is marked. The half-Moorish, half-English Zoraya is a skilled apothecary who returns to England with Robin and goes into business with him as his equal partner.

In all of these texts, the personal desires of the Jewish women take second place to the needs of their culture, creating a potential conflict between their message and the aspirations of many young female readers. The paramount importance placed on Jewish family life and continuity in these texts had a basis in reality, however; Jewish feminists were, and still are, grappling with the tensions between Jewish tradition and the broadening of women's gender roles in wider society. The issue led to rifts within the British feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s, with Jewish feminists accusing leaders of the movement of failing to recognise ethnic differences

and instead promoting a white, Protestant, universalist feminist perspective (Tylee 16-17).

### **The (s)mother-monster**

The emphasis on domestic life in Jewish culture led to a view of the Jewish family by both Jews and Gentiles as ‘warm, supportive and ever-nurturing’, and it was the matriarch who was understood to wield power in the Jewish home (Hyman 3). It was in this context that the stereotype of the Jewish mother embodied in BT’s Beattie emerged. Judith Plaskow explains that the Jewish mother is seen as ‘powerful, intrusive, devouring’ (96), a characterisation so ubiquitous that it prompted Joyce Antler to entitle her 2007 history of Jewish motherhood, *You Never Call! You Never Write!* The Jewish mother is often portrayed as an extreme parody of ideal motherhood; Antler suggests that she exemplifies ‘the monstrous qualities of all American mothers’ (6).

In Lynne Reid Banks’s *My Darling Villain*, Mrs Daniels ‘just can’t keep her hands off children, and if you don’t want to be hugged and kissed and plied with things to eat, you had better keep out of her reach’ (136). Food is the symbol that links children to their reliance on their mother, her means of restoring the pre-symbolic mother-child dyad, and it is of no consequence to Mrs Daniels that two of her children are now young adults. Mrs Daniels is an example of what Barbara Creed describes as the ‘monstrous-feminine’ (1), plying her children with food like the witch in ‘Hansel and Gretel’ so that she may metaphorically consume them. According to Erika Duncan, this emotional smothering of their children is why ‘so many male writers have turned the one who endlessly spoons out the chicken soup into a mad devourer from whom they have to flee lest their identities be eaten up’ (qtd. in Heschel 29). The Jewish writer Leon Garfield creates a humorous version of this Jewish mother in his story ‘The Fool’ from *The Apprentices* (1977), which takes place at a Passover *seder*. Garfield gently sends up all of the characters bar Bunting, the eponymous *schlemiel*. The mother, Mrs Israels, is not so much a character as the personification of her dining table. She is the maker of a much admired, enormous stuffed carp, the creator of a feast so majestic that the table resembles ‘a white and silver vessel – floating in candlelight’ (169). She speaks just once, to forgive a boy who has spilled wine on her tablecloth. Mrs Israels is the mother who gives her

family a surfeit of love, while the carp is the metaphorical devoured child: 'it had been stuffed to suffocation ... and reclined, in an exhausted fashion, in a platen from which its head emerged to rest upon the rim, with the expression of one who has just awakened to its nightmare plight' (173).

The image of the devouring, smothering mother does not feature at all in texts written by Jewish women, and it is employed for a range of purposes by non-Jewish women writers, who often use it to show how all mothers may be perceived in contemporary patriarchal society, and what their repression may make them become. This is the case in Jean Ure's *Tomorrow is Also a Day* (1989), in which there are three mothers: Marianne's mother, Mrs Fenton, 'always fussing and bothering' (69); Mrs Shonfeld, the mother of Abe, whose description of her as 'fond and doting' (91) is contradicted by her relative absence from Abe's life; and Mrs Simons, the overweight, flamboyant mother of Debbie, a singer who has brought her own weight under control. Marianne seems unaware of the Jewish mother stereotype, for she has 'never thought of Abe as having a mother – not in the sense of a mother who fussed and bothered and wielded power' (69), a type which she applies to all mothers regardless of cultural origin. Mrs Fenton is a 'typical' Jewish mother, despite the fact that she is not actually Jewish, while the Jewish mother, Mrs Shonfeld, is a break with the stereotype. Mrs Simons, however, is a monstrous Jewish mother, with everything about her exaggerated, from her loud voice to her garish clothing. Marianne, however, sees her as 'warm and plump and cosy' (37), while Abe merely finds her embarrassing. Mrs Simons, a family friend, is a threat to his own tenuous subjectivity, for he is not just a Jewish man, but a blind man who initially requires the aid of a woman to find his way outside the domestic sphere. For any Jewish man, 'mother' represents a source not just of comfort but of his own abjection, for it is through his mother that he is identified as 'Jew'. Abe, a young adult, has negotiated a space for himself in the paternal authority, and he is unsettled by the image of Mrs Simons' clutching fingers and uncontrolled sobs. Mrs Simons is the embodiment of a Jewish mother joke, and Abe must repel the threat that she poses to his carefully constructed boundaries.

It is her speech, in particular, that disturbs him. Marianne is sympathetic when Mrs Simons arrives on her doorstep, upset that her husband has been having an affair with Mrs Fenton. She tries to comfort Mrs Simons, but Abe is angry that she 'just splurged all over [Marianne]! Couldn't control herself. Couldn't wait till he

came in then tackle him about it ... Has to go and blart all over someone else' (96-97). He then mimics her, 'beating his breast and tearing his hair and crying "On my life already!" in a stage Jewish accent which unfortunately sounded all too like Mrs Simons in her more excitable moments' (116). For Abe, Mrs Simons' use of language is 'too Jewish'. As Sander Gilman says, 'The Jew who sounds Jewish, for some ... represents the hidden Jew within ... the mark of difference which offends even after the Jew is integrated into the mainstream' (*Jew's Body* 28).

Although Abe feels threatened by the Jewish mother, the young women accord her more understanding. Mrs Simons' daughter, Debbie, at the start of a successful career, is able to offer her mother sympathy and to realise that monstrosity is not an intrinsic quality of Jewish motherhood, but, rather, has arisen from a particular combination of cultural and social circumstances which she herself will be able to avoid:

Underneath that big Jewish momma bit there is one very insecure lady. In her day they'd never heard of women's lib or equal rights ... blacks were coloured, gays were queer, and women were the second sex. You got your man, you got your kids, and that was it: the story of your life. Unless you were pretty exceptional, you just stayed on the treadmill. (136)

Catherine Johnson's *Hero* (2001) departs from the mother-son dyad to focus on the stepmother-stepdaughter relationship. Here, too, the mother can be read as a woman trying to escape her position as a victim of patriarchy, but in this case she does not smother her children; instead, she is every inch a fairy tale wicked stepmother. Gilbert and Gubar point out that 'myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts' (36). *Hero's* own mother is dead, her father removed from the scene through the treachery of the 'stepmother'. Aunt Silver takes over The Feathers, the pub owned by *Hero's* father, in order to secure her own daughter's future, for the income from its sale will provide Rachel with an essential trousseau.

Upon usurping The Feathers, Aunt Silver takes possession of its best mirror, here a symbol not of entrapment but of freedom, for its location behind the bar reflects the mirror's position in the domain of men. Bought from 'the silverer' (11), Aunt Silver believes the mirror to be the symbol of her subjectivity. However, in the tradition of fairy tales, the mirror tells Mrs Silver that it is *Hero*, not she, who is destined for liberation; Mrs Silver is to remain trapped in the domestic cage. It does so not with words, but by shattering before it can be brought into Mrs Silver's house,



her resulting outburst of swearing and screaming evidence that she speaks with the uncontrolled voice of the monstrous-feminine. Mrs Silver transforms progressively from monster into demon. Her rage grows out of control: she slaps Hero, hurls racist abuse, and her face ‘glow[s] red all over’ (18), ‘like a ha’penny horror mask; she looked like a severed head in floral starched linen’ (35). Yet enraged though she is, Mrs Silver claims that she has been trying to provide Hero with a future appropriate for a young woman: ‘[W]hat would any girl rather have? A decent start in life, a job, a little money, a reputable family background, or ... growing up in a dissolute and immoral fighters’ ken like The Feathers with a Negro for a father!’ (115). And, indeed, if Mrs Silver and her daughter must conform to society’s rules, then she would wish nothing else for Hero. Yet unlike a fairy tale princess, Hero is not required to become a submissive young woman whose life is defined by marriage and home. With her androgynous name and talent for boxing, Hero takes up an independent place in the symbolic order, working in the pub alongside her father, her reflection visible in ‘the new mirrors bought to hang behind the bar’ (120).

According to Barbara Creed, both woman and monster are constructed in patriarchal society as ‘biological freaks’ (6) whose bodies represent a fearful and threatening form of sexuality. Their grotesque bodies, paired with an inability to control their behaviour, point to their abjection. This is the case with the majority of the Jewish mothers in these texts. Mrs Gorman, in *Dance on My Grave*, is a ‘large, lumpy woman with blue-rinse grey hair who transmogrified into a whirling dervish’ (Chambers 22); in *Tomorrow is Also a Day* (1989), Mrs Simons dresses ‘like a dog’s dinner’ (Ure 33), her ‘mounds of ... flesh unconfined beneath the magenta jump suit’ (86); in *Hero*, Mrs Silver has ‘a copious double chin that wobbled when she was agitated’ (Johnson 17). The body of the Jewish mother, then, is a physical manifestation of the Jewish mother jokes that lower her high status in the traditional Jewish family until she becomes associated with the maternal earth, which ‘devours, swallows up’ (Bakhtin 20). Julia Kristeva views the maternal as a threat to the body, which must expel it in order to be assimilated into the symbolic order. Woman’s abjection in patriarchal society is inscribed on these grotesque bodies, their roundness a reminder of the maternal authority’s refusal to remain within the body’s boundaries.

The bodies of old women, too, are grotesque, and, when pregnant, become both ‘biological freaks’ and sexually threatening. Mary Russo explains that the

image of 'pregnant hags' is 'loaded with all of the connotations of fear and loathing around the biological processes of reproduction and aging' in women (qtd. in Vice 172). When birth and ageing come together, for example, in the cases of women who give birth at the age of 60 with the aid of fertility treatment, the media response is invariably one of revulsion mingled with fascination. In *Sarah and After*, Lynne Reid Banks resists this image of the aged mother as monster or freak in her retelling of the biblical story of Sarah. Long past childbearing age, Sarah is told that she will yet bear a child, and she responds to the prophecy by laughing a 'cold and bitter chuckle' (32). Yet the ageing woman makes the decision to have sex with her husband not passively, as she has done for many years, but with 'laughter and joy and rapture' (36). Her pregnant body itself is not represented as an aberration of nature or a cause of fear, but as something to be celebrated, a source of exuberance which is echoed in her laughter 'at small things, or at nothing at all' (37) and in her face, which 'fill[s] out with the flesh of good rich food which, suddenly, she relished again' (37). Here, food, which by its nature transgresses the body's boundaries, is not a source of disgust, as it is for Kristeva, who encapsulates the abject potential of food in the image of the skin which forms on warm milk; rather, it is 'an obvious example of a healthy transgression of the body's confines and the enlargement of the individual self' (Vice 172).

### **The man-eater and the princess**

The Jewish woman takes on an additionally monstrous dimension when her appetites for food and sex come together. Creed points out that the monstrous-feminine is a type of abjection 'produced at the border which separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who don't; or the border is between normal and abnormal sexual desire' (11). According to Lori Lefkowitz, the stereotypical Jewish woman is depicted as 'a monster of misguided sexuality' ('Coats' 25); Andrea Dworkin describes her as 'a harlot' (120).

The connection between a mother 'devouring' her children with love and a woman 'devouring' a man with her sexual appetite is foregrounded in two texts by male authors. In Aidan Chambers' *Dance on My Grave*, Mrs Gorman's interest in her son's friends is ambiguous, read as motherly or sexual, as in a scene in which she helps to make Hal ready for a bath:

She tugged my jeans and underpants down with one swift (and obviously practised) movement, finishing with an expert flick of the hands that slipped them under my feet ... 'I don't know why your mother should neglect you,' she said, nodding approvingly. 'She ought to be proud of you. Believe me, you're a good-looking boy'. (24-25)

Hal interprets the situation from a Freudian perspective, worrying about Mrs Gorman's 'overactive id' (29), and the picture of an overweight, grey-haired woman undressing a teenaged boy certainly conjures up images of a devouring mother-monster with inappropriate sexual desires. Focalised by Hal, the scene invokes an image of the vagina dentata, feared and loathed by men. Yet Hal's obsession with Barry makes him an unreliable narrator, leading a sophisticated reader to question his understanding of both characters and events.

After Barry dies in an accident, a young woman's sympathetic response to Mrs Gorman's abject grief reveals Hal's blinkered gaze, not just on Mrs Gorman, but on Barry himself, and suggests an alternative reading of the episode. The boys that Barry brings home are his lovers. Not interested in any woman sexually, they are, for Mrs Gorman, not sex objects but pre-sexualised children. Immediately before the scene, Hal recounts that Mrs Gorman 'cooed at me, patted my cheek, smoothed my tangled locks. I was five years old and she had just plucked me from the clutches of a baby-snatcher...' (Chambers 23). The scene, then, is not one of attempted seduction, but of a woman's attempt to recreate a mother-and-baby bathtime routine, a time when, as with feeding, the bond between mother and child develops. The bath can be read, too, as the amniotic fluid of the womb. Mrs Gorman takes Hal's clothes off not to seduce him, but to render him naked as a baby; indeed, she reminds him that she gave birth to her son and that he has 'nothing now [he] didn't have then', drawing the sixteen-year-old to her maternal authority when she is unable to do so with her own adult son.

Like *Dance on My Grave*, Robert Westall's *Fathom Five* (1979) both colludes with and problematises the stereotype of the Jewish woman as sexual predator. In this text, her Jewishness is implicated much more fully in the construction, with the description of even the pawnshop – thought of as a traditionally Jewish profession – full of sexual imagery: Chas 'plunges in' to the shop's 'dark interior' (128), for instance. Chas is unable to stop himself from staring at the body of the young woman who assists him: 'He tried not to look at the bosom, but his eyes kept coming back to it' (129). The woman, who is never given a name,

knows that in Chas's mind she is a sexual predator, as he thinks all Jewish women are, and she knows, too, that the teenager is both tempted and repelled by her. Although he constructs her as a seductress, it is he who does most of the looking. In finally taking the lead sexually, she confirms her monstrous-femininity, not simply because she actively threatens Chas's unstable position between the maternal and the symbolic, but because she displays 'unnatural' sexual desire:

[S]he placed both her arms around him, and they were strong. For a moment he felt totally enclosed; trapped for ever. Then he was staggering back, taking deep breaths ... She was laughing openly.

'Come and see me again. Perhaps one day you will marry me! I am, like all Jews, *very rich*'. (131)

Chas objectifies the woman, but the text foregrounds the fact that he is doing so; in objectifying Chas in return, she mocks his beliefs not just about women, but about Jews.

The trope of the Jewish woman as seductress also occurs in Caroline Lawrence's *The Assassins of Rome*, but the text's position here is much clearer. Jonathan, a convert to Christianity, has long thought his Jewish mother, Susannah, to be dead, but discovers her to be alive, only to find that she had abandoned her family in order to be with her lover, after whom he is named. When he accuses her of loving the other Jonathan more than her children, she responds, 'I don't think it was love ... It was a kind of madness' (174). Even after her lover's death she does not return to her family, becoming an influential confidante of the emperor and refusing her son's entreaty that she return home. Susannah's decision to follow her own agenda and to maintain control over her own sexuality can be seen as transgressive, offering the possibility of a powerful adult womanhood, a position unavailable to her in the domestic sphere. The text, though, encourages readers to sympathise with Jonathan, the focaliser. His mother not only abandons her children, but does so because of a sexual obsession rather than for a great love. From the text's perspective, a mother's rightful place is in the home; only someone suffering from 'madness' would privilege her independence as an adult woman, with the sexual freedom that the choice allows, over her duty to her children and an unloved husband. As Creed says, 'The possessed female subject is one who refuses to take up her proper place in the symbolic order.... Abjection is constructed as a rebellion of filthy, lustful, carnal, female flesh' (38).

The younger version of the stereotype of the insatiable Jewish woman is identified by Lori Lefkowitz as the Jewish princess: 'while the one is all appetite, the other is all restraint. Yet both eat their men alive. Both are all *desire*' (25). The image of the Jewish princess in popular culture is one of a young woman who suffocates men not through her sexual desires, for she is represented as unable to respond sexually, but through her emotional and material demands. While some fiction for young people represents Jewish girls and young women without characteristics that specifically identify them as 'Jewish', others depict them as monsters in the making. In *Hero*, the protagonist's cousin, Rachel, is often to be found in Mrs Silver's company mimicking her mannerisms. When she is startled, for instance, she 'put[s] her hand to her throat, like her mother would have done' (85). With her qualities of fairy tale stepmother, Mrs Silver is perhaps the most monstrous of all the adult women in these texts, yet Hero does come to understand the entrapment that the mini-monster, Rachel, will suffer in the future, and accords her a measure of sympathy: 'Hero felt suddenly sorry for her. She was spiteful and ignorant and she would probably remain spiteful and ignorant all her life. She would marry a rag merchant like her father, and produce a stream of rag merchant babies' (86). If this is what being a Jewish female must be, then Hero wants no part of it.

The description of Rachel in Leon Garfield's 'The Fool' as 'the very brightest ornament' (161) with a laugh 'like tinsel' (162) reflects not just her outward beauty, but her lack of inner substance. When an unexpected young visitor is invited to ask the Four Questions at the Passover seder instead of Rachel, she is angry because this means she will not receive a gift. Her mood improves, however, when the new arrival produces 'a pretty trinket on a thin silver chain' (174), which she covets. In *See You Thursday*, set in contemporary Britain, the teenaged Sarah's sexual interest in her older cousin Abe is thwarted by his lack of interest in her, so she expresses it instead by attempting to make the blind man dependent on her. Abe's sister says to his girlfriend, 'What was it he used to say? *Blow my nose for me if I let her?*,' to which Marianne replies, 'That was because she stifled him' (99).

### **The new Jewish woman**

Many representations of Jewish women in texts for young people contain familiar stereotypes, but a few construct a positive, active Jewish feminine subjectivity in

which earlier constructions are resisted. As in the novels containing representations of enclosed women, there are no qualities here that are intended to be specifically Jewish, though their Jewishness is a central part of the characters' lives. The protagonists of *One More River* (1973) by Lynne Reid Banks, *The People and the Promise* (1974) by Ursula Sygne, and *The Girls in the Velvet Frame* (1978) and *Voyage* (1983), both by Adele Geras, are what Roberta Trites refers to as 'transcendent females' (9), a transcendent female being one whose awakening 'is not bestowed on her by a male awakener; instead she wakes herself and discovers herself to be a strong, independent and articulate person' (8).

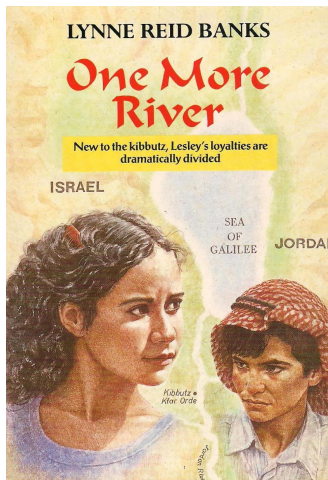


Fig. 4.3. Lynne Reid Banks's *One More River*, Penguin edition, 1998. Ill. by Caroline Binch. In Israel, Lesley has a new, 'unfussy' appearance.

Lynne Reid Banks's *One More River* (1973) (see Fig 4.3), to which *Broken Bridge* is the sequel, constructs a 'new Israeli girl'. In her native Canada, Lesley is a stereotypical Jewish princess – rich, 'spoilt' (13) and weak in character – but once she has acclimatised to life on the kibbutz, she undertakes a dangerous initiation test which gains her acceptance by the other children and enables her to form a tenuous, secret friendship with a Palestinian boy on the other side of the river. At one point, she looks in the mirror and is uncertain whether the reflection is really her, the fussy hair and clothing replaced by a utilitarian appearance which corresponds to her newfound, 'unfeminine' independence of thought and action. The

moment highlights both the constructedness of gender and the role of national culture in its formation.

The impact of place on gender is also apparent in *The People and the Promise*. After waiting to no avail for a marriage to be arranged for her, Zillah decides to marry without her mother's blessing: 'it was a bold step and not to be taken without consideration but, to the new generation bred in the desert and knowing a freedom their parents had never known, it was not impossible' (164). Zillah consults the prophet Miriam, who, as Barley Queen, had led the women's harvest rituals in her role as priestess, but who has become a virtual recluse since the implementation of monotheistic religion. Miriam advises Zillah to consult the Mother goddess. When she fears that Yahweh will be angry, Miriam replies,

What does a great stamping bull know of maidens? ... We are in the hands of the Mother, Zillah. She is the womb and the grave; she brings forth men and gods and they play for a while in the world, till she calls them home again. (166-167)

Zillah is convinced, and does meet her husband, a gentle man who had been a slave in Egypt and who compares his slavery to the entrapment that a free-born woman such as Zillah might feel in an unhappy marriage. Being free-born gives Zillah a degree of agency that her elders did not possess. After waiting passively and in silence while men ask for her hand in marriage and her mother turns them away, she rediscovers her voice, asks Miriam for advice and the Mother goddess for help, and actively influences her own future. She reconciles the new god with the traditions that accompanied goddess worship, and her marriage enables her grieving mother to become an active participant in life once more.

Set in pre-state Israel, *The Girls in the Velvet Frame* (1978) by Adele Geras focuses on five sisters who live with their impoverished, widowed mother. Living in a household of women frees the girls to express their hopes and dreams. As in other domestic dramas, issues of romance, marriage and housework are central. The girls' brother has gone to America to seek his fortune, and while their mother and a neighbour heap praise upon him, Chava notes resentfully that she and her sisters always did the chores and childcare 'so as not to disturb Father, and His Highness was reading stories from the depth of an armchair!' (14). Chava determines that 'If they make me marry someone, I shall run away. I'm going to be famous. Maybe a famous explorer ... I'm not spending every morning of my life doing dishes, like this' (32-33). Naomi, the third daughter, wants to emigrate to America like her brother, while Rifka, the eldest, is considering an arranged marriage.

The text does not claim that the girls are free from societal and cultural pressures; however, it does suggest that there are options beyond those that are expected, and that choosing them does not necessarily require the abandonment of one's Jewish culture. The girls' bohemian aunt, for instance, has remained resolutely unmarried, preferring 'fun, and travel, and meeting people, and being my own mistress' (80). She rejects a proposal from a suitor because it would mean leaving Jerusalem, 'never to see an olive tree again, never to walk in the market, where everyone knows me, never to see my friends again, the friends I grew up with – no, I couldn't bear it' (136-138). The text suggests that some women may conform to

expectations, while others may transgress social norms, and that both paths are valid as long as there is a choice in the matter.

The two teenaged protagonists of Geras's novel *Voyage* (1983) present very different models of feminine subjectivity. Fifteen-year-old Mina has a fiery temper and beats up boys, but tenderly cares for her fragile younger brother. For Mina, America represents the opportunity to make public her self-identification as an artist. The passengers on the ship to America have brought their treasured possessions with them. Mina brings paper, 'as much of it as she could fit into the baggage' (1), marking her as the hero of the feminist *Kunstlerroman*, a form of the *Bildungsroman* focusing on the growth of the artist, who 'never sacrifices her [art] for the sake of a love relationship' (Trites 64). Mina has a budding romance with Daniel, who hopes to become a farmer in California, but she is unwilling to give up her own dreams for the sake of his. It is Daniel who decides to make the compromise and stay with her in New York.

Seventeen-year-old Rachel, in contrast, is physically small and unimposing. Thin, pale and quiet, her father and the handsome Yasha mistakenly believe her to be weak and compliant, but although she is compassionate and sensitive, she is also strong-minded. It takes an elderly man, Mr Kaminsky, to observe the signs of her inner strength:

A skinny little thing, with sad eyes and pale hair, but strong, oh yes. A determined set to her mouth sometimes and a brave smile ... She is not the kind of person to submit in silence to anyone's wishes, and if she has been obedient and devoted up till now, it is because she has never wanted anything her parents did not also want for her'. (32)

Mr Kaminsky is proved right, for Rachel's father must abandon the match he has arranged for her when faced with her determination to marry Yasha.

Like the texts featuring the new Jewish man, it is notable that the novels featuring a new Jewish woman were written in the 1970s and 1980s and that they did not mark the start of a new trend towards active Jewish female subjects in literature for young people that was in keeping with that of feminist representations of girls and women more generally. In the newer texts that do contain representations of active Jewish girls, such as *Hero* and *Not the End of the World*, both by Gentile authors without first-hand experience of Jewish culture, Jewishness must be minimised or abandoned in order for female agency to flourish.



## Conclusion

Contemporary British literature for young people contains a wide spectrum of constructions of Jewish masculinities and femininities, with masculinities, for example, ranging from 'effeminate' to normative to rigidly authoritarian. This breadth is not necessarily indicative of a desire to acknowledge the fluidity of gender positions of Jews, for many constructions correspond to long-standing stereotypes about Jewish people, which have always been varied and at times oppositional. In some cases, stereotype is a product of the period in which a text was written, while in others, it serves a specific ideological function – for instance, in *Not the End of the World*, in which rigid masculinity is critiqued in part in order to foreground the strategies adopted by women to resist patriarchy. The Jewish woman is a sexual aggressor in *Fathom Five* and the 'Roman Mysteries series', both of which employ stereotype seemingly without question. There is a smothering mother in the *See You Thursday* trilogy; nevertheless, her behaviour is contextualised as the product of a time in which women's choices were limited and constraining. In almost all of the texts in which there is a monstrous Jewish woman, whatever form this might take, her behaviour is often closely linked to her desire for power or agency; the text's position on the former, in particular, corresponds to whether the character is read sympathetically or not.

In works for young people, constructions of Jewish gender are informed by the author's own cultural or gender position. It is no coincidence that the male characters whose gender most closely conforms to a 'positive' hegemonic masculinity are written by male authors, that feminised men are written by women, or that monstrous Jewish mothers are almost always written by non-Jewish authors and never, in this literature, by Jewish women.

It is in representations of teenagers and young adults that transformative Jewish gender positions are created. The multi-faceted masculinity and femininity of the new Jewish man and woman disrupts earlier images and is recognisable as normative by readers in late twentieth-century Western culture. These characters have egalitarian relationships, and they create and take opportunities for personal fulfilment. The range of constructions of the new Jewish man and woman acknowledges Jewish masculinity and femininity to be informed by individual Jewish experience, but eschews the idea of specifically Jewish gender identities.

Ultimately, Jewish masculinities and femininities are constructed as other to heteronormative gender positions in the majority of contemporary British children's literature, and they reflect constructions that have dominated in Western culture: that of the feminised Jewish man and the domineering Jewish woman. That these constructions are often stereotypical is undeniable, although as is apparent from Daniel Boyarin's definition of a *mensch*, the 'feminised Jewish man' is a construct privileged by some Jews and, indeed, the perspective in much of this literature is one of affinity. If not from a shared cultural heritage, it stems either from the common experience of being a member of a marginalised group or from sympathy with those who are excluded from hegemonic power. In texts such as *The Star and the Sword*, male gentleness is not synonymous with weakness, while in *The People and the Promise*, female strength is not necessarily overbearing. Where there is a Jewish marriage, men and women struggle with gender roles, and, even if the woman appears stronger, the relationship itself is usually shown to be egalitarian. Such perspectives can be seen as subversive, perhaps most of all in *Sarah and After*, by Lynne Reid Banks, who, in the 1970s, constructed men of the Jewish Bible as 'anti-patriarchal' in opposition to 'the scholarly construction and popular understanding of Judaism as patriarchal' (Schussler Fiorenza qtd. in Beavis 32). When employed in a critique of hegemony, or in images of 'new' Jewish men and women which resist historical constructions, representations of Jewish masculinity and femininity become not merely 'positive', but even, at times, radical.

## Chapter 5

### **‘Good Jews’ or ‘Bad Jews’?: The Jewish Question Revisited**

According to historian Geoffrey Alderman, ‘the upsurge of anti-Jewish racism, following the destruction of the World Trade Center by Islamist terrorists on September 11, 2001, has been accompanied also by an anti-Jewish political discourse that would have been scarcely imaginable but a few years ago’ (‘Tradition’ 223). Journalist and author Jonathan Freedland notes ‘the return of “dinner-party anti-Semitism”’ in the wake of the second intifada and 9/11 (351), while a parliamentary group investigating anti-Semitism points out ‘a sharp increase in incident figures and general atmosphere of hostility towards Jewish people’ (Mann *n. pag.*). Anthony Julius, author of a lengthy study of anti-Semitism in Britain, concludes bluntly that ‘the closed season on Jews is over’ (lviii).

This bleak picture, however, does not tell the whole story. The Holocaust is on the curriculum in British schools, and Holocaust Memorial Day has become established as a national event. In March 2010, the reopening of the Jewish Museum after a period of redevelopment was the cover feature of the popular London listings magazine, *Time Out*, while Jewish Book Week and the Jewish Film Festival have become annual fixtures on the cultural calendar. A high-profile centre of Jewish culture is due to open in London in 2013.

These varying perspectives on Jews and Jewishness suggest that, even if its nuances have altered along with its historical, political and cultural contexts, the ‘Jewish Question’ – that of the relationship of Jews to the hegemonic culture – still persists to an extent in Britain. Indeed, Anthony Julius claims that ‘the master trope, that there are “good Jews” and “bad Jews”, has been continuous in the political culture for at least the last hundred years’ (347).

The stark division posited by Julius has not been dominant in children’s literature, however. Instead, much literature for young people has either revealed the position of Jews in British society to be ambivalent or has been ambivalent itself. Many representations of Jews are embedded within a liberal ideology that advocates tolerance but often stops short of a genuine acceptance of Jewish difference. This chapter demonstrates that the ‘good Jew’/‘bad Jew’ binary has, nevertheless, become more common in British children’s literature over the past decade. Alongside the

growing body of literature about the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews at other points in history has come the resurgence of constructions of Jews in terms of stereotypes with roots dating back to Shylock and Fagin. In part because of this historical and literary and legacy, constructions of Jews as either ‘victims’ or ‘villains’ appear most often in historical fiction.

Representations of Jews as victims and villains, or as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, are part of an increase in the diversity of representations. However, this is not, for the most part, due to the many and varied culturally authentic self-identifications that one might expect to see in the postmodern twenty-first century, although there are, for the first time, a few texts in which Jews are constructed as heroes or ordinary people. This range of representations reflects the position of Jews in British society today as both more and less secure. The historical persecution of Jews, the Middle East conflict and the positioning of Jewish men, in particular, as ‘mainstream’ compared to women and other ethnic minorities, have led to a range of constructions and ideologies that together make the corpus of recent historical fiction for young people both more conservative and more radical.

### **‘Knights errant’?: victimised heroes**

In common with historical novels for adults, those for young people reflect the social, cultural and political concerns of the times in which they were written, as well as those of the period being written about. Some historical fiction for children written from the 1960s onwards uses intertextuality to interrogate, subvert or even adopt stereotypical constructions of Jews as a means of addressing such concerns. Other works include representations of Jews simply as an element common to the particular literary tradition in which they are writing. Historical fiction is used as a means of exploring and commenting on differences and similarities between past and present. It may be a vehicle for recovering the stories of marginalised peoples and embedding them in the narrative of the nation’s history, or a way to reflect the range of cultures in society; doing so from a historical perspective may make accusations of cultural inaccuracy less likely than in a text set in more recent times.

Four texts examined in this chapter view the Jewish Question from the perspective of the experience of Jews in England between the period shortly before their expulsion in 1290 and the time of their readmission in 1656. In *Return to*

*Freedom* (1962) by Josephine Kamm, *The Star and the Sword* (1965) by Pamela Melnikoff, *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966) by Geoffrey Trease, and *Plots and Players* (1988), also by Pamela Melnikoff, it is possible to see the development from historical romance to what Amy Elias calls ‘metahistorical romance’, which is concerned with the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’ as subject, object and producer of history (189).



Fig 5.1. David, Solomon, Susannah and Robin (centre) in *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966) by Geoffrey Trease. Ill. by Charles Keeping

*The Red Towers of Granada* and *The Star and the Sword* comment on the same historical period as Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, and they also respond to Scott’s particular nineteenth-century perspective on attitudes towards Jews during the Crusades and the expulsion of the Jews a century later. Scott’s novel takes a progressive view of Jews for the time; for instance, with regard to the possibility of a marriage between Ivanhoe and Rebecca, he notes that ‘the prejudices of the age rendered such a union almost impossible’ (qtd. in Tulloch xv). In his own age, liberalism allowed for Jews

and Christians to marry, provided the Jew converted to Christianity. *Return to Freedom* and *Plots and Players* are set in a later period, but adopt similar strategies to *The Star and the Sword* and *The Red Towers of Granada*. All three authors were writing with a post-Holocaust sensibility about the persecution of Jews at a time when the Holocaust itself was not yet considered suitable subject matter for children. In addressing such persecution in England, they take a revisionist approach to history, critiquing the myth of England as a tolerant nation. Within this larger theme, they interrogate specific literary and historical stereotypes, such as Jews as ‘racially’ distinct from Gentiles, ‘the Jew’ as an avaricious moneylender, and the Christian theological view of Jews as Christ-killers. They treat Jewishness as a valid cultural heritage despite its marginalised status, and present Jews as contributing positively to the building of the nation.

Rather than adhering to the trope of the widower and his only daughter, there is domestic stability in these texts, usually a married couple, and always at least two children. None of the Jewish men are moneylenders; however, neither do the novels break completely with the stereotype of Jewish wealth. Instead, they contextualise it,

rather than presenting it as an intrinsically 'racial' characteristic. There is a tension in *The Red Towers of Granada* between a desire to address the literary connection between Jews and money and the inability to do so without disapproving of what it sees as a Jewish propensity for financial wheeling and dealing. The morally upright Solomon bargains with the Queen of England to pay for his trip to Spain, despite the fact that he had been planning to move there in any case. The Gentile protagonist, Robin, 'half amused, half angry' (Trease 62) protests to David, who justifies his father's behaviour: 'I try to teach you when we play chess: never sacrifice any piece for nothing, always make the other player give something better in return ... That is the way to win' (62). Robin responds. 'It was not necessarily (I thought) the way to live. But, to be quite fair ... David and his father were given little encouragement to behave like knights errant in some old romance' (62).

The statement foregrounds Trease's text as a work of fiction that takes its place in the tradition of romance. The reference to Scott is obvious, both in the substance of Robin's point, which echoes Scott's, and in Trease's metafictional reference to the literature with which *The Red Towers of Granada* engages intertextually: the chivalric romances on which *Ivanhoe* is based, and which, as a developing genre at the time of the novel's setting, are dismissed anachronistically by Robin as outmoded. Trease recognises the interplay between history and fiction, for Robin notes that David and Solomon would hardly be expected to behave as knights and, indeed, their interest in striking an advantageous bargain more closely resembles Scott's Isaac. Despite recognising the fictiveness of knights of romance, Robin takes Jews like Isaac to be a reflection of reality. Yet Robin is incorrect in his judgement of David and his father, for in Trease's 'new' romance, the wandering Jews could indeed be said to be knights errant, for they too undertake and complete a quest, the success of which is crucial for the welfare of the English nation.

Jewish loyalty to England is foregrounded in these texts: in *The Star and the Sword*, the children join forces with Robin Hood to help rescue Richard the Lionheart; in *Return to Freedom*, the Jews uncover a plot to assassinate Oliver Cromwell; and in *The Red Towers of Granada*, they undertake a mission to Spain to locate an elixir intended to save the life of the English Queen. The role these Jewish characters play in serving the nation is similar to that performed by Kadmiel in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, but with a key difference: in these newer texts, their role is more active, and unrelated to finance. However, being Jewish does circumscribe their

agency, rendering them somewhat passive heroes. In *Return to Freedom* and *Plots and Players*, for instance, a Jew is attacked by a group of boys and must be rescued by a Christian man; in *Plots and Players*, the family's fate is in the hands of William Shakespeare. In the texts by Kamm and Melnikoff – both Jewish themselves – the ultimate heroic deed is choosing to remain Jewish despite the risk to their lives for doing so.

In *Plots and Players*, this ambivalent position has additional significance. Set in Elizabethan times, the novel focuses on a crypto-Jew, Robin, his growing friendship with William Shakespeare, and the difficulties he has in keeping his Jewishness secret. Robin complains bitterly to Shakespeare, asking him why Jews can't ever be seen as heroes, in life or on the stage. The community of crypto-Jews is endangered following the trial and execution of Queen Elizabeth's *converso* physician as a spy. The postscript details a meeting between Robin and Shakespeare a year later, during which Shakespeare explains that he has rewritten his new play:

'I could not make the Jew a hero ... such a thing would not be allowed ... no audience would accept it. He is still the villain of the piece, but a human villain, I think. He may not be a giant, but at least he is less of a horned beast.'

A feeling of great gladness and comfort came over Robin, for in that moment he knew how the words would ring down the centuries and that the time would come when St. Olave's children would no longer be horned beasts but even giants, perhaps. (159)

With this postscript, the novel becomes, for the reader, both fictionalised historical context which imparts 'authenticity', and interpretive device for *The Merchant of Venice*.

As in *Ivanhoe*, when, on meeting Rebecca, the knight assumes her to be a noble lady, in these later novels, the familiar fixed 'racial' construction of the older Jewish male is in tension with the more fluid constructions of young Jewish men and women. However, in these works this is not a strategy to suggest that young Jews can be 'converted' to Englishness, but one employed to highlight the fluidity of racio-national identity. In Trease's novel, Robin says that David is almost 'beautiful' (23). Later, when they journey to Spain and David removes the yellow cap that he is forced to wear in England, 'We looked like any two ordinary youths walking out into the country. After those weeks of travelling in all weathers I was as brown as any Spaniard' (140). The text both supports and undermines the notion of a specifically Jewish appearance: in England, where he was born, David has a particular, 'Jewish'

beauty; in Spain, as a Sephardic Jew of Spanish origin, he looks like an 'ordinary' young man. Yet Robin also passes as a Spaniard, which further underlines the instability of racial constructions. The extent to which appearance is used to signal Jewishness is also questioned in *The Star and the Sword*. Benedict and Elvira's tattered clothing, changed names and invented story enable them to masquerade as Saxons; clearly, they do not 'look Jewish'. Elvira defends two Jewish merchants from whom Robin Hood is extorting money, proclaiming the resemblance of the older man to her uncle, to the incomprehension of Friar Tuck. Even the young Jewish merchant is 'mystified' (Melnikoff 51); his failure to 'recognise' his brethren problematises the notion of a recognisably Jewish 'racial' appearance.

In *The Star and the Sword*, *Return to Freedom*, and *Plots and Players*, to be Jewish is not just an accident of birth, but an active choice. In *The Star and the Sword*, Sir Edward's home symbolises all the attractions of hegemonic culture. Benedict and Elvira must choose between abandoning their Jewish identity and gaining access to wealth and power as the adopted children of Sir Edward, or asserting their racial particularity, which would once again bring isolation and persecution. The children have the opportunity to choose a father who is everything Rebecca of York's father is not and can never be. However, they do not accept Sir Edward's offer, instead joining their aunt and uncle in the ghetto at the end of the book. Their decision is portrayed as the right one for them, and by extension, the Jewish people: 'The familiar flavour of the goose, cooked just as Mother had cooked it, and then the long Hebrew grace, chanted by Uncle Isaac in a deep, melodious voice, all helped to make Benedict feel thoroughly at home and at peace' (138). The text ultimately suggests that a selfhood as valid as any other can be constructed from a space on the margins.

In *Plots and Players*, the protagonist, Robin, considers becoming an apprentice in the theatre, but finally chooses Jewishness, realising that the career would mean

having to say Christian prayers and eat forbidden food. It would mean not keeping the Sabbath or the Festivals. It would mean having to keep a watch on my tongue day and night. Just suppose ... suppose I were to talk in my sleep! I might say something wrong, and betray our whole community. No, no, I can't be apprenticed to the players. It would mean I couldn't go on being a Jew. (62)



The Jews in these texts are victimised, but they are not constructed as victims, while Jewishness is represented as a heritage worth preserving, rather than one to be discarded should the opportunity to assimilate arise.

Each of the texts explicitly confronts theological anti-Semitism. In *Return to Freedom*, the Jewish boy, Andrew Anson, asks his parents why Christian children say Jews killed Christ and whether Jews have done anything to deserve the abuse they routinely suffer. In *The Red Towers of Granada*, Trease uses Robin's ignorance to convey information about Jews and Judaism to the reader via David, and crucially, to position Judaism as a religion as valid as Christianity: 'I thought it a curious way to use the Scriptures, but it would not have been polite to say so. I knew that David would have retorted: was it more curious than our Christian way of encasing a hair or tooth from some long dead Saint, or even a splinter or a rusty nail?' (27).

The failure of Ivanhoe and Rebecca to marry continues to resonate intertextually in more contemporary treatments of interfaith relationships. These are dealt with in varied ways and with different ideological underpinnings, although the newer texts all have the same outcome as in the earlier novel: Jewish and non-Jewish characters do not marry. *The Red Towers of Granada* accepts the possibility of such a relationship, while in *Return to Freedom*, the fathers of the young couple refuse to countenance the proposed marriage. Both authors accept that intermarriage is a fact of life in the era in which the books were written, and the liberal Christian view is that to oppose such marriages is intolerant. However, by the 1960s, research was already showing the Jewish community's concern for its future because of rising rates of intermarriage. Trease respects the Jewish right to difference, and also acknowledges the historical improbability of such a relationship. David expresses his opposition to the possibility of a marriage between his sister Susanna and his non-Jewish friend: 'Father would sooner see you dead at his feet than married to a Gentile! ... I am more practical than Father. I think I would prefer to kill the Gentile – and not wait till he tried to marry you' (66). Trease resolves any ideological ambiguity by expressing his own ease with interfaith marriage through Robin's eventual marriage to a half-Christian, half-Muslim Spanish woman, with whom he returns to England.

Through their interrogation of the 'official' view of history, their privileging of the perspective of marginalised people and their dialogue with earlier literature, these texts attempt to rewrite longstanding constructions of Jews. Other novels, with

a focus on social history rather than grand historical narrative, use politics more overtly as a lens through which to examine attitudes towards Jews, and, in this context, Jewish characters begin to emerge as heroic figures.

### **East End left-wing radicals**

According to Anthony Julius, from a left-wing perspective, ‘good Jews’ are “‘unionizable” working-class, socialist Jews, Zionists, then anti-Zionists’ (347). Such a position might be considered a left-wing outlook in general and not applicable specifically to Jews; nevertheless, this view is found in historical fiction for young people written in the 1990s and 2000s and set between the 1880s and the years immediately after World War II. Historically, Jews were labelled as eternal capitalists or dangerous political radicals, but in literature the moneylender has become the more familiar and enduring image. The history of Jewish involvement in left-wing politics provides a historical basis for constructions that counteract the literary image of the Jew as miserly financier. Such constructions of radical left-wing Jews situate them within the progressive ideology that has become normative in contemporary British children’s literature, in contrast to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when ‘alien Jews’ were viewed as having the potential to undermine the nation. In *The Tiger in the Well* (1991) by Philip Pullman, *Street of Tall People* (1995) by Alan Gibbons and *Time Bomb* (2005) by Nigel Hinton, the Jewish hero has working-class roots and fights those who would exploit the weak. *Street of Tall People* and *The Tiger in the Well*, in particular, are engaged in rehabilitating the image of Jewish males, to whom the most damaging stereotypes have been attached.

Any author writing of the Victorian era has a wealth of literary antecedents to draw on. Dennis Butts says that Philip Pullman’s Sally Lockhart mystery series is ‘deeply influenced by such novelists as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins’ (‘Tis’ 85). However, as Christopher Ringrose points out, ‘the gravitational pull of Dickens is so strong that ... the writer of historical fiction set after 1800 has a different context from the one dealing with earlier periods’ (215). A historical novel set in the Victorian East End, and especially any such text containing Jewish characters, will almost inevitably be read in relation to Dickens, and in particular, *Oliver Twist*.

Fagin is an outcast from his community, lacking in religious faith, a miser who profits from exploiting children, his 'lovable rogue' image in the musical notwithstanding. In contrast, in *The Tiger in the Well*, set in 1881, a Jewish family shelters Sally Lockhart's daughter, Harriet, from the Gentile men who would do her harm. The toddler is drawn to Mr Katz, a pious Jew who quietly does good works for his poor working-class community.

As noted in Chapter 1, an 1882 issue of *The Girl's Own Paper* challenges stereotypes about Jews at a time when they were arriving in the UK in large numbers and when anti-Jewish sentiment was common as a result. The article seeks to contest the popular discourse, saying that Jews are loyal, domestic and support their needy – points rarely made in children's literature of the time. The same positive characterisations are found a century later in Pullman's depiction of the Katzes, although Pullman's snapshot of refugee Jews arriving in London eschews the 'good Jew'/'bad Jew' binary. Stereotypes are juxtaposed with representations that break with them, the range problematising the notion of a single, rigid image of 'Jew':

Some individual faces stood out: a young woman of startling dark-eyed beauty; a thin man with an expression of surpassing craftiness; a child hollow-eyed with illness; a stout woman so cheerful she was infecting all those near her with laughter; a young man, red-bearded, blazing-eyed, with the marks of consumption in his cheeks; an old man in a torn coat and a greasy fur hat, with a long white beard and white corkscrew ringlets framing the face of a learned, gentle saint; a sharp-eyed opportunist, more or less clean-shaven, with a black cap and a fur-collared coat. (17)

This deliberate interrogation of stereotype is then developed over the course of the novel. It is apparent in the construction of characters such as Daniel Goldberg, who, along with Sally Lockhart, is the novel's hero. Goldberg's means of fighting for justice are at times morally ambiguous: he has no qualms about enlisting the aid of notorious Jewish gangsters and does not hesitate to use violence when necessary to achieve his aims. With qualities of hegemonic masculinity, Goldberg is a more traditional hero than the gentler Mr Katz, although the latter, too, is unquestionably heroic. The gangsters are ruthless criminals, but put their rivalry aside to rescue Sally's daughter. Goldberg, Katz and the gangsters collaborate to help not just other Jews, but anyone in their working-class East End neighbourhood who would benefit from their support, undermining the stereotype of 'international Jewish Communists' as a threat to the stability of society.

Pullman wrote about socialism to show ‘that there was a time when it was the best response of the best people to the conditions around them’ (‘Daddy’ 108), and indeed, Goldberg, one of these ‘best people’, is at his most courageous when he staves off an anti-Semitic riot by Irish workers with an impassioned speech:

‘Who sacrificed *your* children, my friend? Who made sure you couldn’t buy any medicine for your little daughter? Who refused to pass the law that would have made the landlord keep the drains in good repair, so your little boy had to catch typhoid and die?

I’ll tell you who did it. Every one of those rich men – the landlords – the factory-owners – the Members of Parliament – the judges – Lord This and the Earl of That and the Duke of Something Else – they’re the ones who go in for human sacrifice. They’re the real murderers. You can see their victims every day along Nightingale Lane and Cable Street.’ (Pullman, *Tiger* 352)

Pullman explains that writing about feminism and the drugs trade and including references to terrorism in his novel would teach readers that ‘the seeds of the present day were germinating’ in the Victorian era (‘Daddy’ 107). In doing so, he also reveals that debates about Zionism are not a new phenomenon.

While in Anthony Julius’s opinion, the left-wing view has been that ‘good Jews’ were Zionist before the Second World War and anti-Zionist afterwards, *The Tiger in the Well* demonstrates that the position among Jews themselves was not consistent. Characters refer to debates among pro- and anti-Zionist Jewish groups about the relative merits of a Jewish homeland in the light of the persecution of Jews in Europe, but despite the anti-Zionist stance of Morris Katz’s wife, Katz himself remains undecided, and the author does not make his own position clear. Writing about the work of Philip Roth, Hayden White notes ‘a liberalism alert to the perils of a pre-occupation with moral and political purity’ (153). Such a sensibility is to be found in Pullman, whose own liberalism is apparent in *The Tiger in the Well*, but who nevertheless refuses to impart simplistic lessons to his child readership. As Butts notes, the Sally Lockhart books ‘display a version of post-modernist metafiction in their literary technique while, in their values, they reflect the gains, uncertainties, ambiguities and ironies of European society a century later’ (‘Tis’ 86).

As in Pullman’s novel, the stereotype of the weak Jew is subverted in Alan Gibbons’ *Street of Tall People*, which is set against a backdrop of socialist resistance to fascism in East London in 1936. When Benny, who is Jewish, defeats Jimmy, an

Irish boy, in a boxing match, the two struggle to build a friendship despite opposition from each community. Jimmy's mother is dating a fascist, while Benny's best friend,

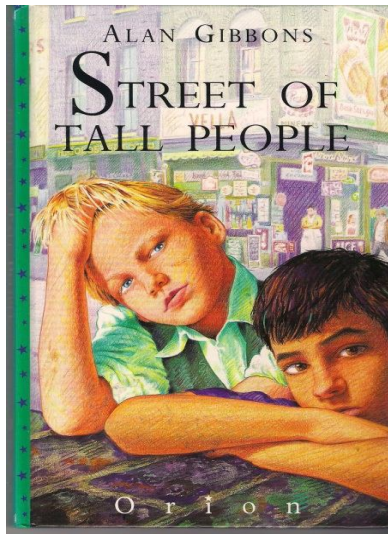


Fig 5.2. *Street of Tall People* by Alan Gibbons (1995). Cover ill. Derek Brazell.

the tough and imposing boxer, Yaro, is suspicious of Gentiles. He greets Benny's victory with, 'He knocked the kishkes out of that big Yok' (8). Yaro's peppering of his conversation with Yiddish is not a mere by-product of his culture, but a political gesture. The other Jewish boys see themselves as 'a bunch of ordinary London boys' (8), but Yaro has been embittered by the anti-Semitic taunts of other boys: 'he wanted to ram them down the throats which uttered them. He was a Jew first, second and last ... He was proud of his east European origins – fiercely proud – and that set him apart from the others' (8).

The book culminates in the Battle of Cable Street, when a coalition of Jewish workers and Irish dockers prevented Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts from marching through the Jewish East End. Aware of the impending march, Benny worries about the safety of the community, but his mother tries to reassure the boy by asking him to recount his father's story about union solidarity:

'You take a match. One match you can break. Two matches that's stronger. A whole box of matches....'

He made a gesture as if trying to break a bundle of matches, 'a ... whole box of matches, that's a union'. (52)

White Britons' intolerance of minorities and immigrants is a theme of these texts, as it was in the novels by Trease, Melnikoff and Kamm, yet there is a notable shift: here, Jews are left-wing, working-class radicals. They are confidently 'out' as Jews, despite facing anti-Semitism, and they actively defend themselves from the threat it poses. There is no authorial need to prove to the reader that Jews are loyal to Britain, to define their place in the nation, or even to critique Britain's historical treatment of 'the Jews'. Instead, these Jews are ordinary people who at times behave heroically. Intercultural and interfaith relations in the East End community in which they are embedded bring both conflicts and rewards. The Jewish Question is raised here primarily by fascists concerned to preserve the integrity of white, Christian Britain.

Other texts are preoccupied with the repercussions of global tensions between the monotheistic religions.

## The Middle East, past and present

In the twenty-first century, concerns about relations between and within nations and cultures are manifested in rising numbers of children's books that address 9/11, the 'war on terror', and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many of these texts are works of historical fiction that treat the subject obliquely rather than addressing it head on.

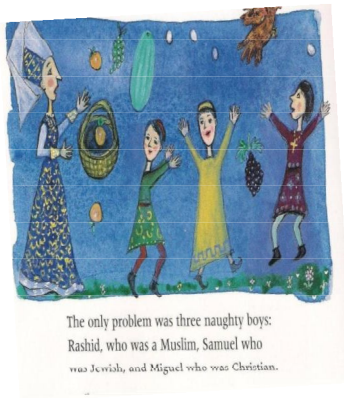


Fig 5.3. *The Most Magnificent Mosque* (2004) by Ann Jungman. Ill. by Shelley Fowles.

Authors may choose to explore an ongoing conflict through past rather than present in order to give child readers a sense of emotional safety that is lacking in real life. Novels set in the present-day Middle East are more troubling than historical fiction, for instance, because on this subject the distant past was more reassuring than the present. Texts set today can be problematic because the 'true' narrative continues, literally, to be violently contested. Literature set in the past may also seek to provide a historical context for a current situation. The wider effects of the Middle East conflict are addressed in

works about relations between Christians, Jews and Muslims at different points in history, which demonstrate that there have been periods of harmony between the three religions.

Elizabeth Laird explains, for example, that in *Crusade* (2007), which is about the budding friendship between a Christian boy and the disabled Muslim apprentice to a Jewish doctor, she seeks to counteract the impression of seemingly inherent enmity between Jews and Muslims:

Right up until the end of the Ottoman Empire and the ghastly nationalism at the end of the twentieth century of which Israeli nationalism was one example, every city had its quarter for Jews, Armenians, Sunnis. It was a great old mixture and everybody lived side by side perfectly happily for 1,000 years. People talk about the 'age old conflict between Jew and Arab', and that's rubbish. I wanted to reflect that. ('Personal' 2010)

Ann Jungman's picture book, *The Most Magnificent Mosque* (2004) (see Fig. 5.3), also illustrates peaceful interfaith relations, in a story of how the friendship between a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew saves the mosque of Cordoba from being

destroyed,<sup>1</sup> while the jacket of the picture book *One City, Two Brothers* (2007) informs readers that the author, Chris Smith, has worked with UNICEF and Oxfam on the West Bank and in Gaza. The story tells how King Solomon uses a folk tale to convince two brothers to share land each claims as his own. The symbolism is made explicit in the paratext: ‘Jerusalem has seen many wars and many rulers. Arabs, Turks and Europeans have all had their turn. Today, the city is still bitterly disputed, claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians. Nobody knows if, one day, there will be peace’ (*n. pag.*).

A further reason an author might choose to write a historical novel is that their interpretation of events is much less likely to be challenged than in a text set in the present. This is particularly the case when the novel addresses an issue as contentious and rapidly changing as the Middle East conflict. It is undoubtedly one reason why there is so little British children’s literature set in contemporary Israel or Palestine, and it underlies the strong reactions to two books about the conflict: *Broken Bridge* (1994) by Lynne Reid Banks, written from the Israeli perspective and published just before the peace deal between Israel and Jordan, and *A Little Piece of Ground* (2003) by Elizabeth Laird, written from the Palestinian point of view.<sup>2</sup>

*Broken Bridge* was on the shortlist for both the *Guardian* Children’s Fiction Prize and the Carnegie Medal. At the time, *Books for Keeps* magazine described it as ‘an heroic attempt to represent even-handedly the tensions and passions underlying events in Palestine’ (G. Hunt *n. pag.*). More recently, and in line with current British public opinion about the conflict, judgement about the book has altered. In the same magazine in 2002, Ann Lazim’s survey of the portrayal of Arabs in children’s literature says of *Broken Bridge*, ‘The political situation is shown to be complex but despite this, the Israelis are accorded the moral high ground’ (*n. pag.*). Lazim disapproves of Banks’s privileging of Israeli perspectives and disagrees with the earlier reviewer that the book attempts to be even-handed, although Israeli characters do present a range of views on the conflict:

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<sup>1</sup> The teenage novel *Prisoner of the Inquisition* (2010) by Theresa Breslin, also set in medieval Spain, features a Catholic heroine and a Jewish-Muslim love interest.

<sup>2</sup> The only other text by a British author to be written from the Israeli perspective is Adele Geras’s story ‘Beyond the Cross Stitch Mountains’ in *Stories from Jerusalem*, a domestic adventure of two children set against a backdrop of the 1948 war of Israeli independence. The story focuses primarily on the journey of Danny and Daskah through a Jerusalem at war to visit his estranged relative. The psychological toll war takes on civilians from both sides is mentioned, though details of the war itself are not given.

‘A terrible thing,’ muttered Nat, shaking his head as he switched the TV off after the news. ‘It just shows you what the Occupation has brought us to.’

‘Brought them to,’ said Miriam. ‘We only do what’s necessary.’

‘Ah. You mean, if only the Arabs would lie down and be quiet, there’d be no need for us to repress them?’ said Nat sarcastically.

‘We don’t repress them,’ said Miriam tautly.

‘Yes, we, do, Sabta,’ said Nimrod. ‘We have to.’

‘Well I don’t believe it. The newspapers – ’

‘Miriam! The only newspaper you ever read is this rag, and even they can’t deny – although they play it down – that our troops are shooting demonstrators in the streets of the Territories every week!’ (42)

Nat and Miriam Shelby had immigrated to Israel from Canada in the 1970s, some twenty years prior to the events of the novel; Nimrod is their Israeli-born grandson. Much of the novel’s action revolves around the aftermath of the murder of Nat and Miriam’s Canadian grandson, Glen, on a visit to Israel, and his extended family’s attempts to come to terms with the murder. Characters negotiate a Canadian-Jewish or Israeli-Jewish identity within a context of the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

At first estranged from his father, Nat, for marrying a Catholic, Noah Shelby follows his family in order to fight in the Yom Kippur war and finally emigrates with his wife, only to find himself unable to adapt to life in the army or to be party to the exploitation of Palestinian workers that he witnesses at work. He returns to Canada, where he marries again, this time to a Jewish woman, and builds a career which gives him ‘a very comfortable home and two cars, one a Jaguar. His firm sent him all over the world ... In short, he’d made it’ (6). Despite his material comfort, Noah feels a failure. Noah had discovered in Israel that he was not made of heroic material, but those Israelis of the next generation who remain in the army have no such illusions of valour, and the novel gives no suggestion that anything to do with war is heroic. One character, Adam, is believed to have died in a tragic accident, but in reality has committed suicide; while Noah’s son, Yoni, is transformed from a happy-go-lucky boy to a guarded and troubled young man, wracked with guilt for torturing a Palestinian under orders. Those who serve in the army are individuals, the complexities and contradictions of being an Israeli soldier taking a different toll on each, with their army service affecting but not defining them.

Characters in the book are secular, their Jewishness detached from Judaism.



Instead, their Jewishness has an inescapably political dimension: whether they live in Canada or in Israel, the characters' relationship with the Jewish state, no matter what their feelings towards it, is bound up with their identity. Noah's second wife, Valerie, who is Jewish, hates the place: 'This country eats people. I knew it the first time I was here. I couldn't wait to leave then, and I can't wait to leave now' (80). However, Donna, his Catholic ex-wife, has stayed and grown to love it, as Banks herself did. Jewishness in the novel combines with ideas of national character to form a 'Canadian-Jewishness' in contrast to 'Israeli-Jewishness'; the stereotype of spoiled, materialistic Diaspora Jews is perpetuated, while that of tough Israeli Jews is interrogated and problematised by the negotiation of characters with various factors that make up their own identity. The Canadian-Israeli Jew, Lesley, has more in common with the Canadian-Israeli Catholic, Donna, than she has with the Canadian-Jewish Valerie. The novel, then, acknowledges a relationship between Jews and Israel, but highlights its complexity as well as the attachment of people from a range of groups to the Jewish state. The use of multiple focalisers provides readers with access to a variety of Jewish subject positions, some of which correspond to national stereotypes, while others break with them through nuanced portrayals of individuals who happen to have a shared cultural heritage.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, no such plurality exists in the construction of Jews in *A Little Piece of Ground*, which tells the story of West Bank teenager Karim and his family under Israeli occupation. Fiercely condemnatory of the occupiers, the novel is so closely focused on Karim's narrow perspective that it was criticised in the *Guardian* newspaper by Ann Jungman, a member of the group Jews for Justice for Palestinians, for its generalised view of Israelis (F. Gibbons 3). The novel contains images of humiliation of Palestinian men by Israeli soldiers and of settlers shooting at Palestinians picking olives. Karim says of Israelis, 'I hate them, all of them' (Laird, *Little Piece* 57). Later, he feels 'fear and hatred at the sight of the enemy' (139); there are references to the Israelis as 'the enemy' throughout the novel. There is one scene in which another perspective is given, when Karim's great-uncle explains that the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians is like that between any other powerful and powerless groups:

'I watched them closely, for a long time. I was trying to decide if they were superior beings or not. In the end, I saw that they were not. They were bad, good, moral, immoral, some greedy and vain, some kind-hearted and

suffering, all just men, women and children – like the rest of us. Human beings.’

‘Human? You call those settlers human?’

‘Yes. Human. Like us. And that’s what I find so depressing.

Watching them, I see what we humans are capable of. I know that we could be like them too. They’ve shown me how bad human nature can be. If we had power over them, or anyone else, for that matter, we’d do the same things that they do.’ (56-57)

Karim rejects his uncle’s view: he sees all Israelis as villains, and so will most readers, for the narrative is constructed so that they are encouraged to identify closely with him and never suggests that Karim’s point of view is limited. As Eve Tal points out, ‘the misery of the occupiers [referred to in the paratext] never appears in the novel itself. Israelis are nameless, faceless soldiers’ (23). It could be argued that young readers will not necessarily draw any conclusions about Jews on the basis of judgements about Israelis in *A Little Piece of Ground*, and, indeed, nowhere in the book are the Israelis referred to as Jews.<sup>3</sup> However, many will be interested in the book precisely because events such as the 9/11 attacks on the United States and the 7/7 bombings in London will have made them aware of the repercussions of the Middle East conflict on the rest of the world, and such readers are likely to have encountered the common linkage of Israelis and Jews. As Jonathan Freedland points out, ‘When Osama Bin Laden sought to stir support among the world’s 1.2 billion Muslims, he named the Jews as his enemy. Not Israelis or Zionists, but Jews’ (10).

The likelihood that readers will make a connection between Palestinians and Muslims and Israelis and Jews is further demonstrated when even well-intentioned publishers such as Frances Lincoln erroneously use the words ‘Jewish’ and ‘Israeli’ interchangeably. The award-winning publisher of multicultural children’s books brought out two collections of stories: one Palestinian, the other Jewish, because, says Editorial Director Janetta Otter-Barry,

I felt that countries that have been in the news in a difficult way ... it would be nice to show their wonderful folk tradition and these very heart-warming stories. That would be a really interesting way into other cultures, particularly because you hear Jewish/Palestinian on the news. (*n. pag.*)

Elizabeth Laird herself makes a connection between British Jews and events in the Middle East: ‘I had this picture in my mind as I wrote, of a little Jewish girl sitting in the back of a class feeling terrible. Then I thought, “I’m very sorry, little girl, but

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, not all Israelis, including those that serve in the army, are Jewish.

you're going to benefit from knowing the truth just as much as everyone else” ('Personal' *n. pag*). The notion of literature as 'truth' resurfaces when Laird explains that people in Northern Ireland responded to her comment that she had wanted to include a 'good Israeli' in her novel with 'tired smiles and said, "We're so fed up about the made-up, unrealistic, love-across-the-divide kind of stories, and they just irritate people. We'd much rather have something that tells the truth"' ('Personal' *n. pag*).

Literature for young people does, however, tend to follow certain conventions; books about conflict or persecution usually avoid constructing an entire nation or group of people as evil. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the 'good German' has become a trope of children's literature about World War II, for instance, and the 2009 Carnegie Medal winner, *Bog Child* by Siobhan Dowd includes a friendship between an Irish student and a British soldier in 1980s Northern Ireland. According to Tal, *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak* (2004), by Deborah Ellis, marks 'a chilling transformation' (16) from the position in children's books that individual friendships across the divide in times of conflict 'contain the key to achieving true peace' (16). *A Little Piece of Ground* makes a similar transformation, bleakly dispensing with any suggestion of the possibility of friendship between Israeli and Palestinian. Ellis's book is non-fiction, and could be seen to serve a different function than a novel, which is likely to present a more limited viewpoint. Nevertheless, despite the difference in genre, and the fact that many of the twenty children who tell their stories have never met anyone from 'the other side' and never wish to, Ellis's book illustrates the complexity of the situation and ultimately constructs a tapestry of perspectives rather than a single vision of 'Jew-oppressor' or 'Arab-victim'. The foreword by Beverley Naidoo follows the normative convention with regard to conflict in children's books: 'It has to be possible to imagine a different future in which there is respect for each other's humanity instead of war' (qtd. in Ellis 3). The back cover features a review from the American journal *Booklist*: 'Even the grimmest stories have a glimmer of hope.' Both quotes express the sentiments discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to contemporary literature about the Holocaust.

What has most disturbed those adult readers troubled by Laird's novel, even those who are vocal supporters of the Palestinian cause, is that *A Little Piece of Ground* provides no historical context. Combined with the 'truth' as seen from

Karim's perspective, this results in the demonisation of the 'other' – in this case Israelis, and, by extension, Jews, a minority group subjected to racism not just historically but also today. The book does not allow for the emergence of any Israelis as individuals, nor does it distinguish between army and civilians. The storm it provoked makes it unsurprising that newer texts set in the present day Middle East are careful to deliver a message more aligned with the conciliatory tone of historical fiction about relations between the monotheistic religions and about conflicts throughout history.

One such recent work is Michael Foreman's picture book, *A Child's Garden: a Story of Hope* (2009), which addresses life for children in an unnamed war zone. Foreman originally intended it to be about Bosnia, but by the time he wrote it, 'Gaza had come up' ('Interview' 2010). In the simple story, a boy grows a vine next to a barbed wire fence until it is destroyed by soldiers. He finds that some seedlings have survived, and discovers that the children on the other side of the fence are tending their seeds too. Eventually, the vines on both sides of the fence intertwine.

Michael Morpurgo's *The Kites are Flying* (2010), which developed from his short story 'No Trumpets Needed', for a collection of stories endorsed by Amnesty International, is equally committed to promoting reconciliation. The narrator is a photographer who is filming on both sides of the wall in the West Bank 'to tell a story that does not point the finger, that does not accuse, but that tells it as it is' (28). However, while recuperating at the home of a Palestinian family after an accident, he befriends Saïd, a boy who has been unable to speak since witnessing his brother being shot dead while throwing stones at an Israeli tank. Saïd flies kites painted with the word 'salaam' to the children in the settlement on the other side of the wall in homage to his brother. The army is presented very clearly as the aggressor, yet the soldiers are humanised and given voice: they 'were firing warning shots, they say. They are sorry, they say. One of the soldiers is crying' (67). An Israeli girl, a wheelchair user since a Palestinian attack in which her mother was killed, collects the kites. Saïd's embittered uncle dismisses the girl as 'an occupier ... All occupiers are the same' (61), but he is proved wrong as the Israeli

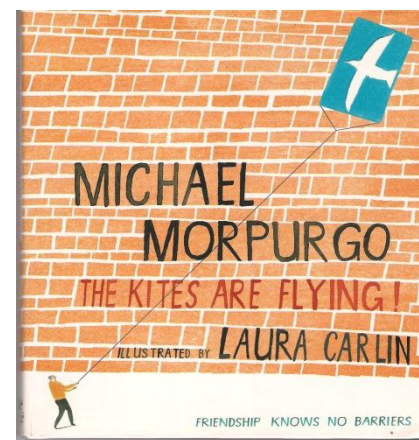


Fig 5.4. The cover of *The Kites are Flying* (2010) by Michael Morpurgo, ill. by Laura Carlin, has a message of hope: 'Friendship knows no barriers'.

children set all the kites aloft with 'shalom' written on the other side. In *A Child's Garden* and *The Kites are Flying*, the children are victims of war, but they embody hope for the future. The laughter of the children in their jubilation 'would one day resonate so loud that this wall, like all the others, would come tumbling down' (77).<sup>4</sup>

The books by Morpurgo and Foreman demonstrate that contemporary authors think it appropriate for even young children to be aware of wars taking place in other countries, and of the wider repercussions of such conflicts. The majority of such literature written today is carefully neutral, focusing on individuals living with conflict rather than its causes, though that there is conflict is central to the texts. In those either explicitly or implicitly about relations between Muslims, Jews and Christians, the Israel/Palestine conflict or the war in Iraq, only in the novel for older children set in present day Palestine, *A Little Piece of Ground*, can Jews be said to be constructed as villains, and even here the word 'Jew' itself is never used. The majority of such recent historical fiction advocates tolerance. In most of this literature, the view is outward-looking, focusing not so much on the place of Jews in Britain as the need for interfaith tolerance in an ever-changing world.

### **Competing victimhoods**

The majority of representations of Jews in children's books published since the 1990s have appeared in literature about the Holocaust, but the subject matter of texts in which they appear has broadened since the start of the new century. Todd Endelman contends that a heightened 'Jew-consciousness' (198) accompanies the multiple agendas that are part of a diverse postmodern society, while Linda Rozmovits suggests that British liberalism generally keeps radical anti-Semitism at bay, but that older stereotypes 'have a tendency to resurface at times of heightened social anxiety about Jews' (712). The disintegration of the mainly coherent post-war view of Jews as victims of intolerance into a multiplicity of opinions and voices appears to confirm the positions of both Endelman and Rozmovits, and this fracturing of consensus is apparent in British children's literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Morpurgo included a story by Elizabeth Laird in the 2005 collection of short stories he edited, *War: Stories of Conflict*. 'Leila's Nightmare' does exactly what adult readers complained that *A Little Piece of Ground* did not: it very deliberately humanises an Israeli soldier in the eyes of a Palestinian child who has taken literally the description of Israelis as 'monsters'.

The tendency to privilege the perspective of marginalised groups, which was at one time considered innovative or even radical, has become the normative position in children's literature. Deborah Stevenson complains of historical fiction that rather than taking a postmodern interrogative approach, such 'formulaic inversion' of perspective (25) has led to a 'very conservative' genre (27). Certainly, in some respects Stevenson is correct: in instances where the binary is simply inverted, there is often neither nuanced characterisation nor interrogation of the validity of the binary itself. However, in other literature, this 'new orthodoxy' is rather more complex than she suggests. Some groups, such as women – or Jews – may be marginalised in some situations, but not in others. In such instances, the binary ceases to be a simple opposition between powerful and powerless. In some children's books, this becomes a hierarchy of competing marginalities or victimhoods.

Anthony Julius suggests that, towards the end of the twentieth century, anti-racism became the dominant political ideology of 'right-thinking people' and that the term now 'comprise[s] any stance of disrespect by a dominant or majority group towards a subordinate or minority group' (516). In some recent historical fiction for young people, Jews, and particularly men, are seen as the dominant, 'racist', group compared to women and other ethnic and religious minorities. *Hero* by Catherine Johnson (2001) foregrounds the issue of hybrid identity; Geraldine McCaughrean's *Not the End of the World* (2004) is a feminist retelling of the Noah's Ark story; and Caroline Lawrence's 'Roman Mysteries' (2001-2010) are light historical mysteries with an Evangelical message.

Catherine Johnson's novel, which features a mixed-race protagonist, simultaneously dismantles racial divisions and constructs a binary between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. Hero's black father, a former slave, is a boxer; her dead mother and beloved grandfather were Sephardic Jews. Hero's father adopts their family name and is treated by her grandfather as his son. In contrast, the Ashkenazic side of the family, the Silvers, are associated with the stereotypically 'Jewish' traits of avarice and unscrupulous business practices. Although, as Jews, the Silvers are distinguished from the dominant culture, they are more 'white' than the da Costas, and therefore have more power in society than Hero and her father, whose inheritance they steal after attempting to have him returned to his former owner.

Hero sees her uncle 'walking out with three other black-coated, black-hatted businessmen to view the new rag warehouse he had bought with Pa's money. They didn't waste a minute, Hero thought – they must have been waiting for Grandpa to die all this time. Waiting to get their hands on everything Pa had' (18). The description of Hero's villainous uncle's attire, that of a pious Victorian Jew, is similar to that of Mr Rosenbaum, the moneylender in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, and, indeed, many of the moneylenders and pedlars featured in Chapter 1.

Hero is comfortable as a black-Jewish Briton until her cousin Rachel tells her that 'Niggers can't be Jews' (12). That she does so at the Passover *seder*, commemorating the exodus of the Jews from slavery, reverses the traditional story, rendering the Jews in the powerful position of slave-owners and the 'nigger' Hero in the subordinate position of slave. Hero's grandfather gives her the empowering message that she can, indeed, be black and Jewish if she so chooses, and that such a choice would be valid, for there are

'African Jews, from Ethiopia in the east, from Morocco and Algeria in the north. We've probably family there still,' he rubbed his beard, 'in Fez, I think. We're Sephardi, and there probably aren't many corners of Africa a Jew hasn't seen!' He said something else too: 'Hero, whatever you want to be, you are.' (82)

Hero is reassured that she does belong 'racially' to the Jewish people, yet the failure to assert her unarguable religious claim to Jewishness, which according to Jewish law is passed down through the maternal line, distances her from the 'white' Silvers and aligns her with the religiously unobservant 'non-white', Sephardic da Costas. In one scene, the Silvers beat Hero, and tie her up in the kitchen before setting off for synagogue, the contrast between 'racially' unsavoury behaviour and apparent piety a familiar motif found in texts such as 'The Good Aunt' (1801) by Maria Edgeworth and 'The Little Jew Merchant' (1829) by Mary Howitt, to name just two. Here, the scene also reinforces images of the relationship between masters and slaves, with the Jews the persecutors rather than the persecuted.

The text, then, seems to suggest that there are different types of Jewishness: the Silvers, who are outwardly pious, racially white, scheming, greedy and racist, and the Sephardic da Costas, who identify with black culture and who are secular, honest, generous and racially inclusive. Sander Gilman describes multiculturalism as 'a space where the contrast between the haves and the have-nots is played out' ('We're Not Jews' 128), observing that until the 1990s, writing by African-American

authors contrasted their marginalisation to the relatively privileged position of Jews (128). *Hero* problematises both this black-Jewish dichotomy and the whole notion of race; it does so at a time when ‘mixed race’ will soon become Britain’s largest ethnic minority group (Burrell *n. pag.*). Nevertheless, the construction of the Silvers/da Costas binary demonstrates that Gilman’s point still has currency today.

The other culturally fluid figure in this text is Hero’s cousin, Daniel Silver, who feels closer to Hero’s family than to his own:

Hero, your pa is a national treasure ... I wish I had a father like that. Look at mine! All he wants for me is to sell more rags and more rags, marry a nice girl, sell more rags, and maybe – if I’m lucky – get my name on the board at the synagogue and buy them a nice villa in Tottenham. (Johnson 21)

Daniel admits that he had once asked Grandpa Reuben if he could live with Hero’s family. He distances himself from the greed of the Silvers, which makes them ‘like other people, different people. Just thinking about the money from The Feathers has made them all mad’ (61). In its constructions of Sephardic Jews, then, *Hero* subverts earlier representations, while perpetuating them in its constructions of Ashkenazic Jews. Daniel and Hero must choose to belong to one side or the other, for it is impossible to be both. Ultimately, in *Hero*, Jewishness is represented not so much as a binary with non-Jewishness, but as a racial dichotomy of black-Jew and white-Jew. White-Jews display the racial characteristics of Jews as constructed in texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so, unsurprisingly, it is the black-Jew side of the divide, the heroic ‘self’, which is represented as superior to the villainous, white-Jew ‘other’.

Its plot involving villains cheating the protagonist out of her inheritance, and its East End location, give *Hero* the Dickensian resonance which Ringrose suggests is unavoidable in recent texts set in the 1800s. Hero and Daniel have an ambivalent relationship to their Jewishness, in contrast to the scheming Silvers, whose Jewishness, like Fagin’s, is understood by the reader to be implicated in their villainy, even if this was not the author’s intention. An unsympathetic ethnic minority character is hardly a rarity in Victorian literature, and the caricatured villainy of the Silvers is suggestive of postmodern parody, which Linda Hutcheon describes as ‘a value-problematizing, denaturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations’ (*Politics* 94). Certainly, Johnson’s mixed-race female hero serves a postcolonial function by giving voice to a



silent minority in the history of nineteenth-century Britain. That Hero's father's status as a former slave is a key element in the plot is further testimony to Johnson's objective of 'writing back' to the Empire. Grandfather positions Sephardic Jews as 'wandering Jews' who integrate into a variety of cultures, but as equals rather than rulers. His acceptance of Hero's black father as a son situates the Sephardim, who have settled in almost all the 'corners of Africa', among the colonised; the exploitative Ashkenazic Silvers, in attempting to return Hero's father to his owner are aligned with the colonisers. The text problematises a static construction of 'Jews', but when juxtaposed with the seriousness of Hero's plight, the pantomime villainy of the Silvers reinforces historical constructions of Jews rather than parodying or deconstructing them, as Philip Pullman does in *The Tiger in the Well*.

The two authors' different approaches are mirrored in contrasting contemporary responses to Fagin. In a discussion about the 2007 television adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, Alkarim Jivani suggested that the casting of black actress Sophie Okonedo as Nancy is a sign that British society is 'anxious about proper representation' (*Saturday Review*). Louise Doughty problematised this claim by saying of Timothy Spall's portrayal of Fagin:

This idea that you give him this Yiddish accent because 'we're not afraid of the Jewishness of Fagin' ... well, actually, if you're going to update Dickens and have a black Nancy, there is no reason why Fagin cannot be a Gentile. (*Saturday Review*)

Catherine Johnson's characterisations in *Hero* encompass both positions in the above exchange: she is 'anxious' about more accurately reflecting British society, but this does not extend to a concern for 'proper' representation of Jews. Sam Leith shares Doughty's discomfiture with portrayals of Fagin that are unmodified for contemporary audiences, but reluctantly concludes, 'I suppose we've decided it's okay on the grounds that it's heritage anti-Semitism' (*n. pag.*).

The project of making visible characters that were once absent from literature differs somewhat from that of engagement with historical literary stereotypes. The first must, by definition, be an active process on the part of the creator, while in some cases the second can be simply a matter of interpretation by the recipient of the text. The comments of Doughty and Leith point to a postmodern tendency to take such an interpretative position on stereotypes in artistic representations, viewing both old and new with an ironic gaze. Contemporary viewers, it might be argued,

automatically read the character of Fagin within inverted commas, understanding it to be a construction.

To view a historical representation with a contemporary ironic eye, however, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the context in which the work was written, and the same is true for a contemporary text which parodies an earlier period. Linda Hutcheon suggests that irony is produced as part of the process of making meaning: 'Irony is not something *in* an object that you either "get" or fail to "get": irony "happens" for you ... when two meanings, one said and the other unsaid, come together, usually with a certain critical edge' ('Irony' *n. pag.*). There is a risk, then, that irony may not 'happen' for a reader, particularly if the unarticulated meaning is not easily interpreted.

Such instances can be problematic, as Hutcheon points out when she describes an exhibition about Empire in which the use of irony was criticised as 'highly inappropriate', a view which Hutcheon considers to be valid, 'especially ... when condemnation is what is expected and desired' ('Irony' *n. pag.*). If, as Hutcheon claims, the 'knowingness of irony [is] a mark of the fall from innocence, if ever there was one' ('Irony' *n. pag.*), then a text for children which makes use of irony must assume that its readers are knowing – an assumption which may be incorrect, for readers may not have the requisite experience of literature or life to understand its irony. In this case, the reader's interpretation of the message behind the textual representations of 'other' races or cultures might well diverge from the one the author intended.

This paradox is apparent in David Clement-Davies's novel of the Crusades, *The Telling Pool* (2005), which makes extensive intertextual reference to *Ivanhoe*. Its temporal setting, attention to monotheistic religion and post-9/11 awareness give it some commonalities with texts in the preceding section, but its English geographical location and plot drawn from nineteenth-century historical fiction make it comparable in other respects to *The Red Towers of Granada* and *The Star and the Sword*. Clement-Davies set the novel during the Crusades because of his concern about

the dangerous climate of fear and ignorance that might prevail if we go back to old stereotypes ... I did intend parallels with the present, most especially in trying to question all the belief structures that the characters carry around with them in the book ... and I imply both positive and negative things about them all. (Blasingame *n. pag.*)

Despite the author's clear statement of ideological intent, the text seems implicitly to desire 'conversion' from Jewish particularity to English universalism in a manner not dissimilar to some literature examined in Chapters 1 and 2.

On his way to a Crusade in Jerusalem, the protagonist, Rhodri, encounters Isaac, a widower, and his beautiful daughter, Rebecca. Isaac's difference from the Christian characters at first appears superficial. Apart from his hair and attire, he looks 'ordinary enough' (Clement-Davies 242), but his syntax indicates his foreignness and his behaviour signals a more fundamental 'racial' otherness. Clement-Davies may be attempting to bring the anti-Semitism of the past to the attention of contemporary readers, but the harsh patriarch Isaac, who is constructed without a hint of irony, would not be out of place in many nineteenth-century texts. Throughout, Isaac is ill-mannered towards Rhodri, even during a scene when the young man helps him to repair a wheel on his cart. Isaac nods 'curtly' (245), speaks 'coldly' (245), asks 'rudely' (246); he has a 'sour, suspicious expression' (243) and looks at Rhodri 'resentfully' (255). The text takes care to distinguish Isaac's behaviour from Judaism itself – Rhodri finds the sound of Hebrew prayer surprisingly beautiful – but it does make a link between those who practise Judaism and unscrupulous behaviour. It is difficult to sympathise with the 'wily old man' (255), with the exception of when he explains the effect that anti-Semitism has had on Jewish people. However, any sympathy disappears shortly afterwards, when the parallel with *Ivanhoe* ends. In the earlier novel, Isaac gives the thieves the money to prevent them from raping Rebecca, for his daughter is more important to him than his riches. In *The Telling Pool*, Isaac insists that he has no money to give. Rebecca is saved only when Rhodri surprises the attackers, and when the young people part ways, she reveals her father's deception by giving Rhodri gold coins to thank him.

The sentiment expressed in Rebecca's attempt to excuse her father's behaviour – 'Perhaps with the years ... people can become what others accuse them wrongly of being' (286) – is found in texts dating back to the eighteenth century, such as Wollstonecraft's translation of Salzmann's *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children; With an Introductory Address to Parents* from 1790 (see Chapter 1). In *Ivanhoe*, it is the narrator who makes the point, progressive in 1819, that behaviour is learned rather than an inherently racial characteristic; in *The Red Towers of Granada*, it is the protagonist, Robin, who is a product of his time, struggling to

make sense of what he sees as strange Jewish ways. In *The Telling Pool*, the statement sounds curiously essentialist, simultaneously dismissing the notion of a biological, 'racial' origin to avarice and accepting it as an ingrained cultural characteristic. It may not be the Jews' fault that they behave reprehensibly, the text implies, but they do so nonetheless. Coming from Rebecca, the statement seems to acquire quasi-Christian overtones of turning the other cheek following her father's betrayal, and to be an implicit criticism of, and self-distancing from, her people.

Clement-Davies's characterisation of Isaac's daughter differs notably from that of Scott, whose Rebecca is pious and apparently free from ambivalence about her Jewishness, as she swiftly disabuses Ivanhoe of his belief that she is a 'noble damsel' (145), despite the knowledge that this will alter his feelings for her. In contrast, Clement-Davies's Rebecca is a young woman whose modern sensibilities would have been unthinkable in Scott's age, let alone the era in which the book is set. She questions her father's beliefs, initiates a sexual relationship with the Christian Rhodri (of which her father becomes aware but to which he does not object) and resents that Isaac has arranged a marriage for her, believing that cultural background is unimportant when forming romantic attachments. She decides to end the relationship with Rhodri because they belong to 'worlds kept apart by the hatred and foolishness of men' (348) rather than from any positive feelings for her culture, as the heroine does in *The Vale of Cedars* (1850), Grace Aguilar's response to *Ivanhoe* from a Jewish perspective. Writing in the *Guardian* online, Josh Freedman Berthoud points out that:

while mainstream, white British culture might have come to accept mixed marriages as the norm, British minorities are frequently far more resistant to marrying outside the fold ... On many levels this is understandable ... although it flies in the face of modern Britain's liberal values. (*n. pag.*)

Clement-Davies's text conforms to this liberal-secular ideology, viewing as divisive and intolerant both the prejudice shown by the dominant culture towards those who are different and the desire by Isaac to preserve his culture by seeking a marriage between his daughter and a man of her faith.

Rebecca and her father have differences of opinion that would not be uncommon in many parent/child relationships, yet the divergence here is more significant than a mere generation gap. Were it not for her loyalty to her father and the intolerance of others, the suggestion is that Rebecca would willingly abandon her

faith and culture. Like the beautiful ‘Jewesses’ of nineteenth-century conversionist novels and the refugees in texts examined in Chapter 2, Rebecca would be easily assimilated into the dominant culture, for she is not constructed as a Jew in racial terms. Her hard-hearted father, who is represented as irredeemably Jewish, cannot be ‘converted’ to Englishness. Because the text does not engage with the complexities of difference, the identification of readers with the ‘modern’ Rebecca would, in all likelihood, lead readers to conclude that assimilation is indeed the desired outcome, without considering its implications for the minority culture. Furthermore, Clement-Davies’s ready admission that he implies ‘positive and negative things’ about belief systems and cultures that are not his own reveals the inability to accept difference as equal, even while professing to do so. His comment, like that of Pat Pinsent quoted in Chapter 3, suggests that authors from the dominant culture feel entitled to pass judgement on minority cultures – a view with patronising, imperialistic overtones which the author no doubt did not intend.

Clement-Davies’s resurrection in the twenty-first century of the stereotype of the miserly Jew, without modifying it in any meaningful way, is curious. His alteration of Scott’s plot to make maximum capital of the stereotype is surely deliberate, but few contemporary readers will have read *Ivanhoe* – in the 1960s they would have been much more likely to have done so – therefore, in many cases, the intertextual connection will not be made. Conceivably, the author intended to make the stereotype so outlandish that readers will understand that prejudice against Jews comes from constructed images bearing no resemblance to reality; this would seem possible in the light of the author’s stated aims. If this were the case, however, it presupposes readers whose sophisticated critical faculties will enable them to decode a message which is extremely ambiguous. Perhaps, then, the author’s aim is simply to show the damaging effects of persistent prejudice on individuals and groups, although, paradoxically, in this case he appears to be colluding with stereotypes rather than challenging them, making the view voiced by Rebecca that Jews are not to be blamed for being the way they are the one that most closely matched his own. Alternatively, the construction of Rebecca may be intended to demonstrate to readers that Isaac is a historical literary construction and does not reflect all, or ‘real’, Jews, in which case the point needed to be made far more unambiguously.

This reinforcement of type in some characters and departure of it in those whose values chime with those of contemporary readers is the same strategy as that

used by Johnson, but while her intentions *vis à vis* a postcolonial agenda are obvious, *The Telling Pool*'s position is less so. The 'critical distance' which Hutcheon identifies as being essential to postmodern parody ('Irony' xiv) is not sufficiently in evidence in these texts, making both of them 'ideologically shifty' (xiv). The 'contemporary' characters in these historical novels represent how things might, or should, have been, while the 'period' characters seem to represent the past as it 'really' was. It is in this context that replication of old stereotypes without modification or narratorial intervention is problematic, and only slightly less so in Johnson's novels, despite her deconstruction of binaries of race. Although in relation to the characters of Hero and Rebecca, Hutcheon's view that postmodern historical fiction espouses an 'ideology of pluralism' ('Pastime' 63) is abundantly clear, it is far more opaque with regard to Mr and Mrs Silver, their daughter Rachel, and Rebecca's father, Isaac.

Under the guidance of the blacksmith, Rhodri questions the superiority of Christianity, and his acquaintance with Rebecca causes him to rethink his belief that Jews are evil. The novel conforms to at least one characteristic of the metahistorical romance: it 'seeks to dialogue with the past, to reconstruct its own (First World) relation to the world' (Elias 170). However, the point of this particular dialogue is ambiguous; therefore, *The Red Towers of Granada*, which is more didactic, more earnest and more modern than postmodern, also does more to use stereotype as an obvious means of interrogating historical representations of Jews and Jewishness. In failing to make its ideology clearer, *The Telling Pool* seems more likely to reinforce the 'dangerous climate' the author fears than to help prevent it.

Modern child readers may make little or no distinction between a text written during the nineteenth century and a twenty-first century parody of an earlier character, text or genre. Fagin, for instance, may be read (or, more likely, watched) today with irony, but Dickens wrote a character which some even at the time complained was anti-Semitic – a charge Dickens accepted, despite his insistence that he himself was not anti-Semitic. That the interpretation of a text is beyond its author's control is apparent in a review of Nigel Hinton's *Time Bomb* (2005) on Amazon, which reads, 'This book was shocking. I recommend you stay away from this. It has no plot and is racist' (Peterson *n. pag.*).

*Time Bomb* problematises the 'formulaic inversion' prevalent in historical fiction of which Deborah Stevenson complains. The novel shares with Alan

Gibbons' *Street of Tall People* a backdrop of conflict between Jews and socialists on one side and fascists on the other, but the representations of Jews and Jewishness in the two books differ considerably. *Time Bomb* takes place in 1949, when Mosley's British Union of Fascists was still active. It is the story of four boys whose friendship is strained by the intrusion into their tight-knit group of Cap, a charismatic young member of the Blackshirts. The construction of the Jewish character, Manny Solomon, is a dramatic contrast to that of Yaro and Benny, the two boys in Gibbons' novel. In *Time Bomb*, Manny's mother is a shadowy background figure who fusses over her son, forcing him 'to wear warm clothes even when it was baking hot. He was also spectacularly unattractive with a pale, flabby body and a big, round face with a large hooked nose. He wore very thick glasses' (31). Manny's father is a Marxist, and Manny shares his father's political views. When the narrator, Andy, invites Cap to the boys' secret hideout, Manny sits, cowed, as he is ostracised by the young man, but returns the next day having prepared his defence:

'My dad says Mosley's a Fascist. He says he's an old-guard aristocrat trying to keep the workers down.'

I held my breath as Cap slowly lifted his eyes and gave Manny a look of contempt.

'Oh, yes? And what the hell's he, your dad? A Communist?'

Manny shook his head. 'He's a Marxist.'

'Same thing,' Cap snorted. 'They're all Russian sympathizers.'

'Karl Marx was German,' Manny said. 'He died years before the Russian Revolution. Anyway my dad says that what they've done in Russia isn't proper Marxism. He says that when the workers understand about real Marxism they'll unite all over the world and bring the capitalist bosses to their knees'. (193)

Manny's initial attempt to defend himself against Cap's taunts fails; although he is described as weak and unfit, it is as a boy that he is defeated by a man rather than as a Jew, for his non-Jewish friends do not even attempt to defy Cap. When Cap mimics one of the boys, Bob, who has a severe stammer, Manny is the only one of the four with the strength of character to retaliate:

He sucked his saliva together and spat again. This time, at the ground in front of Cap's feet. The action – ancient and ritualistic – was a gesture of such total contempt that even Cap was taken aback by its power and he merely stared as Manny turned and walked slowly out of the room, followed by Bob. (197)

Nigel Hinton brings the post-Holocaust construction of Jews as victims together with historical stereotypes about Jews, voiced through the fascist, Cap, and the construction of the left-wing Jew as hero. There is a complex ambivalence at

work in the novel, which does not explore the tension between the perception of Jews and the ‘reality’, but suggests, like some of the authors in Chapter 3, that even if at times Jews *do* conform to stereotype, this is not the sum total of who they are. The text perpetuates the left- and right-wing stereotypes of Jews as wealthy, but also poor; communists, but also capitalists: though Manny’s father ‘didn’t earn much money from his job as a Trades Union official in the Seamen’s Union ... his mother’s parents were rich so he always had far more toys and comics and books and sweets than the rest of us’ (31).

Andy and Eddie decide to warn Cap about the presence of an unexploded bomb at the building site where he is working, but before they do so, the bomb detonates and Cap is badly injured; ultimately the injuries prove fatal. Manny is ‘the least repentant’ (258-259) of the four, saying that it ‘serves him right – that he got blown up by a German bomb. It’s kind of like ... justice’ (259).

A postscript to *Time Bomb* makes unexpected reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a parallel to the explosion that ultimately kills Cap, Manny is killed by a car bomb, resulting from his work as a human rights lawyer working in Israel on behalf of Palestinians. The identity of the perpetrators is left unclear: ‘The Israelis blamed the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the PLO blamed Israelis who resented his work with the Palestinians’ (277). Manny’s fate can be read in several ways: as a general anti-war statement; a punishment of Manny for abandoning the moral high ground in his desire for ‘Old Testament’ justice in relation to Cap; or, if one understands the bombers to be Israeli, an anti-Zionist equation of Israelis with Nazis. Perhaps it is intended to be all three. Andy’s politically charged disclosure years later makes explicit the function of historical fiction as a comment about the times in which it is written and its place in history.

Clearly, *Time Bomb* conforms to some extent to a left-wing view of the ‘good Jew’ as anti-Zionist. Hinton includes the Middle East conflict on the continuum of Jewish history, an inclusion which problematises the post-World War II impulse to portray Jews in terms of victimhood.<sup>5</sup> The text encourages readers to make a moral equation between the Jews as victims of fascism and the Palestinians as victims of

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<sup>5</sup> Like Nigel Hinton, Linda Newbery links the Holocaust to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although her novel, *Sisterland* (2003), is more ideologically neutral. The protagonist, Hilly, discovers towards the end of the book that her grandmother had been a Jewish refugee, but has denied her past. Hilly subsequently travels to Israel to meet her grandmother’s sister, a Holocaust survivor, to the consternation of her Palestinian boyfriend.



the Israelis. Manny – British-Israeli-Jewish, but an ally of the Palestinians, a lawyer but a socialist – disrupts the ‘good Jew’/‘bad Jew’ binary, demonstrating that such labels are not as straightforward as they might seem. Ultimately a victim, Manny progresses during the novel from a boy who is ‘worried about hurting himself’ (64) to someone prepared to defend the powerless, and who dies for doing so. The construction of Manny incorporates many stereotypes about Jews and responds to others, suggesting that Hinton’s intention is to use “‘type” as something to be ironically undercut’ (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 63). Such irony is characteristic of postmodern metafiction, as is the disintegration of ethical certainty that occurs when both Manny and Cap are killed in a bomb explosion, inviting the reader to compare the circumstances, and blurring the line between justice and vengeance. As an adult narrator, Andy makes clear his naïvety and ignorance as a child but, oddly, the older Andy seems to retain his childhood perception of Manny as conforming to stereotype even while Manny is portrayed as *Time Bomb*’s hero.

Both *Hero* and *The Telling Pool* associate Jewish religious practice with unsympathetic or villainous characters, while avoiding criticising Judaism itself. This strategy is also used in Caroline Lawrence’s ‘Roman Mysteries’ series and Geraldine McCaughrean’s *Not the End of the World*. The ‘Roman Mysteries’ are set during the first century AD, when Christianity was still a minority faith. The text represents Judaism as an outmoded religion superseded by a modern Christianity. Lawrence states her position openly: ‘Every author promotes their own world view, either consciously or unconsciously. I do not hide the fact that I am a Christian’ (Bakker *n. pag.*). Elsewhere, she says, ‘Jews today are still waiting for the Messiah to come, although there are a growing number of “messianic Jews” who believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is the promised Messiah!’ (‘Roman Mysteries’ *n. pag.*). The text imagines what Marshall Grossman describes as ‘the subsumption of Jewish history into the putatively “Judeo-Christian” present’ (115) and, in its otherwise modern sensibility which represents diversity in terms of equality, fails to acknowledge ‘the ambivalent position of “the Jew” within a supposed “common culture”’ (Cheyette, *Constructions* 4).

Throughout the series, Christians are portrayed as wiser and more kindly than Jews. In contrast to Mordecai, the Christian, the Jewish characters are ignoble. Jonathan’s mother, believed dead, is in fact still alive, having left his father for her Jewish lover after her husband converted to Christianity. Susanna’s lover dies in

debased circumstances; Susanna herself abandons her children; Jerusalem is lost as the result of Jewish dissension. Susanna's brother was once a Jewish zealot, but has converted to Christianity: 'You were right, Mordecai. In the terrible days that followed [the fall of Jerusalem] I often cursed myself for not listening to you' (Lawrence, *Assassins* 27). Mordecai contrasts outmoded Judaism with modern Christianity. Jonathan asks unhappily, 'Are we permitted to eat these, father?' (37) as snails are brought in to a dinner party. His father replies soothingly, 'God has made all things clean' (37).

The Jews are represented as intolerant of the victimised Christians. The rabbi is 'much fiercer looking' (Lawrence, *Thieves* 123) than the convert, Mordecai. He tells Jonathan 'tersely' (123) that he is 'not welcome' (124) because 'his father teaches dangerous lies' (124). Jonathan explains that they 'can't worship openly because so many people hate us' (127) and later says that not only has the family been banned from the synagogue, but they have also been 'rejected by the Jewish community, even by his father's relatives' (Lawrence, *Slave Girl* 4). Readers are likely to identify with Jonathan, one of the protagonists, particularly as the majority of them are likely to be at least nominally Christian themselves.

In broadly liberal and secular contemporary Britain, children's literature does not often contain characters that practise any religion. When it does so, it is usually with the intention of informing readers about religions they may not know of, or demonstrating the intolerance historically shown by the Christian church towards those who practise minority religions, including paganism. The 'Roman Mysteries' series is a rare example of a contemporary mainstream text that is also overtly Evangelical. Titles such as *The Slave-Girl from Jerusalem* signal the series' position in the tradition of nineteenth-century conversionist novels such as *The Slaves of Sabinus* (1890) by Charlotte Yonge or Emily Holt's *The Slave Girl of Pompeii* (1887), both discussed in Chapter 1. The very popularity of the 'Roman Mysteries' series has enabled the books' insensitivity to Jews and Judaism seemingly to go unnoticed.

Geraldine McCaughrean's staunchly feminist, anti-religious, Whitbread award-winning *Not the End of the World* (2004) is more overtly critical of Judaism than Lawrence's novels. With its focus on a community of women subverting patriarchal domination, her novel has much in common with a strand of historical fiction which focuses on the oppression of women, often healers, who are accused of

witchcraft by authoritarian male religious fanatics.<sup>6</sup> The novel begins as Noah and his family escape the flood. The family has a 'jolly, cosy Sabbath' (25) while people drown outside. Noah prays, 'palms upraised, face glowing with zeal' (9), while, at the same time, Shem 'wield[s] his stave, dislodging people from the hull in the same way you might swat horseflies off the flanks of your horse' (8). Later, the protagonist, Noah's daughter, Timna, says 'Shem thinks being the hand of God means he has to hit people whenever he issues God's commands for the day' (130). After a baby wildebeest is born, Shem drags it from its mother and slits its throat, demonstrating the perceived inhumanity of the Jewish practice of ritual slaughter.

The women, and Noah's youngest son, still a boy, quietly undermine the authority of the men, first by smuggling two children onto the boat and then, by daring to question Noah's beliefs: 'A companionable silence falls while we women wonder if it can possibly be true: that Noah is wrong. A little wrong. Wrong in certain crucial respects. Wholly, catastrophically wrong' (157). Finally, the women collude to save at least Noah's daughter, Timna, and the hidden children from his tyranny, enabling them to join another family in a life of freedom and equality.

Certainly, the majority of readers would approve of a community of women subverting patriarchal authority and escaping to a life free from a religion represented as innately repressive of women, yet reviews of the novel reveal different responses to its view of Judaism. In *The Independent*, Nicholas Tucker implicitly concurs with its construction of Judaism as a harsh and merciless religion, describing Noah as 'a bigoted cultist ... It takes Noah's wife Ama to understand that no genuinely loving Deity could ever countenance the carnage caused by the great flood' (21). Dina Rabinovitch merely notes that the book 'takes a jaundiced view of Old Testament religion' (17), while Diane Samuels is more critical, pointing out that the book's ideological linkage of patriarchal values to Judaism is inaccurate:

Noah and his family are described as practising Jewish law (there are references, for instance, to circumcision and the prohibition of the making of images). Yet, according to biblical chronology, Noah comes long before the commandments (and Abraham, later in the book of Genesis, is the first to be circumcised). (*n. pag.*)

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example *I, Coriander* (2005), by Sally Gardner; *The Burning Time* (1994) by Carol Matas; and *Witch Child* (2000) by Celia Rees.

These errors, whether deliberate or not, serve to highlight the link the author makes between oppressive patriarchy and Judaism. The novel's message that Judaism is incompatible with a fulfilling life for women is one which Jewish feminists such as Rachel Adler would challenge. Adler suggests that the critique of Judaism by feminists from other religions has led at times to 'ugly anti-Judaic smears' (45). She criticises 'the hegemonic feminism of white, middle-class, liberal, secularist women, reproducing the same contempt for difference that characterises their male counterparts' (50), and indeed, the liberal-secular feminist ideology of *Not the End of the World* similarly fails to recognise the possibility of multiple and at times competing feminist concerns. Neither does it take into account the implications of its criticisms for a minority faith whose adherents are still victims of religious intolerance.

The failure of Gentile critics to notice the anti-Judaism inherent in such constructions of Jews and Jewishness highlights Marshall Grossman's point that in Christian culture, Jewish biblical history is part of, but also superseded by, a 'superior' Christianity. Indeed, the term 'Old Testament' is employed routinely in the British press to signify not only someone severe and unyielding, but also something outmoded.<sup>7</sup> This type of reference does not necessarily point to anti-Semitism, but it does demonstrate a failure of cultural sensitivity: it is difficult to imagine many of the broadsheets denigrating the Muslim holy book in such a manner. Perhaps this type of reference is made unthinkingly with regard to Judaism because the Christian appropriation, reinterpretation and renaming of the Jewish Bible, the *Tanakh*, as the 'Old Testament', has given Gentiles a feeling of 'shared ownership' of its stories, and the incorporation of these stories into a so-called Judeo-Christian culture has rendered them open to criticism in a dominant culture that is becoming increasingly secular humanist in outlook.

Although 'negative' representations such as those detailed above have become more common in the discourse about Jews in children's literature since the 1990s, a few texts continue to present Jews as victims in a manner similar to, but more simplistic than, texts from the 1960s, such as *Return to Freedom*. Bridget Crowley represents Jews as passive victims in *Feast of Fools* (2003), for instance,

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<sup>7</sup> Just one recent example is to be found in *The Evening Standard*: 'Sarah Brown's account of recent times in Downing Street will read like the Old Testament by the autumn' (Sands 17).

which links the plight of the stigmatised non-Jewish hero with that of the Jews in medieval Lincolnshire shortly before the expulsion of the Jews from England.<sup>8</sup>

A small number of texts eschew the victim/villain binary. Robert Westall's short story, *The Christmas Ghost* (1992), is markedly ambivalent towards Jews and Jewishness. Immigrant Otto Leibner becomes a wealthy factory owner and uses his profits for the benefit of the town: he builds a school and library, and 'was the first to give the workers a fortnight's paid holiday' (104). However, he is also a 'joke' (103), with the children 'performing' Otto by donning a hat and 'beard'. The text refers to Leibner as 'Otto the Jew, fabulous monster' (103). As Kipling had done some eight decades earlier, Westall's story accepts that Jews can play a positive role in nation building, providing they use their seemingly inevitable wealth for the good of others.

As Philip Pullman does in *The Tiger in the Well*, Alan Gibbons constructs a range of Jewish characters that depart from the binary structure in his novel, *Renegade* (2009), which adds elements of horror to a text that draws on and subverts elements of *Oliver Twist*. Gibbons takes an approach of which Louise Doughty would undoubtedly approve: he makes the Fagin figure, Samuel Rector, a Gentile, while the Oliver figure is a Jewish boy, Israel. Inherently a gentle boy, Izzy has been corrupted by a 'demon seed' which gives him the ability to bring the dead back to life, and he is too weak to oppose Rector's plan to harness his power for evil. Another Jewish boy, Chaim (Hebrew for 'life'), joins forces with the kind prostitute, Betsy, and the time-travelling hero, Paul, to rescue Izzy. It is Chaim who has the novel's moral conscience, although, like Daniel Goldberg in *The Tiger in the Well*, he uses tactics some might judge to be morally ambiguous in order to do good: 'This is survival. You've got to take a leaf out of old Robin Hood's book. Steal from the rich and give to the poor' (122).

*Renegade* also includes minor Jewish characters in the form of sullen and cynical school boys, who serve as a foil to Chaim. Neither Jewish characters nor villains conform to type, even when that type is an inversion of what might be expected. When the hated Rector shows off Israel to the crowd as a new addition to his group of Rat Boys, a man calls out,

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<sup>8</sup> Sarah Matthias's *Tom Fletcher and the Angel of Death* (2008) focuses on a Jewish man falsely accused of murdering a monk in medieval England. The *Books for Keeps* review complains that 'the tone of this book is flippant, which does not sit well with these events' (Fisher n. pag.)

‘Taking up with the Hebrews now, are you, Sammy?’ ... There was sarcasm in the question.

In response, Samuel stiffened and swept the crowd with his eyes, searching for the speaker. ‘Is that a problem?’ (15)

Izzy is opposed to his masters’ plan, but is unable to resist them physically. Instead, he does so psychologically, telling them, ‘I serve you because I have no choice ... You can’t ask for more’ (287). Israel has the capacity to restore life, while Chaim helps the living to experience it.

Gibbons problematises and subverts stereotypical images of Jews, and demonstrates that casual anti-Semitism is to be found among ordinary people. He uses *Oliver Twist* as intertext in a way that is transparent enough to be recognisable to most readers, but is also complex, avoiding the simplistic didacticism and inversion of stereotype to which Deborah Stevenson objects. The technique of using a time-travelling protagonist from the twentieth century to view the past with the eyes of the present from within the text itself encourages readers to recognise stereotypical constructions such as Fagin as products of the literary imagination. *Renegade* successfully contests longstanding literary constructions of Jews, but does so from a postmodern perspective that facilitates young readers’ interrogative dialogue with the legacy of the English literary tradition.

## **Conclusion**

When Josephine Kamm, Geoffrey Trease and Pamela Melnikoff were writing in the 1960s, immigration and racism were significant issues in a society slowly making the transition to multiculturalism, and the Holocaust was not considered a suitable topic for children. These authors used the example of the experience of Jews in medieval and early modern England to address such contemporary concerns as cultural, racial and religious tensions and differences. Four decades on, the Holocaust and conflicts abroad are within the realm of young people’s knowledge. They are subjects of literature for children in a society in which racism remains a persistent social and political problem, and global events have contributed at home to intercultural strife, home-grown terrorism, and a backlash against multiculturalism.

Since the 1990s, the number of children’s books originating in Britain that contain Jewish characters has grown, and continues to do so. The majority are historical fiction. Some are about the Holocaust. Others focus on Judaism or the

relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Several are set in London's multicultural East End. Others are explicitly or implicitly related to the Middle East conflict. In all of these texts, Jews are positioned at the intersection of politics and power relations, often as the group against which the position of others can be measured.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that Jews have been constructed sympathetically when viewed as a marginalised people in relation to the hegemonic culture. Chapter 5, in contrast, has shown that the notion of Jews, particularly Jewish men, as powerful, divisive or authoritarian underlies several recent texts. But although it might be assumed that these new constructions are related to changing attitudes towards Jews in the light of the Middle East conflict, this does not appear to be the case. Certainly, anti-Semitism is increasing in Britain in part because Jews are felt by many to be the aggressor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the stereotype of international 'Jewish power' is aired with some regularity in the public sphere in connection with this view.<sup>9</sup> However, the majority of texts concerned with conflict in the region address it obliquely, by instead highlighting interfaith tolerance and good relations between the monotheistic religions in past times. Those works that engage with the subject directly are careful to avoid conflating Jews with Israelis and, with the exception of Elizabeth Laird's controversial *A Little Piece of Ground*, refrain from demonising Israel. This approach is in keeping with the trend in children's literature to advocate peaceful relations even while acknowledging the realities of war. It is also in line with the impulse, seen in children's literature from the eighteenth century onwards, to instruct readers about the world and their place in it, including the appropriate way to interact with 'other' groups in society. It is surprising, then, that some texts depart from this convention, not in constructions of Jews in literature about the Middle East, but by reviving ambivalent messages about them that were common in the Victorian era and earlier, but dormant since the end of World War II.

The complacency with which 'new heritage anti-Semitism' is employed runs counter to the received wisdom that contemporary children's literature should strive to accept difference as equal. That objective is undertaken in historical fiction in part

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<sup>9</sup> For a full discussion of the nature and extent of contemporary anti-Semitism in Britain, see the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Anti-Semitism's *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism* (2006).

through the privileging of a range of minority perspectives, a strategy which at times leads to the ‘very conservative’ genre of which Deborah Stevenson writes. However, that some representations of Jews reinstate centuries-old stereotypes without serving an obvious anti-racist or multicultural purpose indicates a radical break with the ideology of cultural pluralism, and the potential for Jews to be excluded from the discourse of multiculturalism.

The boundary between Jews and other groups is constructed through appearance in ‘Roman Mysteries’, *The Telling Pool* and *Time Bomb*, the only contemporary text in which a Jewish child is depicted as ugly and having a large, hooked nose. It is constructed not just through wealth, but avarice and cunning in *The Telling Pool* and *Hero*; through unscrupulousness in *Hero*; and through foreignness in *The Telling Pool*. Criticism of Judaism reappears in ‘Roman Mysteries’, *The Telling Pool*, *Hero* and *Not the End of the World*,<sup>10</sup> and the link between the observance of Judaism and immoral behaviour is reiterated in the same texts. A new, modern stereotype appears, too, in *Hero* and *Not the End of the World*: the association of Jews with the oppression of women and minorities. In these texts, Jewish characters are not constructed as bad people who happen to be Jewish, they are ‘bad Jews’.

This is not to suggest that authors should only write heroic, or ‘positive’ Jewish characters. However, with a long history of literature that includes stereotypes of minorities, and in a climate where racial and religious intolerance is rising alongside the ostensible acceptance of multiculturalism, one might expect the ways in which minority groups are represented in children’s literature to be an issue of particular concern. Indeed, this is one reason why the suitability for today’s readers of once popular, or even classic, texts for children or families, such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or *Little Black Sambo* (1899) by Helen Bannerman, is an ongoing subject of debate, and why some texts have had racial stereotypes removed from more recent editions. Clearly, in works such as *Hero* and ‘Roman Mysteries’, which in addition to the Jewish-Christian boy features an Egyptian former slave and a mute boy in the circle of friends, the authors’ privileging of a range of minority perspectives indicates their awareness and approval of the trend

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<sup>10</sup> A failure to accept the validity of Judaism and Jewish practice is found even in the education sector. An inspector criticised the acts of worship he witnessed at a Jewish primary school, finding fault with the children for not being contemplative and for lacking the discipline of ‘shutting their eyes and listening to a prayer’ (Shire 43), a mode of worship which is not Jewish, but Christian.



towards cultural sensitivity. It is curious, then, that writers who consider the history of representations of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in their work replicate in the same texts damaging stereotypes of Jews.

That Jews appear, in some cases, to be an exception to the rule points to a perception of them as occupying a uniquely ambivalent space in children's literature, and in British society more generally. The location of Jews in a hierarchy in which they are 'powerful' compared to other groups is an indication that their position in society is perceived to have shifted from the margins towards the centre. Indeed, the constructions of Jews in these texts suggest that they are increasingly seen as part of the dominant culture and that, as a result, they are perhaps more open to criticism than would have been the case in earlier decades. These constructions suggest that perceptions of Jews are moving beyond associations of them with the Holocaust.

Any of these developments might be seen by many as positive, pointing to the growing acceptance of Jews as part of an increasingly diverse Britain. However, as in the past, acceptance of Jews is, at times, conditional: in some texts, to be a Jewish self – a 'good Jew' – characters must leave the Jewish other – the 'bad Jew' – behind. The transition from *The Star and the Sword*, in which Jewish characters are at their most heroic when they choose to remain Jewish, to texts such as *Hero* or *Not the End of the World*, in which heroes must reject their Jewishness in order to escape from oppression by the Jewish villains, is marked.

Certainly, though, this new, 'bad Jew' does not exist in isolation. The construction has grown up alongside others, in which Jews are subjects who tell their own stories, rather than a group that needs to be defined and explained, or used as a stock character to make a broader point. In *The Tiger in the Well*, *Street of Tall People* and *Renegade*, historical or literary events are the starting point for a complex dialogue with Jewish history. In these texts, Jewish experience is part of the story, but the story itself is about individuals, not 'Jews' or 'Jewishness'. The presence of several Jewish characters in these texts also enables them to function as characters in a story rather than serving as 'token Jews', bearing the weight of literary history on their shoulders. There is no 'good Jew'/'bad Jew' binary in these novels, as there is in *Hero*, *Not the End of the World*, and *The Telling Pool*; no good non-Jew/bad Jew as in the 'Roman Mysteries', *A Little Piece of Ground* and *The Telling Pool*.

As an active socialist, Alan Gibbons wrote *Renegade* from a deliberately anti-racist perspective in response to his mother's recollection – one that gave *Street of Tall People* its name – that as a child she had been frightened by the black coats and beards of Hasidic Jews in Manchester:

I got to thinking that part of this was bound to be cultural representations of Jews in Shakespeare and Dickens (Shylock, Fagin). I was aware of anti-Semitism as probably the most ancient and poisonous racism. I started to think about reworking the themes of *Oliver Twist* but with a positive Jewish character ... I wanted to present an alternative to the usual imagery of usury and avarice.' ('Re: Your Question' 2010)

That Gibbons felt it necessary to challenge the 'usual imagery' raises again the question of why many of these tropes are being resurrected in literature for children, when they are acknowledged by some to be damaging, and they remain alive in popular culture in any case. Gibbons, certainly, does not believe that a 'heritage' stereotype would necessarily be understood by children as one that resides only in the past. Indeed, some young people might see such an image as very much a part of the present. Faced with a range of competing and conflicting constructions of Jews, many of which pass judgement by categorising them as 'good' or 'bad' Jews, contemporary readers might well be led to question the place of Jews in twenty-first century Britain.

## **Conclusion: At the Crossroads**

This project grew out of my experience as a secular Jewish New Yorker living in London. In my childhood reading, I had met characters whose lives resembled my own, or those of my immigrant ancestors. I wondered whether children's literature of this type was published in Britain, and began to research what was available. I discovered that the number of contemporary books in which Jews appeared was small, and that most of them were not written by Jewish authors. What I believed to be a paucity of books, together with the silence on the subject by British-Jewish writers for children, pointed to a larger question about the ways in which Jews were perceived in contemporary Britain, and, perhaps, the ways in which they perceived themselves.

As I researched further, I discovered that the literature I had hoped to find was in short supply, but there was an unexpectedly large amount of material from the eighteenth, and particularly, nineteenth, centuries. This earlier literature was also written by, and for, non-Jews. There was, however, also a small amount of literature by Jewish writers for a Victorian Anglo-Jewish child readership. The majority of this material, unfortunately, did not fit into the structure of this thesis and must, therefore, form the basis of another project. This might compare this literature with Jewish-American material from the same period, or examine the ways in which narratives of Jewish history were presented to Jewish children, and the functions that such literature served.

That Jews appeared in adventures, domestic stories, 'It-narratives', 'London Cries', moral tales, fantasy and conversion narratives had less to do with their number in society – for there were few Jews in England until the late nineteenth century – than with their status as the country's oldest non-Christian religious minority. The literary preoccupation with Jews suggested that there were tensions around the question of how such a group could, or should, be incorporated into a monocultural, Christian country – a question intimately connected with that of the kind of nation England was and wished to be. Children's authors participated actively in this discourse, for national identity was a crucial element in literature that aimed not just to entertain, but also to instruct readers into their future roles in society. As this thesis has demonstrated, the imagining of England as the Holy Land

in many texts inevitably had a specific impact on England's relationship with its Jewish population; the English view of themselves as 'chosen people' moulded its relations with a range of groups within and without its national borders.

Children's literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was dominated by writers from a tradition of religious dissent, whose Enlightenment values led many to write literature reflecting their rational, egalitarian outlook. This literature sought to overcome entrenched attitudes towards, and beliefs about, Jews and Judaism, by adopting the liberal approach that would continue to characterise much children's literature up to and including today: it focused on what different groups had in common rather than on the divisions between them. One strategy authors employed was attempting to reconcile Judaism and Christianity. In William Fordyce Mavor's *Youth's Miscellany* (1798), for instance, 'Shadrach the Jew' exhibits the virtue of charity by settling his Christian neighbour's debts in order to save him from the workhouse. Other works for children, such as Jeffreys Taylor's *The Little Historians* (1824), took a 'revisionist' view that was critical of England's historical treatment of Jews. Still others accepted that Jews could be 'converted' to Englishness, even before novels for adults such as Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), and *Harrington* (1817), by Maria Edgeworth, were lauded for doing so. One such example is Christian Salzmann's *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children; With an Introductory Address to Parents* (1790) (trans. Mary Wollstonecraft), in which Ephraim, who is Jewish, pays a social call on his Christian neighbours and cures the toothache of the boy of the house. That even those Jews who were thought to be unassimilable were permitted to live peaceably among their neighbours was a further indication of how tolerant, civilised, and civilising, a nation the English believed themselves to be.

Nevertheless, this liberal impulse was always in conflict with longstanding images from literary and popular tradition, of which Shylock, and later, Fagin, are the most well known. In children's books, Jews were constructed as figures both comic and sinister. They were avaricious moneylenders or swindling pedlars, dressed in long black cloaks, with hooked noses and beards. Whether they were immigrants or born in England, they invariably spoke with an accent that set them apart as 'Jews'. They were 'dark' and 'oily'; outsiders in 'race', religion, nationality. Such images pervaded even literature that represented Jews as part of the nation, and, in particular, London, revealing not so much a 'good Jew'/'bad Jew' binary, but a

prevailing ambivalence. This remained the case even when the majority of Jews were English-born and acculturated, and the literary image bore less and less resemblance to English Jews, most of whom did not wear the garb of the *shtetl*. Indeed, although the borders between ‘real’ Jews and non-Jews blurred with increasing Jewish integration over time, and textual representations adapted accordingly, markers of difference nevertheless remained in place, demonstrating the perceived threat to the dominant culture posed by ‘invisible’ Jews who could pass unnoticed among Englishmen. This threat was countered by the frequent reinscription of fixed ‘racial’ images of Jews as ‘dark’, and accented or lisping, for instance in *Jack Harkaway at Oxford* (1872) by Bracebridge Hemyng and *Harding’s Luck* (1909) by E. Nesbit. ‘Jewish wealth’ was also often used as a distinguishing feature. When used for their own benefit rather than that of others – as in the character of Mr Meyer in Rudyard Kipling’s ‘The Treasure and the Law’, from *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) – their ‘intrinsic’ wealth set Jews apart ‘racially’ from the dominant culture.

The fact that the demarcation line was moveable does suggest that, to some extent, the liberal agreement that made it possible for Jews to become, in Claude Montefiore’s famous phrase, ‘Englishmen of the Jewish persuasion’ (qtd. in Endelman 170) was a success. However, that even politically progressive literature for young people, such as *We and the World: A Book for Boys* (1881) by Juliana Horatia Ewing, continued to construct Jews as not-white a century later demonstrates that the majority culture felt some anxiety that Jews might be ‘the same’ as Englishmen, and reveals that the ‘emancipation agreement’ had also, in some respects, failed.

As might be expected, after World War II, children’s literature in Britain reflected some of the cataclysmic changes wrought by the war and the demise of the Empire. Growing awareness of the Holocaust, the rise in immigration, and the broadening of attitudes towards multiculturalism led from the late 1950s and 1960s onwards to an increase in characters in children’s literature from marginalised groups. These texts often privileged the perspective of such groups in realist fiction: *A Box for Benny* (1958) by Leila Berg is an example of this type of book. Beginning at this time, historical fiction increasingly took a revisionist approach to the treatment of minorities by the hegemonic culture. With regard to Jews, this perspective has been adopted most often in literature about the Holocaust, and in a

smaller number of texts, including *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966) by Geoffrey Trease, about earlier periods of anti-Semitic persecution in England.

The task of embedding Jews textually in a realist, multicultural, contemporary Britain has been rather less straightforward. That there is interfaith romance without the Jewish character having to convert to Christianity, as in *The Longest Weekend* by Honor Arundel (1969), is certainly a clear development from the past. There are also modifications of familiar literary constructions of 'the Jew', and the texts interrogate such traditional images by demonstrating the difficulty Gentile protagonists have in overcoming them. In some respects, though, the literature itself exhibits this same difficulty. In these texts, as in society, Jews have left London's East End, and they are not moneylenders, but doctors. There is hardly ever a hooked nose, but the black hair and olive skin continues to feature in representations of Jews in texts such as *My Darling Villain* (1976) by Lynne Reid Banks. There is no longer a lisp or 'Jewish' accent; instead, Yiddish phrases signal Jewishness. These are used, not with the ease born of cultural authenticity, but awkwardly, or incorrectly, as in *Dance on My Grave* (1982) by Aidan Chambers. The overwhelming impression of Jewish wealth remains intact in the *See You Thursday* trilogy (1981-1989) by Jean Ure, *My Darling Villain* and *The Longest Weekend*. This inability to break completely with the past in the textual construction of Jews and Jewishness reveals a difficulty in establishing the difference between 'real' and literary Jews, despite the fact that, in this context, such difference is intended to be 'positive', or neutral. Perhaps this ambiguity is one reason why the strategy to incorporate Jews into contemporary realist children's literature has been largely abandoned in Britain. Characters whose cultural difference is more obviously 'visible' might be thought to be better examples of literature that seeks to normalise cultural difference, while Jews who are 'almost the same', might be thought to be more usefully employed in texts that adopt a universalist liberal approach that seeks to erase difference.

Certainly, Jews feature not only in literature about persecution during the Middle Ages and World War II, but, increasingly, in historical fiction such as *Crusade* (2007) by Elizabeth Laird, in which good relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims in earlier periods are highlighted in an attempt to foster tolerance in the aftermath of 9/11, the 7/7 bombings and the 'war on terror'. In some contemporary literature, liberal ideology leads to the construction of Jewish

difference solely in terms of religion, which harks back to the emancipation agreement of the Enlightenment period, a construction that many Jews themselves welcomed, as some still do. Such an attempt to elide difference in favour of similarity, however, often results in the privileging of the majority culture and the judging of Jews and Jewishness against its norms, for instance in the frequent message that Jews are acceptable because Jesus was Jewish, found in texts such as *Escape from War* (2005) by James Riordan, or that Jewish particularity is illiberal, as in *The Telling Pool* (2005) by David Clement-Davies. The universalist impulse that suggested tolerance in the context of the Empire may begin to look somewhat less egalitarian in a postcolonial world.

If the engagement with its literary history in relation to Jews gives Britain a particular challenge, then its imperial past provides another. In the ideology of Empire, the British were constructed as ‘naturally’ superior to the cultures over which they ruled; acceptance of outsiders could never really be unconditional from this perspective. The ideology of progressive politics in British society today is not as consistent as it once was, with the debate about the limits of multiculturalism taking place across the whole political spectrum. It can be said, though, to be broadly anti-imperialist, seeking to atone for the nation’s colonial past by aligning itself with marginalised peoples and opposing the powerful. Britain may no longer be an international superpower, but it continues to see itself as providing a moral compass on the world stage – acting as a ‘light unto the nations’, as in the past. The position of the Jews in this transition between old and new constructions of Britishness is ambiguous. Jews are not among the groups subordinated by the colonial project. On the political left in Britain, Israel is widely viewed as a colonialist nation – a problematic position in a postcolonial world. From this perspective, Jews, often associated with Israel, shift from being seen as powerless to being viewed as powerful.

This transition in the common, though not universal, perception of Jews as moving from margins to centre is not manifested in the children’s books in which it might be expected to do so: those obliquely or overtly concerned with the Middle East conflict or the ‘war on terror’. Instead, it is implicit in historical fiction about other topics, which can be classed as broadly postcolonial in that it writes marginalised perspectives back into the narrative of British history. Such literature at times breaks with the common convention of including a sympathetic white,

Christian character in texts that otherwise focus on other groups, nor is what constitutes the dominant culture always consistent. This stance, which privileges difference over similarity, is in many respects synonymous with the type of multicultural literature that presents 'other' cultures as equal in value to the hegemonic culture (as opposed to multicultural literature that includes characters from a variety of cultural backgrounds but is not 'about', and does not privilege, any one of them). A key function of such texts is that they provide a literary mirror to child readers which validates their culture and their experience; it also offers a window to those not of the culture being represented. However, this perspective can be problematic in its own way. At times the binary is not simply between centre and margins, but between one marginalised group and another, a strategy which at times seems unwittingly to promote conflict. In children's literature this is realised in the construction of a binary between Jewish woman and Jewish man, black Jew and white Jew, Christian-Jew and Jewish-Jew, and secular Jew and religious Jew, with the former positions constructed as subordinate in the power structure and privileged in the text.

The 'racial' construction of 'dark' Jews, which persisted in historical and realist fiction through the 1980s, shifts in recent historical fiction towards a 'good Jew'/'bad Jew' binary in which 'bad Jews' are constructed as wealthy, avaricious swindlers and cultural particularists, dressed in a 'Jewish gabardine', as in *Hero* (2001), by Catherine Johnson. Judaism is presented as a harsh, 'patriarchal' religion in the 'Roman Mysteries' series (2001-2009) by Caroline Lawrence. Where this new historical fiction departs from earlier literary convention is in its avoidance of constructing 'bad Jews' as 'black'. In the current progressive ideology, 'black' connotes marginalisation and is a 'positive', distinguishing feature from the dominant culture, whereas 'bad Jews' are a part of it.

That the majority of children's literature still attempts to position Jews in relation to other groups and seeks to establish whether Jews are really 'us' or 'them' suggests that Jews 'don't fit': there remains a Jewish Question, although, as in the past, the real question is as much, or more, about British national identity as it is about Jews. This is illustrated in literature in which three main ideological positions are present: that the country must be mindful of racism and should foster tolerance of difference; that the harmonious coexistence of different religions is not only desirable, but possible; that certain Jewish values are 'other' to those of the nation.



Embedded in these constructions is a clear moral framework. In many respects, Britain has changed beyond recognition over 250 years, but many constructions of Jews in its children's literature, and the ideologies that they reveal, bear a remarkable similarity to those of some literature from over 200 years ago. That these constructions remain unexpectedly stable is perhaps particularly surprising, given that both the colonial and postcolonial conditions, which might be assumed to be oppositional, at times give rise to the positioning of Jews as outsiders in the construction of national identity. In this material, Jews who leave their particularity behind, adopting 'British values' by opting for a mingling of cultures, are deemed acceptable, while those who remain 'Jews', are not.

There is a paradox here that cannot be ignored, and it is one that applies to all relationships between majority and minority: the objection to the imposition of a liberal sameness that refuses to acknowledge difference, and the simultaneous opposition to being constructed in terms of difference. The rationale behind such objections, however, is twofold: such similarity, or difference, is imposed by majority upon minority, and, often, because of this, it lacks the nuance that is suggestive of cultural authenticity. In relation to Jews and Jewishness, 'difference' in British children's literature should mean Jewishness that is not defined solely by the Holocaust, Judaism that is acknowledged to be a religion in its own right rather than simply that which gave birth to Christianity, and Jews that are not 'Jew' – Shylock or Fagin, or their modern descendants – but individuals.

Yet it must be reiterated that several contemporary texts do construct Jewish subjectivity and experience as multiple and varied. These are often at least somewhat autobiographical, as are the memoirs by Lore Segal (*Other People's Houses* (1964)) and Charles Hannam (*A Boy in Your Situation* (1977) and *Almost English* (1979)), and poetry by Michael Rosen, including 'New School' (1986) and 'Don't Tell Your Mother' (1996). They are usually written by Jewish authors, but not always: *War Games* (2002) by Jenny Koralek is one such text. Jewish femininity is constructed with subtlety in *The Girls in the Velvet Frame* (1978) and *Voyage* (1983), both by Adele Geras. In historical fiction such as *The Tiger in the Well* (1991) by Philip Pullman and *Renegade* (2009) by Alan Gibbons, literary tradition is acknowledged, or resisted, and authorial imagination makes something new. In practice, however, the very limited quantity of such literature suggests that British writers for children struggle to articulate images of Jewish people that transcend literary and popular

constructions of 'the Jew'. As a result, in contrast to earlier children's literature that was at times progressive, both in the context of its production in an ostensibly monocultural England and in comparison to literature for adults at the time, today British children's literature seems surprisingly fearful of the fluid and complex nature of culture and identity.

In British children's literature, Jews are often constructed as victims or villains, but there is a middle ground that remains virtually unexplored; it is, however, the subject of literature for young people from other Anglophone countries, and, recently, British literature for adults. This middle ground is precisely the liminal space between Jews and non-Jews that has so troubled Gentile authors over the centuries. The interstitial position illustrated by the many constructions of Jews 'passing' or 'coming out' is an intrinsic part of life for acculturated Jews in the modern, or postmodern, world; this ability to pass, and the active decision not to, are among the particular experiences that gives Jews as much in common with homosexuals as with other ethnic groups.

That authors for young people in this country refrain from foregrounding these very ambiguities is as revealing of adult beliefs about child readers as it is of authorial opinions about Jews. The relative reification of constructions of Jews suggests a conflict not just between universalism and particularity, or between liberalism and multiculturalism, but also between the idea that children should, or even can, cope with indeterminacy and complexity, and the notion that they should be presented with clear, simple values and ideas. The question of how the country defines itself, and where the limits of Britishness lie, looms large in society; children's literature, which ostensibly inducts children into the values of that society, is unable to offer a consensus view on where it stands on diversity. This need not be seen as a problem, however: child readers are coping with fragmentation and uncertainty in their lives, and many are capable of doing the same in their books. Indeed, I would argue that what is needed in a postmodern society is exactly the 'welter of heterogeneous impressions' of which Emer O'Sullivan is wary (18), even if, as this thesis has shown, variety is not always synonymous with complexity.

The idea that identity is always in a state of flux is foregrounded in contemporary literature by Jewish-American authors. *Never Mind the Goldbergs* (2005) by Matthue Roth, *A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life* (2006) by Dana Reinhardt, *Goy Crazy* (2006) by Melissa Schorr, and *Confessions of a Closet*

*Catholic* (2006) by Sarah Littman, acknowledge, respectively, the struggle to be an Orthodox Jew while embracing aspects of secular society; the negotiation of a relationship between Jewishness and atheism; cultural tensions in an interfaith relationship; and a Jewish girl's flirtation with Catholicism. All focus on aspects of Jewish particularity, but the development of individual identity in these texts is common to all young people, whatever their ethnicity or religion. Novels such as *The View from Saturday* (1998) by E.L. Konigsburg focus on a small number of characters from a range of cultural backgrounds. These backgrounds are incidental to the story, but are fleshed out and culturally authentic nonetheless.

In Britain, a few recent texts do embed Jews in contemporary society, most of them in a way that differs markedly from American literature. Mal Peet's *Exposure* (2008), which is set in South America, includes three minor Jewish characters: a principled journalist, a lawyer and the 'wise, restrained foil .... for [one character's] racist ranting' (Personal Interview). Sarwat Chadda's *The Devil's Kiss* (2009), about modern-day Knights Templar, features a half-Muslim, half-Christian heroine and a Jewish keeper of the Templars' reliquaries. Kate Saunders' time-switch novel *Beswitched* (2010), set partly during the 1930s, reveals an ordinary girl to be Jewish only towards the end of the novel. Aside from Jonny Zucker's *Dan and the Mudman*, however, the only recent text to highlight contemporary Jewish experience is a short story by Noga Applebaum, who is not British-Jewish, but Israeli-Jewish. 'Cinema' (2005) tells of a Hassidic Londoner who borrows the clothing of his British-Asian friend in order to sneak, unnoticed, into the cinema: the viewing of secular films is forbidden in his community.

To an extent, whether representations of Jews in British children's literature might develop in future, and the direction any such development might take, is a matter of speculation. British society itself has become more accepting of the particular within the universal in recent years, but whether it can become comfortable with particularity that cannot be universalised remains to be seen. If one recognises and accepts instability as a feature of the contemporary world, then allo-Semitism, that theoretically neutral term, seems not only an accurate descriptor, but one that can be employed not only by Gentiles, but by Jews in relation to themselves.

Ben Gidley and Keith Kahn-Harris observe that in the 1990s, the UK Jewish community underwent 'a sea change in how [it] positioned itself in the context of

multicultural Britain.’ (10). This may be why, lately, more British-Jewish writers for adults have been able to break free of the ‘tame satire or crude apologetics’ that Cheyette suggests characterised Jewish literature in Britain until recently (*Contemporary* xxxiv). Certainly, Gibley and Kahn-Harris are optimistic that the relationship between the wider culture and the next generation of Jews will continue to evolve. For this relationship to be expressed authentically in British children’s literature, though, the historical ‘Jewish Question’ needs to be updated and asked by Jews themselves, and in relation to their own lives. The question should no longer be, ‘How can Jews be English in England?’; it should be rephrased as, ‘How can British Jews be Jewish in Britain?’

If it is the former question that more closely resembles the one being asked, can Jews, then, still be said to be ‘almost English’? That there is a discourse specifically ‘about Jews’ in literature for young people, and that few children’s books feature them as protagonists or ordinary people, is a clear indication that they are not considered part of the hegemonic culture, even if they are also, paradoxically, constructed as ‘powerful’ in some texts. The message that Jews occupy an ambivalent position in Britain continues to be passed down to young readers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, as it has been for over two centuries.

Perhaps only a new generation of authors raised to view ambiguity as unremarkable, who are comfortable with their own Jewish identities in a multicultural Britain rather than a monocultural England, will be able to explore the multiplicity of British-Jewish experience confidently in their writing, and to grapple with the borderland position of Jews as both ‘the same’ and ‘not the same’. Some British authors for young people have already done vital work to reimagine and rewrite Jews into the country’s history from within its literary tradition, and more, certainly, is needed. The more pressing task now, however, is not to write Jews into England’s past, but to inscribe them into Britain’s future.

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