JEWS AND GENDER

IN BRITISH LITERATURE

1815-1865

NADIA DEBORAH VALMAN

PhD

Queen Mary and Westfield College
University of London
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the variety of relationships between Jews and gender in early to mid-nineteenth century British literature, focussing particularly on representations of and by Jewish women. It reconstructs the social, political and literary context in which writers produced images and narratives about Jews, and considers to what extent stereotypes were reproduced, appropriated, or challenged. In particular it examines the ways in which questions of gender were linked to ideas about religious or racial difference in the Victorian period.

The study situates literary representations of Jews within the context of contemporary debates about the participation of the Jews in the life of the modern state. It also investigates the ways in which these political debates were gendered, looking in particular at the relationship between the cultural construction of femininity and English national identity.

It first considers Victorian culture's obsession with Rebecca, the Jewess created in Walter Scott's influential novel Ivanhoe (1819). It examines Rebecca's refusal to convert to Christianity in the context of Scott's discussion of racial separatism and modern national unity.

Evangelical writers like Annie Webb, Amelia Bristow and Mrs Brendlah were prolific literary producers, and preoccupied with converting Jewish women. Particularly during the 1840s and 1850s, evangelical writing provided an important forum for the construction and consolidation of women's national identity.

Grace Aguilar's writing was an attempt to understand Jewish identity within the terms of Victorian domestic ideology. In contrast, Celia and Marion Moss, in their historical romances, offered narratives of female heroism and national liberation, drawing on the contemporary debate about slavery.

Benjamin Disraeli's construction of a "tough" version of Jewish identity was a response both to the contemporary stereotype of the feminised Jew and to the debate about Jewish emancipation. It also drew on the virile ideology of the Young England movement of the 1840s.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks for inspiration and support to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Gendering the Jew: Scott's <em>Ivanhoe</em> 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Conversion Stories 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Home Influence: Grace Aguilar and Domestic Writing 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Judea Capta: Celia and Marion Moss, Slavery and Liberty 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Muscular Jews: Disraeli, Jewishness and Gender 166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Conclusion 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography 211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the first years of the campaign to establish political equality for British Jews in the 1830s, gender formed part of the debate. While the rights of Jewish men were being discussed in the male parliament and literary reviews, women writers were disseminating and extending the debate in novels, romances, periodicals and the theatre. Moreover, in the proliferation of literary texts that appeared in the decades following Sir Walter Scott's bestselling *Ivanhoe* (1819), representations of Jews were increasingly gendered. A brief reading of three plays which appeared during the first few years of the Emancipation campaign will indicate some uses of this strategy.

In Thomas Wade's play *The Jew of Arragon; or, The Hebrew Queen*, performed six months after the launch of the emancipation campaign in 1830, an ambivalent response to the Jews' demands is expressed through the figure of Rachel, a beautiful but ambitious Jewess. Wade's dedication "to the Jews of England" employs Enlightenment language in looking forward to the "great progress of reason, and, therefore, of justice and liberality" continuing in the release of "those unworthy bonds with which you still remain encumbered". But his play, which depicts the plot by a Jew and his daughter against the King of Arragon in revenge for his attempt to tax them, suggests a fear of Jewish political power. The Jew, Xavier, sees in his daughter's beauty "inborn royalty of soul / And outward-worn nobility" which will bring "glory and power to Spanish Israel". Indeed, the king cannot resist Rachel's beauty, and discards his betrothed bride despite the protests of his nobles and subjects. Increasingly aware of his political vulnerability, and that Rachel is "a honey that is poison", the king is nevertheless persuaded to make her queen. The retribution of the nobles is simultaneously patriotic and vicious; they declare that Arragon will "from Jewish graves / Start up again in Christian liberty". Rachel and her father kill themselves to avoid capture; while she reiterates her genuine love for

1 In 1830, Jewish men were obliged to renounce their religion in order to own land, to vote, to hold certain municipal offices, to be an MP, to take a degree at the universities of Oxford or Cambridge, or to operate a retail business in the City of London. The campaign for Jewish "Emancipation" aimed to remove these political disabilities.
2 Thomas Wade, *The Jew of Arragon; or, The Hebrew Queen. A Tragedy, in five acts*. Performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden on Wednesday, October 20th, 1830 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1830), x. Rachel and Xavier were played by Charles and Fanny Kemble.
3 Ibid, 21.
4 Ibid, 57.
5 Ibid, 77.
the king, Xavier promises ominously that although he "once did dream / Of building up a new Jerusalem / Here in this Saragossa ... Yet will her full hour come - hear it! 'twill come".6 In Wade's play, the desire of the beautiful Jewess for recognition in the Gentile world is elided with her father's more sinister political ambition.

Wade's representation of a scheming Jewish woman is challenged in Elizabeth Polack's play *Esther, the Royal Jewess!* which followed a few years later in 1835. Polack recasts the biblical story of Esther as an anti-Jacobin drama in which the Jews, and in particular the brave heroine, are shown as the bulwark of the monarchy. Esther, a beautiful and virtuous Jewess, is chosen by the king of Persia as his new wife. Meanwhile, insurrection is being planned by a flattering courtier, Haman, who despises the clergy and plots against the king, using popular resentment against "these vultures - who have so long been feasting on the substances of our people's labour, and revelling in wealth robbed from the needy" as a means to his own advancement to power.7 Esther's uncle Mordecai discovers the plot by Haman, whose plans to destroy the Jews are linked with his revolutionary aspirations: "I marvel not that he who could insult a fallen people, should prove a traitor to his sovereign".8 When Esther finally risks revealing her Jewish identity to the king in order to expose Haman's double treachery, the king responds with tolerance: "Never should the feelings of the heart be perverted by religious opinion. That power omnipotent, be it what it may, never intended its laws for cruelty and oppression".9 Esther ends the play with a speech of patriotism in which her loyalty to the monarch and to the Jews are perfectly compatible: "Blessed be this hour! happy be my king! and prosperous be the Jews of every land and clime! May the sacred tree of liberty never lose a branch in contending for religious superiority; but all be free to worship as he pleases. Let that man be for ever despised who dares interfere between his fellow man and his creed".10 In Polack's play, granting "liberty" to the Jews enhances their loyalty to the monarch.

Three years later, Charles Zachary Barnett's melodrama, *The Dream of Fate, or Sarah the Jewess*, also published as a prose tale, portrayed the Jewess as a victim of a scheming Englishman. The play is set in seventeenth-century Frankfurt, where Jews "were treated more like feudal slaves than honest citizens", making them vulnerable to exploitation.11 Stephen Cardinham, attracted by the wealth and beauty of the

---

6 Ibid, 81.
7 Elizabeth Polack, *Esther, the Royal Jewess!* An historical drama, in three acts (London: J Duncombe & Co, 1835), 9, 10, 18.
8 Ibid, 21.
9 Ibid, 28.
10 Ibid, 30.
Jewess Sarah Stolberg, "poured the insidious poison of a wily, but ingenious flatterer's tongue, into an unsuspecting artless maiden's ear - that he persuaded her to forget her lover - father - all, and to think of him, and him only". He also blackmails her, telling her his brother was murdered by Zodiah Cahn, "a bloodthirsty Jew" who has been protected by her father. Sarah agrees to elope with him, and is cast out by her father, whom Stephen kills, leaving Sarah accused of the murder. As Sarah approaches execution at the scaffold, she wakes and realises that most of the preceding action has been a dream. She determines to profit by its warning, and decides to marry the Jewish man her father had chosen as her husband. Thus, while the drama plays on the image of the victimised Jewess familiar from *Ivanhoe* and the recently successful English version of the French opera *La Juive*, it suggests that such tragic scenarios could be prevented by filial obedience and the avoidance of Jewish-Gentile marriage. The Jewess's sexuality, as in all the other plays, is the dangerous point of contact between Jewish and non-Jewish worlds.

Between them, these three plays usefully point to several of the themes associated with the Jewess that will be recurring in the course of this study. Most interestingly, perhaps, they have little of the ambiguity or allusiveness evident in the novels I will be considering. The Jewess appears in a variety of distinct though contradictory roles, as temptress, patriot or loyal daughter, ambitious or modest, scheming or loving, tragic or redemptive. While her father's Jewish identity is always visible, the youth and beauty of the Jewess often conceal her Jewishness, and invite her participation in the world outside the ghetto. The plays do indicate, as will the other texts under consideration in this thesis, that the figure of the Jewish woman was an important, politicised and unstable aspect of a semitic discourse which existed parallel to the parliamentary debates. Despite this variety, however, critical accounts of the conjunction of gender and Jewishness in literature have focussed particularly on the

---

12 Ibid, 10.
13 Ibid, 17.
14 In Augustin Eugene Scribe's English version of *The Jewess* (1835) the heroine, Rachel, is deceived by a prince who tells her than he is a Jew and that he is not married. She publicly exposes his deception, but since this will result in his condemnation to death she agrees to retract the accusation. This means that she must sacrifice her own life instead. The Cardinal offers to save her if her father converts but he refuses so Rachel is executed. After her death, it is revealed that she was in fact the Cardinal's daughter. In the English version of the play both Jewish obstinacy and Catholic hypocrisy are punished, but the suffering of the Jewess is the means of their punishment.
15 Bryan Cheyette's term "semitic discourse" rather than "antisemitism" or "philosemitism" is particularly appropriate to analysis of the ambivalent figure of the Jewess who, even when at her most threatening, is also always attractive. See Bryan Cheyette *Constructions of the Jew in English Literature and Society. Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7-9.
victimisation of the Jewish woman. Jean Paul Sartre, writing in 1946, saw the image of the *belle juive* as the sexual fantasy of antisemitic cultures:

There is in the words 'a beautiful Jewess' a very special sexual signification, one quite different from that contained in the words 'beautiful Rumanian,' 'beautiful Greek,' or 'beautiful American,' for example. This phrase carries an aura of rape and massacre. The 'beautiful Jewess' is she whom the Cossacks under the czars dragged by her hair through the streets of her burning village. And the special works which are given over to accounts of flagellation reserve a place of honor for the Jewess. But it is not necessary to look into esoteric literature. From the Rebecca of Ivanhoe up to the Jewess of 'Gilles,' not forgetting the works of Ponson du Terrail, the Jewess has a well-defined function even in the most serious novels. Frequently violated or beaten, she sometimes succeeds in escaping dishonor by means of death, but that is a form of justice; and those who keep their virtue are docile servants or humiliated women in love with indifferent Christians who marry Aryan women.\(^{16}\)

The Jewess's beauty, according to Sartre, is always already marked by and implicated in a history of persecution. The sexuality of the Jewish woman is a political symbol; her beauty is the justification for her rape, and by extension the provocation to her people's persecution. The desirability and passivity of the female Jew is a metonym for the status of Jews within the European diaspora: she must be both possessed and punished through the violence of rape.

In nineteenth century European culture the Jewess was seen as Oriental, a dark beauty in turban and jewels. Sartre's argument in this passage, with its emphasis on the relationship between power structures and their cultural manifestations, bears some resemblance to Edward Said's influential account of Western representations of Oriental femininity. Said begins *Orientalism* by epitomising the political relationship between Occident and Orient as a relationship of gender:

There is very little consent to be found ... in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically Oriental.' My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.\(^{17}\)


Both Said and Sartre rightly draw attention to the important function of the imagery of gender in the imaginative apparatus of political domination. Rana Kabbani, who in Imperial Fictions. Europe's Myths of Orient concentrates more closely on orientalist representations of women and sexuality, suggests a simple correspondence between imperialist and patriarchal patterns of power. The representations of women in Richard Burton's version of the Arabian Nights (1885-8), for example, "were in keeping with the general Victorian prejudice. All women were inferior to men; Eastern women were doubly inferior, being women and Easterners ... They were there to be used sexually, and if it could be suggested that they were inherently licentious, then they could be exploited with no qualms whatsoever".18 Tamar Garb has applied this assumption to the cultural representation of the Jewess, which is seen to have a determining effect on the "actual" Jewish woman:

The Jewess invokes a particular set of racist and misogynist fantasies, which involve a double 'othering' and consequently a double silencing. To speak as an actual Jewish woman in the face of the dead weight of phatasmatic projections that circulated around the category Jewess was difficult, if not impossible.19

However, Jane Miller has criticised the simultaneous absence of women's history in Said's analysis: "The irony is that within these anti-imperialist discourses it is women's vulnerabilities and the injuries they attract to themselves which become metaphors for the injuries suffered by whole societies and for the consequent humiliations of their men".20 In order to pursue "the implications of the colonial/sexual parallel beyond its reference to the humiliations of men", she urges an attention to the material histories of colonised and colonising women and their relationship to cultural symbols of femininity.21 Such work would also unpack Kabbani's reductive notion of "patriarchy", for, as Catherine Hall has shown, women themselves were active in defining and disseminating nineteenth-century ideologies of gender.22 This study will begin by juxtaposing Said's thesis and Miller's critique in relation to a semitic discourse, and will examine gendered representations of Jews as the product of both Jewish and non-Jewish writers in nineteenth-century Britain. I intend to show firstly how such images functioned within the context of the widespread debate on the political status of the Jews in this period, and to consider

---

20 Jane Miller, Seductions. Studies in Reading and Culture (London: Virago Press, 1990), 120.
21 Ibid, 118-9
22 Catherine Hall, "Feminism and Feminist History," in Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 9.
what kinds of political questions were at stake in these debates and displaced onto images of Jews - questions about modern commerce, for example, or the status of women, or the threat of Catholicism. Secondly, I will be arguing that, although certainly Jews were subject to political and social disabilities in this period, a situation often justified and reinforced by contemporary cultural representations, the Jewish woman was not silenced, nor was her "othering" completely disabling, as Garb implies. Instead both female and male Jewish writers engaged dynamically with the gendered images circulating in the dominant culture, and used them strategically to contribute to contemporary political debates.

It is only recently that the importance of gender in Jewish social and cultural history has been addressed, and as yet constructions of masculinity in this context have not been adequately considered. In the case of Jewish women's history, however, two contradictory narratives have emerged. In one, as I have shown, the Jewish woman has been "silenced"; in the other, however, the traces of an emergent Jewish feminist identity have been detected in the writing and social activity of nineteenth and twentieth-century Jewish women. While Linda Gordon Kuzmack's study *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States, 1881-1933* is important in that it establishes the extent of Jewish women's participation in feminist activities, and discusses the relationship between feminism and Jewish acculturation, it presents an oversimplified account of a coherent women's movement that does not allow for the dissent and diversity within this history. In *Writing Their Nations. The Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Women Writers*, Diane Lichtenstein has argued that there was a distinct tradition of Jewish women's writing in nineteenth-century America, identifiable as "a group of texts which share particular concerns - concerns born of authors' common cultural values,

---

myths and status”, and Michael Galchinsky has sought to make a similar argument for early nineteenth-century British Jewish women. However in both cases the need to locate anachronistically a discrete, recognisable and liberatory "tradition" of Jewish women's writing has led to a disregard for the specific historical, literary and generic contexts in which their writing was produced, their impact on male writers, and their dynamic and sometimes problematic relationship both with contemporary religious and secular literature and with "feminism".

Such histories are based not only on a triumphalist feminist teleology but also on what has been the dominant mode of Jewish historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. David Katz has called this "a Judaized version of 'Whig History'; that is, the writing of ends-oriented history so that emphasis is placed on 'precursors' and 'pioneers' who have in some way 'contributed' to a final event or institution ... In the writing of English history, especially in the nineteenth century ... History took on an evolutionary character which developed, like man himself, into the most advanced and perfected final product". David Cesarani has described the political context in which this version of Jewish history was institutionalised. The founders of the influential Jewish Historical Society of England, established in 1893 in an atmosphere of hostility to Jewish immigration, "asserted passionately that the study of history could reinforce Jewish pride and help secure Jewish continuity. But they insisted that alongside any internal function it might perform, Anglo-Jewish history was also intended to show the rootedness of Jews in English society, their contribution to English life and their patriotism". The work produced by this approach tended to edit out the rough edges of Anglo-Jewish history, glossing over internal conflict, non-conformity, antisocial or unpatriotic behaviour to produce an account of the linear, uncontested process of Anglicisation. Acculturation was a measure of the Jews' consummate capacity for adaptation; they were celebrated as surviving through the conscious pursuit of adapting to the dominant culture. This myth is echoed in Kuzmack and Galchinsky's accounts in which Jewish history mirrors the evolution of feminism, another form of acculturation. The progressive shape of this historiography has also been mapped onto the study of Anglo-Jewish cultural interchange, and underlies Linda Gertner Zatlin's *The Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel*. Zatlin suggests both that novels by Jews registered increasing "acculturation" over the

---


26 David Cesarani, "Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages? Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry," in *The Jewish Heritage in British History*, 34.
course of the century, and that stereotyping in literature by non-Jews shifted from the "conventional" to the "complex" in response to writing by Jews.27

However, recent studies have challenged the whiggish model to produce a more complex account of nineteenth and twentieth-century British Jewish history. Todd Endelman has argued that British Jews were far from unanimous in their desire for the right to sit in Parliament: much depended on their class status.28 On the other hand, Abraham Gilam shows that there was considerable activity by the Jewish working class in support of Emancipation, although this was thoroughly discouraged by the elite conducting the parliamentary campaign.29 Similarly, mid nineteenth-century Jewish philanthropic institutions, according to Bill Williams, were not so much the benign agents of modernisation but "more evidently the instruments of class control in a communal setting, designed to protect the status of the communal elite at the expense of the culture of the communal poor".30 David Feldman, however, situates the arrival of Jewish immigrants in London in the late nineteenth century in the context of a wider national debate about the limits of the English nation: "the apprehension of Anglo-Jewry in the face of Jewish immigration was not simply a matter of class interest. It not only reflected the niche occupied by the leaders of London Jewry among the propertied classes of the capital but also the difficulties and pressures they experienced after emancipation in aligning patriotism and Jewishness".31 Feldman looks at the diversity of late nineteenth-century Jewish responses to immigration and highlights the shared terms which governed them: "In fact, these views tell us more about the contours of discourse than they do about the responses of the immigrant orthodox to the technological, cultural and political opportunities of their new environment ... The immigrant colony was the site of a conflict, not between traditionalism and modernity, East European culture and

28 In the early nineteenth century there was frequent conversion to rather than from Judaism, for marriage purposes, among the lower classes, who had nothing to lose by becoming a religious dissenter. Even the majority of middle-class Jews failed to be attracted to the emancipation campaign because, as Endelman suggests, the character of the legal disabilities did not affect the areas in which their livelihoods were concerned, which were primarily commerce and finance. See Todd M Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830. Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 268, 276-8.
anglicisation, but between diverse conceptions of westernisation and 'anglicism'. At the same time, he argues, "as well as tendencies towards anglicisation, plainly, there were others towards a more forceful assertion of Jewish identity in England". Thus Feldman's model of British-Jewish history, which underlies my consideration of the diverse voices which emerge from the period, stresses its instability, its unsolved conflicts: Anglicisation was a "contested and fractured process".

A different kind of resistance to teleological overdetermination is registered in Bryan Cheyette's important study *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*. Cheyette warns against "the over-simple association of fictional constructions with mass murder" which has dominated twentieth-century studies of the representation of the Jew and led to the subject being considered aberrant in literature and therefore marginal to literary studies. He argues that this approach has been reinforced by the common definition of representations of Jews as fixed, mythic stereotypes. His account shows instead that "writers do not passively draw on eternal myths of 'the Jew' but actively construct them in relation to their own literary and political concerns". The present study begins from this important insight and will show that Jewish as well as non-Jewish writers bore a similarly dynamic relationship to stereotypes of "the Jew" and, more particularly for my argument, "the Jewess".

Michael Ragussis' study of nineteenth-century Jewish representations, *Figures of Conversion. "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity*, echoes Cheyette's resistance to the notion of fixed stereotypes, concentrating instead on "the representation of Jewish identity in Christian culture ... through a specific discourse: the rhetoric of conversion and the figure of the Jewish convert", and arguing that "this field of discourse was not static". His work rightly locates British-Jewish writing not as a separate phenomenon but within the context of writing by non-Jews, but he establishes his own binary division between conversionist novels and a "revisionist tradition" which "attempted to reinvent the representation of Jewish identity" and "educated the public in England's past crimes". My study, which in Chapters 4 and 5 looks at how the Jewish "apologetic" writers Grace Aguilar and Celia and Marion Moss drew on the language of Evangelical domestic and abolitionist literature, will demonstrate the interdependence of conversionists and "revisionists".

Recent work in women's history has also begun to construct a more complex and less teleological history of feminism, and in doing so to answer Jane Miller's challenge

---

33 Ibid, 224.
34 Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*, 2-3.
37 Ibid, 7, 300.
to consider how race, class and gender have intersected at given historical moments. In particular, the involvement of women in the campaign for the abolition of slavery has provided an opportunity to examine the relationship between racial discourse and the development of feminism. Debate about slavery, it has been shown, provided a language which was later used to critique the British class system and the legal position of women. But British women were not excluded from the complex development of imperialism. Indeed, as Moira Ferguson has forcefully put it, as the abolition campaign proceeded, "the gathering of some cultural power for white British women was won at the expense of African material reality because the closer the country came to an abolitionist politic, the more imperative writers found it to denote racial difference". Thus it has become clear that the history of feminism is fractured by its complicity from early on with racial discourse. Jane Rendall and others have shown that there was a clear connection between the Evangelical Revival and women's increasingly public role in religion and social organisation. Rendall argues that "in its language and imagery, in the individual experience of conversion, in the religious life of the family, and through association with other women outside the family, the religious revivalism of the early nineteenth century offered an important framework through which the changing situation of women could be expressed". But women's participation in forms of philanthropy like conversionism, as I will show in Chapter 3, also involved the imaginative construction and control of others, whether Roman Catholic or Jewish. Indeed, I will argue, the Jewess provided the ideal opportunity for the articulation of Evangelical female identity.

Ferguson draws attention to two further points which will inform my study. Firstly, she argues that with the onset of the organised abolitionist campaign, literary representations of slaves themselves became formulaic, "a kind of abolitionist shorthand that can be copied, expanded, or abbreviated at will". This is precisely the strategy that was adopted by writers representing Jews and Jewesses in their missions to enlighten, convert or emancipate British Jews, and Ferguson's location of

---

39 Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 94-5, 102.
40 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 141, 163. For more on the relationship between anti-slavery discourse and the generation and consolidation of British imperialist attitudes see Catherine Hall, "Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s," in Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, 209-10.
42 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 146.
such images within the context of specific political campaigns is, I believe, a more subtle understanding of the concept of the stereotype. However, she also seeks to establish a clear distinction between constructions of slaves and "African reality": while abolitionist women inevitably "spoke ... as part of a colonial discourse", ex-slaves necessarily produced "texts of freedom". This thesis will seek to problematise such a straightforward notion of authenticity. It will show how Jewish "reality", was contested by different writers, using different languages of authority which depended on gender. While Grace Aguilar claimed that "the virtues of the Jews are essentially of the domestic and social kind", Disraeli asserted that "the Jews ... are essentially Tories". One reason why this was possible was because, as Todd Endelman has argued, in the 1830s "the Jewish community itself, in the sense of a corporate body with authority over the individual, simply did not exist". Moreover, as I will show in Chapter 3, some claims to an authentic Jewish identity through writing were clearly used to express a fantasised version of Jewish subjectivity. When the authorship, and hence authenticity of a text cannot be determined, we cannot rely on the presumed identity of the author as a tool for analysis and must concentrate instead on their textual strategies.

This study will seek to reconstruct the historical context in which Jewish women and men wrote about Jewishness, and to link several contexts which are not usually considered to be related. It will concentrate on writing produced between the 1820s and the 1840s, from the publication of Walter Scott's influential novel Ivanhoe through the heyday of Evangelical conversionist literature and the various debates articulated in literary texts during the first decades of the debate on Jewish emancipation. This was a time of considerable political and constitutional upheaval, with the political emancipation of Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics in 1828 and 1829 respectively, the 1832 Reform Act, the intensification of the campaign against slavery during the 1820s and 1830s, and the growth of Chartist activity in the 1830s and early 1840s. To some extent, the demands for these reforms, like the campaign for Jewish emancipation, were made possible by Enlightenment thinking of the late eighteenth century. In 1831, at the end of his life, William Hazlitt referred to religious liberty, and more specifically the emancipation of the Jews as "a natural step in the progress of civilisation". He argued against the maintenance of "intolerance" encoded in law:

43 Ibid, 141, 140.
We throw in the teeth of the Jews that they are prone to certain sordid vices. If they are vicious, it is we who have made them so. Shut out any class of people from the path to fair fame, and you reduce them to grovel in pursuit of riches and the means to live. A man has long been in dread of insult for no just cause, and you complain that he grows reserved and suspicious. You treat him with obloquy and contempt, and wonder that he does not walk by you with an erect and open brow ... You tear people up by the roots and trample on them like noxious weeds and then make an outcry that they do not take root in the soil like wholesome plants. You drive them like a pest from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, and then call them vagabonds and aliens.47

The same argument that humans are socially constructed was made in the late eighteenth century by abolitionists and by feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft. In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), she argues that women's alleged inferior nature is a result of an oppressive culture and not innate. An emphasis on beauty resulted in vanity and corruption, inattention to health and exercise produced excessive delicacy. But Hazlitt's discussion also turns on an optimistic definition of the English character, which is currently obscured by prejudice: "it is the test of reason and refinement to be able to subsist without bugbears". Meanwhile, the character of the nation is further consolidated by his aside, "That the Jews, as a people, persist in their blindness and obstinacy is to be lamented".48 While Hazlitt deplored "prejudice" and demanded "respect" for the Jews he still hoped that they would transcend their unbelief; the "blindness" of the Jews is implicitly contrasted with the "diffusion of light and knowledge" which has made possible their toleration.49 In Chapter 2 I will trace this ambivalence through Walter Scott's Ivanhoe and show how it is powerfully and influentially inscribed in the figure of Rebecca.

The political conflicts of the 1820s and 30s also affected, directly or indirectly, the social role and expectations of middle-class British women. They began to be employed in philanthropic organisations and associated literary activities that sought to alleviate or suppress lower-class discontent, to defend the Protestant state against Catholicism, and, in the abolition campaign, to champion British morality in the government of colonies.50 For Evangelicals in particular, these concerns were linked. While the origins of the Evangelical Revival were a response to the French Revolution, from the late 1820s Evangelicals expected the imminent advent of the

---

48 Ibid, 324, 322.
49 Ibid, 322, 324.
50 Vron Ware describes how the sudden increase in women's involvement in the abolition movement in the 1820s and 30s considerably boosted the power of the campaign. See Ware, Beyond the Pale, 70 and also Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 44-6. As I will show in Chapter 3, the same decades saw a dramatic increase in women's involvement in conversion activities.
millennium. Evangelical activity was stimulated at this time as a reaction to the Catholic Relief Act and to the growing dissemination of geological evidence which threatened to displace the authority of the Bible as a source for knowledge about the earth. The politically conservative message of Evangelicalism clearly also had a renewed role to play in a time of renewed social unrest. Evangelicalism, like the Enlightenment philosophy of Scott, sought a unifying and civilising regeneration for England - in the words of William Wilberforce, to abolish the slave trade and reform "the manners and morals of the nation". Women ideologues like Hannah More had been instrumental in constructing Evangelical ideology in the 1790s. But the increased public participation of middle-class women in the movement from the 1820s enabled them to participate at a high level in the project to convert the Jews, a campaign which was central to Evangelical millennial expectations. For such women, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, the Jewess seemed a particularly appropriate object for their concerns. Yet the prolific literature of conversion produced by women is just as much concerned with producing a definition of Englishness in contrast to Jewishness. As Catherine Hall has persuasively written of British missionaries to Jamaica, in the England of the 1830s and 1840s religion provided one of the key discursive terrains for the ... construction of a national identity ... Religious belief provided a vocabulary of right - the right to know and to speak that knowledge, with the moral power that was attached to the speaking of God's word. One of the issues on which they spoke was what it meant to be English.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I will consider the impact of this powerful language on the Jewish writers Grace Aguilar and Celia and Marion Moss, who, in their writing for women, drew on contrasting definitions of English identity.

The Moss sisters and Aguilar published their work at highly strategic moments, during the hiatus between 1836 and 1847 when no attempts to pass the bill for the relief of Jewish parliamentary disabilities were being made. In these years, while the male parliament was silent on the question of the Jews the gap was filled by the historical romances and domestic novels of women writers, who used these apparently apolitical genres to discuss political issues. At the same time, however, a new voice was emerging to challenge the existing connections between gender and Jewishness. In one sense Disraeli drew on the romantic nationalism which had animated Celia and Marion Moss's representations of Jewish identity. But Disraeli's

novels and parliamentary speeches in the 1830s and 1840s, as I discuss in Chapter 6, also linked the political status of the Jews with that of other disenfranchised sections of the British public. Disraeli's novels imagined national reconciliation through an incorporation of working-class and middle-class political demands and national regeneration through an assimilation of their virtues. In a similar way, he argued that it was impolitic to continue to exclude the Jews from the legislature. In *Lord George Bentinck. A Political Biography* (1852) Disraeli warned that "the fiery energy and the teeming resources of the children of Israel" had been behind the European revolutions of 1848, "because they wish to destroy that ungrateful Christendom which owes to them even its name, and whose tyranny they can no longer endure". In this way, Disraeli employed a gendered language associated with class tension, chartism and revolution to describe the Jews as a threat to the nation which could nevertheless be incorporated to its benefit.

Racial discourse, which Disraeli used to structure his novels, was a means of claiming authority similar to the way in which Grace Aguilar and the Moss sisters use the languages of women's literature. Disraeli was able to play on the ambiguity around Jewish identity which meant that it was defined, by both Jews and non-Jews, sometimes as religious dissent and sometimes as a racial essence. While the idea of racial conflict had been a central component in eighteenth century historiography, the biological science of racial difference first gained credibility in the 1820s. As the campaigns intensified to emancipate slaves and to admit Jews into parliament notions of racial difference could no longer be enshrined in law, but became encoded in science instead. Meanwhile, Enlightenment rationalists and enthusiastic Evangelicals, whose ideologies were seemingly so opposed, were united in their similar hope to transform the Jew. But they were also united by a fixed notion of racial difference which underlay their progressive ideologies and threatened the possibility of transformation. In a similar context, Catherine Hall has written of missionaries to Jamaica: "At the heart of the Baptist missionary enterprise was a profound ambivalence - a belief in brotherhood and spiritual equality combined with an assumption of white superiority. This contradiction ... closely echoed the fraught ambivalence of Evangelical discourses on gender". The same ambivalence is

---

55 For more on this ambiguity see Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 78.
56 Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 64-5. Ware interestingly points out that in the 1820s the science of phrenology, which was being used to prove the inferiority of black races, was also used by feminists to prove the equality of the sexes.
evident in representations of Jews, and encoded with particular subtlety in the figure of the Jewess.
CHAPTER 2

GENDERING THE JEW:
SCOTT'S IVANHOE

In 1819 the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, the most widely-supported Evangelical conversionist society of the nineteenth century, abandoned all attempts to convert British Jews, and moved missionary efforts abroad. The same year saw the publication of Ivanhoe, one of the century's most influential novels, a text in which the inauguration of the modern English nation is marred by the Jewish heroine's failure to convert. While the Evangelical Revival of the 1790s looked back to seventeenth-century millennialism and forward to a regeneration of British Protestantism, Ivanhoe inspired a different kind of revival, also looking to the past as a resource for national renewal. For both, as I will show in this and the following chapter, the figure of the Jew was crucial. Scott's novel of racial and cultural struggle in mediaeval England was his most successful to date, but it also became particularly timely for Victorian readers, for whom nostalgia for the Middle Ages was increasingly a means of defining their own sense of history and national identity. Scott's writing demonstrated that the novel form "was an ideological discourse of the first importance in constructing a new kind of national culture". In particular, Ivanhoe provided an originary myth for nineteenth-century England, and raised urgent questions for a readership who saw social, economic and constitutional relations changing: questions about the authority of the past, the pattern of English history and the relationships between race, culture and progress.

In Ivanhoe, Scott measures historical progress by attitudes towards the Jews. His own distance from the world of mediaeval "prejudice" is signalled by his attempt to

1 For example, John Henry Newman acknowledged "the literary influence of Sir Walter Scott, who turned men's minds in the direction of the Middle Ages. The general need," I said, 'of something deeper and more attractive, than what had offered itself elsewhere, may be considered to have led to his popularity; and by means of his popularity, he reacted on his readers, stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten, and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas which might afterwards be appealed to as first principles". See J H Newman, Apologia pro vita sua, ed. Martin J Svaglic (Oxford, 1967), 94, cited by A N Wilson, "Introduction" to Ivanhoe, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), xix. For a wide-ranging and detailed discussion of Scott's influence on Victorian culture see also Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), especially Chapters 3 and 5.

counter the stereotype of the Jew in the figure of Rebecca of York, the virtuous Jewess who valiantly resists sexual persecution. Gendering the Jew enabled Scott to display Jewish resistance at its most admirable. But by gendering the Jew, Scott also strengthened the configuration of mediaevalism, nationalism and race-thinking, which resurfaced in the representation of Rebecca's father Isaac and was later reproduced in the work of numerous nineteenth-century conservatives from Cobbett and Carlyle onwards. The problematic duality established in this influential text continued to resonate throughout nineteenth-century writing about Jews, both by Jewish and non-Jewish authors. This chapter will look at the conjunction of religion, race and gender in Scott's analysis of English history and some Victorian responses to it.

Rebecca and religious prejudice

Since *Ivanhoe*'s publication, readers and in particular dramatists have consistently seen Rebecca as its major source of interest. In 14 of the 29 dramatic and operatic versions of the novel produced in the sixty years following its publication, the focus on Wilfred of Ivanhoe, the disinherited knight struggling to reconcile Norman and Saxon history in the cultural and political chaos of mediaeval England, was replaced by a focus on the tragic Jewess Rebecca. Rebecca, who risks her life to save the wounded Ivanhoe, condemns the violence of the culture of chivalry, refuses to sacrifice her honour or her religion to save her life, and finally renounces her love for Ivanhoe so that English history may take its proper course, is the novel's clearest embodiment of heroism. Although Jewish, Rebecca's gender exempts her from the associations which render her father, the moneylender Isaac of York, little more than a stereotype. Uninvolved in the sordid life of transaction, she is correspondingly uncorrupted by it. Likewise its effect on Isaac's physical and psychological demeanour is not shared by Rebecca:

> She could not indeed imitate his excess of subservience, because she was a stranger to the meanness of mind and to the constant state of timid apprehension by which it was dictated; but she bore herself with a proud humility, as if submitting to the evil circumstances in which she was placed as the daughter of a despised race, while she felt

---

3 Richard Ford, *Dramatizations of Scott's novels* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society. Occasional publications no 12, 1979), 20-27; H Philip Bolton, *Scott dramatized* (London: Mansell, 1992), 342-371. The most successful dramatization of the novel, Thomas J Dibdin's version, produced as one of three productions playing simultaneously in London in the first year of *Ivanhoe*’s publication, had an alternative title *The Jew's Daughter*, which became conventional in most subsequent dramatic productions. The titles of some versions, for example M R Lacy's *The Maid of Judah; or, Knights Templars*, first produced in 1829 and revived throughout the 1830s, show an exclusive focus on the story of Rebecca and her struggle against the Templar. The *Times* review said "nearly the whole interest of the piece is made to devolve upon the character of Rebecca". See Bolton, *Scott dramatized*, 353. This overt change of emphasis in the dramatic versions of *Ivanhoe* continued through the century.
in her mind the consciousness that she was entitled to hold a higher rank from her merit than the arbitrary despotism of religious prejudice permitted her to aspire to.4

While persecution has made Isaac a craven collaborator, Rebecca's humility is "proud", as if surviving from a time when Jews had concerns other than materialism. Thus only she can justifiably retort to the Templar's insults, "Read the ancient history of the people of God, and tell me if those by whom Jehovah wrought such marvels among the nations were then a people of misers and of usurers!" (444). At the Ashby tournament, where Ivanhoe appears in armour borrowed by Isaac, Isaac's concern for its preservation is contrasted with Rebecca's concern for its bearer's life (106). Her generosity can never be reproduced by Isaac, who remains dominated by his habit of avarice. Her renunciation of material things is underlined in the final scene when she sacrifices her jewels, a metonym for her sexual appeal, to Ivanhoe's wife as a parting gift. Moreover, the nature of the particular persecution she suffers allows Rebecca greater heroic stature. While Isaac's courage only stretches to the narrowly selfish defence of his wealth, Rebecca, in defending her honour, upholds the universal principle of regulated gender relations. Judaism makes Isaac "obstinate", while it makes his daughter "resolute" (226, 505). Thus, while Scott does insist that Isaac's character is determined not by his race but by "evil circumstances", he nevertheless shows Rebecca's transcendence of such circumstances (247).

The response of contemporary readers to Rebecca focussed on her private rather than public heroism. Blackwood's hyperbolic review of Ivanhoe on its publication was typical:

The true interest of this romance ... is placed in the still, devoted, sad and unrequited tenderness of a Jewish damsel - by far the most romantic creation of female character the author has ever formed - and second we suspect, to no creature of female character whatever that is to be found in the whole annals either of poetry or of romance.5

Here, the reviewer identifies the figure of Rebecca as a feminine ideal, devoted but self-renouncing, suffering rather than defiant. Such an interpretation was eagerly embraced by the Victorian Jewish critic David Philipson, who saw the novel as a whole, and in particular Rebecca's ideal femininity as a prototype for British-Jewish apologetic writing. In his view, Ivanhoe's historical perspective presented an effective argument for the social and political emancipation of contemporary Jews, since "by showing in this popular form the origins of some of the wrongs of the Jews, how they were compelled, well nigh driven, to become what they were, how the fault lay with their oppressors, he could better enlist the sympathy of the thinking classes than by

---

4 Walter Scott, Ivanhoe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982, [first publ. 1819]), 247. Further references to this edition are indicated by page numbers in the text.
5 "Ivanhoe," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 6 (1819): 263.
merely offering a picture of the Jews as they were in his day". Philipson celebrated the enlightened rationalism of *Ivanhoe*, which became a precursor to Hazlitt's liberal argument for the emancipation of the Jews, which maintained that "we throw in the teeth of the Jews that they are prone to certain sordid vices. If they are vicious it is we who have made them so". Philipson read the novel as a challenge to negative stereotyping, in which the character of the Jews was central, because her presence asserted that "a woman of attainments and position such as are attributed to Rebecca, was not only a possibility, but an actuality among the Jews".

Michael Ragussis's recent deconstructive reading of *Ivanhoe* also sees Rebecca as crucial to the novel's defence of the Jews. The failed attempts to convert Rebecca signal Scott's liberalism: he "attempts to enlist the sympathies of his English readers for the broadest basis of cultural diversity by suggesting that the project to convert the Jews (and to erase the Scots) has its parallel in the attempted genocide of the Saxons during the Norman Conquest". Rebecca "represents the religious and racial question that England cannot solve", and she exposes England's guilty conscience in her final exchange with Rowena, when her sacrificial gift to the English lady "marks the Jewish woman as the woman beyond the influence of worldly value ... transfers to Lady Ivanhoe the sign of material value which stereotypically marked the Jew". Scott's novel, then, continues to be interpreted as a critique of "the arbitrary despotism of religious prejudice" against the Jews, a critique which consistently depends on the role of Rebecca, whose virtue is seen to be a scourge to the English conscience. As Edgar Rosenberg comments, "For the first time in English literature the Jews alone are right and everybody else is wrong. The outcast defines the community; the scapegoat indicts the king".

The literary context of Scott's novel certainly reinforces such a reading. *Ivanhoe* was produced at a moment when the traditional Jewish stereotype was being subjected to public revision. When a character in a 1795 drama remarked that "the fashion of plays, you know now, is to do away with old prejudices; and to rescue..."
certain characters from the illiberal odium with which custom has marked them. Thus we have a generous Israelite, an amiable Cynick, and so on", he was referring to Cumberland's recent success in *The Jew* (1793). Both Cumberland's play and Thomas Dibdin's farce *The Jew and the Doctor*, which enjoyed similar popularity in 1798, expressed their opposition to "old prejudices" through the figure of a secretly philanthropic Jewish moneylender. Through the reconstructed Jew, capitalism in these plays takes on a benevolent rather than corrupting aspect. Maria Edgeworth similarly used the figure of the Jew emblematically in *Harrington* (1817). In her version of the challenge to prejudice the familiar figure of the benevolent Jew appears once again, this time accompanied by his beautiful daughter Berenice, the heroine of the romance, beloved by the hero Harrington. The novel, in keeping with its author's interest in pedagogy, also constructs an analysis of the cultural construction of intolerance. In particular it documents the domestic teaching of prejudice, and deplores the use of superstition to control children, as the young Harrington is terrified by his nursery-maid's threats to call "Simon the Jew" to carry him away and crucify him. The narrator insists that "in further proof of the progress of human knowledge and reason, we may recollect that many of these very stories of the Jews, which we now hold too preposterous for the infant and the nursery-maid to credit, were some centuries ago universally believed by the English nation, and had furnished more than one of our kings with pretexts for extortion and massacres". Edgeworth also clearly distinguishes between the Jewish "race" and the Jewish religion. Thus when Mr Montenero is reassured that the hero's father objects not "to her being the daughter of a Jew" but "to her not being a Christian", he reveals that Berenice is the daughter of both a Jew and an Englishwoman, and "bred in her faith - a Christian - a Protestant". Berenice Montenero's "Jewishness" is significant primarily as the means of a new kind of heroic test for the protagonist Harrington, in which, as Mr Montenero tells him, "you have given proofs that your matured reason and your humanity have been able to control and master your imagination and your antipathies".

At the same time, another kind of shift in the representation of the Jew came from the theatre. Edmund Kean's 1814 interpretation of Shylock did not try to find the stage Jew's hidden benevolence, but it did consign the satanic red wig to the dustbin.

---

13 Ibid. 103-112. Dibdin later wrote the first of three dramatizations of *Ivanhoe* produced in London following the novel's publication. See Bolton, *Scott dramatized*, 342.
14 For a longer discussion of *Harrington*, see Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, 57-88.
16 Ibid, 293, 294, 300.
of the Middle Ages and give dignity to Jewish villainy. Writing in 1817, two years before the publication of *Ivanhoe*, Hazlitt saw Kean's performance as part of a more general modern rejection of "popular" prejudices: "In proportion as Shylock has ceased to be a popular bugbear, 'baited with the rabble's curse', he becomes a half-favourite with the philosophical part of the audience, who are disposed to think that Jewish revenge is at least as good as Christian injuries". Kean's proud and alienated Shylock had revealed the stage Jew's potential as a romantic hero. Meanwhile, Scott had cast his own work in terms of an enlightened challenge to national stereotypes. Linking the representation of the Scottish in *Waverley* to the "Irish novels" of Maria Edgeworth, he wrote: "I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland - something which might introduce her natives to that of her sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles". Several contemporary revisionist currents, then, are reflected in the representation of the Jews in *Ivanhoe*.

However Scott's established place in a "liberal" teleology needs to be examined carefully. His enthusiasm for "sympathy" and advancement beyond "the arbitrary despotism of religious prejudice" has a very specific historical and political context. Scott's admiration for Edgeworth is important, as both constructed in their novels of Scotland and Ireland a "transcendental 'British' consciousness that is to be the unifying culture of the nation's leaders". Document the transformation of Scottish society between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries into a modern nation, a narrative in which the 1707 Union with England is seen as the necessary basis for economic development and modernisation. The theme of beneficial and progressive reconciliation which dominates these novels determines their representation of minority groups which resist rational compromise, thus the representation of Jews, like Camerons in *The Heart of Midlothian*, is ambivalent. This ambivalence was registered in *Ivanhoe*'s contemporary reception. When Edmund Kean played Isaac in George Soane's 1820 adaptation of *Ivanhoe* the role was expanded and elevated, as if Scott's characterisation was not sufficiently

---

19 Walter Scott, "General Preface" (1829) to *Waverley* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972 [first publ. 1814]), 523.
20 Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, 83. Edgeworth's version of Irish "nationalism" in "The Absentee", for example, advocates "an Ireland led by a nationally conscious, self-disciplined, resident Anglo-Irish gentry" (82). Scott's novels construct myths of "national" origin at the same time as looking forward to social reconciliation and progress led by an enlightened gentry and professional class (141). Kelly also points out that both Edgeworth's and Scott's "national" novels were taken to apply to British society in general (142).
romantic for Kean's repertoire of heroic Jews. Likewise the *Times* review of Samuel Beazley's dramatisation, also in 1820, underlined the significance of Rebecca in providing an object for Isaac's most laudable emotions, and thereby rehabilitating the stereotype through a defence of female honour. But the review also suggested that Scott's text had to be considerably modified by the dramatist to produce such an effect unambiguously. Most controversial of all has been the perceived discrepancy between Rebecca's virtue and her undeservedly tragic fate, in which the novelist appears to perpetuate her persecution himself, and for which he was "censured". Indeed, from Soane's *The Hebrew* (1820) to Thackeray's novella "Rebecca and Rowena" (1850), *Ivanhoe* has been rewritten allowing the more deserving Rebecca to marry the hero.

But, as both the *Blackwoods* reviewer and David Philipson evidently recognised, the novel in fact relies on Rebecca's suffering for its argument for tolerance. In *Ivanhoe* Scott strategically uses what Mario Praz identified in *The Romantic Agony* as the dominant mode of Romantic eroticism, the "theme of the persecuted woman". Rebecca's persecution in England is made to emblematise the Jews as a suffering race in a way that her father's never can. In particular, her persecution by the corrupt cleric, the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, draws implicitly on contemporary anti-Catholicism and was to become a paradigm for both Jewish and non-Jewish writers in the later nineteenth century.

21 Bolton cites the *Times* review of Soane's *The Hebrew*, which criticises the deviations from the novel, and also Kean's portrayal of Isaac's suffering as "too bold and confident". See Bolton, *Scott dramatized*, 347.
22 In a long discussion of the character of Isaac the review of Beazley's *Ivanhoe; or, the Knight Templar* (1820) praises Mr Farren's apologetic interpretation "in displaying the superiority of parental affection and honourable solicitude for the safety of his daughter's honor, to that love of money which is too often attributed to his sect ... The whole audience appeared to be most powerfully affected". See Bolton, *Scott dramatized*, 348. But in fact Scott is constantly undercutting the rational argument against anti-Jewish prejudice by figuring Isaac in stereotypical terms. It appears that the dramatic versions, however, did not reproduce Scott's ambivalence.
23 Walter Scott, "Author's Introduction" to *Ivanhoe* [1830], 544.
25 In the dungeon at Torquilstone, however, Isaac's persecution is aestheticised in a way that is more typical of the representation of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*: "In this humour of passive resistance", his "folded hands, his dishevelled hair and beard, his furred cloak and high cap, seen by the wiry and broken light, would have afforded a study for Rembrandt, had that celebrated painter existed at the period" (226).
26 In *Ivanhoe* many stereotypical "Jewish" qualities are displaced onto the Templars, who are demonised as both Catholic and "oriental". The Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert's appearance with his "Oriental" Saracen retinue is "wild and outlandish" (20); he is even racialised by association: "High features, naturally strong and powerfully expressive, had been burnt almost into Negro blackness by constant exposure to the tropical sun" (19). He is well known to be both avaricious and lecherous: "Templars love the glitter of silver shekels as well as the sparkle of black eyes" (368). The Grand Master Lucas de Beaumanoir is "an ascetic bigot" (391), and his order is sinister and conspiratorial in its adherence not to the national law but to "the Pope and princes of Europe" (509). Barbaric cruelty is seen to be an Eastern influence...
Jeremiah's figurative language when he hears of Rebecca's imprisonment: "'Ah, my daughter! - ah, my daughter! Alas! for the beauty of Zion! Alas! for the captivity of Israel!' (389). In this formulation, Rebecca's refined beauty becomes a faint echo of lost political autonomy, her captivity at Templestowe a condition of exiled Jewry. Rebecca herself confirms the necessity of submitting to persecution, which she sees within a longer view of Jewish history:

all around her showed that their present state was that of punishment and probation, and that it was their especial duty to suffer without sinning. Thus prepared to consider herself as the victim of misfortune, Rebecca had early reflected upon her own state, and schooled her mind to meet the dangers which she had probably to encounter (248).

Moreover, it is Rebecca's gender which makes her more able to accept the equation of suffering and Jewish identity. When her father complains of the humiliating emasculation of political disinheritance, "that when we are wronged and plundered all the world laughs around, and we are compelled to suppress our sense of injury, and to smile tamely when we would revenge bravely", Rebecca turns punishment to advantage, reminding him of the persecutor's dependence on the persecuted: "We are like the herb which flourisheth most when it is most trampled on" (117). She herself seems to link her own eroticism with suffering. When she appears at the tournament at Ashby her dress marks her "Eastern" Jewishness, and "her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion" (83). The yellow silk turban is not only a symbol of her exoticism, but, as yellow headgear, the mark of the pariah in mediaeval England. On Rebecca, in contrast to her father, it is turned into a decoration, emphasising her beauty, and making persecution and eroticism interdependent.

However those who have rewritten *Ivanhoe* have felt the perpetuation of Rebecca's suffering in Scott's text unjustified. Rebecca's failure to take up the offer of conversion, royal protection, and a future in the newly peaceful England, is indeed felt as an unresolved problem, a silence and denial which echoes the unspoken passion between Rebecca and Ivanhoe and disrupts the novel's celebratory resolution. As she takes leave of Ivanhoe's wife, "there was an involuntary tremour on Rebecca's voice, and a tenderness of accent, which perhaps betrayed more than she would willingly have expressed" (518), while this is later matched on Ivanhoe's side: "it

that has corrupted the Christian morality of the Templars; however in contrast Jewish orientalism is merely exotic. Nathan ben Samuel points the irony of the difference between the Jews and "these men of blood, who take their name from the Temple to the dishonour thereof" (433). England's own cruelties, meanwhile, are not indigenous but also derive from the Eastern connection established by the Crusades. Prince John takes advantage of "the numerous class of 'lawless resolutes' whom the crusades had turned back on their country, accomplished in the vices of the East, impoverished in substance, and hardened in character, and who placed their hope of harvest in civil commotion" (74-5). More specifically, Front-de-Boeuf's torture of Isaac is also Eastern: "he also had been in Palestine, where, perhaps, he had learnt his lesson of cruelty" (229).
would be enquiring too curiously to ask whether the recollection of Rebecca's beauty and magnanimity did not recur to his mind more frequently than the fair descendant of Alfred [Rowena] might altogether have approved" (519). Scott himself clearly felt the need to defend this aspect of the novel, as the only mention made in his 1830 "Author's Introduction" to its contemporary reception is regarding his betrayal of Rebecca. "The character of the fair Jewess found so much favour in the eyes of some fair readers" he says, "the writer was censured". However his explanation appeals to historical realism:

not to mention that the prejudices of the age rendered such an union almost impossible, the author may, in passing, observe, that he thinks a character of a highly virtuous and lofty stamp is degraded rather than exalted by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity. Such is not the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit; and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine to teach young persons, the most common readers of romance, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our wishes. In a word, if a virtuous and self-denied character is dismissed with temporal wealth, greatness, rank, or the indulgence of a rashly-formed or ill-assorted passion as that of Rebecca for Ivanhoe, the reader will be apt to say, verily Virtue has its reward. But a glance on the great picture of life will show that the duties of self-denial, and the sacrifice of passion to principle, are seldom thus remunerated; and that the internal consciousness of their high-minded discharge of duty produces on their own reflections a more adequate recompense, in the form of that peace which the world cannot give or take away.27

Scott's lengthy defence of his plot is as much an indictment of Rebecca's judgement in "indulging" her passion for Ivanhoe as a rebuke to the "fair readers" who desire its consummation. In this statement Scott identifies his work in generic terms, in opposition to the romantic novel which has created such expectations in female readers. It is through the figure of Rebecca and her fate that Scott claims authority for the genre of the historical novel, in which desire remains unfulfilled, loss unrequited.28 But Scott's concern for historical realism is not only a question of moral realism, it is also a question of race. In a letter to the novelist Joanna Baillie, Scott identified with the ambivalence of the author of Harrington regarding her representation of Jews, though his formulation was more explicit:

I think Miss Edgeworth's last work delightful, though Jews will always to me be Jews. One does not naturally or easily combine with their habits and pursuits any great liberality of principle although certainly it may and I believe does exist in many individual instances. They are money-makers and money-brokers by profession and it is a

27 Walter Scott, "Author's Introduction to Ivanhoe" [1830], 544-5 The Times review of The Hebrew objected in similar terms to Soane's happy ending. Although it was acceptable for Rebecca to conceive a "hopeless passion" for Ivanhoe, it was historically inconsistent for him to propose to her. See Bolton, Scott dramatized, 347.

trade which narrows the mind. I own I breathed more freely when I found Miss Montenero was not an actual Jewess.\textsuperscript{29}

The importance Scott ascribes to "liberality of principle" points to the reconciliatory emphasis of \textit{Ivanhoe} as a whole. While Rebecca herself is a "character of a highly virtuous and lofty stamp", it is these qualities which distinguish her from her race rather than typifying it. Rebecca leads the way to a new tolerant England, when she tends the wounds of Ivanhoe after the Ashby tournament, arguing with her father's "prejudices and scrupulous timidity" that religious barriers should be ignored if life is at stake, for then "the Gentile becometh the Jew's brother" (293). But her final refusal to convert to Christianity indicates that, tragically, as an "actual Jewess" she cannot finally transcend her "narrowness" of mind.

\textbf{Race and history in \textit{Ivanhoe}}

In order to unravel the relationships between Jewishness, female conversion, and the representation of English history in \textit{Ivanhoe}, the political and historiographical context of its production must be considered. The question of race was at the centre of Scott's analysis of English history, as it was for so many of his predecessors and contemporaries.\textsuperscript{30} Indeed, Scott used an argument about the relationship between Jews and Christians as a model for his own historical method. The antiquarian narrator "Templeton" explains how the historical novel may be authentic if not always accurate, by invoking Shylock's argument for human equity:

\begin{quote}
Our ancestors were not more distinct from us, surely, than Jews are from Christians; they had 'eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions'; were 'fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer', as ourselves. The tenor, therefore, of their affections and feeling must have borne the same general proportions to our own.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Here Scott reverts to the Enlightenment premise that the differences between Jews and Christians are socially constructed, not innate. This is mapped onto the question of historical change to argue that the inhabitants of the past were not essentially different from those of the present, a fact which makes historical fiction possible. But how does this metaphor function in the novel's wider discussion of the relationships between race and history?


The parallels between past and present in *Ivanhoe* are only too obvious. The novel was written and published in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, years of Regency rule, recession and rioting. Following Luddite resistance to industrial change earlier in the decade, civil instability increased after the war. It was stimulated by the Corn Law and game laws of 1815, measures which would protect aristocratic and gentry interests at the expense of the labouring classes. Radical sympathisers were massacred at "Peterloo" while the novel was being written. The England of *Ivanhoe*, similarly, is in disorder, roamed by vagrant soldiers returned from the crusades, their military training turned threatening in an indolent, lawless peacetime. Discontent is fuelled by the protective forest laws, which, like the 1815 game laws, restrict hunting to landowners. Racial enmity is conflated with class tension in the relationship between the Saxon peasantry and the Norman nobility, a situation which would have been as recognisable to Scott's first audience as to his later Victorian readers. The Saxon multitude suffers under the "tyranny of the nobility" (8), initiated by the Norman Conquest but now exacerbated by the absence of King Richard and by his brother John's encouragement of aristocratic rule. The power of the ambitious nobility and their factions is undermining national security; many yeomen are forced unwillingly into outlawry, and a Saxon serf travelling across the country perceives danger in "the disorderly state of the town, crowded with military nobles and their dissolute attendants" (123).

The political struggle between King Richard and Prince John's alliance with the treacherous barons must be settled before the racial division of the nation can be healed at the end of the novel, because it is the struggle for control of England that underlies and promotes its internal strife. In these terms, *Ivanhoe* is a Tory allegory of the eventual triumph of the established monarchy over the rebel (Whig) aristocracy. Fiona Robertson links Scott with the genre of Gothic fiction in these terms: "Like Gothic fictions since Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) - a story of usurpation and retribution - and like the romance narratives on which Gothic is modelled, the Waverley Novels are literally histories of restored legitimacy ... The familiar romance plot of legitimate restoration which is so common in Gothic has an obvious political relevance in the years following 1814". The England of Scott's time, as much as the England of Scott's novel, was in need of a unifying national myth and a renewed

---


33 Scott's background was in eighteenth-century Enlightenment Edinburgh and his father's and his own class was professional, but in the years leading up to the publication of *Ivanhoe* he was identifying himself more explicitly as a Tory. He had left the Whig *Edinburgh Review* in the previous decade because of political differences with the editor Francis Jeffrey, and in the same year as *Ivanhoe* he also published *The Visionary*, a collection of anti-Reform satires.

belief in political authority. Therefore the novel's tensions are resolved in a double restoration: of the Norman king Richard, eventually accepted by all as the legitimate monarch, and of the Saxon Wilfred, legitimate heir of Ivanhoe. Wilfred, whose allegiance to Richard against the wishes of his Saxon father Cedric had provoked his disinheriture, can finally be seen as the herald of national unity. Richard, identifying himself not as a Norman, but as "Richard of England! whose deepest interest - whose deepest wish, is to see her sons united with each other" earns the right to a title won by conquest, by defending the people from their own worst enemy, the ambitious nobility (485). Likewise his mythical status in the eyes of his Saxon subjects as a victim of usurpation in a similar plight to themselves, enables his restoration to be seen as a general vindication of the wronged (1). Eventually even Cedric's token opposition is won over by the monarch's "personal attention" (514). Moreover, in banishing the Templars, corrupt monastics who defy his authority for that of Rome, Richard even anticipates the Protestant reformation (508-9). Instead of perpetuating a divided nation, conscious of conquest and loss, the "undisputed dominion of Richard" legitimates Norman rule, but unites Norman and Saxon races in the progressive "English" nation (512).

Richard's resolution to restore the ancient land rights of the yeomen points to a further form of conflict in the novel, one in which the Jews play a crucial role. The novel's historical analysis of the opposition between Saxon and Norman races associates it with an economic opposition between the systems of mediaeval feudalism and modern commerce. Chris R Vanden Bossche argues that "the opposition that underlies the conflict of cultural codes also underlies the conflict of economies: an economy grounded in the proprietor's land is opposed to an economy dependent on the circulation of capital".35 Saxon food and clothing derives from the land and is fixed, traditional and functional; for the Normans it is imported - derived from trade - and decorative. This opposition became central to the Victorian reading of Ivanhoe. Scott himself registered in the novel a faint disaffection with the commercial and professional values of his own background in Enlightenment Edinburgh.36 But in the following decades Ivanhoe came to form the basis of a

36 See Girouard, The Return to Camelot, Chapter 3. With the profits of his novel-writing Scott removed himself from the commercial urban environment of Edinburgh, recreated himself extravagantly as a Scottish laird at Abbotsford and tried to live a feudal life on his estates. This involved playing down the source of his wealth as a professional writer, an occupation he thought ungentlemanly. Girouard suggests that both Scott's authorial anonymity and the later neglect of his printing company's accounts (which led to his bankruptcy) were effects of his embarrassment about the middle-class sources of his wealth. Scott went to great lengths to conceal his professional activities: "Visitors to Abbotsford commented with amazement on the fact that he seemed to do no writing at all; in fact he got up at five every morning and did the bulk of it before breakfast. Even his children, when they were young, did not realise that their father was an author" (38).
pervasive discourse of medieval nostalgia, which was associated with opposition to industrialisation, commerce, democracy and modernity.\textsuperscript{37} However the political philosophy of Cobbett, Carlyle and Kenelm Digby, like Scott, associated the most threatening aspect of modern commerce not with what appears in \textit{Ivanhoe} as the courtly Norman culture of "artifice" and trade, but with Jewish participation in the economy of credit.

In contrast to Cumberland's Enlightenment representations of Jews, Scott's moneylenders are not exemplars of the beneficent effects of commerce.\textsuperscript{38} Instead, the circumstances of Isaac's wealth are shown to be inevitably corrupting. Both the Jew and the Templar, unattached to the land, have no national loyalties and cannot be incorporated into the new structures of allegiance (254). In this critique, Scott is not so much reproducing an ancient stereotype as representing it in terms of contemporary economic concerns.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, while he unequivocally condemns popular prejudice and the exploitative practices of the nobility, Scott also asserts that medieval Jews were not wholly victims; they themselves colluded in the cruel persecutions by which their cash was extorted from them: "the passive courage inspired by the love of gain induced the Jews to dare the various evils to which they were subjected, in consideration of the immense profits which they were enabled to

\textsuperscript{37} See Girouard, \textit{The Return to Camelot}, Chapters 3 and 5.

\textsuperscript{38} J G A Pocock describes how in the eighteenth century Scottish scientific Whiggism had justified the Union and loss of political autonomy by a theory of progress and the benefits of commerce: "Scottish scientific Whiggism - of which Millar's \textit{Origin of Ranks} is an outstanding representative - had employed the notion of a progress of society, from savagery to commerce, as a means of vindicating the Whig order and presenting commercial and specialized society as superior to the classical republics and their ancient virtue". By the late eighteenth century this authorisation of the Whig order was replaced by Burke, who "had diagnosed the French Revolution as the conspiracy of a monied interest, aimed at establishing a new kind of despotism on the dissolution by power and paper of all the natural ties among men". Burke accepted commerce but stressed the danger of its being controlled by a middle class without traditional allegiances. See "The Varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform: a History of Ideology and Discourse," in J G A Pocock, \textit{Virtue, Commerce, and History. Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 298, 288, 260.

\textsuperscript{39} For the identification between commerce and "judaization" see M C N Salbstein, \textit{The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain: The Question of the Admission of the Jews to Parliament, 1828-1860} (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982), 30-7. Adam Smith had compared England's commercial progress with Europe which limited individual enterprise and thus diminished wealth of nations. "The Jews were readily identified with the free-market climate associated with Adam Smith and his Manchester School successors. The republican Michelet compared his own France, which he conceived of as the harbinger of peasant revolutionary progress, with England, supposedly the country of \textit{statu quo} and of gold; the Jews, represented by Michelet as having in their hands the funds of every state and as guaranteeing the settlement of 1815, 'that armed peace, that motionless war', were therefore seen to be at home in the exchange of London". Salbstein also shows how in England itself a similar discourse informed the liberal Romantic critique of commercial progress, for example Byron in "The Age of Bronze": "Was ever Christian land so rich in Jews?" (32). See also Michael Ragussis's discussion of Burke's use of the metaphor of "judaization" in relation to the French Revolution in \textit{Figures of Conversion}, 120-5.
realise in a country naturally so wealthy as England" (69). It is almost an informal contract:

The obstinacy and avarice of the Jews being thus in a measure placed in opposition to the fanaticism and tyranny of those under whom they lived, seemed to increase in proportion to the persecution with which they were visited; and the immense wealth they usually acquired in commerce, while it frequently placed them in danger, was at other times used to extend their influence, and to secure to them a certain degree of protection. On these terms they lived (70).

The Jews' amoral individualism also entails danger to national security. It is the moneylenders who make possible the financing of factions:

To maintain these retainers, and to support the extravagance and magnificence which their pride induced them to affect, the nobility borrowed sums of money from the Jews at the most usurious interest, which knawed into their estates like consuming cankers, scarce to be cured unless when circumstances gave them an opportunity of getting free by exercising upon their creditors some act of unprincipled violence (75).

The operation of Jewish usury in England is a further factor contributing to civil instability, but the violence that rebounds on the Jews, it is implied, is of their own making. Thus when Isaac shows his terror of the Norman baron Front-de-Boeuf, Ivanhoe "viewed the extremity of his distress with a compassion in which contempt was largely mingled" (65). Ivanhoe, on the other hand, even when his true identity is disguised, refuses remuneration for his acts of generosity; his ethos is of obligation not exchange (71). In the final restoration of order it is this ethos that prevails, and the Jews, without factional conflict to finance, and fearing Richard's retribution, quit England (510).

But while one way in which the new unified England is defined is by its rejection of modern finance, the novel does not wholly endorse resistance to modernity. The Jews, I would argue, fall between the contending historiographies which form Scott's narrative, one nostalgic and one progressive. The novel's analysis of the mediaeval past is also informed by ideas about historical progress drawn from Scottish Enlightenment "philosophical" historiography. Despite his later espousal of Tory politics and a pseudo-aristocratic lifestyle, Scott grew up in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, among middle-class professionals and wrote for the Whig Edinburgh Review in which Scottish Enlightenment theory was debated. Scottish "philosophical" historians of the Enlightenment argued that civilisation progressed by "stages". This model of history inverted the belief that English liberty had originated with an "ancient constitution", which had been displaced by the Norman Conquest and restored by the Glorious Revolution. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the idea that liberty had been enshrined in a constitution of Gothic origin was linked to an assertion of Saxon, and therefore English, racial supremacy.40 But

40 See Hugh A MacDougall, Racial Myth in English History, 73-103.
"philosophical" historians refused to see authority in antiquity and argued that liberty arose progressively through the process of history, the "stages of the history of civil society". This principle is explicitly acknowledged in the "Dedicatory Epistle" to *Ivanhoe*, where the narrator "Templeton" compares his tale of Old England to Scott's accounts of early eighteenth-century Scotland, which then was similarly "under a state of government nearly as simple and as patriarchal as those of our good allies the Mohawks and Iroquois" (522). The purpose of these representations of the past, then, is not the nostalgic evocation of lost ideals, but the documentation of earlier, less sophisticated systems of social organisation. Scott's fiction shares its philosophy of history with the work of Sharon Turner, whose influence in reviving interest in the Anglo-Saxons is acknowledged in the "Dedicatory Epistle" (525), and whose *History of England from the Earliest Period to the Norman Conquest* (1799-1805) was the greatest single source for *Ivanhoe*. Turner's description of the origin of the Anglo-Saxon Church, for example, maintained that

> New agencies occurred afterwards to rear this infant to a noble youth. Better views of religion have since united with expanded science and progressive reason to conduct the national character and mind to a still superior manhood. Each preceding stage was necessary to the formation of the subsequent. Each has produced its appropriate utilities, and each has passed away from our estimation as soon as higher degrees of improvement were attained, and better systems became visible.42

While Turner saw the Norman Conquest as providential, he did agree that the origin of English liberty was Saxon. But his interest in the Anglo-Saxon past was exclusively for the sake of its bearing on the present; he warned against the idealisation of an ancient constitution, for antiquity should be considered as obsolete.43

Scott's approach to the past evoked in *Ivanhoe* is correspondingly sceptical, and this scepticism has been subject to influential misreadings. Augustin Thierry's *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825) was heavily influenced by *Ivanhoe*, and subscribed wholeheartedly to the "Norman yoke" theory of a subjugated Saxon race struggling against Norman conquerors. Asa Briggs argues for a similar partisanship in Scott: "No effort was spared in *Ivanhoe* ... to press the claims of the Saxons and to make fools or rogues out of the Normans".44 *Ivanhoe*’s analysis of English history does articulate a powerful consciousness of Saxon loss:

---

43 Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, 116-19. In Turner's work "the proved capacity of the past to beget the present, often somewhat mysteriously or at least providentially, becomes its sole claim to sentimental regard" (117).
Cedric mourns that "our bards are no more ... our deeds are lost in those of another race; our language - our very name - is hastening to decay" (53). Templeton, in his "Dedicatory Epistle", indicates a wish to redeem this loss in "a work designed to illustrate the domestic antiquities of England, and particularly of our Saxon forefathers" (521). But Thierry and Briggs were wrong to see the novel as a eulogy to the Saxon race. Cedric, the radical Saxon separatist who mourns the loss of culture, language and name, is both tragic and ridiculous. He disinherits his worthy son Wilfred for associating too much with Normans, while he maintains a blinkered devotion to the "slow, irresolute, procrastinating, and unenterprising" Athelstane merely on account of Athelstane's royal descent (198). Cedric's desire to perpetuate the Saxons as a race wilfully ignores the physical evidence which should dissuade him: the degenerate Athelstane is "a cock that would not fight" (514). Similarly, his efforts to resist the march of time, deliberately preserving in his house "the rude simplicity of the Saxon period" are seen as futile rather than heroic (31).

Nevertheless, it is true that, however much his text later became the basis for mediaeval nostalgia, Scott seemed intent in Ivanhoe on debunking Norman chivalry. In one example he interrupts a catalogue of the impressive intricacies of heraldic display with a chilling prolepsis:

> It is unnecessary to be particular on these subjects ... Their escutcheons have long mouldered from the walls of their castles. Their castles themselves are but green mounds and shattered ruins: the place that once knew them, knows them no more - nay, many a race since theirs has died out and been forgotten in the very land which they occupied with all the authority of feudal proprietors and feudal lords. What, then, would it avail the reader to know their names, or the evanescent symbols of their martial rank? (92)

The tournament at Ashby is doubled by increasingly dark parallels in the novel: its glamorous militarism is the precursor to the pointless battle for Torquilstone and its showy orchestration is echoed at the corrupt trial of Rebecca for witchcraft. The attractions of chivalric spectacle are part of a culture of conquest and aristocratic "tyranny" (8), the lists only a site for constantly replaying Saxon defeat, "a repeated triumph over the honour of England" (94). Chivalric formality is the expression of a corrupt court culture, which adds a deceptive veneer of refinement to uncivilised behaviour. Scott particularly objects to its effect on gender relations. Subjected to the Templar's crudely penetrating gaze, Rowena is forced to veil herself, resisting "the

---

45 Ivanhoe puts particular emphasis on this theme, citing the case of the Empress Matilda, who disguised herself as a nun to escape "the licentious pursuit of the Norman nobles", which is "indubitable and remarkable testimony to the existence of that disgraceful license by which that age was stained" (242-3). One of Scott's most vehement criticisms of the medieval past is focussed on its disrespect for women; chronicle accounts testify that "It was a matter of public knowledge ...that after the conquest of King William, his Norman followers, elated by so great a victory, acknowledged no law but their own wicked pleasure, and not only despoiled the conquered Saxons of their lands and their goods, but invaded the honour of their wives and of their daughters with the most unbridled license" (243).
compliments which your French breeding teaches" (47). Later in the novel a Norman baron plots to abduct Rowena in disguise, then to "appear in mine own shape, play the courteous knight, rescue the unfortunate and afflicted fair one from the hands of the rude ravishers", a cynical manipulation of the knightly code (169). Chivalry is constantly betraying the savagery it disguises, just as the elaborate pageantry of the tournament soon degenerates into bloodthirsty battle: "All that was beautiful and graceful in the martial array had disappeared, and what was now visible was only calculated to awake terror or compassion" (137).

Though not entirely concurring with Hume's rationalist indictment of the Crusades in his History of Great Britain (1761) as "the most signal and durable moment of human folly that has yet appeared in any age or nation", Scott was nevertheless writing from an Enlightenment perspective which saw the tyrannical potential in an irrational and outdated devotion to personal glory. His interest in medieval culture came not from the romanticism that would animate his successors, but from a materialist regard for history. In his "Essay on Chivalry", published just prior to Ivanhoe in the 1818 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Scott criticised the knightly code as extravagant, licentious, superstitious and bloodthirsty, although "from the wild and overstrained courtesies of Chivalry have been derived our present system of manners". In the late eighteenth century, interest in chivalry had been primarily part of a new, historicist approach to the past, a new attention to documentary evidence through which antiquarians could reconstruct more accurate accounts of medieval culture than had been available previously. Scott, who saw himself as an antiquarian researcher, and uses an antiquarian for his narrator, evokes the pomp of chivalry in order to historcise it. His description of the Ashby tournament, for example, is not only undercut with a vision of oblivion, but also with a specific and political analysis of the contemporary function of public spectacle: "In this manner did Prince John endeavour to lay the foundation of a popularity which he was perpetually throwing down by some inconsiderate act of wanton aggression upon the feelings and prejudices of the people" (90). John's counsellor Fitzurse contemptuously

---

46 Scott also points out the way in which chivalric rhetoric characteristically disguises male power over women. When De Bracy has captured Rowena he constantly, absurdly avows that it is he who is captive, and she captor. However this is not a language she understands, and she responds: "the insolent familiarity with which you apply to me the jargon of a troubadour forms no apology for the violence of a robber" (236). She turns the language of heroic chivalry back on him, mocking "the memorable conquest of this night, a conquest obtained over an old man, followed by a few timid hinds; and its booty, an unfortunate maiden transported against her will to the castle of a robber" (237).


48 Cited by A N Wilson, "Introduction" to Ivanhoe, xiii.


50 Ibid, 30.
refers to the tournament as "this present mummery", conscious of its strategic, rather than spiritual significance (148).

Scott's representation of the Middle Ages, then, does not mythologise either the oppression of the Saxons or the chivalry of the Normans. In the "Author's Introduction" he simply sets Saxon and Norman cultures in structural contrast to each other, describing without judging between "the vanquished distinguished by their plain, homely, blunt manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient institutions and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the Flower of Chivalry" (537). From the perspective of "philosophical" history the Saxon way of life is "rude" and the Norman code "wild": thus both are primitive stages of civilisation, though the latter, being slightly more recent, perhaps more closely resembles modern social organisation. Saxon irrationality, for example, is superceded in Norman culture; "the Normans being a mixed race, and better informed according to the information of the times, had lost most of the superstitious prejudices which their ancestors had brought from Scandinavia, and piqued themselves upon thinking freely on such topics" (192-3). Here, Scott clearly associates the progress of civilisation with racial intermixture.

*Ivanhoe* is a narrative of the progress towards miscegenation. England's conflicts are only resolved when they are transcended, when both Norman and Saxon races are united in the multi-racial English "nation". This unity is anticipated in the scenes in Sherwood Forest between Richard and the outlaws, where Norman king and Saxon partisans all identify themselves frequently as "true English hearts" (469). In the forest, Richard's recklessness brings him into personal contact with his struggling subjects and thus to appreciate "the value of Saxon virtue", which is fully recognised when race and class prejudice are finally dissolved in the name of the nation (353). The marriage of the Normanised Ivanhoe and the Saxon Rowena, endorsed by Richard, becomes the central event in the consecration of national unity, "a pledge of the future peace and harmony betwixt two races" (515), since "from the countenance which he afforded on this and other occasions to the distressed and hitherto degraded Saxons, [the King] gave them a safer and more certain prospect of attaining their just rights than they could reasonably hope from the precarious chance of a civil war." (514). Richard's Englishness unites Normans and Saxons, transcending both: "as the two nations mixed in society and formed intermarriages with each other, the Normans abated their scorn, and the Saxons were refined from their rusticity" (515); thus the next stage of civilisation is reached. One of the objects of *Ivanhoe* is to demonstrate how narrow and static race-thinking can be transcended by allegiance to the nation.

*Modernity and the Jewess*
The progressiveness of an English nation whose social and political advancement derives from miscegenation, is also demonstrated by a new tolerance towards the Jews. Prince John, whose prejudice is a measure of his wilful and cynical tyranny, and who treats Isaac with contempt and ridicule while remaining financially reliant on him becomes outdated (82-7). As Hazlitt wrote some years later of mediaeval attitudes to the Jews, "Three hundred years ago all this was natural and in order, because it accorded with the prejudices of the time; now it is absurd and Gothic, because it is contrary to men's reason and feelings".51 Like Berenice Montenero in *Harrington*, the Jews become a test of the nation's civilisation. Indeed, one of the signs of the similar primitiveness of both the Normans and Saxons before their unification is their relationship with the Jews, "a race which, during those dark ages, was alike detested by the credulous and prejudiced vulgar, and persecuted by the greedy and rapacious nobility, and who, perhaps owing to that very hatred and persecution, had adopted a national character in which there was much, to say the least, mean and unamiable" (50). In contrast, Ivanhoe, herald of the new nation, is distinguished for his courteous, if not companionable, demeanour towards Isaac. With the ascendancy of Richard and Ivanhoe, when "race" itself ceases to be an issue of contention, the Jews too have a chance to transcend the "national character" they adopted during a time of persecution. Most of all, the new tolerance is evident in a refined attitude towards the national religion: at the end of the novel, Rebecca is offered the persuasions of Rowena towards conversion instead of the coercive method of the Templars' witch-trial. Now, Rowena insists, Rebecca "'can have nothing to fear in England, when Saxon and Norman will contend who shall most do her honour'" (516-7). In such a united England, Rowena offers, "'I will be a sister to you'" (518).

In this context, the question of Rebecca's conversion occupies a central position in defining the nature of the new inclusive English nation. Dissenting from the atmosphere of compromise and progress which pervades the close of the novel, Rebecca resists conversion with an assertion that her difference from Rowena remains absolute and cannot be transcended, either by allegiance to the nation or even by sisterhood: "'it may not be - there is a gulf betwixt us. Our breeding, our faith, alike forbid either to pass over it ... I may not change the faith of my fathers like a garment unsuited to the climate in which I seek to dwell'" (517-8). Rebecca's conviction that her fate is determined rather than chosen suggests that she still sees her Jewishness, the "faith of my fathers", as a racial destiny as much as a belief-system. But her refusal to compromise is also the quality that distinguishes Rebecca as the novel's only heroic female - in contrast to Ulrica, the Saxon princess who saves her own life by sacrificing her honour, and the spoilt Rowena whose "haughtiness and habit of

51 Hazlitt, "Emancipation of the Jews", 324.
domination ... deserted her when her eyes were opened to the extent of her own danger" (240). Rebecca's fortitude derives from her specific experience as a Jewish woman:

she was better prepared by habits of thought, and by natural strength of mind, to encounter the dangers to which she was exposed. Of a strong and observing character, even from her earliest years, the pomp and wealth which her father displayed within his walls, or which she witnessed in the houses of other wealthy Hebrews, had not been able to blind her to the precarious circumstances under which they were enjoyed. Like Damocles at his celebrated banquet, Rebecca perpetually beheld, amid that gorgeous display, the sword which was suspended over the heads of her people by a single hair (246-7).

On the other hand, the Templar, taunting Rebecca in an attempt to seduce her, accuses Jews of being eternally adaptable: "'No race knows so well as thine own tribes how to submit to the time, and so to trim their bark as to make advantage even of an adverse wind'" (438). However Rebecca argues that Jewish identity is not determined by pragmatic compromise and corruption, which are traits produced by political disenfranchisement:

'Lamented be the hour,' said Rebecca, 'that has taught such art to the House of Israel! But adversity bends the heart as fire bends the stubborn steel, and those who are no longer their own governors, and the denizens of their own free independent state, must crouch before strangers. It is our curse, Sir Knight, deserved, doubtless, by our own misdeeds and those of our fathers' (439).

But while she defends herself against one Jewish stereotype, she perpetuates another. Gendering the Jew, and focussing the narrative tension on seduction, produces a construction of Jewishness which stresses obstinacy and inflexibility, the old theological typology. The Templar interprets her tantalising resistance in these terms: "'The devil, that possessed her race with obstinacy, has concentrated its full force in her single person!'" (404). The narrator himself refers ambivalently to "that unbending resolution with which Israelites have been frequently known to submit to the uttermost evils which power and violence can inflict upon them, rather than gratify their oppressors by granting their demands" (226). Thus Rebecca's self-defence against the Templar's threats and Rowena's persuasions is conflated with her uncompromising and outdated racial pride The source of her heroism very easily becomes evidence for her incompatibility with the English nation. Through an ambivalent representation of the Jewess the novel is able to define England as simultaneously progressive, tolerant, and exclusive. Because Rebecca herself refuses conversion, adhering to the notion of racial destiny rather than rational compromise, *Ivanhoe* can represent the English future purged of its Jews. While the Jewish male represents an economic modernity incompatible with the novel's nostalgic texture, at the same time the Jewish female, locked in the past, is irreconcilable with the novel's narrative of modernisation.
Rebecca's position firmly outside Christian culture reflects an understanding of Jewish identity derived from scripture. But unlike the Evangelical attitude to the Jews, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3, *Ivanhoe* stresses the rupture rather than the continuity between Christianity and Judaism. In the novel, Judaism appears not as the origin of modern Christian culture, as Evangelicals maintained, but its antithesis. The return of Richard heralds a turning away from zealous religion, from thoughts of Palestine, and from the Jews. Thus it is possible to condemn "religious prejudice" as an outdated, irrational attitude, without at the same time identifying too closely with its victims.\(^{52}\) Nevertheless Scott employs in *Ivanhoe* one concept which was central to Evangelical thought: that of the Jews' relationship to time. In a review of various publications of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, published in January 1819, some months before *Ivanhoe*, the Society's activities were condemned for threatening "to supersede the rational piety and well-directed benevolence which were the characteristics of our countrymen".\(^{53}\) However the sceptical reviewer began the article by stating his common ground with the Society:

> 'Time and chance,' we are told, 'happen to all men;' but in the lot of the Jews neither time nor chance have had power to effect a change: cities have crumbled into dust, empires have been swept from the earth, and languages have survived the nations which gave them utterance; but the Jews remain the same, in features, in habits, in customs, and in character. Gross darkness overspread the world for ages; but it added not to the mental thraldom, nor extinguished the limited knowledge of this extraordinary people. Light has since sprung up, arts have revived, science has reared its head, education, morals, religion, all have made rapid progress; but their blindness has not been removed, their prejudices have not been softened, their condition not improved.\(^{54}\)

The reviewer sees the Jews as untouched by secular enlightenment, just as they had remained untouched by religious enlightenment. In fact, like the Wandering Jew of romantic literature, the Jews are seen as outside time itself. Scott may also have derived his characterisation of the Jews' relationship to temporality from a more materialist analysis. The Scottish Enlightenment historian Adam Ferguson considered property a necessary requirement for a progressive view of time: "Property frees the

---

\(^{52}\) While Evangelical interest in the Jews in the first half of the nineteenth century was grounded on a theological identification with Judaism, the Old Testament and the Mosaic Law, liberals often utilised a political discourse about the Jews which stressed their difference from the English. M C N Salzstein shows that liberals like Hazlitt and Emerson supported Emancipation but denounced the "Judaizing" of England: "Emerson decried that Englishmen, no longer transcendentalists or Christians in anything but name, now espoused exclusively the doctrine of the Old Testament and lived under the 'Jewish law' of a brutal utilitarian political economy.[English Traits, 1856]". See Salzstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain*, 33. The association of the Jews with the Old Testament was thus the ground for both evangelical identification with and liberal alienation from contemporary English Jews. Scott's duality towards Jewish commerce and Jewish persecution anticipates this later nineteenth century liberal ambivalence.


mind from bondage to mere appetite and violent passions by bringing about a fundamental change in the orientation of oneself in time: one now acts with a view to futurity and motivated by a distant object, no longer propelled only by the immediate gratification of instinct or passion." In these terms, unlike the English whose land rights are restored at the end of the novel, the Jews, with no property, are unable to engage with a concept of futurity.

One of the functions of the Jews in Ivanhoe, then, is to highlight the difference between Jewish temporality and the temporality of the English nation, which has cast aside nostalgia and looks forward to progress. In contrast Jewish time is cyclical, looking to restoration but at the same time repetition. Isaac believes implicitly in the ultimate redemption of the dispossessed Jews, though his experience assures him that his destiny is endless mistreatment: "I trust too in the rebuilding of Zion; but as well do I hope with my own bodily eyes to see the walls and battlements of the new Temple, as to see a Christian, yea, the very best of Christians, repay a debt to a Jew, unless under the awe of the judge and jailor" (117). Rebecca, like Cedric the Saxon, defines herself in terms of the past; she adheres to "the law of my fathers" (425). Her attachment to the past for its own sake, her resistance to change and refusal of conversion constitute a clear parallel to Cedric's narrow racialism. Moreover, central to Scott's characterisation of Jewish temporality is Rebecca's response to Jewish persecution. Her submission to suffering is a confirmation of the inevitability of that suffering, a deep identification between Jewishness and perpetual punishment: "We are like the herb which flourisheth most when it is most trampled on!" (117). This logic also links Jewish temporality to Gothic, the "feminine" literary mode which Scott was widely understood to have displaced with his historical novels. Fiona Robertson defines Gothic temporality as the "backdating of sin to the ancestral past. Gothic plots disrupt the reader's conventional expectations about the workings of cause and effect. All responsibility for sin in Gothic is typically referred back to the past, so that the evil effects suffered by protagonists in the present are clearly unrelated to any sins they themselves might have committed". Likewise, the Jews insist that their destiny is punishment which is both inevitable and in excess of present causes. Their sense of the future is, in a similar way, outside linear time.

When the Templar, in his effort to seduce her, offers Rebecca personal restoration to Palestine, she refuses because of a belief in eventual divine intervention on behalf of

---

56 Robertson, Legitimate Histories, 76. In this sense, the exile of the Jews and the inauguration of English history at the end of the novel mirrors the displacement of the Gothic genre by the historical novel.
her people. Yet Palestine in the novel is an indeterminate site of fantasy, fought over, changing hands constantly, but never restored to any claimant.

Both the fetishisation of national suffering, and the belief in eventual redemption are objects of critique in the novel's representation of the Saxons, and this also holds true for the Jews. In the same way that the novel satirises the "Norman yoke" theory as a basis for English political identity, it condemns the rigid, retrogressive temporality of Rebecca, and shows it to be incompatible with the new understanding of the nation. Thus Cedric's final compromise in renouncing aspirations to absolute racial restoration effects the final split between those committed to modernity and optimism and those self-condemned to repeating the past. The apparent parallel between two disinherited races develops into a contrast by the end of the novel. While Richard, the knight-errant, returns from his various wanderings to offer the Saxons regeneration through compromise, the Jews choose obstinately to perpetuate their exile in continued wandering. In Ivanhoe, Scott constructs a new English history by rejecting "Jewish" time, the cyclical historiography of Gibbon and the providential historiography of Turner, for a secular, progressive, national temporality. This, then, is the significance of Scott's use of the figure of Jewish-Christian relations as a model for historical writing. Jews are to Christians what the past is to the present: an earlier stage of civilisation.

Rebecca's refusal to convert is not only a rejection of progressive history. It is also a refusal to acknowledge her own ambivalence towards Rowena's offer of a feminine identity, and, more importantly, towards Ivanhoe's sexual appeal. When Rebecca tends Ivanhoe's wounds she finds herself praying for his recovery: "the petition was already breathed, nor could all the narrow prejudices of her sect induce Rebecca to wish it recalled" (256). The beginnings of her passion for Ivanhoe have already softened the "narrow prejudices" of her religion.57 Rebecca's desire for Ivanhoe continually hints at her capacity to transcend her Jewishness, yet it is also constantly frustrated. When reunited with him in the besieged castle of Torquilstone she "was astonished at the keen sensation of pleasure which she experienced" but immediately chastened by his "cold" response, which "recalled her to herself, and reminded her the sensations which she felt were not and could not be mutual", although he replies

57 Undoubtedly, this was the reason for the Victorian Jewish critic David Philipson's vehement protest against Rebecca's expressions of sexual desire: "it is impossible that Rebecca ... could have entertained even the slightest tender feeling for Ivanhoe beyond that of sympathy for his sufferings ... Such a feeling could not even have arisen. With Jessica, light and frivolous, it was possible; with Rebecca, earnest, deep feeling, so Jewish in every thought, never under any circumstances ... had he truly portrayed Jewish feeling of that time, not even by a syllable would he have indicated that any passion had sprung up" (83–4). Philipson blurs Rebecca's expression of sexual desire with disloyalty to her religion, but insists on the unlikelihood of either. Here he anxiously engages in his own, Victorian exaggeration of the myth of the Jewess, whose loyalty to her religion seems to be only one aspect of her essentially asexual nature.
"hastily" indicating his own strained self-discipline (308). The siege of Torquilstone becomes a metaphor for Rebecca's divided loyalties. Resolving to resist distraction by the "fair features" of the sleeping Ivanhoe,

She wrapped herself closely in her veil, and sat down at a distance from the couch of the wounded knight, with her back turned towards it, fortifying, or endeavouring to fortify, her mind not only against the impending evils from without, but also against those treacherous feelings which assailed her from within (319-20).

The double identity of Rebecca is again revealed in the prison at Templestowe when she is awaiting her trial for witchcraft, falsely accused by the Templar. Here, apparently defiantly expressing her Jewishness, she sings a devotional hymn, part of "the evening prayer recommended by her religion" (435). The hymn, "translated" by the narrator, uses Old Testament allusion, yet it conveys a more Protestant than Jewish theology:

Our harps we left by Babel's streams,
The tyrant's jest, the Gentile's scorn;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute our timbrel, trump, and horn.
But THOU hast said, the blood of goat,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize;
A contrite heart, an humble thought,
Are Mine accepted sacrifice (436).

Here Rebecca invokes the fallen condition of modern Jewry with a reference to the decline of the communal ritual of animal sacrifice and its replacement by personal prayer, yet these are in fact the terms of Christianity's self-definition in opposition to Judaism. At this moment of imminent martyrdom, Rebecca's capacity to transcend Judaism is realised in the very nature of her religiosity, which, passive and humble, is essentially Christian, even perhaps Evangelical. Her refusal of Rowena's offer of conversion at the end of the novel is shown, then, as a refusal of her own spirituality as well as of feminine community. In both these respects, the representation of the Jewish woman in Ivanhoe overlaps with the conversionist discourse which I will be discussing in the following chapter.

Thus, an important part of the tragic irony of Ivanhoe's conclusion, as Victorian critics and revisers of the novel recognised, is the frustration derived from the sense of Rebecca's fitness not just for the hero, but for the Christian world he represents.88

---

88 Rebecca frustrates the expectation of integration raised by the model of Rowena and other displaced heroines of cross-cultural romance. Fiona Robertson compares Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor (1819) and Maturin's The Milesian Chief (1812), in which social change is represented in a tragid love-affair between the daughter of newcomers and the son of the dispossessed ancient landowners, who is "torn between his sense of his family's fate and his modern instinct for social integration". See Robertson, Legitimate Histories, 218. Robertson considers these texts in terms of their relationship to Sydney Morgan's "national tale" The Wild Irish Girl (1806): both "reverse the gender terms of Morgan's original formulation. The romantic aura of the dispossessed is made masculine, and leads decisively to tragedy rather than reconciliation ... To look at these three novels together is to see that the threatened
Instead, Rebecca's beauty, which has attracted all who come into contact with her, is finally left to waste, unreproduced, as she resolves to become one of the Jewish women who have traditionally "devoted their thoughts to Heaven, and their actions to works of kindness to men - tending the sick, feeding the hungry, and relieving the distressed" (518). Rebecca explains that she is leaving for Spain in fear of the continuing hostility of the English to the Jews, but her renunciation of England also betrays the persistence of her desire for Ivanhoe, and her inability to renounce her own sexual nature: "her eyes filled with tears" when she speaks his name to his new wife (517). Refusing the offer of a comfortable life in England as a Christian woman means more than renunciation of her closely-guarded religion, for acceptance would entail the painful proximity of Lady Ivanhoe's patronage. Furthermore, Rebecca's renunciation of Christian England confirms the threatening nature of her own continued presence to Ivanhoe, whose thoughts indeed continue to be distracted by the memory of her "beauty and magnanimity" even when she is gone (519). Thus Rebecca's submission to her own "duty", the reinforcement of racial segregation, acknowledges a greater duty, the primacy of English national destiny, which requires the successful marriage of Saxon and Norman, unimpeded by exposure to temptation (517). Even at an early stage, Rebecca has demonstrated a strong sense of her subordinate role in the destiny of the English nation. Persuading Ivanhoe to submit to her cure, she argues: "... Thou hast been restored to thy country when it most needed the assistance of a strong hand and a true heart, and thou hast humbled the pride of thine enemies and those of thy king, when their horn was most highly exalted; and for the evil which thou hast sustained, seest thou not that Heaven has raised thee a helper and a physician, even among the most despised of the land?" (304). Rebecca's Biblical diction shows her identification with English nationalism as a tragic echo of her own lost national cause. But while she may serve the cause of the English nation she cannot become part of it.

In Rebecca, Scott dramatises what was to become in later decades the crisis of Jewish emancipation. While Rebecca's virtue hints at the possibility of her integration within an enlightened, multi-racial England, her resistance to Christianity finally defines the limits of England's tolerance. The transcendence of the racial conflict between Normans and Saxons in the discourse of the "nation" is completed when the nation in its turn enforces its own exclusivity. While Scott's novel is a "philosophical" history of the universal progress of civilisation, it is also a particularist history of the English.

culture, if feminized, may be reassimilated; if masculine, must be lost and also more powerfully mourned" (219). Robertson's argument shows how the gendering of the dispossessed in these novels sets up certain narrative expectations: the figure of the female Jew raises possibilities of assimilation which are impossible for the male.
Sexuality and the Jewess: Rebecca and Neela

Rebecca remained, however, a problematic figure for Jewish writers. In particular they sought to modify the powerful sexuality which characterises Scott's heroine. For the Templar, the very source of Rebecca's sexual charisma is her authority, which appeals to him, narcissistically, with an image of his own aspiration:

While Rebecca spoke thus, her high and firm resolve, which corresponded so well with the expressive beauty of her countenance, gave to her looks, air, and manner a dignity that seemed more than mortal. Her glance quailed not, her cheek blanched not, for the fear of a fate so instant and so horrible; on the contrary, the thought that she had her fate at her command, and could escape at will from infamy to death, gave a yet deeper colour of carnation to her complexion, and a yet more brilliant fire to her eye. Bois-Guilbert, proud himself and high-spirited, thought he had never beheld beauty so animated and so commanding (253).

Rebecca's self-possession and hence her power over her tormentor is eroticised; similarly her relationship to Ivanhoe, who later lies injured in her power, subject to her orders and her cures, is one of command (298). Indeed, S S Prawer has suggested that "the sexually alluring aura that had come to surround Scott's Rebecca" was a model for Thackeray's self-conscious heroine Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair (1848). Similarly, Trollope's Rebecca Loth in Nina Balatka (1867) combines physical beauty with imperiousness: she is "dark, with large dark-blue eyes and jet-black tresses ... who knew herself to be all a queen". Scott's Rebecca, as these later versions make explicit, is more than the spiritual, domestic heroine celebrated by David Philipson, who wished to see her in terms of "her attachment to her father, her care for the poor, her attention to the wounded, her proud defiance of the evil doer, her enthusiasm for Israel's past, her deep piety, her trust in God". Rebecca is also a heroine conceived in Romantic terms, through an association of femininity, distance, mystery and domination. In Ivanhoe Rebecca's power is connected to her secret knowledge of Jewish medicine: "The youngest reader of romances and romantic ballads must recollect how often the females, during the dark ages, as they are called, were initiated into the mysteries of surgery, and how frequently the gallant knight submitted the wounds of his person to her cure whose eyes had yet more deeply penetrated his heart" (294-5). Thus Jewishness, erotic power, and the cure of the body are linked around the figure of Rebecca.

59 S S Prawer, Israel at Vanity Fair. Jews and Judaism in the Writings of W M Thackeray (Leiden and New York: E J Brill, 1992), 214. Prawer writes that "the dark beauty of Rebecca of York was to haunt Thackeray's writings", in which there is a recurrent contrast between unattractive Jewish men and sexualised Jewesses (11).
Like other heroines in Scott's novels, Daniel Cottom has argued, Rebecca's function is to humiliate and thus to civilise the male hero. Clearly this is a structural feature of the romance plot, but in Cottom's account it is also an ideological contest between aristocratic and bourgeois values, expressed as a "division of consciousness between sober control and an anachronistic, tortuous, perversely fascinating state of submissiveness". In relation to Ivanhoe Cottom focuses on the scene inside the besieged castle of Torquilstone. While the Templar later admits that, with the failure of male coercion and chivalric rhetoric, "yonder girl hath wellnigh unmanned me" (446), Ivanhoe at Torquilstone is similarly unmanned by Rebecca. He is infuriated by her horror at the battle in which he longs to participate, since he feels it is an essential expression of his masculinity: "Rebecca ... thou knowest not how impossible it is for one trained to actions of chivalry to remain passive as a priest, or a woman, when they are acting deeds of honour around him" (317). However, regretting his willingness to renounce the life she has saved, reflecting to herself that "yet but a short space, and those fair features will be no longer animated by the bold and buoyant spirit which forsakes them not even in sleep" (319), Rebecca condemns the desire for violence as "an offering of sacrifice to a demon of vain glory, and a passing through the fire to Moloch" (317). While she characterises chivalry as no more than heathen barbarism, Ivanhoe considers it a fundamental expression of Christianity, and a guarantee of proper gender relations: "the pure light of chivalry, which alone distinguishes the noble from the base ... Thou art no Christian, Rebecca; and to thee are unknown those high feelings which swell the bosom of a noble maiden when her lover hath done some deed of emprize which sanctions his flame" (318). But, she asks, "is there such virtue in the rude rhymes of a wandering bard, that domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness, are so wildly bartered, to become the hero of those ballads which vagabond minstrels sing to drunken churls over their evening ale?" (318). Yet Rebecca's critique of pointless violence finally prevails. It is a redefinition of both masculinity and Christianity at the end of the novel, particularly in Richard's forgiveness towards his treacherous brother John, which finally makes possible a peaceful and prosperous England, an England ruled by "domestic love".

If Rebecca's ability to "unman" and feminise the hero was not referred to by reviewers, her racialised sexuality was also felt to be problematic. Despite her unwitting emulation of Christian charity and piety, Scott's Jewess is constructed

---

63 Ibid, 144-5, 153-6. Cottom designates "aristocratic values" as "humanistic intellectuality, unthought bravery, and personal loyalty" and "bourgeois values" as "professionalism, industry and the law" (144-5).
mainly in terms of Orientalist discourse, which saw her sexual allure as one aspect of her "Eastern" race. When Philipson protested that Rebecca's expression of sexual desire was psychologically and historically inconsistent, he was seeking to undo this association. But in the novel, the association of Jewishness and sexuality is made readily enough by the Templars, who are only too eager to explain Brian de Bois-Guilbert's infatuation with Rebecca as the effect of heathen sorcery. The Jewess is a useful scapegoat by means of which the Temple may be purged without damage to its Knights. The sexuality of the Jewess can be substituted for the transgressive desires of the corrupt Knights: the preceptor of Templestowe explains how it has been arranged that "the death of a Jewess will be a sin-offering sufficient to atone for all the amorous inducements of the Knights Templars" (405). At the same time the Templars themselves play cynically on the popular belief in a correspondence between Jewishness, sexuality and sorcery (407). They can easily engineer evidence against Rebecca at her witch-trial by linking her foreignness with her sexuality, thus proving her guilty of witchcraft because she was "heard to mutter to herself in an unknown tongue; that the songs she sung by fits were of a strangely sweet sound, which made the ears of the hearer tingle and his heart throb" (421).

But Rebecca herself, the novel sometimes implies, has contributed to such an analysis. Her first appearance in the novel, at the Ashby tournament, is emphatically marked by a display of both nature and artifice:

The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colours embossed upon a purple ground, permitted to be visible - all these constituted a combination of loveliness which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her. It is true, that of the golden and pearl-studded clasps which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. A diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value, were by this means also made more conspicuous (82-3).

Rebecca displays in an unrestrained manner both her body and her material wealth, deliberately making "conspicuous" more than is expected. She forms an implicit contrast to Rowena, who is veiled at Rotherwood and silent at Ashby. Bryan Cheyette has pointed to the characterisation in similar terms of Trollope's unnamed "Jewesses" in *The Bertrams* (1859), who "were somewhat too bold, perhaps; there was too much daring in their eyes, as, with their naked shoulders and bosoms nearly bare, they met

---

the eyes of the men who were looking at them". Cheyette's discussion of the beautiful Jewess Madame Marie Max Goesler, in *Phineas Finn* (1869), argues that "as well as her Oriental sexuality, Goesler's uncertain 'dark' racial origins also make it difficult for Trollope's 'realist' fiction to accommodate her", and that finally, "understanding her place in the social order of things", she renounces her ambition to marry into the English aristocracy and is thus "desexualized and deracialized". This confusion is anticipated in Scott's attempt in *Ivanhoe* to contain Rebecca within a national narrative of progress and compromise, an attempt which ends, similarly, with her exclusion. Indeed, it is Rebecca's inability to renounce her sexual passion for Ivanhoe in a sisterly life with Rowena, as much as her adherence to her Jewish religion, that makes her unfit for a future in England. Moreover, in *Ivanhoe* Rebecca's racialised sexuality has an important political dimension. Just as Isaac, Scott implies, participates in an unspoken contract with his persecuting creditors, Rebecca, who chooses to display herself, is also something of a collaborator. It was this aspect of Scott's ambivalent portrait of Rebecca that was anxiously rewritten in the work of Grace Aguilar and Celia and Marion Moss while at the same time they sought to invoke his use of the figure of the beautiful Jewess as an argument for social and political tolerance.

In Celia Moss's "Neela: a Tale of the Jews in England" (1842), this kind of rewriting is apparent. The story appeared twenty three years after the publication of *Ivanhoe*, at the height of the campaign for Jewish Emancipation, the mediaeval revival, and renewed civil unrest in England. "Neela" is heavily indebted to Scott's novel, the continuing popularity of which may have suggested a market eager for tales of persecuted Jewesses. Moss's story however makes some significant changes to its model, which reinforce my arguments about the original text's ambivalence.

The narrative is set in the Middle Ages and focusses on Neela, beautiful daughter of a benevolent Jewish physician, who with her elderly mother Naomi is persecuted by a "mob who spared neither sex nor age", charging them with heresy and child-murder (128). Moss clearly emphasises the innocuousness of the Jews, indicated through her strategic use of gender. At the opening of the narrative the male member of the family is already dead, so that the Jews are represented by "only helpless and sorrowing women" (128). As in *Ivanhoe*, the threatening public character of the male Jewish stereotype is displaced by the female. Thus, violence against the Jews, violence against helpless women, the elder of whom is trampled to death by a

---

65 Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*, 32.
66 Ibid, 33, 34, 42.
67 Mrs Levetus [Celia Moss], "Neela: a Tale of the Jews in England", in *The King's Physician* (Portsea: T Hinton, 1865), 125-47. Further references to this edition are indicated by page numbers after the text. The story was first published in *Friendship's Offering and Winter's Wreath* for 1842.
member of the mob, is a clear transgression of chivalry. Moreover, persecution in "Neela" is framed within a similar political context to *Ivanhoe*. The mob, whose long history of "vulgar prejudice" is easily mobilised, are directed by a corrupt aristocrat, Leslie Gower, whose designs on his elder brother's barony have been crushed by the Jew's refusal to be bribed as a poisoner (137). Persecution is thus a revenge for the Jew's refusal to submit to manipulation by nobility. Naomi and Neela are finally rescued and offered protection by the rightful Baron, thus they are identified with established authority under threat from aristocratic insurrection.

However, as in Scott's novel, persecution also has a sexual motive. Neela, like Rebecca is a sexualised Jewess:

She did not appear to be more than seventeen, and her full rounded figure and sunny complexion betrayed her Eastern origin. There was no tinge of colour on her cheek; but the ripe red lip contrasted beautifully with her white teeth. Her eyes were of the darkest shade of blue, and their long black lashes gave them a thoughtful and pensive expression (131).

She is pursued remorselessly by Gower despite her constant resistance; the mob attack on the Jews is also his personal revenge on Neela (132). The mob echo his desire; while one attacks her mother "another had wound his hand in the long tresses of her daughter" (135). The beauty of the Jewess has an ambivalent significance in this text as in *Ivanhoe*. Provoking desire and violence, it also speaks her innocence and secures the protection of an English knight, Sir Richard Falkner: "The supposition that so fair and delicate a creature could be a participator in the shedding of blood seemed too monstrous to be entertained ... there was something so touching in the expression of her pale but beautiful countenance, and sad resignation of look and attitude, that Sir Richard was moved almost to tears, as he thought of her probable fate" (131). His chivalric defence of beauty against persecution is emphasised in contrast to the "unmanly" actions of the mob and the aristocratic Gower's crime against his chivalric oath "to protect the innocent and oppressed" (134, 145). However it is around the question of Neela's sexuality that an important revision of *Ivanhoe* occurs. Moss seeks to downplay the relationship between eroticism and material wealth which was highlighted in Scott's text when Rebecca appeared in public at Ashby. Neela rejects ornamentation and self-display:

Her hair, of a glossy jet, was thrown carelessly back from her face, and fell in thick tresses almost to her feet; the pearl chaplet with which she usually bound them lying neglected on a marble table near. Her dress, of violet coloured silk made in the Oriental style, was without ornament of any kind, and a white embroidered veil, thrown over the back of her head, formed a graceful drapery round her fair shoulders. Still there was an air of negligence in her attire, rich as it was, which showed the heart of the wearer to be too full of sorrow for womanly vanity (131).

By showing Neela at the time following her bereavement, Moss increases both the pathos and the passivity of her heroine. Her sexual appeal is focussed on her
victimisation, and this focus is sustained throughout the story, so that finally she is less of a heroine than a victim. In a Gothic scene in the Baron's castle, Neela witnesses her mother's death and, while "a sickening feeling of terror crept over her; horrible visions crowded on her brain, and she who had so loved her mother while living, feared to look upon her when dead", Gower appears once more to threaten her with abduction or execution (142). Like Rebecca, Neela professes a preference for suicide, but Gower torments her with a graphic description, closely following the Templar's words in *Ivanhoe*:

'Bravely spoken!' and he laughed a bitter laugh. 'But hast thou considered, gentle Neela, what the death will be of which thou hast spoken so calmly? Canst thou, whose youth and beauty have been guarded like a well-prized jewel or delicate flower, bear the rude gaze - the execrations of an insulting crowd? Are those lovely limbs fitted for the torture and the flame?' (144)

In *Ivanhoe*, Rebecca responds with a spirited defence of female bravery, arguing that "not in thy fiercest battles hast thou displayed more of thy vaunted courage than has been shown by woman when called upon to suffer by affection or duty ... when we enter those fatal lists, thou to fight and I to suffer, I feel the strong assurance within me that my courage shall mount higher than thine". But in Moss's story, "Neela heard him not, for, exhausted by previous terror and excitement, she had fainted" (144). Neela's lapse out of consciousness at this crucial point in the action is significant. The author elides submission and resistance; at the point of greatest danger Neela's agency fades and she does not have to choose her own salvation. Neela does not have Rebecca's authority, nor can she become a proud martyr - but, crucially, neither is she obstinate. Moss's homage to Scott in this story shows that his mode of historical romance continued to be used to discuss questions of race, class and nation. In Moss's time, *Ivanhoe* was still being avidly read, while the questions it raised were being articulated in parliamentary debate in the context of possible constitutional reform. At a moment when Jewish loyalties were under public scrutiny Moss chose to privilege an image not of racial pride and religious obstinacy, but of feminine passivity.

In *Ivanhoe*, Walter Scott popularised the split representation of the male and female Jew. This duality was reproduced in most nineteenth-century texts considering the Jews in terms of religion, politics or "race". Some nineteenth-century conservatives, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, romanticised Scott's evocation of the Middle Ages, and exaggerated his portrait of the moneylender Isaac to reinforce the racial exclusiveness of the English. On the other hand, the figure of the Jewish woman became a means of encoding a complex and ambivalent "liberality". The Jews

---

were, then, a crucial element in Scott's construction of an originary myth for the
English nation. In his narrative, the maintenance of "racial" traits and "racial" purity is
opposed to the pursuit of progressive civilisation through miscegenation. At the same
time, the Jewess's loyalty to "the faith of my fathers" was a question both of descent
and belief. Her Jewishness was simultaneously racial and therefore determined, and
religious and therefore chosen. These elements were combined and recombined by
nineteenth-century Jewish and non-Jewish writers, who looked to both the biblical
and mediaeval past to authorise contesting versions of nationhood. Scott's enlightened
"English" nation is, finally, an exclusive nation; as in the case of the writers I will be
considering in the next chapter, who opposed "prejudice" not on the grounds of
reason but Evangelical religion, tolerance was coercive.
CHAPTER 3
CONVERSION STORIES

In a tract published by "A Lady" in London in the 1810s, middle-class Englishwomen were exhorted to consider "the degraded situation of the Poor Jewesses". Enjoying the privileges of Christianity and prosperity, the author wrote, "we can scarcely imagine to ourselves, any situation so entirely without comfort, as the lower ranks of Jewish women" (3). She went on to detail the material situation of such women:

sunk in the grossest ignorance, without a single correct idea of religion, or even the common restraints of education, these poor unprotected young females are exposed to the snares and designs of the unprincipled. The consequences may be easily imagined; and it is well ascertainment, that great numbers of these are wandering about the streets of London, sinking under the accumulated horrors attendant upon poverty and vice. The prejudices subsisting between Jews and Christians deprive these unfortunate victims of many of the advantages which are afforded to others in the same wretched situation, many of them are left to perish in infamy, without an eye to pity, or a hand stretched out to relieve them... does not every female in happier circumstances feel herself called upon to attend to her perishing sister, when she says, "Oh! pity me, for the hand of God hath touched me"? (4).

The rhetoric of the tract anticipated a central aspect of the argument by women campaigners for the emancipation of colonial slaves. Women were called upon to take action against the circumstances which threatened the moral wellbeing of other women, whom they saw as their "sisters". The Appeal highlighted the sexual vulnerability of lower-class Jewish women, while implicitly connecting this with their lack of "a single correct idea of religion". It concluded by urging women to deny themselves "unnecessary indulgencies" and instead contribute to a fund for

---

1 A Lady, An Appeal to the Females of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, more especially with reference to the degraded situation of the Poor Jewesses. 'That through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy.' (London: B R Goakman, no date), [1]. This text must have been published between 1811, the date of a sermon advertised at the back of the tract and 1814 when the Female Asylum opened housing thirteen girls. By 1817 there were only three, and the project was abandoned. In 1819 the LSPCJ discontinued all attempts at providing the temporal relief for the Jews which is delineated in this tract. See Robert Michael Smith, "The London Jews' Society and Patterns of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801-1859", Jewish Social Studies 43 (1981): 282-3 and Mel Scult, Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties. A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid Nineteenth Century (Leiden: E J Brill, 1978), 109.

establishing an "Asylum for Jewish females, sinking under a burden of sin and sorrow, or labouring under the weight of accumulated woe, and who, without such a place of shelter, would still be left to perish in the streets" (9, 7). Such empathy with their plight, it was hoped, would induce the Jewesses to investigate the religion of their benefactresses.

Like Scott, the author of the tract constructed a forward-looking and inclusive vision of England, redeemed from an "uncivilized" past. Moreover, as in much abolitionist writing, she linked her philanthropic project with an appeal to the Evangelical concept of womanhood. As Clare Midgley has written of women's anti-slavery appeals, "women's petitions associated their own privileges with an 'enlightened' imperialism which could spread the benefits of Christianity and of British social conventions and government to the colonies". This tract celebrated the liberation of Englishwomen from "the oppressed and servile condition in which women are ever considered in uncivilized nations ... as the mists of error were gradually dispersed by the beams of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles, and as the general tone of manners and morals were improved, the importance of the female character became, as the natural consequence, universally felt and acknowledged" (6). Female character, indeed, was discussed in detail in the tract: "It has been most wisely appointed, that with a more delicate frame of body, and inferior intellectual endowments, a more confined sphere of action has been assigned to us than to the other sex, but the value of our immortal souls is exactly equal, in the eyes of our Creator, and therefore it must be of exactly the same importance, that the peculiar duties of our situation should be conscientiously fulfilled" (6). But the "more confined sphere" was not one of "indolent inactivity"; rather, "activity and zeal, which are such appropriate handmaids to the tenderness and delicacy of the female character" (6, 7). Moreover, combining piety and activity in a charitable venture on behalf of "these outcasts of the earth", would be an enactment both of femininity and of messianic expectation; it would be "building up the walls of Jerusalem" (5, 8). As Vron Ware has suggested, the rhetoric of 'woman's mission' "undoubtedly helped to regulate the distance between women of different classes. In this context it is important to consider how it worked to construct relationships between women across race as well". In this chapter I will be examining Evangelical women's writing on the conversion of the Jews. For the writers under consideration, constructing the

3 Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 101.
4 Ware, Beyond the Pale, 67. Ware shows how similar arguments based on "woman's mission" that I have identified in the Appeal are evident in abolitionist women's writing of the 1820s and 1830s, where women are seen to have a particular duty and ability to redeem the slave (66-9).
Jewess was a particularly forceful means of articulating Evangelical definitions of female character and women's mission within the nation.

Women and the conversion of the Jews

The *Appeal*, written on behalf of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, reveals women's early involvement in the most prominent and well-funded Evangelical conversion society of the nineteenth century. The LSPCJ was established in 1809 by Joseph Samuel C F Frey, a converted Polish Jew, in order to "relieve the temporal distress of the Jews, as well as to promote their spiritual welfare". The Society organised sermons and lectures for the Jews, published and distributed tracts, translated the New Testament into Hebrew and opened a school and a workshop for converts. It was a typical middle-class Evangelical voluntary society, characterised by a "blend of earnestness, business sense and bureaucratic officiousness". However, the Society went bankrupt after six years and was only saved by the large fortune of Lewis Way, a millennialist Evangelical devoted to the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to Palestine. Although Dissenters had originally been prominent in the Society, a dispute in 1814 led to their withdrawal and it became a Church of England organisation. The LSPCJ was supported by the leaders of the Clapham Sect, and most of its officials were Evangelicals, both of the middle class and the aristocracy. Eventually expanding to establish mission stations throughout Europe and the Near East, the Society had thousands of subscribers in London alone, and by 1817 there were also 45 auxiliaries across the country, each consisting of a Committee, officers and members. In his study of conversionism in Britain, Mel Scult describes the activities of provincial auxiliary societies: "Each group held an annual meeting to which one of the itinerant preachers of the parent society was invited to give a talk on the progress of the whole organization. During the year sermons were sponsored and if there happened to be any Jews in the community, they might be approached with tracts or New Testaments in Hebrew".

---

5 Other contemporary LSPCJ publications included *An Address to Females on the Behalf of the London Society, by an Englishwoman; including a Plan and Rules for the Formation of a Penny Society* [1810]. Recent accounts of the activities of the LSPCJ, such as the studies noted above do not mention the separate and specific aims of the women's organisations.


9 Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties* 115, 123, 100, ibid. The Society's income was enormous, and by 1858 it had reached an average of more than £30,000 per annum. See Smith, "The London Jews' Society", 278.
In other words, despite a high degree of organisation and the involvement of many individuals, any contact with Jews themselves was incidental rather than necessary to the activities of the Society.

Indeed, for these campaigners, the mission to convert the Jews amounted to more than concern for the spiritual welfare of a small religious minority. The project was impelled by those Evangelicals with a millennialist tendency, which is apparent in the Appeal on behalf of Jewish women. The Rev. Charles Simeon, a Clapham Evangelical and preacher, fundraiser and strategist for the Society, believed that the highest manifestation of the religious spirit

is where the individual through reading the Scriptures becomes aware of God's special relationship to the Jews and His design to restore them in due season to their former inheritance, and to a state of piety and blessedness far exceeding anything, which in their national capacity they ever possessed. He sees further, the connection which subsists between the restoration of that people, and the salvation of the whole Gentile world; the latter being, in divine purpose the effect and consequence of the former.  

Lewis Way, Charles Hawtrey and Henry Drummond, prominent Evangelical members of the LSPCJ, were also involved in societies for the study of millennial prophecy. From the late 1820s most of the LSPCJ Committee had adopted the "premillennial" view that the Advent and the conversion of the Jews were imminent. The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository, which supported the work of the LSPCJ, published a letter in 1831 warning that "We live in the midst of times awfully momentous; visitations of an alarming nature are among the nations; war, famine, and pestilence, are depopulating kingdoms to a fearful extent".  

Premillennialists saw the recent rapprochement between Jews and Christians as an indication of their impending conversion. They also believed that English Protestants, who historically had not persecuted the Jews like Catholics and would therefore be more attractive to them, had a particular role to play in the conversion of the Jews and the precipitation of the Second Coming of Christ. In addition premillennialism

---

11 "To the Editor", Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository 1 (August 1831), 47.
12 Smith, "The London Jews' Society", 279-80. For the influence of Premillennialism (the belief that Christ would return before the Millennium) on the officers of the LSPCJ from the late 1820s, see Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 81-3.
13 The significance of the conversion of the Jews derives from the Pauline belief that this would signal their "return to God's favour" as part of the Second Coming. This was linked with Isaiah's prophecy of the national restoration of the Jews to their historic homeland in Palestine and became a prominent doctrine in seventeenth-century millennialism. Some millennialists maintained that the conversion of the Jews was a pre-requisite for the Second Coming of Christ. See Scull, Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties, 17. Thus many seventeenth-century English Protestants "no longer believed that the Jews were the devil or anti-Christ, but was again God's chosen people who are to play a key role in the drama of God's historical plan. They also believed that the positive prophecies of the Old Testament refer to Israel of the Flesh and not to the Christian Church; and that the Christians are very much in debt to the Jews who have been the keepers of the "Word" throughout History. Some
reinforced the bibliocentric emphasis of Evangelicalism: "There was a tight logical connection between high hopes for the Jews and a new estimate of scripture. Those who looked for indications in the Bible that God's chosen people would be gathered into his fold were inclined to take Old Testament prophecies literally".\textsuperscript{14}

The LSPCJ, like its supporters in the Clapham Sect, was politically conservative and opposed the campaign for Jewish emancipation, with the exception of William Wilberforce who had personally been a supporter from very early on.\textsuperscript{15} However in 1826 the Philo-Judean Society was established as an offshoot of the LSPCJ. Whilst the London Society had been criticised for its aggressive and unscrupulous methods of conversion, the aims of the Philo-Judean Society were "to work for the relief of the disabilities to which the Jews were subject, with the hope that through such efforts Jews would come to look upon Christians more kindly and ultimately would be led into the 'Pale of the Christian Church'". Members of the Philo-Judean Society such as Lord Bexley and Robert Grant were the first Christian supporters of the efforts towards Jewish emancipation in the early 1830s.\textsuperscript{16} Their emphasis on the need for pity and aid for the Jews recalls the approach of the \textit{Appeal} to Englishwomen and was later echoed in many literary accounts of conversion. On the other hand, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, who was president of the LSPCJ for over 40 years,

\begin{itemize}
\item maintained that those who persecute the Jews will eventually be held accountable for their actions" (34). Jewish conversion thus became a matter of national concern, because the spiritual fate of the nation as a whole was at stake. Nineteenth-century Evangelical millennialists believed that England had a special role to play in the future of the Jews, and hence in precipitating the Last Days (83-5).
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{14} Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain}, 88.

\textsuperscript{15} Scult, \textit{Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties}, 124, 129. For Evangelical leaders' discouragement of involvement in the political sphere see Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain}, 72-4. Catherine Hall describes the new Evangelical morality as having "liberal and humanist parameters on the one hand (the attack on slavery), yet buttressed by social conservatism on the other (the reform of manners and morals)" See Catherine Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology," in Catherine Hall, \textit{White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History} (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), 82. However Bebbington argues that Evangelical forays into the public sphere were not motivated by "humanitarian" concerns, although the alleviation of suffering may certainly have been the effect of campaigns such as the abolition of slavery. Instead, "the object of attack was wickedness". Thus, for example, "Slavery became the target of Evangelical assault in the early 1830s because it began to be seen, for the first time, as an absolute barrier to missionary progress in the Caribbean". Similarly the "Ten Hours" campaign was motivated by concern that the length of the working day was preventing millworkers from attending worship. The Contagious Diseases Act was opposed because it seemed to imply public sanction for sexual immorality (133-4). Thus Evangelical participation in "liberal" campaigns also had a conservative motive. For more detail about Evangelical involvement in reform campaigns see Bebbington, 132-7.

was vehemently opposed to the emancipation of British Jews. He believed that non-believers could not legislate for a Christian state, and argued that the millenialist aspirations would be more effectively achieved by encouraging immediate repatriation of the Jews to Palestine. Conversionists themselves were therefore potentially split between advocating toleration of the Jews as an inducement to conversion, and remaining committed to the preservation of the Christian state, a split which we shall see echoed in the fictional writings of the period.

Some forms of Christian philanthropy like the visiting charities, F K Prochaska has argued, "bolstered that network of relations between the classes which, for better or for worse, gave England a semblance of social order in the early years of the nineteenth century and after". Similarly, overseas missionary work could become an aspect of colonial administration. But converting the Jews, who constituted a minute percentage of the population, did not have an obvious political function. Moreover, although the LSPCJ's income grew steadily, its actual success rate remained consistently poor, averaging under ten conversions a year. Indeed, as I pointed out with regard to Ivanhoe's story of failed conversion, after 1819 the Society turned its attention to Europe, admitting that the attempt to convert British Jews had failed. Yet its output in terms of sermons and publications for British audiences remained prolific. However, despite the fact of this "fantastic exercise in futility", the Society's impact was significant in two important ways. Firstly, as Mel Scult suggests, in early Victorian England the attitudes of a significant number of Englishmen toward the Jews was influenced by the activities of this society. Since many had never seen a Jew they could draw no conclusions from their own experience. The London Society was the only national organization whose incessant activity (mainly sermonizing) reached large numbers; it had little competition in molding attitudes and ideas about the Jews.

Secondly, the LSPCJ was enormously productive. Its generation of a discourse about the Jews, through lectures, fundraising and distributing tracts, and indirectly through stimulating the publication of periodicals and novels, involved large numbers of

---

17 Scult, Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties, 139-40. This policy was also linked to enhancing English influence in the Levant by strengthening the Sultan against Mehmet Ali, the ruler of Egypt. In 1840 Shaftesbury proposed that the Jews needed protection in the Syrian provinces in order to become established there.
19 The Jewish population of Great Britain was about 27,000 in 1828, rising to 40,000 in 1869. It was never more than 0.2 per cent of the population before the last third of the nineteenth century. See M C N Salstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain: The Question of the Admission of the Jews to Parliament, 1828-1860 (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982), 37.
21 Scult, Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties, 125-7.
people at great expense; its persistence in the face of failure suggests that it was less about the achievement of the end and more about the elaborate construction of the means. The significance of the Society lay not in how it could affect Jews, but in how imagining Jews could become a way of speaking about Christians.

For, like abolitionists, the conversionists communicated their message through a proliferation of verbal and printed texts in which Evangelical self-definition was as important as the advancement of philanthropic causes. As Leslie Howsam has written of the efforts of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which probably did not manage to pacify the radical poor as some members had hoped, "the evidence points instead to the importance of evangelical energy and commitment in the making and marketing of books".22 Joseph L Altholz's review of nineteenth-century periodicals indicates that Evangelical productivity rose to a height between the 1830s and 1850s, when the movement's social influence was also at its peak.23 Altholtz does not mention the considerable number of conversionist periodicals, which indicate that the obsession with converting the Jews crossed the boundaries between Protestant denominations. The LSPCJ had begun producing its annual publication, *The Jewish Repository* in 1813 (renamed *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel* in 1816) and from 1830 also published the *Monthly Intelligence* (renamed *The Jewish Intelligence, and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* in 1835). *The Jewish Herald and Record of Christian Effort for the Spiritual Good of God's People* (1846-94), published by the interdenominational British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews showed that Dissenters were as enthusiastic in the cause as Anglicans. Their periodical resembled its Anglican counterparts, consisting of reports from auxiliary societies, reviews of tracts, poetry, information about Jewish communities around the world, explanations of Jewish customs and narratives of conversion. Other Evangelical publications, like the Congregationalist *Christian Witness and Church Members' Magazine* (1844-64) also contained reports about the progress of Jewish conversion. In addition numerous conversion novels began to appear at this time.24 The rise of conversionist publications was, I would suggest, an effect of the urgency felt by premillennialists to hasten Jewish conversion. The same years saw an

24 The LSPCJ's income, which had seen its first ever decline during the early 1830s, increased massively between 1838 and 1844, which reflects an upsurge of interest in the cause from the 1830s.
increasing rigidity of attitude among Evangelicals towards profane reading material, and Christian novels and periodicals could thus supply a new demand. There are also possible political reasons for the expansion of conversionist discourse. It may well have been a response to the campaign for Jewish emancipation which began in 1830, and which, it was argued, would threaten the Christian character of the British state and jeopardise one of the most obvious motives for Jewish conversion. The virulent attacks on Catholicism which were also a prominent feature of these journals and novels were an aspect of a long tradition in English nationalism, but also more particularly an effect of debate about Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, Irish immigration and fears of revolution. At the same time, anti-Catholicism was strongest among premillennialist Anglicans, who identified Antichrist with Rome.26 Moreover, the growth of a network of Evangelical voluntary associations, with publications and subscribers, constituted part of what Catherine Hall has called "the newly created public sphere of nineteenth-century England", which formed as the middle class constructed alternative sites of influence and prestige from the traditional institutions in which they remained unrepresented in the first half of the century.27 In a concerted effort, Protestants across denominational divides were united by the conversionist defence of the Protestant state.

In addition, it became more clear at this time that there was a gendered dimension to conversion. Like their middle-class male counterparts, women were not excluded from the new sites of influence. On the contrary, as Hall has argued, Evangelicalism prescribed an exalted role for women through their influence on the public sphere: "Women, it was believed, could act as the moral regenerators of the nation. They occupied a key position in the struggle to reform and revive the nation. Women in the home could provide, as it were, a revolutionary base from which their influence could

25 Bebbington notes that "Evangelicals in the Church of England seem to have become more rigid during the early nineteenth century. Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS at mid-century, excluded all but one novel from his house, whereas his father, John Venn of Clapham, had devoured Scott's novels avidly. Among those influenced by premillennialism, it was axiomatic that there should be no trifling with the vain things of a world about to perish". For more on the Evangelical response to theatre, music and novels, see Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 130-1.

26 Bebbington explains Evangelical anti-Catholicism as a mixture of theological and political anxieties: "Evangelicals shared the common British aversion to popery as a compendium of all that was alien to national life, whether religious, political or moral. They inherited the Reformation identification of the papacy as Antichrist, the seventeenth-century fears that linked popery with continental autocracy and the popular suspicions that hovered round celibacy and the confessional. They added their own specific sense of the spiritual deprivation of Catholics". In the 1820s after Irish immigration anti-Catholicism grew more virulent, "fostered by fears of their revolutionary tendencies and a stereotype of poverty and laziness, barbarism and ignorance". See Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 101-2.

27 Catherine Hall, "Competing Masculinities", 263.
shine forth". As the *Appeal* makes clear, "activity and zeal" were considered the most "appropriate handmaids to the tenderness and delicacy of the female character". Women were indeed zealously involved in the conversion campaign, often concentrating their efforts, as in other philanthropic ventures, on female subjects of concern, since "such activism on behalf of other women was seen as consistent with woman's role in society and her character". In 1847, for example, *The Jewish Herald* included "Extracts from the Female Scripture Readers Reports" and the "First Annual Report of the Bristol Ladies' Association". In fact, the LSPCJ had one of the highest percentages of women subscribers among nineteenth-century voluntary societies, suggesting that the cause was seen as a particularly female concern. This was certainly implied by the Rev. John Wilson's view that converting the Jews required "compassion, and condescension, and long-suffering patience", all qualities gendered as female. The rhetoric of Jewish conversion itself took a noticeably "feminised" form. Writers tended to stress the family-relationship of Christians and Jews, who, it was often said, were "kindred, 'as concerning the flesh' of the Saviour himself". The writer Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna hoped for the Jews' conversion "from the innermost core of a heart filled with love for Israel". She used floral and maternal metaphors in declaring "We ... pray for the Jew, that while he tenaciously holds the folded germ of eternal life, in his own blessed scriptures, it may blossom in his hand, and bear fruit, to gladden his heart and to nourish his soul". Female Evangelicals were prominent in producing conversionist writing for women. Amelia Bristow edited *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* (1831-2) and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna edited *The Christian Lady's Magazine* (1834-49), *The Protestant Annual* (1840) and *The Protestant Magazine* (1839-65). Bristow, and Tonna, who published under the name of "Charlotte Elizabeth", also produced several

31 By the end of the nineteenth century 59% of subscribers to the LSPCJ were women. In general women contributed more to Evangelical voluntary societies than to other Christian societies. See Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, 29, 38.
narratives on the subject of Jewish female conversion. Thus, as well as having a high profile within missionary discourse, women had a significant role in producing it.

Conversionist periodicals and novels by women had three major preoccupations: the delineation of women's proper role, the horrors of Catholicism and the conversion of the Jews. In its issue for October 1831, for example, *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* contained, as well as notes on Jewish practices and accounts of conversion, an essay on "Woman - Her Original Dignity and Condition under the Patriarchal Dispensation", which argues that, "in accordance with the simple dictates of the most refined and exalted reason", the Bible is the origin for "the true and proper station of Woman". In 1842 Charlotte Elizabeth published an article in *The Christian Lady's Magazine* criticising the use of the phrase "Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics" in the Anglican service. She signalled her concern for Jews by condemning "this insulting juxtaposition in which God's ancient people are placed" as a remaining effect of "idolatries and other anti-Christian falsities engraved by Popery on a Christian ritual". She asserted that "From the day of her first pagan invasion of the holy land, to this hour of her prolonged papal existence, has Rome persecuted the Jew". Charlotte Elizabeth argued that neither persecution nor "contempt and dislike" for the Jews was sanctioned by Scripture. Instead, she recommended that conversion be approached "quietly and affectionately". Thus, conversionist periodicals, and, as I will show, conversionist novels developed the concerns expressed in the *Appeal* of the 1810s into a sustained form which served to forge a close link between Protestantism, patriotism and the responsibility of women.

Moreover, the form of the conversion narratives which were a central feature of the periodicals was also gendered. In accounts of male conversion there is often a stress on reasoned argument. In a letter from a converted Jew published in *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* in 1832 the narrator describes the beginning of his religious doubt on the grounds that "It seemed to me unreasonable to think, that we can serve the Supreme Being by not eating certain meats, and by repeating, at stated times, prayers, some of which are not fit to be offered up to the Almighty ... Many other passages in our prophets I could not explain". When he began to read the New Testament he "compared it with Moses and the prophets, and found that they corresponded in every respect"; eventually he came to the rational decision "that the Christian religion must be the best, because it is generally professed by all civilized nations". The rest of the letter labours to disprove this motive for conversion: "I found afterwards that it is not by philosophy and reasoning that a man

---

is converted, or that water baptizes him; it is the grace of God which converts a
sinner, and the Holy Ghost which baptizes him". The narrator describes how, in a
moment of destitution and despair, "Involuntarily as it seemed, I called on the name
of the Redeemer, to strengthen me by his example of humility and patience, which he
gave us while he walked in this world". It was only through an involuntary, non-
rational and submissive need that the narrator realised his conversion had been
confirmed.37

In some ways Evangelicals were on more familiar territory in documenting the
conversions of women. Such accounts tended to stress the spiritual and emotional
components of religion unencumbered with the need for argumentative proofs.38 A
typical narrative tells of a Jewish banker's daughter, who converts after her mother
dies, when the words of the New Testament are the only "consolation" for her.39 A
letter to The Jewish Herald in 1849 contained the narrative of "Mrs D", a woman who
had been brought up in the Jewish religion. Later in life she "became the subject of
many great and sore troubles, and being ignorant of the only way to access to God, I
was bowed down with continued sorrow". Her emotional yearning was only fulfilled
on her meeting with "two young ladies" who "conversed with me on the all-important
cconcerns of my never-dying soul".40 Here, typically, religion is shared between
women and fulfills "female" needs. In an essay in 1842 Charlotte Elizabeth imagined
the unconverted Jews as personified by the image of the enslaven woman on the
Roman coin known as "Judea Capta": "often do we gaze on that fettered, weeping
figure, bowed in sorrow under her palm-tree, while the proud Captor stands exulting
by ... Yes, we do believe she will, under the Lord's wonderful guidance, loose herself
from those bands, and march on". Recalling unmistakably the language of the recent
campaign for the abolition of colonial slavery, in which she herself had taken part, she
went on, "We look for a sudden rousing of the mighty energies of a people 'terrible
from their beginning hitherto'; and though Gentile instrumentality will be used in
conveying them, we hope and we believe that the movement will be their own".41

37 J. L., "Letter from a Converted Jew to his Brethren in Prussian Poland", The Christian
Lady's Friend and Family Repository 1 (June 1832) 443-6. For another such account see
"Intelligence: Baptism of a Converted Israelite", The Jewish Herald 6 (February 1851): 46.
38 Gerald Parsons notes that a distinctive feature of Victorian Christianity was its emphasis
on the experiential element of religious life. Even where doctrine remained orthodox, "there
was a distinct tendency to base the maintenance of orthodoxy upon an intensity of experience
and emotion rather than upon an intellectual apprehension of a doctrinal system". See Gerald
Parsons, "Victorian Religion, Paradox and Variety," in Religion in Victorian Britain, ed. by
39 Unsigned review of Thirza, or the Attractive Power of the Cross. From the German by
40 "Intelligence: letter from the Rev. T Craig of Bocking", The Jewish Herald 4 (July 1849):
182-3.
148-9. For Charlotte Elizabeth's anti-slavery activities see Clare Midgley, Women Against
Charlotte Elizabeth, who, though an abolitionist was also deeply conservative, was not advocating revolution, however much this is implied by her imagery. Instead, she utilises political liberation as a metaphor for spiritual liberation. Her use of the figure of the captive Jewish woman is a powerful example of the way that conversionist literature combines images of femininity and imprisonment while displacing questions about the political status of the Jews.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will be considering in detail several conversion narratives of the 1830s and 1840s, in order to explore further the discursive construction of Jews and the significance of gender in their construction. Annie Webb's *Naomi; or, The Last Days of Jerusalem* (1841) and Elizabeth Rigby's *The Jewess: A Tale from the Shores of the Baltic* (1843), were roughly contemporaneous with the publication of the first writings by the Jewish writers Grace Aguilar and Celia and Marion Moss, whose treatment of similar historical subjects I will consider in Chapters 4 and 5. In these texts, political desires regarding the Jews are projected on to romantic narratives about women. Rigby's story is set in the contemporary Baltic and juxtaposes Russian treatment of a poor Jewess with her graceful treatment by an English gentlewoman. It stresses mercy and tolerance towards the suffering of the Jews, represented by the passive, virtuous Jewess Rose. In marked contrast *Naomi*, a premillennialist historical romance set at the time of early Christianity, traces the singular path to conversion of a determined Jewish apostate. Finally I will consider autobiographical texts by Jewish women converts, in which authentic testimony is combined with a revelation of arcane knowledge about the Jews. While debates about the Jews surfaced intermittently in parliament and the press, the prolific genre of which the following texts formed part is an indication of the continuity and coherence of conversionist discourse.

**Feminising the Jewess**

Annie Webb was the author of over twenty Evangelical novels published between the 1840s and the 1860s, but *Naomi; or, the Last Days of Jerusalem* was her first and most popular. It was reprinted virtually every year following its publication in 1841 until the end of the century. Webb's Jewish heroine is of a type recurrent in both

---

*Slavery*, 58. In Chapter 5 I consider the appropriation of Evangelical arguments against slavery by the Jewish writers Celia and Marion Moss.

42 Other conversion novels by Annie Webb (afterwards Mrs J B Webb-Peploe) include *Julamerk; a Tale of the Nestorians* (1849), *Idaline; a Story of the Egyptian Bondage* (1854) and *Benaiah; a Tale of the Captivity* (1865).

43 In 1905 *Naomi* was published in a Yiddish translation in Leipzig, as part of a series, *Schriften des Institutum Judaicum in Berlin*, which comprised Yiddish language volumes on a range of Jewish-interest subjects from Rabbinic scholarship to contemporary antisemitic
Jewish and non-Jewish writing of the time. Patriotic and courageous, she actively resists the image of "Judea Capta" or surrender to Rome. Indeed, the novel begins with her articulation of fortitude:

'. . . I would rather, oh! ten thousand times rather perish beneath those sacred walls, if it be the will of Jehovah that the spoiler should again possess them, than live to see my people once more subject to the Roman power. We have nobly shaken it off, and never till we are exterminated will we cease to resist their oppressions, and assert our freedom. You wonder at my enthusiasm, as you call it; but be assured the same spirit animates every son and every daughter of Israel; and when your proud legions advance beneath these impenetrable walls, they will be received with such a welcome as shall prove that in Jerusalem at least the soul of our fathers still survives':

Drawing on Scott's Rebecca, Webb uses the figure of a proud Jewess to personify her nation's obstinacy. But the novel, like Scott's, judges her resistance to history harshly. Its Evangelical, millennarian historiography refigures the meaning of patriotism and the relationship between families and nations. Naomi, set during the Jewish revolt against Rome and the siege and eventual conquest of Jerusalem, chronicles the political life of the city as it disintegrates into civil war, and the spiritual history of a young woman as she converts to Christianity and replicates her conversion in individuals around her. The two narratives come together in Naomi's eventual abandonment of her fatherland and hereditary religion for the Christian community at Ephesus in order to preserve both body and soul. The novel seeks the origin of the Evangelical movement and finds it intrinsically linked with the suffering and conversion of the Jews. The story of the prophesied fall of Jerusalem, moreover, has particular significance for a premillennialist readership: "The signs of the present times point strongly towards the Holy Land and the once glorious city of Jerusalem; and the eyes of many (both Jews and Gentiles) are turned thither in anxious expectation of the approaching fulfilment of those promises of favour and restoration which are so strikingly set forth in scripture, with reference to that land and her scattered and degraded people" (v). Indeed, a decisive connection between England and Jerusalem was instituted in 1841, the year that Naomi was published, with the LSPCJ's establishment of a Protestant bishopric in Jerusalem. Thus, through a new consciousness of the significance of Jerusalem, Naomi articulates Evangelicalism's continuing mission to redefine contemporary British life in both domestic and political terms. Such redefinitions were intrinsic to the movement, as Catherine Hall

writings. Presumably, Webb's novel was translated as an example of missionary writing, rather than for its contribution to Biblical scholarship, although works about the Jews and works about the conversion of the Jews were often confused. In the following chapter I discuss this confusion in relation to the writing of Grace Aguilar.

44 Mrs J B Webb [Annie Webb, afterwards Mrs J B Webb-Peploe], Naomi; or, the Fall of Jerusalem (London: Harvey and Darton, 1841), 4-5. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

has argued: "in the Evangelical struggle over anti-slavery and over the reform of manners and morals, a new view of the nation, of political power and of family life was forged. This view was to become a dominant one in the 1830s and 1840s". 

Webb's story of the Roman conquest of Judea and the early days of Christianity is therefore an opportunity for a discussion of contemporary British national and religious identities.

Webb's analysis of the course of diaspora Jewish history in the preface to the novel typifies Evangelical ambivalence towards the Jews. They are seen as both outcast and divine symbol, objects of pity and contempt: "The children of Israel are now a despised and humbled race, but they are a perpetual memorial to the whole world, of God's unsparing justice, and a standing miraculous proof of the truth of His word" (v-vi). In Naomi, the story of the fall of Jerusalem becomes a universal parable of disobedience, punishment, and the fulfilment of prophecy. The fate of the Jews, a proud and arrogant nation who "were contented to carry the law of the Lord upon their persons and their garments while it entered not into their hearts" (10), is a lesson in bad faith to all, including British "nominal Christians, who by their cruel and vindictive, or otherwise unchristian spirit, give occasion to the enemies of our holy religion to speak evil of that which they profess, but do not follow" (60). Jewish worship resembles the idolatrous, sensual materialism of the Roman Catholic Church: "the imposing magnificence of the temple-service, ... the thronging multitudes, the glittering gold and jewelled dresses of the priests, the costly sacrifices, the clouds of incense, the marble pavements and splendid altars,... the brazen trumpets and united voices of the choristers, that were ordained to impress the senses, and fix the attention of the Jews" (132). Attachment to the practice of the law rather than its principle means that ultimately, as Jerusalem sinks into civil war, the Jews are unable to distinguish their own transgression: "however sunk in sin, and regardless of the laws of the God of their fathers, [they] yet looked on themselves as his peculiar people, whom he would save and defend from all those who sought their ruin ... Divine aid would attend all their efforts, and enable them to baffle every attempt of their foes to deprive them of their freedom or their inheritance" (390). The fall of Jerusalem, the preface to the novel warns, is a lesson in the futility of such confidence without the

---

46 Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", 75.
47 For more on Evangelicalism's concern with the distinction between nominal and real Christianity see Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", 77.
48 This is a good illustration of David Feldman's argument that "Anti-popery was a more potent force than any hostility to Jews in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Inevitably, for militant Protestants, Catholicism was a more significant opponent. However, this primary opposition did not deflect attention away from Judaism. Instead it could provide the terms within which the Jewish religion was understood". See David Feldman, Englishmen and Jews. Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 56.
engagement of the "heart". In these terms, the patriotic Jewish "enthusiasm" exemplified by Naomi's speech of loyalty and resistance at the beginning of the novel is another example of human arrogance. The Evangelical perspective of this novel seeks to question national sentiment in general and Jewish nationalism in particular.

Jewish nationalism takes its most zealous form in the novel in the character of Naomi's pharisaical brother Javan. His "bigotry" and "fanatical cruelty" represent the worst consequences of Jewish obstinacy (245). His tendency to excess is an effect of "undue liberty", passions unchecked by maternal control (10). The lack of an appropriate domestic education is shown to have a crucial bearing on the destiny of the nation. Webb notes the sublimation of Javan's personal discontent into the security provided by patriotic fervour; fanaticism "rendered his religion a motive to fierce and arrogant conduct, instead of having the effect of softening his heart, and leading him to such holy and gentle and charitable dispositions as are most acceptable to the God of love and mercy" (8). Similarly, when Naomi plays the harp for Javan,

it was not the psalm of penitence or praise that he loved best to hear; it was the tone of exultation and triumph, or the prophecy of vengeance that breathes forth in some of the inspired songs of David, which met with corresponding emotions in the breast of the fiery young Jew, and recalled his spirit from its own passions and resentments, to a contemplation of the promised restoration and glory of his nation, and the signal punishment of all their foes (11).

The romantic nationalism of Naomi and Javan, which is manifested on a wider scale in "the misguided efforts of the Jews to regain their liberty and independence", betrays not only their excessive dependence on the material world (20). It is also an example of Judaism's overly "masculine" character, which is associated with vengeance, violence and the pursuit of power. The same character is displayed by John of Gischala, who tricks the Romans into believing that the Jews in his city have surrendered, and flees with his followers. When their women and children are too weak to continue the flight, "the men abandoned them, and proceeded rapidly, leaving those who should have been their first care to perish unheeded" (88). The Jewish army constantly employs tactics of deception and treachery against the Romans, being less interested in abstract military honour than material military victory. When taken prisoner of war by his enemies, Javan is willing to break his oath to his captors using dangerously Jacobin terms: "...Liberty is the right of every man, and especially of every Jew" (141). In contrast, the Roman soldier Marcellus is shocked at Javan's escape through treachery: "he pitied the deceit and the pride of [Javan's] heart, which could induce him to seek safety and freedom at the expense of truth, and regard his captors as unworthy to be treated with the faith and confidence due from man to man, whether friends or foes" (143). The Romans, meanwhile, are inspired to fight not by the thought of national glory but by the personal inspiration of their commander (410). Their military strategy is not one of aggressive intimidation; instead they wait
patiently for Jerusalem to destroy itself through internal dissension. They conduct war honourably and repeatedly offer the Jews the chance of surrender and mercy before the final devastation. The destruction of Jerusalem is not approached in a spirit of imperialistic fervour; rather, "when Titus saw that he could neither persuade the Jews to take pity on themselves and their families, nor to regard the sanctity of the temple, he was compelled against his will to resume the siege" (447). The Romans make mercy a possibility to the last, implicitly acknowledging their own instrumentality within an ordained plan. The assault on the principle of the Jewish nation in Naomi is grounded in the novel's historiography. The Evangelical writer sees the narrative of history not as struggle between nations with an uncertain outcome, but as a fixed and eternal plan, in which they merely fulfil their preordained functions. The struggle of nations does not create history; rather, they are created by it. Webb analyses a momentary failure in the defence of the walls of Jerusalem in these terms: "Whatever were his motives, assuredly they were overruled by an all-directing Providence, and made instrumental in bringing about the destruction and massacre which were permitted that night for the chastisement of a rebellious people" (97). The Jews' rebellion against the Romans is conflated with their resistance to divine justice.

In this novel, as elsewhere in conversionist writing, Evangelical ambivalence about the Jews is gendered. Webb represents Christianity's modification of the patriotic spirit of its protagonist as a process of feminisation. Christian converts learn to turn their attention away from national concerns inwards towards the personal. For Javan religion is patriarchal, historical and communal: he declares that "the pure faith which has descended to me unsullied from our father Abraham is dearer to me than any consideration of a personal nature" (267). But when Naomi becomes a Christian her language emphasises the personal and the present:

'Could I be too grateful to him who had done so much for me? Could I feel proud and self-righteous when the Son of God had died to wash away my guilt?...I received the Lord Jesus as my God and Saviour, and he has given me rest unto my soul. Never, never will I forsake Him who gave himself for me! - never will I renounce that name whereby alone I hope to be saved!' (153).

Christianity appeals to the "personal" affections which Javan seeks to repress; similarly it liberates Naomi from her suppressed affection for Marcellus, a forbidden Gentile. Christianity allows the sentiment which a severer religion has denied; Naomi's and Marcellus' respective conversions eventually make possible the sentimental closure of the novel in their Christian marriage. At the same time. Naomi's Christian identity is seen as a fulfilment of her femininity, the counterpart to her rejection of "the way of her fathers" (133). Judith, her aunt, describes the change in Naomi's political and social outlook as the feminisation of an over-masculine patriot: "Your countenance no longer expresses the same pride and self-confidence
that I have always lamented in your character; and your manner is meek and gentle, like that of one who has renounced all human pride and human dependence, and consented to learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart" (120). Naomi has become more like the feminised Christ of Evangelical theology while Javan, whose "scrupulous adherence to the minutest points of ceremony" shows his identification with a "masculine" religion of law and ritual, has no "real piety" (9). Rabbi Joazer, who also tries to convince Naomi of her error "only served to show to Naomi more plainly the folly and absurdity of exalting these human inventions above the word of God ... Joazer would not listen to her; he only overwhelmed and silenced her by long and rapid quotations from the cumbrous volumes on which he rested his creed" (167). In contrast Christianity's form is feminine and forms part of women's lives. It is disseminated not by the imposition of rules and performance of ritual but by the telling of stories, "the affecting narratives that had at first attracted Naomi's own attention, and excited her own curiosity, and led her to her own adoption of the faith of Christ" (167). The conditions for the telling of these narratives are made possible as women are left at home while the war rages (156). It is the absence of men, away fighting futile battles, when it is "necessary for females to remain as secluded as possible", that gives women the opportunity to study and spread the new religion (156, 345). Moreover, Christianity is a religion of independence, sanctioning the autonomy of individual conscience rather than blind obedience to human authority. The narrator even criticises Salome, Naomi's mother, for her wifely submission, when she should have "looked simply to the word of God, and studied it attentively, with prayer for the guidance of his spirit, and cast aside all human dependence" (155).

Through its emphasis on a feminised religion, Webb's characterisation of the historical distinctiveness of the early Christians also reflects the particular inflection of the Christianity of her own day. Evangelical theology tended to stress the humility and renunciation of Christ, qualities which were also considered "feminine". Moreover, together with an emphasis on bibliocentrism, the "word of God" rather than "human inventions", a central Evangelical tenet was "the possibility of salvation through the conversion and rebirth of the individual".49 The emphasis on individualism and the direct, personal relationship to the deity was the theological counterpart to the economic and political ideology of the Evangelical campaigners. Catherine Hall describes how the rise to dominance of Evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century coincided with the formation of the new industrial bourgeois class, and its ideology came to represent the changing consciousness of this class.50 Indeed, Evangelicalism distinctively encouraged individualism, favouring reform from within

50 Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", 79-81.
rather than political restructuring. At the same time the movement was committed to national regeneration, although crucially it believed that such regeneration would rely on personal change: "It was the religious consciousness of England, they argued, which determined her political condition". In her critique of Jewish nationalism in favour of the personal consciousness of Christianity, Webb suggests Evangelicalism as an appropriate relocation for the energies of patriotism. Paradoxically, the turning from worldly patriotism towards a feminised religious consciousness is the route to national regeneration.

Moreover, in this and many other novels, it is the figure of the Jewish woman who most powerfully embodies "the possibility of salvation through the conversion and rebirth of the individual". Naomi represents the potential for the transcendence even of Jewishness. Indeed, her nature and experience as a Jew and as a woman make her the ideal Christian. Jewish monotheism, for example, is seen as a sign of spiritual preparation for Christianity. Thus Naomi's Roman friend Claudia finds conversion a greater struggle:

She did not, as it were, grasp and comprehend the doctrines that were presented to her, with the rapidity that had characterized Naomi's conversion. Her less energetic disposition was alarmed at the wonder and the novelty of the religion that was proposed to her belief; and though in the mythology which she had been taught in her childhood, there were many pretended instances of the heathen divinities dwelling with men upon the earth, yet the history of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, was altogether so different from these idle tales, and the miracles which glorified his earthly life were so astonishing and so awakening, that Claudia paused before she could give full credence to all that her friend related to her (167-8).

Claudia's religious consciousness evolves from paganism to Judaism and finally to Christianity in a familiar teleology. But the "energetic disposition", which the Roman woman does not share with the Jewess, is the factor which qualifies Naomi for a glorious conversion. The "courage and obstinacy of the Jews" in their war against the Romans is echoed in the personal character of Naomi herself (46). It is this energy and tenacity which spurs her onward to the dangerous, clandestine investigation of new forms of knowledge:

We have said that Naomi was self-willed and impetuous: her feelings were ardent and uncontrolled; and in proportion to the contempt she entertained for the Nazarenes [Christians] while she was ignorant of the character of Him whom they worshipped, was the admiration she now felt when that character was in some degree displayed to her, and the eagerness of her determination to know more of this gracious and glorious Being (41-2).

Naomi's Jewish enthusiasm can be directly rechannelled. Moreover, her ability to redirect this tenacious loyalty confirms the value of her faith. Naomi feels that the conversion of the Jew has particular significance because the Jews are the type of irredeemable guilt: "...is it not ... a miracle of grace, that any one of us should be

---

51 Ibid, 80.
...Are not all of our fallen race by nature dead in trespasses and sins, until the Spirit of the Lord takes away our stony heart, and gives us a heart of flesh?" (374).

It is also the specific experience of the Jewess that makes her worthy of and receptive to Christianity. Naomi's dual loyalties, to her new religion and to her unbelieving parents cause a tension only experienced by the Jewish daughter. Her life becomes embattled as her parents try to have her re-educated by a dogmatic rabbi, and she loses the domestic privileges of a dutiful daughter (166). But while Naomi's parents become her persecutors, Naomi herself repays them with a deeper respect. She refuses to leave them when the final battle for Jerusalem is approaching and she is offered the opportunity to escape by Marcellus. Naomi's "determination to share whatever peril should betide her parents" (186), whilst not abandoning her religion either, constitutes a counter-stereotype of the Jewish daughter. Like Scott, Webb challenges the treacherous image of Jessica, the Jewess whose apostasy must entail betrayal of domestic authority. But the Evangelical text values the tension generated by conflicting loyalties which can only be reconciled by the mediating figure of the suffering, elevated individual: "Anxiety and sorrow had already left their traces on her form and face, and quenched the brilliance of her clear black eye, but she was more lovely and more interesting in her patient grief than she had been in the pride of her joyous youth" (174). Through her suffering, Naomi upholds both filial submission and Christian fortitude. The stubborn nature of the Jew is what enables the convert to endure "persecutions and afflictions, or ... the more dangerous trials of prosperity"; the suffering that can only be experienced by the Jewess is what makes her a better Christian (120). In this text then, conversion is closely linked to ideas about femininity, submission and suffering.

The role of Naomi's parents and their "domestic persecutions" in her story points to an important, if obvious feature of the representation of Jews in this text (148). By situating the narrative at a time when Christians are the powerless minority, Webb casts Jews as the tyrants. The novel is able to discuss the principle of tolerance without reference to the question of political tolerance towards Jews in contemporary Britain. Instead, Jews are "bigoted" and "prejudiced" because "they would not be gathered under the wings of their merciful and forgiving Saviour" (15). Conversionist discourse appropriates the Enlightenment language of the opposition to prejudice but as in Ivanhoe applies it to Jews. Webb describes the attitude of Naomi's father to Christians in terms reminiscent of antisemitic discourse: "those who were in his judgement unworthy of the air they breathed, and not to be approached by a faithful son of Abraham without contamination" (136). Javan considers "the infliction of torments or the terrors of death" necessary to discourage conversion, "as he believed that their souls were thus saved from perdition" (219). In these terms, the persecuted Christians, "these poor and exiled brethren", become the new Chosen People, "his
own believing children" (133, 343). The novel speaks out vehemently against tyranny, denouncing the cruel forms of punishment inflicted by the Romans on their Jewish enemies, despite the necessity of the Roman victory. In the same vein the novel also includes a diatribe against slavery: Marcellus writes in horror of his nation's decadent custom:

'... That is a melancholy species of wealth which consists in the persons of our fellow creatures! Camillus says that they were born to serve the Romans, but I cannot believe that the great and merciful Creator designed one race of men to be subject to the cruelty and caprice of another, or that victory in war can entitle the conquerors to treat the vanquished like beasts of burden' (72-3).

Here Webb interjects the familiar Evangelical argument against British colonial slavery, on the grounds of Christianity's belief in spiritual equality. But Marcellus also sees captive Jews at the Roman market, and weeps at "the degradation of so many noble human beings" (73). In these terms the foolhardy tenacity of the Jews becomes almost understandable: their revolt was ... wild, and all but hopeless; and yet we cannot read the account of the cruelties and oppressions which were heaped upon this once blessed race by many of the Roman governors, and wonder that they should spend their life-blood in the effort to shake off the galling and ignominious yoke (20).

However the Jews' "yoke" is finally revealed to be of their own making. Their religion of ephemeral "forms" without principles ensures that degeneration into barbarism is rapid. In particular Javan's persecuting devotion to Judaism becomes indistinguishable from the pagan religions which preceded it:

To Javan's excited imagination the altars once erected in this spot to Chemosh, Moloch, and Ashtaroth were present again, reeking with their human sacrifices; and the cries of the innocent children who were offered up by hundreds to the gods of cruelty and murder sounded in his ears. The savage mob that had followed the dead-carts stood round to enjoy the spectacle, and as the flames burst forth afresh, and the bodies consumed away, they expressed their exultation and joy by loud, discordant shouts, that only added to the infernal character of the scene (319).

This barbarism reaches a climax at the height of the siege, when the urge for physical self-preservation in the midst of starvation results in murder, pillage and cannibalism; "it was the spectacle of human nature in all its own depravity, unrestrained by the fear of God or the laws of man" (438). By this point the people of Jerusalem desire their own destruction as liberation from "their tyrant defenders" who fight "with the undisciplined fury of wild beasts" (418, 398). Webb indicates that the moral degeneration of the people of Jerusalem only reveals more clearly the pagan insufficiency of their religious code. Catherine Hall has interestingly drawn attention to a slippage in Caribbean missionary discourse between slavery and heathenism, body and soul: "In bringing Christianity [missionaries] were bringing civilization, for the two were equated in their discourse. The contest over slavery was a contest with
Christianity - freedom meant the light of the word of God, the chains of bondage were infidelity and ignorance. In the 'contest for empire' between Christianity and slavery, the light had triumphed and Satan was defeated. A similar slippage is apparent in *Naomi* as the Jews' enslavement is revealed as one of ignorance. Naomi describes her brother as "yet in the bondage of the law", a victim of his Jewish identity. The alternative, "glorious liberty of the disciples of Christ" is on offer but refused (377). For the missionaries, as for Charlotte Elizabeth and Annie Webb, African slavery and the oppression of the Jews became metaphors. Indeed, this use of language reinforces Evangelical political quietism: material liberty is meaningless without spiritual liberty.

Thus in the narrative of Evangelical history Jewish suffering is the responsibility not of the perpetrators but of the victims. Persecution is not a social and political process but a spiritual state. The figure of the Jewess, whose apostacy symbolises the defeat of the old order by the new, is a central element in this analysis of Jewish history. By representing her conversion as a return to true femininity, Webb's novel suggests that Christian ascendancy is both natural and inevitable.

The Grateful Jewess

*The Jewess: A Tale from the Shores of the Baltic* was published anonymously in 1843 by Elizabeth Rigby. Rigby was at the beginning of her career in periodical journalism, which progressed with the encouragement of Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and editor of the Tory *Quarterly Review*. She came from a provincial professional middle-class background, the hotbed of Evangelicalism, but was herself an orthodox Church of England Tory. Rigby was a great admirer of Scott, and echoes of Scott's ethnography are evident in her travel writings. On a visit to the Baltic in 1838, from which the story of *The Jewess* derived, she found Estonian society a primitive echo of English society, "like the translated souls of my great-grandfathers and grandmothers". Travelling in Scotland in the summer of 1843 she concluded "The union with the Celtic and Saxon heads has produced the best of all compounds, an Englishman. The Highlanders, who remain unmixed, are incapable of any talents beyond those of war". She found the Highland landscape bleak and barren, and watching uncared-for children in a Highland village, she commented "There's

---

something Jewish in a Highlander", presumably referring to a common "primitiveness".\textsuperscript{55}

Rigby caused a stir in May 1843 with an attack on Evangelical novels in the \textit{Quarterly Review}. In particular the article criticised the anti-aristocratic polemic of Evangelical writers. The Evangelical contempt for the world was "so much the more dangerous as being levelled against an immense community of baptized and communicating Christians who, because surrounded with all the apparel of hereditary wealth or nobility, are sweepingly condemned by those who move at too great distance from them in society to know how they bestow the one or adorn the other". There was a "religious dissipation" as well as the worldly kind, and it was quite as bad and dangerous "as regards the length of time devoted, the necessary absences from home duties, the heart-burnings, envyings and jealousies, and the vanity of seeing and being seen" as were the aristocratic pleasures condemned by Evangelical novelists. Rigby wrote in her journal that "there have been as many errors committed in the name of conscience as there have been crimes in the name of liberty".\textsuperscript{56} In her \textit{Quarterly Review} article, she perceptively noted that, for all their political polemic, middle-class Evangelicals had created an alternative elite culture which closely resembled that of the aristocracy. But in \textit{The Jewess}, a conversion story published in the same year, she herself demonstrated the extent of the common ground between Evangelicalism and a defence of the aristocracy.

Although its setting is on the bleak Russian coast, and its central figure is a Jewess, Rigby's romance, like Webb's is implicitly concerned with English identity. The narrative begins with the arrival of a Jewish pedlar and his young wife and baby at the house of an aristocratic Englishwoman married to a Russian, at present absent. Only the lady treats the strangers with respect and sympathy, while her Russian servants remark on the young woman's unattractive Jewish face and their expectation that she is planning to rob them. The lady, however, intervenes, telling her maid, "You are a fool, Axina ... her face is not so Jewish as your own, to say nothing of its being a trifle handsomer; and as to picking pockets, one of your own Russians will outwit a Jew any day".\textsuperscript{57} Whereas Webb opens her story with a stern reminder of Christian doctrine, that it is divine command that has rendered the Jews a "despised and humbled race", Rigby's tale advocates Christian pity. The English lady opposes reason to the remarks of the Russians, whose prejudices are associated with their

\textsuperscript{55} Smith., \textit{Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake}, 71, 79.
\textsuperscript{56} Quoted in Lochhead, \textit{Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake}, 49, 36.
\textsuperscript{57} The Jewess: A Tale from the Shores of the Baltic. By the author of "Letters from the Baltic" [Elizabeth Rigby, later Lady Eastlake], (London: John Murray, 1843), 25-6. Further references to this edition are given after quotations. The story was also reprinted in Rigby's collection \textit{Livonian Tales} (1846).
peasant class and their Russian primitiveness. Such prejudices are clearly irrational when their object is a passive young woman preoccupied with a young child, a domestic figure to whom gendered stereotypes like the pickpocket cannot apply. The lady's demonstration of protective generosity is thus dependent on the female gender of the central Jewish figure in the tale; at the same time, the female environment of the lady's home becomes a place for new identifications and empathies. When the domestic space is invaded by "inquisitorial" Cossack soldiers, searching for the Jews whose occupation is illegal, the Englishwoman's "Christian and feminine gentleness" give her strength to resist them (19, 67). Her "native spirit arose: and gaining strength from the very reaction of her feelings, the Englishwoman secretly acknowledged to herself, that but for the dictates of prudence she felt infinitely more disposed to defy the military party than to fear them" (64-5). Her manner commands compliance: "with instinctive obedience they ... began to lay down their pikes, while their leader, met by different weapons than he had ever been accustomed to oppose, looked as if he knew not quite what next to do, and offered no opposition to the act" (71). The Englishwoman defends her domestic sanctuary against all forms of tyranny, while her feminine virtue commands instinctive obedience. Like other conversion stories, this text uses the figure of the Jew as a means of defining contemporary English femininity.

In contrast to Webb's novel, then, Rigby's tale urges sympathy for the Jews, which is evoked through the story of two women, the English aristocrat and Rose, the poor Jewess. The Jewess's sufferings, as the wife of a wandering, persecuted pedlar, are a source of admiration and empathy for the homesick Englishwoman, who identifies with Rose's humble piety and defends her against Russian prejudice and Cossack tyranny. She sees that "in the mixture of loftiness and gentleness which her countenance expressed, seemed equally united the sense of her people's wrongs and their habits of passive endurance" (15-16). Indicting antisemitism as un-Christian and un-English, Rigby's text recalls the approach of the Philo-Judean Society, which advocated a softened attitude to the Jews and supported the principle of their political emancipation. The Englishwoman helps the Jews to escape and takes their baby into her protection, but she does not take advantage of the absence of the child's parents to have him baptised, a strategy which the LSPCJ might have encouraged. Yet the closure of Rigby's novel concurs with Webb's with the inevitable conversion of the Jewess. After her flight from the Cossacks and her close escape from death on the Baltic ice, Rose's sufferings conclude when she returns to the lady's household and, a fortnight later, has her son baptised. Indeed, even the Philo-Judean society believed that the ultimate objective of tolerance towards the Jews was their voluntary conversion, and the story shows this to be an effective approach. Rigby clearly indicates that a correctly Christian attitude to the Jews is one of "gentleness", and that
through feminine sympathy "Jews would come to look upon Christians more kindly and ultimately would be led into the 'Pale of the Christian Church'". Thus, as in Webb's text Jewishness is simultaneously the object of sympathy and intolerance.

This ambivalence, once again, is gendered. Rose is distinguished from her husband, the nameless male Jew who takes risks with his life for profit, in that she merely bears the consequences of his risks. The differing temperaments of the male and female Jew become apparent when their flight from the Cossacks leaves them stranded on the bleak Baltic:

The expression on the countenance of the Hebrew pair was widely different: the knit brow, the fever gathered on the cheek of the Jew, showed the anxiety that was preying within; while Rose was pale, gentle and quiet, like one accustomed to take and bear whatever necessity imposed upon her, equally without inquiring or even understanding its object (99-100).

Passivity marks the Jewess's habitual response to suffering, in contrast to her husband who is unable to submit to his destiny; there is an echo here of the greater serenity of Scott's Rebecca when she and her father are faced with adversity. Moreover, Rose's gentleness suggests that her true affinity lies not with her Jewish husband but with the Christian Englishwoman who had protected her. Indeed, the narrative suggests this identification from the moment of their first meeting:

As their looks met, a spectator might have fancied some resemblance between them, both countenances were so pale and so beautiful, and both marked with an expression of experience beyond their years. But they might almost have exchanged their birthright; for the Christian lady's eye was full, dark, and of an oriental languor, and her eyebrow slender and arched like Lot's daughter in Guido's picture, while the young Israelite's deep blue eye and tender brow might better have found its prototype among the high-born daughters of an island kingdom (19-20).

The "high-born" nature of the Englishwoman manifests itself in her "acquired control over warm feelings often tried, and the submission of a lofty spirit to loftier convictions"; the Jewess is likewise "marked" (19). The lady describes her experience of marriage as similar to that of the poor Jewess: "I did like yourself. I married young, and now I am older I must be wise enough to make the best of it. Women must follow their husbands, you know" (34). Here the Englishwoman suggests that her experience as a wife and an exile is analogous to the deracination of the Jewess. In the same way that Charlotte Elizabeth uses the figure of the oppressed Jewess as a metaphor for unbelief, Rigby links her powerlessness with that of all married women. Jewishness again becomes a metaphor in this text: Rose's "people's wrongs and their habits of passive endurance" are made equivalent to the social and political constraints upon women in unhappy or restrictive marriages.38

38 Similarly, bell hooks has criticised the way that white women campaigners of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries identified their social and political disabilities with enslaved black people. See bell hooks, Ain't I a woman (London: Pluto Press, 1981), 140-3.
However the affinity between the two women has a crucial significance for the conversionist shape of the narrative. Nancy Cott, Mary P Ryan, Carroll Smith Rosenberg and others have argued that religion in the nineteenth century was increasingly "feminized", but also, therefore, increasingly an opportunity for the development of female consciousness. As in the encounter between Rebecca and Rowena, and so many other conversionist texts, conversion is played out through the relationship between women. Thus Rose's identification with the Englishwoman is closely linked to an identification with Christianity. When, later in the story she is trapped on a drifting ice-float, Rose resists her Russian companions' prejudice and pleads the cause of a helpless dog that the men want to kill for food, on the grounds that "the animal has not, like us, a life beyond":

Rose was not to be daunted, and identifying the cause of the poor dog with her own, she replied with more fire than any would have attributed to her, -

'And what do you know of the Hebrews? There are as many Hebrews as little like what you call Jews, as there are Christians who act not up to the creed they profess, and if you Christians think your religion the better of the two, more's the shame. I have ever found those the best Christians who were kindest to the Israelite. No, touch him not; you shall strike me sooner' (113-4).

In defending her own capability for compassion, Rose unconsciously mimics the Englishwoman's sense of the responsibility of the strong to defend the weak. One of her Russian companions sees this as an example to Christians: "For shame, Tomas! let her alone, and the dog also. The woman is right; no Christian could have spoken better ... I wish all Christians were as patient in times of affliction as she" (114).

But the patience born of her experience as a Jewess is insufficient for the ordeal Rose has to suffer. Out at sea, she is torn between passivity and a restlessness which resembles her Jewish husband:

At times she sat motionless, her looks fixed on vacancy, one arm flung across her husband's breast, and sometimes her face hidden upon the same, then she would suddenly rise, as if a quiescent position were no longer endurable, and retreating to the edge, pace up and down with the restlessness and irritation of an animal before the bars of its cage. On one occasion her step was so hurried, her brow so flushed, and her actions so wild,

Vron Ware also draws attention to Mary Wollstonecraft's "allegorical" linking of slaves and women. She comments: "To deny that there was any difference between the basic expectations and experiences of black slaves and free white women and to assert a sort of spiritual sisterhood would have had the effect both of confirming conservative ideas of what constituted a woman and of what imprisoned her at the same time." See Ware Beyond the Pale, 104, 107. Rigby's text is a similar example of the universalisation of a historically specific instance of political inequality through an association with the grievances of upper-class Englishwomen.

In particular Evangelicalism, with its emphasis on the individualistic act of conversion, provided a sanction and vocabulary for a new female subjectivity. Furthermore, the Evangelical revaluation of women's domestic, moral and political status sanctioned communal female organisation for the first time. Jane Rendall describes the powerful influence of Evangelical discourse on the reassessment of women's role and status in the nineteenth century in The Origins of Modern Feminism, Chapter 3.
that Maddis, fearing she would cast herself into the waters, seized her by the arm and endeavoured to draw her back to her husband. But she broke violently from him. 'Don't hinder me, - don't hinder me,' she said, 'I know what I am about; I am not beside myself, - I wish I were, - may God forgive me! But when these fits of yearning come over me I cannot remain there; the aching heart is best carried on the restless foot' (105-6).

Here the torment of being stranded at sea is linked to all Rose's sufferings and restrictions as a Jewess. However her discontent is not a political but a mental, private discontent; her rage is inwardly directed. The text dramatises her conflict of passivity and anger; Rose's instinctual resistance to her fate is not just part of the story's protest against unmerited suffering, but it also, here, denotes her specifically Jewish spiritual insecurity. Rose is unable to derive total comfort from her faith, and this inadequacy is imaged in the familiar figure of the restless, wandering Jew, here "yearning" for something more. Rigby's critique of gentile persecution shifts towards a critique of the Jew.

It is only logical, then, that Rose should learn the lesson of her own true character at the home of the Englishwoman, and approach conversion. Even the Russian peasant Maddis, initially hostile towards Rose, comes to admire her for her exemplary patience. When, the following spring, he and the now widowed Jewess return, as if from the dead, to the Englishwoman's household, he describes her experience as a journey of the soul: "she has sorrowed enough for that rosy cheek; and Jewess though she be, nobody better deserves to become a Christian. I'm not sure she is not one already" (128-9). The reconciliation between the Jewess and the prejudiced peasantry through the mediation of the Englishwoman points to the implicit politics of Rigby's tale. While Rose's Christ-like passivity is the attribute that most qualifies her for tolerance by Christians, it is also a spiritualised form of political acquiescence. Passivity denotes an unquestioning acceptance of history, a political disengagement and convenient exoneration of the perpetrators of persecution: the Jewess is one "accustomed to take and bear whatever necessity imposed upon her, equally without inquiring or even understanding its object" (99). While Rose's patience is compared with that of the virtuous Englishwoman, it also enhances the authority of her "benefactress" (129).60 The Jewess's deference to social hierarchy in this text had

60 See Michael J C Echeruo's discussion of the sentimental "good Jew" in late eighteenth-century fiction and drama and the image of the loyal slave in texts like *Robinson Crusoe*. Echeruo contends that "the savage hero [Friday] lends himself only too naturally to dramatisation as the loyal slave. Thus, when he is enslaved, he is not shown as a man denied liberty but as one only too glad, like the faithful dog, to serve a master." The eighteenth-century Jew could only become a noble hero "by the total rejection of what the period took to be his nature ... He had to be kind and gentle and represent the very opposite of what his Jewish being was thought to profess". See Michael J C Echeruo, *The Conditioned Imagination from Shakespeare to Conrad*. *Studies in the Exo-Cultural Stereotype* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978), 84-91. However this account is complicated by gender: while the Jew, Rose's husband is finally unable to transcend his "nature" as a male Jew, Rose fulfils her "nature" as a female Jew with her gratitude and her conversion.
particular resonance in the 1840s, and was clearly of importance to Rigby. Her essay on *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review* of December 1848 contended that the novel was "pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition ... The tone of mind and thought which has fostered Chartism and rebellion is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre".* Here, Rigby closely associated Christianity with the established social hierarchy, and her interpretation of the novel clearly identified the political connotations of Jane's anger. In particular, she was outraged that Jane was "ungrateful".61 In contrast, Rigby's Jewess cannot be grateful enough. She accepts the social order and her place in it uncomplainingly, whilst providing the means for a benevolent demonstration of aristocratic maternalism. The same ideology structured *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) whose author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, as Clare Midgley has written, "became a symbol of white women's philanthropic and missionary power to bring freedom and Christianity to grateful black slaves".62 Thus, while Rigby may have been critical of middle-class Evangelical culture, Evangelicals provided an important source of support for Tory values, and Evangelical myths about femininity and Jewishness could be effectively appropriated by a Tory writer.63 Rigby's text indicates that in women's fiction as much as in parliamentary argument, "among high Tories, the debates over Jewish disabilities provided occasions to affirm their vision of England as an hierarchical and Christian nation".64

**The Jewess's Autobiography**

Between the 1820s and the 1850s another kind of conversion narrative emerged. Letters and autobiographical accounts of conversion were a central feature of Evangelical periodicals, but they were also expanded into novel-length narratives and multi-volume family sagas, some of which sold very well and went into several editions. By publishing the narrative of their own conversions, these authors hoped to

---


62 Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 146-8. Significantly, Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel provoked the first concerted engagement by aristocratic Anglican women in the anti-slavery campaign, perhaps stimulated by this image of their own "racially based power".

63 Indeed, there was a long tradition of Evangelical support for Tory measures in parliament. In 1795 Evangelicals had voted for measures to suppress radical reformers. After 1815, they voted for the Corn Law and supported the defence of established authority at Peterloo. See Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties*, 88. In the 1820s, the Anti-Slavery Committee led by Wilberforce distanced itself from radical abolitionists who appeared to promote insurrection in the colonies, and campaigned instead for a more conservative, gradual abolition of slavery. See Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 72. D W Bebbington notes that "attachment to the existing political order was the most prominent feature of attitudes to public affairs among all sections of Evangelical opinion down to the end of the French Wars". See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 73.

64 Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 34.
influence and effect further conversions, and to aid missionaries with first-hand information about the Jews. Jewish conversion autobiographies produced by and about women were, like the other Evangelical literary texts I have discussed in this chapter, particularly successful. In this section I want to investigate why female autobiography was a favoured form for Evangelical conversionist propaganda.

_Sophia de Lissau, or, a Portraiture of the Jews of the Nineteenth Century: being an Outline of the Religious and Domestic Habits of this Most Interesting Nation, with Explanatory Notes_ was published anonymously in 1826. It was followed by the story of Sophia's sister, _Emma de Lissau_ (1828) and an account of the previous generation in _The Orphans of Lissau_ (1830). One of the most enthusiastic subscribers was the Rev. Charles Simeon, a leading figure in the LSPCJ. The novels tell the history of a middle-class Jewish family of Polish origin living in England. The family is austere, disciplinarian and pharisaical, and is dominated by a strictly religious Jewish matriarch, Anna de Lissau, who rails against Christians, and the apostatising influence of England, and torments her daughter Emma mercilessly. She uses her seductive beauty to influence her more moderate husband towards an "unnatural" lack of sympathy for Emma. In particular, Anna is directed by a rabbi who lives with her household, usurps the authority of her husband, and takes particular pleasure in subjugating her daughter. Like _Naomi_, the novel represents Judaism as both fanatically strict and lax in piety, comparable with "nominal" Christianity.65 Meanwhile, Emma's sister, the beautiful and pious Sophia, is hopelessly adored by her father's non-Jewish ward Sydney, but resists his efforts to introduce her to Christianity. Instead she agrees to marry a Jewish man, convinced that his religiosity is a sign of his virtue. However his fanaticism hides violence and infidelity, and Sophia, like her sister, becomes an "unresisting victim", desiring only consolation (SL 236). She eventually dies a martyr's death, continuing to resist the conversion that would allow narrative closure. However in the sequel her sister Emma, encouraged by a female teacher, fulfils her sister's potential and converts. In this text the language of slavery is used to describe both the psychological state which prevents the Jewess from transcending her material circumstances, and also her condition as the property of her husband: Sophia de Lissau's obedience is "the enforced service of a bondman, paid as the exacted due of a hard tyrannic master" (SL 219). The linking of slavery, Judaism and the status of married women is, then, embedded throughout conversionist writing.

65 Amelia Bristow, _Sophia de Lissau; or, a Portraiture of the Jews of the Nineteenth Century: being an Outline of the Religious and Domestic Habits of this Most Interesting Nation, with Explanatory Notes_. By the Author of 'Elizabeth Allen, or the Faithful Servant', (London: Published for the Author by Gardiner & Son, Simpkin & Marshall, 1826), 221. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as SL.
Another series of books on female conversion which emphasised suffering and martyrdom was published in the 1840s and 1850s. *Leila Ada, the Jewish Convert. An Authentic Memoir*, was first published by Leila Ada's editor, Osborn W Trenery Heighway in the 1840s, and was followed by a second and third edition, as well as *Select Extracts from the Diary, Correspondence, etc. of Leila Ada* (1854) and *The Relatives of Leila Ada: with Some Account of the Present Persecutions of the Jews* (1856). These narratives, published posthumously, chart a Jewish woman's journey towards Christianity and martyrdom. They describe her disillusion with her religious education which had been based on the Talmud, "an impure, stupid fabrication, composed by fallen and sinful man", her increasingly "strong opinion that the advent of the Messiah is probably near" and her "simple, devout reading, and study of Thy Holy Word", the New Testament. Then follows her resistance to her family's persecutions. She is sent into society, which "was, to her pure and quiet, and retiring spirit, an inexpressible trial", and finally subjected to a seven-hour inquisition at which a group of rabbis hit her, spit in her face and finally excommunicate her (LA 153). Leila's story is narrated "verbatim et literatim", in her own voice, which debates and struggles with itself in diaries and letters dating from her early teens (LA viii). Additional information about her life is provided from the letters and testimonies of her acquaintances.

A text more irreverent in tone, but similar in structure, Madame Brendlah's *Tales of a Jewess: illustrating the Domestic Manners and Customs of the Jews. Interspersed with Original Anecdotes of Napoleon* (1838), tells the story of Judith, the daughter of a German Catholic physician who was brought up in ancien régime France and had changed his religion to marry a Jewish wife and his political allegiance after the revolution. Judith begins her assimilation to Protestant culture at an English boarding school, starts to read the New Testament in secret, and quickly becomes convinced of its truth. She resists an arranged marriage, endures with the help of "her hidden comforter - her Testament" the emotional blackmail of her mother and the persecutions of a lecherous rabbi who lives in the household. Eventually she is reunited with her Christian childhood sweetheart William Hartford, and with the help of her black servant Joseph, also a Christian, elopes with him. *Tales of a Jewess* merges the conversion narrative with the novel of sensibility by associating Judith's capacity for feeling and sympathy with her inevitable movement towards Christianity. Her suffering at the hands of her family identifies her with Christ himself: "while my

---


67 Madame Brendlah *Tales of a Jewess, illustrating the Domestic Manners and Customs of the Jews. Interspersed with Original Anecdotes of Napoleon*. (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1838), 89. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as *TJ*.
unhappy unthinking nation scorns me, I may know that thou, O Lord, smilest upon me" (TI 178). But the narrative emphasises Judith's love for William as much as her love for Jesus, and she reflects that "a time will come when William shall see that a despised Jewess can love with all the fervour of a Christian! Ah, far more sincere and devoted is the love of a Jewess!" (TI 44). She echoes both the sexual desire of Scott's Rebecca and the religious fervour of Webb's Naomi. Moreover, like other conversionist heroines, Judith suffers for her Christianity. When her family and the rabbi try to force her to marry a Jewish husband (and a slave-dealer) against her will, she sees herself as a slave: "Gladly would I exchange my lot with the humblest Christian girl, than be, as I am, the toy of my owners!" (TI 197; original emphasis).

Her own tolerance and compassion are set against the Jewish family's tyranny. In particular, as in the de Lissau novels, the gentleness of her concept of religion is compared with the sternness of her mother, whose feminine character is thereby compromised. On the other hand, the representation of Judaism as meaningless pedantry is also the basis for humour in the novel. Judith frequently takes the opportunity to revenge herself on the rabbi, and contrives an elaborate trick to make him eat meat basted with pork gravy. This switching between piety and profanity is typical of the novel's generally episodic, Shandeian structure. A farcical altercation with "a stout red-faced Billingsgate fishwoman", a satirical account of the corrupt electoral practices of a rotten borough, tales of the wisdom of Napoleon, and jokes about unscrupulous rabbis are juxtaposed with the sentimental narratives of an Anglo-Indian wife abandoned by an English aristocrat and of Bertha, the Christian mistress of Judith's brother, who dies broken-hearted when their love is forbidden. Within this plurality of stories the only coherent and linear narrative is the progression of Judith's conversion.

Like the Jewish writers whose work I will be considering in the next three chapters, the authors of conversionist autobiographies stress their desire for readers to become better acquainted with the domestic life of the Jews. Madame Brendlah regrets that

Christians, in general, are unacquainted with the manners and customs of the Jews: it is true, the Bible furnishes us with both their history and their rites and laws; but the application and practice of their religious ceremonies are known only to themselves, and even their language is peculiar ...

It will be a source of great pleasure if the Authoress can, by any means, lessen the religious rancour and animosity which, she is grieved to say, is not only still too prevalent with the children of Israel, but is also a crying sin with some Christians, and she has attempted, in the following pages, to inculcate a kindly feeling of different sects towards each other (TI viii-x).

The author's identification of Christianity as a "tolerant and charitable creed" has prompted her narrative (TI vi), which was published in the same year as the
inauguration of the newly tolerant Evangelical Philo-Judean Society. The Bombay missionary John Wilson wrote of the *de Lissau* novels that "they are pregnant of love to that remarkable people of whom they treat". However, as my discussion will show, such a claim is somewhat disingenuous. While the novels' attempts to document contemporary Jewish life do represent a new interest in Jewish culture for its own sake, the conversionist message of their stories ultimately add to rather than lessening "religious rancour".

The form and language of these narratives closely resembles the conversion fictions of Webb and Rigby. There is a similar focus on the Jewish woman: *Sophia de Lissau*, for example, is intended "to convey an outline of Jewish domestic and religious habits - particularly as it respects their females" (*SL* 4; original emphasis). Consequently, the "feminine" qualities of the Jewish heroines are strongly emphasised. According to her editor Leila Ada "was one of the loveliest flowers that ever gleamed in the cold atmosphere of a world of sin; a flower fragile in its pensile form, delicate in its tender purity, spiritual in its beauty" (*LA* viii). Like Rose the subjects of these testimonies all turn to Christianity because Judaism does not provide them with adequate spiritual "consolation", and like Naomi they are immediately struck by the power of the New Testament when they read it. A review of *Leila Ada* in the *Jewish Herald* noted how well the book illustrated "the power of the truth of the Gospel to convert the heart, with scarcely any human aid for its exposition or enforcement". Like the novels and the narratives in women's periodicals, *Leila Ada* portrayed Christianity as a religion of the heart which transcended rationality and yet was apprehended through reading the Bible. Meanwhile, in contrast, all the texts criticise Judaism through the sinister or foolish figure of a rabbi, who tries to enforce a pedantic and punitive religiosity on the resisting heroine. For Judith in *Tales of a Jewess* the enforcement of the Jewish ban on marriage to a Christian is a sign of "the cold trammels of priestcraft": an explicit identification of Judaism with the dreaded Catholicism (*TI* 19). Indeed, some aspects of these narratives resemble anti Catholic novels of the 1840s which depict a young English heroine under threat from the conspiratorial and aristocratic power of the Roman Church.

While the narratives, then, bear striking similarities to each other, the authors also stress their unique authenticity and draw on their autobiographical element to

---


69 "Leila Ada", *The Jewish Herald* 7 (October 1852): 289.

70 See, for example, Elizabeth Missing Sewell, *Margaret Percival* (1847), a "female" version of her brother William Sewell's virulently anti-Catholic novel *Hawkstone, A Tale of and for England* (1845) in which England is threatened by a Catholic villain who, among other things, foments discontent among industrial workers.
reinforce this claim. Leila Ada's editor is anxious to reassure the reader of the narrative's purity: "we have everywhere carefully abstained from mixing the language of our own thinkings with the words of that excellent young person who is now with God" (LA 207). In the diary Leila herself resolves "that I will always carefully speak the truth" (LA 17). Madame Brendlah states explicitly in Tales of a Jewess that the information contained in her narrative is taken from real life:

Let not the reader expect to find in the following pages, feigned stories, nor tales from the visions of fancy. What is related is mostly founded on facts. If the names of the individuals concerned are altered, it is because it would be unjust to her friends for the Authoress to expose the frailties incidental to human nature; nor would it be decent in her to hold up to ridicule the religious tenets of the Jews, however erroneous she may now consider them.

The Authoress was born a Jewess (TJ v).

Indeed, the resemblance between the account of her own life outlined in the "Introduction" and that of her heroine Judith in the novel indicates that Brendlah's novel is in fact a disguised autobiography. The narrator of the de Lissau novels similarly hints that the guarantee of her narratives' authenticity is their basis in the experience of the author:

In consequence of various letters and remarks, respecting 'Sophia,' from persons of the first respectability in England and Scotland, addressed to the Author, or communicated to her by her friends, which, though they conveyed a very flattering approbation of that work, yet expressed doubts of its authenticity, she thinks it necessary to offer a few brief remarks.

When she first designed to offer to the public, a sketch of the domestic and religious peculiarities of a people, ever interesting to a reflective mind, and more especially so, to Christians, she found that the mere detail, would necessarily be dry and heavy reading. She therefore adopted, (as a vehicle to convey the necessary information,) events with which she was intimately connected, and could therefore detail, with fidelity and accuracy. Many persons have questioned the truth of these details. The Author knows them to be affecting realities.71

The writer suggests that, although authentic, the purpose of the story was to enhance the communication of information. Like Brendlah she claims that "in the narrative of 'Emma', (as previously in that of 'Sophia'), dates and names are changed, and anachronisms purposely committed, for substantial reasons" (EL iv). Henry Webb, author of the "Preface" to the second edition sees further need for reassurance: "I have known the Author of Emma de Lissau for many years, and have good reasons for believing, that that, which she has written is true".72 But while the first preface to

71 [Amelia Bristow], Emma de Lissau: a Narrative of Striking Vicissitudes, and Peculiar Trials; with Explanatory Notes, Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Jews. By the author of 'Sophia de Lissau,' 'Elizabeth Allen' etc etc. (London: T Gardiner & Son, 1828), iii-iv. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as EL.

72 [Amelia Bristow], Emma de Lissau; a Narrative of Striking Vicissitudes, and Peculiar Trials: with Notes, illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Jews. By the author of 'Sophia de Lissau,' 'Elizabeth Allen, &c. &c. 2nd ed. (London: T Gardiner and Son, 1829), vi.
The Orphans of Lissau states that the text was "extracted from the journals of a departed relative", a later preface claims that the same narratives, "though artificially constructed, describe, with as much precision as prudence dictates, the affecting history of [the author's] own conversion and subsequent trials". The author's "trials" are linked in her own preface to the very texture of Emma de Lissau:

Respecting the defective style of composition, visible in the Author's productions, she at once acknowledges it.- Her's [sic] are native abilities, if she possesses any, - Education has done little for her, - Her reading has been very confined, - added to which disadvantages, 'Emma de Lissau' has been written under much indisposition of body, heightened by the painful anxiety, connected with straitened temporal circumstances. She needs, therefore, the generous allowance of her Christian readers, and confidently believes she shall not be disappointed.

The narrative closes at the period when Emma became an outcast for the truth's sake, prudential reasons render this needful. The trials of Emma since that period have been of a nature, the details of which, would injure the sacred cause, in the opinion of the world, and perhaps grieve and deter, weak converts among her nation (EL iv-v).

Here the author clearly identifies her own sufferings with the sufferings of her heroine. A similar gesture is made by Leila Ada's editor, whose oblique references to the persecutory power of Leila's family explain his reluctance to publish further work concerning her. The eventual publication of Select Extracts from the Diary, Correspondence, &c., of Leila Ada, under such circumstances, becomes additional evidence of its authenticity. The idea of the book produced under stress is an important authenticating device, which also reinforces an Evangelical image of embattled righteousness. The respective introductions to the sequel to Sophia de Lissau and the subsequent volumes of Leila Ada's work argue that their continuing production is justified by public demand; they are not, they claim, novels written for profit, but on the contrary, narratives written in the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of truth.

The emphasis on authenticity evident in these texts registers the Evangelical distrust of the novel which was intensifying during this period. The author of Sophia de Lissau specifies in her "Preface" that her work was produced in a millennialist context: "Nor is this humble Work written merely to amuse - it has a higher end in view; - and is offered to the attention of those, who with the writer, 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (SL 4). Indeed, the de Lissau and the Leila Ada books were all reprinted in the late 1850s by the Evangelical publisher Simpkin, Marshall & Co as

73 [Amelia Bristow], The Orphans of Lissau, and Other Interesting Narratives, Immediately Concerned with Jewish Customs, Domestic and Religious, with Explanatory Notes. By the author of 'Sophia de Lissau,' 'Emma de Lissau,' &c. (London: T Gardiner & Son, 1830), 4; [Amelia Bristow], The Orphans of Lissau, and Other Narratives. By the author of 'Emma de Lissau,' 'Sophia de Lissau,' etc., etc., etc. New ed., Rev. (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co. n.d. [1859]), x.

74 Osborn W Trenery Heighway, Select Extracts from the Diary, Correspondence, &c., of Leila Ada (London: Partridge, Oakey & Co., 1854), vi-vii. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as SE.
part of the "Run and Read Library, consisting of tales uniting Taste, Humor, and Sound Principles, and written by competent Christian writers with a view to elevate the character of our popular fiction". For the Evangelical reader, not only did the conversion experience constitute the only form of narrative worth publishing, but it was also a story designed to spread the Evangelical word. By revealing her own errors the writer hoped to illuminate others'. Heighway noted in his preface to the second volume of writing by Leila Ada that the publication of her book made possible the continuation of her religious work: "The profits I receive from Leila's Memoirs, which are indeed small, are all given to those poor persons to whom she was good in her life" (SE v). These texts are written not as a testimony of subjectivity, but as argument and evidence for universal truth, evidence which is strengthened by every addition to the genre. The very similarities between the way the different stories are framed suggest that they are not about the search for a narrative of the self, but the submission of the self to an already-written narrative. Yet, at the same time, the capacity of the autobiographical form to privilege the individual voice had a particular significance for the Evangelical writer. The Evangelical emphasis on individual conversion gave new authority to the self-analysing voice of autobiography. In addition, as I have argued, the Evangelical emphasis on reform from within was linked to a corresponding conservatism in the sphere of politics. In narratives of Jewish conversion this ideology has a very specific effect.

If Evangelicalism argued that enlightenment was the responsibility of the individual not society, the Evangelical writer used the novel form to underline this emphasis. Autobiography stresses interiority; revelation comes to the heroine of Tales of a Jewess in her locked room, in private, silent communion with the Word. Among her Jewish family she experiences "an instinctive longing to be alone, again to open that forbidden book, which she could not overcome" (TJ 82). Leila Ada's memoir embodies this privacy of faith in the introspective text of a diary, "a secret correspondence with her own heart" (LA 7). Her editor explains that "writing was ever Leila's stronghold. Often when beset with sorrows she found a precious solace in this - partly because it engaged her thoughts; but especially because in it she found a channel for her earnest feeling" (SE 172). Losing her faith in Judaism, she confides "O, I do not know myself! I do not know my conviction! I do not know what to do!" (LA 72). Yet at the same time this exploration of subjectivity seems to be denied: she resolves "that I will live only to serve God and for the good of others. Never seek my own pleasure or satisfaction at the expense of that of any one else; but as far as possible I will forget that there is a self to please" (LA 19-20). Heighway, Leila's editor, explained that her work was essentially private and that he regretted violating its privacy: "I do not publish it of my own desire - I never did so publish anything connected with Leila - I would have chosen that nothing in her life should be
submitted to the press ... we fear lest a gush of earth's breath should pass over those hallowed relics which her spirit has left behind" (SE v-viii). The publication of the diary raises contradictions: it is a work of both selflessness and extreme self-consciousness, and although never intended for publication it somehow made its way into print.

To some extent these contradictions dramatise the ambivalence of the position of the female writer within the Victorian ideology of separate gendered spheres, which Evangelicalism promoted. While Evangelicalism stressed "the renunciation of the self", it also advocated "self-examination" to identify sinfulness; moreover women's natural place in the private, domestic sphere was at the same time complemented by the demand for their public intervention on matters of spiritual welfare. But the intrusion into Leila Ada's privacy to which Heighway admits, and the uncertainty expressed by the other authors about the boundary between fiction and autobiography, also raises questions about the authenticity they so strenuously assert. This is less surprising in view of the fact that some if not all of these texts were the writing not of Jewish converts but of Evangelical conversionists. Although few critics have noticed it, these autobiographies, like the tales and novels I have discussed earlier in this chapter, are fictive. The gender, religion, culture and life-story of their subjects are likewise literary strategies. For despite their claims to provide secret and arcane knowledge, much of the information about Jewish customs in Tales of a Jewess and the Leila Ada texts seems second-hand and is marked by distinctively Evangelical judgements. Strangely, there is little development in Leila's literary style between her childhood and adulthood, even though her editor Trenery Heighway claims that all her papers had been reproduced verbatim. In a more glaring mistake, he states that her diary and correspondence had to be translated from Hebrew because Jews habitually communicated in that language (SE viii). Historically, this is wholly unlikely, though it was a commonly-held belief about the Jews. Similarly, the representation in Tales of a Jewess of a rabbi who lives as a spiritual guide with a family is clearly drawn not from Jewish but Catholic practice. Yet, despite the fact that these narratives show a typically Evangelical concern with the power of the Bible and the malevolence of Rabbis, and the fact that they reflect Evangelical beliefs about

---

75 For a more detailed discussion of the way in which "separate spheres" ideology originated among Evangelicals and later came to define British middle-class identity see Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", 75-93.

76 For example, in Tales of Jewess the Day of Atonement fast and the fast day commemorating the fall of Jerusalem are confused (TJ 103).

Jewish life, almost all the historians and literary critics who have written about them have assumed that they offer a genuine insight into Jewish self representation.  

While Sophia, Leila and Judith are probably literary creations like Naomi and Rose, their creators can be more easily identified. The *de Lissau* novels, published anonymously, were written by Amelia Bristow, who followed the novels by editing *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository*, a women's conversionist periodical. Although the information about contemporary Jewish practices they offer is not erroneous, as in Heighway's and Brendlah's texts, their conversion narratives are formulaic, showing the awakening of a woman to Christianity through reading the New Testament, her persecution by her family, her inquisition by rabbis and finally her escape or death. Bristow's novels resemble *The Christian Lady's Friend* in their inclusion of notes on Jewish beliefs and practices, which the periodical saw as both an aid to missionaries and a means of confirming for readers the extent of Jewish errors. The Rev. Osborn W Trenery Heighway, meanwhile, who pointed out in his remarks on Leila Ada's diary that "only a Jew can tell us what it is for a Jew to become a Christian", was considered an obvious fraudster by *The Jewish Chronicle*. The newspaper expected nevertheless that "the affecting, truthful narrative threw into religious ecstasy many a sentimental devotee, and drew from her pocket an additional sum for the conversion of 'God's ancient people'". In an article on the book in 1858 it declared: "We immediately perceived, from unmistakable evidence, both internal and external, that the book was a fabrication, and as much the invention of the fertile

---

78 See Linda Gertner Zatlin, *The Nineteenth Century Anglo-Jewish Novel*. Twayne's English Authors Series: 295 (Boston: Twayne, 1981), Chapter II; Smith, "The London Jews' Society" 283-5; Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, Chapter I. Zatlin reads Anglo-Jewish novels sociologically, and argues that they are "responses to English society and acculturation to English life" (122). One such challenge is conversion. Clearly, Zatlin's analysis is influenced by an over-literal reading of conversionist and anti-conversionist texts, which would imply that indeed conversionists were a serious threat to the survival of Jewish life in Britain. However, as this and the following chapter argue, the battle was more over public relations than souls, since the conversions were few and the literary productions prodigious. Smith also reads conversion narratives without scepticism. Discussing the accounts of various male converts, he notes their formulaic quality, and their attacks on Catholicism, which he attributes to an attempt "to justify the fact that they had converted to Protestant Christianity", rather than another denomination. While the narratives' resemblance to each other and to every other account of Jewish conversion may suggest that converts saw their experience in similar terms, it also means that writing an account of conversion could be easily reproduced by anyone. The attacks on Catholicism, I would argue, which would have no obvious relevance for a Jewish convert, instead suggest Evangelical concerns. Thus, the authorship of these texts cannot be clearly identified, and we cannot extrapolate a "Jewish response to English life" from them. Instead, as I will show, we can identify the features and strategies of this literary genre. Ragussis, meanwhile, is the only critic to have identified novels which "masquerade" as memoirs (36). However he treats conversion narratives as if they are a separate and distinct literary genre, with unique features, rather than seeing these texts in the context of the terms and concerns of Evangelical writing more generally.

79 "Leila Ada", *The Jewish Herald* 7 (October 1852): 294.
imagination of the author as the innumerable other works of fiction".80. The
newspaper noted with irony the recent successful prosecution of Heighway by his
publishers for having fraudulently sold them the copyright to another memoir of a
Christian lady, the profits of which, as with Leila Ada, were supposed to go to the
"diarist"s poor dependents. Heighway lost the case because he refused to provide
evidence of the authenticity of the memoir or the identity of its subject. The Jewish
Chronicle reprinted the proceedings in full, so that readers "may judge of what stuff
an author patronised by the conversionists is made, who panders to the morbid taste
of a sickly religious public, and in how far credence is to be attached to productions
which speculate upon human feelings as the devices of the swindler upon the purse of
his neighbour"81. The Jewish Chronicle characterised conversionist writing as profit-
making sanctioned by sanctimoniousness, which preyed on gullible women. It later
noted that Heighway's publisher continued to advertise Leila Ada as authentic, and
expressed concern that "new purchasers" or "some simple-minded Jewish youth"
without knowledge and experience of Jewish religious and social practice, would not
necessarily question the origins of these texts.82 Moreover, despite the fact that
Heighway had been found guilty of fraud in 1857, Leila Ada was reissued in a new
edition in 1868. As The Jewish Chronicle had recognised, if a conversion narrative
conformed to the conventions of the genre, it would continue to sell.

However, if we recognise that at least some of these narratives were written as
Evangelical rather than Jewish self-expression, we can examine their implications in
relation to other conversionist texts. Why female autobiography was used in the
literary mission to convert the Jews is an important question. To some extent cultural
precedent had established the Jewess as a proverbial subject for conversion. Jessica,
Rebecca of York, Scribe's Rachel in "La Juive", the popular opera of the 1830s, were
all Jewesses perpetually attracted by the world outside their Jewishness. The Jewish
woman's physical beauty was conventionally the route to her salvation as it could
attract a Christian man who would save her. In conversionist novels, her beauty is
thus elevated from a sign of sexuality to a sign of grace. Leila Ada, the Jewish
Convert makes this conflation of sexual and spiritual desire even more obvious: Leila
visits chapel secretly at night and articulates her conversion with the words "Christ is
mine and I am His" (LA 93). If she refused conversion, however, the Jewess became a
temptress, and unfeminine. For the Christian Sydney, who had himself anticipated

80 "A Pious Fraud," Jewish Chronicle, 15 January 1858, 35. By this time, Heighway had also
produced The Morning Land: A Family and Jewish History. By the author of 'Leila Ada,'
'Leila's Diary,' etc., etc. (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1854) and Adeline: or, the
Mysteries, Romance, and Realities of Jewish Life. By the author of 'Leila Ada, the Jewish
Convert' etc. (London: Simkin, Marshall and Co, n.d. [1857])
81 "A Pious Fraud", 35.
converting to Judaism for her sake, the blameless Sophia de Lissau is transformed into "one whose powerful fascinations had already made such inroads on his peace" (SL 209). In Sydney's eyes, Sophia has become like her mother Anna, a dominant, masculinised figure who is able to manipulate her husband through using her physical beauty. But in general the Jewish woman did not reject her feminine destiny in this way. Bryan Cheyette has described how the late nineteenth-century "crisis of representation" was "reflected in a semitic discourse which constructed 'the Jew' as both within and without; a stranger and familiar, an object of esteem and odium". But, I would argue, this ambivalence has a longer history in the gendering of representations of the Jews: the female Jew represented a belief in the Hebrews' perpetual potential for redemption and conformity, as opposed to the irredeemability signified by the male. In a story included in The Orphans of Lissau Amelia Bristow clearly indicates the physical and psychological differences between a young Jewish girl, clearly destined for Christianity, and her brother:

Seldom had two lovelier infants been seen, though in person and disposition entirely dissimilar. The strongly marked, animated features, and sparkling black eyes of Raphael, were indicative of that spirit and energy which afterwards characterised him, and had already began to develope itself [sic]. Gertrude was unusually fair and delicate, with pale auburn hair, and soft blue eyes; contrasting strongly with the dark and vivacious character usual to Jewish female beauty. In manner, she was gentle, retiring, and thoughtful, even to melancholy; and her light and noiseless step, as she glided about the house, seemed to make the wild, riotous, bounding of Raphael more conspicuous.

The Jewish male is energetic and disruptive while the female is submissive and contemplative. This gendered splitting in the figure of the Jew structures all the texts I have discussed.

Using women's autobiography for the project of Jewish conversion also had important political implications. These writings are among the many considered by this study in the context of the granting of political emancipation to Protestant Dissenters and Catholics, and the campaign by British Jews, who were still barred from public office, the professions and the universities, for similar emancipation. The question of the place of Jews within the British polity forced a public discussion

83 David Biale has noted the connection between "the symbolism of sado-masochism" and philosemitism in the work of Leopold von Sacher Masoch in the 1870s and 1880s. In Biale's reading, "the purpose of this 'eroticization' of the Jews is to promote certain specific goals such as the emancipation of Jewish women". See David Biale, "Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch", Journal of Contemporary History 17 (1982): 318. Tales of a Few flirts with similar ideas when it shows Judith's eroticised teasing of the lecherous rabbi and her successful attempts to humiliate this figure of (Jewish) religion and authority.


85 [Amelia Bristow], The Orphans of Lissau, and Other Interesting Narratives, Immediately Concerned with Jewish Customs, Domestic and Religious, with Explanatory Notes. By the author of 'Sophia de Lissau', 'Emma de Lissau', &c. (London: T Gardiner & Son, 1830), 24-5.
about the definition of political authority, in which a state guaranteeing rights to all Englishmen was opposed to a state defined by its exclusively Christian character. Yet the novels which I have been discussing frame Jewishness in a very different way; they tell of the lives of middle-class women, and their subject matter is correspondingly domestic. The stories are focussed on family relationships, spiritual contemplation, moral reflection: the typical content of the bourgeois domestic novel. For Sophia de Lissau there is no world outside the home; in *Tales of a Jewess* it is chaotic and uninterpretable. Similarly, Leila Ada's travels abroad only increase her introspection. Beholding the sublime scenery of mountains and thunderstorms she writes "It was a terrific tempest; but I was perfectly calm and composed throughout. I knew who held the storm, and I felt safe in the protecting hand of omnipotence" (*LA* 46). Travel further focuses her mind on her private preoccupations, and she wishes "O, that I were in England! that I might obtain more knowledge from the servants of Christ" (*LA* 82). For the female characters in these novels, then, being Jewish does not constitute a political identity in the terms of contemporary public debate: instead, Jewish identity is manifested entirely in the home, in domestic practices and domestic relations. Thus the autobiographical form's emphasis on interiority intensifies the inward focus of the domestic novel. In the diary of Leila Ada in particular, there appears to be no public self at all; Leila exists only through her communion with herself. Using women's autobiography means that Jewishness can be defined in the Evangelical terms of feminine privacy and domesticity. Indeed, there is little mention in these narratives of the social difficulties of living as a Jew in England in the 1830s and 40s. As in Mary Sherwood's Evangelical novels, there are "no social injustices or inequalities, only errors and ignorance". The only prejudice or persecution suffered is the domestic persecution of the Jewess. While the question of prejudice against male Jews was dominating the parliamentary debate, these novels see the Jewess as the only victim. Moreover, the conversionist heroine is the victim not of the antisemite but of her own family. Like Naomi, Judith sees "prejudice" as the Jews' responsibility:

'\[Dear father, what a blessing it would be if we could divest ourselves of all religious prejudices, and look with toleration upon ALL men, - whatever the sect, doctrine, or party, to which they may respectively belong! - Then would the stigma attached to the Jews cease, and they would be more open to conviction, which a free use of all books, read by Christians [ie the New Testament], would give them\]' (188).

---

86 See Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 28-47. For an account of the continuing resonance of this debate in English literature see Cheyette, *Constructions of the Jew in English Literature and Society*. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will consider various contexts and responses to the Jewish emancipation debate in parliament, the press and fiction.

87 For the function of Romantic and Victorian "domestic" fiction which claimed to avoid "politics" see Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, 48.

88 Ibid, 102.
In these novels, persecution is not a question of legal and social status in the public sphere, as it is for Scott's heroine Rebecca; instead it is domesticated. The political is displaced by the personal through the use of autobiography.

However, there is another important aspect to these texts which sets them apart from the other conversion stories I have discussed. In each novel, the form of autobiography is crucially modified by the addition of "Explanatory Notes". Despite the elaborate devices of authentication, the autobiographical voice is found to be inadequate as a vehicle for information, which, after all, Bristow claimed was her primary concern. Cultural difference needs annotation, and these texts are unable to sustain their dependence for authority on the individual female voice. The need to supplement her voice suggests that their focus is not only on the process of conversion. The narrators in fact seem as eager to fix and codify their cultural origins through paratextual commentary as to document their personal development. Thus, each text is constituted through two distinct voices, the voice that tells and the voice that explains. This editorialising takes various forms: in the de Lissau series and Tales of a Jewess the story is accompanied by a series of scholarly notes which are set apart from the main narrative. In Tales of a Jewess the rambling and irreverent narrative, whose style and form shifts constantly, employs stereotypical images of Jews like Judith's father, who outwits a Christian by cunning, and Rabbi Isaac, who speaks the jargon of the stage Jew. In contrast the notes soberly and often lengthily debate details of Jewish thought, language and practice, comparing biblical, classical and personal sources. Sometimes, however, the voices cross over each other, combining ethnographic observation with judgement:

The modern Jews are very religious, or rather superstitious, observers of the Sabbath. If a beast by accident fall into a ditch on this day, they do not take him out, as they formerly did, but only feed him there. They neither carry arms, nor gold, nor silver about them; nor are they permitted so much as to touch them. The very rubbing the dirt off their shoes, is a breach of the Sabbath; and their scruples go so far, as even to grant a truce to the fleas (TJ 213).

There is a similar duality in the Leila Ada books. Leila's words are introduced by an editor, then commented upon by him throughout, thus annotation is incorporated into the body of the narrative. The editor describes Leila's Talmudic education, quotes her own response to it, and comments "it were but too easy to quote passages which would justify our severest censures ... These are the volumes which contain the whole of the Jewish divinity; for, dishonouring to God, they have almost completely withdrawn the Jews from the study of Moses and the Prophets" (LA 13). Often the

89 For an account of the eighteenth-century stage stereotype of the male Jew, see H R S van der Veen, Jewish Characters in Eighteenth Century English Fiction and Drama (Groningen, Batavia: J B Wolters' Uitgevers-maatschappij, 1935), 223-262. One of the features of the stage Jew was his jargon. Van der Veen suggests that the unscrupulous, lecherous stage Jew was revived in the wake of the controversial Naturalisation Bill of 1753.
voices of Leila and the editor appear to merge, so that description and analysis become indistinguishable.

Earlier in the century the genre of the "national tale", notably Maria Edgeworth's novel on Irishness, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), and Sydney Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), had used a double structure of narrative and notes to represent, explain and comment upon cultural difference. This structure has given rise to considerable difference in interpretation. Ina Ferris sees the notes in *The Wild Irish Girl* as "more than scholarly references; they are also political acts, at once vindicating and constructing Irish culture", and thus "the authorial and narrative worlds in the end confound each other". Gary Kelly on the other hand argues that in *Castle Rackrent* the notes satirise the first person narrative. In Edgeworth's novel the "editorial apparatus repeatedly draws attention to the irrational, improvident nature of Irish popular culture, and emphasizes the "otherness" of this culture further by notes on Irish peculiarities of pronunciation and phrasing". This is precisely the effect in the conversionist texts. Kelly suggests that in *Castle Rackrent* "the 'editor' dominates the text as a whole while operating from its margins ... and the mere narrative is continually interrupted, controlled, or supervised by the notes, which represent a literate and learned consciousness very different from that of the 'illiterate' narrator". In Heighway's, Brendlah's and Bristow's texts, similarly, the notes are crucial in modifying autobiography and in regulating its interpretation. Indeed the "simple, lovely-spirited writings" of "Leila Ada", who apparently never intentionally wrote for the public, need to be subjected to ventriloquy by a male, Christian editor (SE v). Annotation defamiliarises what autobiography has made familiar. At the same time, the autobiographical voice defines the function of the notes, drawing their apparently neutral information into a narrative of conversion in which its significance cannot be misconstrued. And yet the notes also, to some extent, exceed this purpose, "vindicating" as well as "constructing" Jewishness.

My concern here is not, in the end, with which register is able to confer authority and regulate meaning. Rather it is with the effects of the difference and interaction between authoritative discourses within these texts. In the narrative of *Tales of a Jewess* Jewishness is subject to ridicule and inevitable refutation. In the footnotes,

---

90 Later, in 1840, the *Arabian Nights*, the popular Orientalist fantasy of the eighteenth century, was transformed into a work of ethnography by E W Lane by the addition of extensive notes providing historical and sociological context and political commentary. Rana Kabbani writes that "Lane's intention was ... to present the Orient as fully as possible, to contain it in narrative". She describes his note as a "parallel and dictatorial narrative; the text for him is pretext". See Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*, rev. and exp. ed. (London: Pandora, 1994), 44.


93 Ibid, 78.
which assume a sober, scholarly tone, Jewishness becomes a subject of knowledge. The Western 'Orientalist' production of the Orient through the creation of knowledge about it is replicated here in the codification of knowledge about Jews and Judaism. Such a production of knowledge was, as Edward Said has argued, an aspect of the power relationship between the Occident and its 'Other'.94 Like these novels, the conversionist periodicals were full of informative "brief extracts from the rabbins on religious subjects", with the more explicit purpose of revealing the "superstitious and erroneous opinions" of the Jews.95 Or, as the missionary John Wilson wrote in his "Recommendatory Preface" to Amelia Bristow's *The Orphans of Lissau*, "the more that is known of their present tenets, feelings, observances, and religious and social customs, the more intense will be the interest that is felt in the work of their instruction and enlightenment".96 In its conflation of knowledge and power through these texts, Evangelicalism had more in common than might be expected with the Enlightenment project.

***

The repeated appearance of the converting Jewess in novels between the 1820s and the 1850s may owe something to the simultaneous popularity of *Ivanhoe*, the story of a Jewess who refuses to convert. But the publication of these texts did not induce mass conversion among Jewish women. When in the 1790s Hannah More had produced the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, aimed at the lower classes to counteract Jacobin literature and encourage obedience, they were in fact bought enthusiastically by the first wave of Evangelicals. The *Tracts* served to provide the middle classes with a powerful and reassuring image of their own secure place in the social hierarchy.97 Conversionist writing, which did not effect conversions, did however serve to display to British Evangelical women in a similar way the ascendancy of their national religion and their own growing public power. But, as Moira Ferguson writes of the abolitionist campaign, which was conducted by the same middle-class British women, "in making subjects of themselves they effectively silenced the objects of their benevolence".98

---

98 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 108.
CHAPTER 4

HOME INFLUENCE:
GRACE AGUILAR AND DOMESTIC WRITING

In June 1847, two days before departing from England in search of a cure for her deteriorating health, the British-Jewish writer Grace Aguilar was presented with a testimonial by a delegation of Jewish women. It declared:

Until you arose, it has in modern times never been the case that a woman in Israel should stand forth the public advocate of the faith of Israel ... You have taught us to know and appreciate our own dignity: to feel and to prove that no female character can be more pure than that of the Jewish maiden, none more pious than that of the woman in Israel. You have vindicated our social and spiritual equality with our brethren. You have by your excellent example triumphantly refuted the aspersion that the Jewish Religion leaves unmoved the heart of the Jewish woman. 1

Although Aguilar had only been known to the public for a few years, and had not yet published her most successful works, the testimonial recognised that both her action as a woman and the kind of writing she had produced were extraordinary. Like the Moss sisters Aguilar exploited a contemporary interest in the history of the Jews to challenge anti-semitic stereotypes through historical fiction. But she was also the first Jewish writer to use the female genre of the domestic novel as a response to the burgeoning literary and social activities of Protestant conversionists. Her novels and short stories were written between the 1830s and her early death in 1847, when conversionist writing was at its height and Jews were still widely perceived as a criminal and irreligious underclass. 2 However, the increasing success of her work in the 1850s after her death reflected new concerns in the debate about the political


2 For Jewish criminality in the eighteenth century see David S Katz, The Jews in the History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), Chapter 7. According to Katz, Jewish criminality "continued to be a worry until at least the 1830s ... in contemporary eyes, the Jewish connection with certain kinds of crime [for example fencing] was axiomatic, and this had a great influence on the English conception of the Jew" (358-60). Representations of criminal male Jews like Fagin in Oliver Twist (1838), which revived the mediaeval image of the demonic Jew, a figure with red hair, a transfixing gaze and associations with the serpent, and who preys on young children, may have been one impetus for Aguilar's counter-models of pious and vulnerable Jewesses. For an account of Fagin which shows him to be an embodiment of disorder, see Juliet Steyn, "Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist: Fagin as a Sign," in The Jew in the Text. Modernity and the Construction of Identity, ed. by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 42-55.
status of the Jews in Britain. In this chapter I will situate Aguilar's writing in its historical and literary context, and explore the ways in which domestic writing became a means of articulating new arguments about Jews.

**Grace Aguilar and Evangelicalism**

In the preface to her first major publication *The Spirit of Judaism*, Grace Aguilar explains that she aims to correct the wrong impression of Judaism that has been used to justify the necessity of conversion to Christianity. However, she adds "It is not from argumentative works that the true spirit of a religion can be discovered; and yet with the exception of one or two, these are the only kind found in a Jewish library".3 In *Records of Israel* (1844), Aguilar seeks to increase the use of fiction to evoke the "true spirit" of Judaism. Her first published fiction, two tales of heroic Iberian Jewry set at the time of the expulsion and Inquisition, are "offered to the public generally, in the hope that some vulgar errors concerning Jewish feelings, faith and character may, in some measure, be corrected".4 Aguilar protests that for both Catholics and Protestants "martyrdom has always been considered the proof of truth" yet they have consistently seen the suffering of the Jews as evidence of "the unbelief of the persecuted" (*RI* vi-vii). In the first story, "The Edict. A Tale of 1492", Aguilar dramatises the tenacity with which Spanish Jews clung to their religion in the face of banishment from their homes and enforced starvation. She demands that Christian logic is applied to the Jewish history of martyrdom too: "could man endow his own spirit with this devotedness? Pride might lead him to the stake, but not to bear what Israel has borne - aye, and will bear, till the wrath of his God is turned aside. No; the same God who strengthened Abraham to offer up his son, enables His wretched people to give up all for Him. Would He do this, had they denied and mocked Him?" (*RI* 69-70). In the second story, "The Escape. A Tale of 1755" the crypto-Jews who stayed in Portugal and by concealing their Jewishness remained in constant danger from the Inquisition, are seen not as hypocrites, who saved their lives at the cost of religious integrity, but as evidence of miraculous protection:

> It was the power of God, not the power of man. Human strength had been utterly inefficient. Torture and death would long before have annihilated every remnant of Israel's devoted race. But it might not be; for God had spoken. And, as a living miracle, a lasting record of His truth, His justice, aye, and mercy, Israel was preserved in the midst of danger - in the very face of death, and will be preserved for ever (*RI* 97-8).

---

4 Grace Aguilar, *Records of Israel* (London: John Mortimer, 1844), x. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as *RI*.
The endurance of suffering, Aguilar argues, is supernatural. Thus, in both stories Aguilar utilises the Christian idea that suffering is a sign of election, the "proof of truth", to valorise Jewish history.

Like Disraeli, Aguilar frequently uses the language of conversionism against itself. In an essay written in 1836 after attending an Anglican lecture on the twenty-second psalm, which was published after her death in a collection of private writings on religion, her argument closely echoes the structure of Evangelical thought. While philosemitic Evangelicals considered Judaism admirable as a primitive anticipation of the more universal Christianity, Aguilar writes of her feeling of "charity" towards "the Christian, who, spite of his errors, or rather, the errors of his faith, yet worships with a true and pious heart the God of all". Christians' theological affinities with Judaism "will have rendered them more prepared to receive our promised Prince, than had they remained in their own barbarous idolatry". Indeed, Aguilar sees the Jewish messiah, who will "cleanse the Christian nation from their impurities ... remove the veil from their eyes", as the herald of a transcendent, universal Judaism. The strategy of asserting that Judaism, rather than Christianity, was the truly universal religion was to be used repeatedly by Disraeli; even more daringly, Aguilar reverses the usual teleology and anticipates Christianity progressing towards Judaism.

More specifically, however, Aguilar's engagement with conversionist rhetoric focusses on its preoccupation with Jewish women. This is most evident in her study of Biblical heroines, The Women of Israel (1845), which provides a Jewish counterpart to Evangelical conduct manuals like Sarah Stickney Ellis's The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits (1839), but at the same time counters Evangelical accounts of the relationship between Judaism and femininity. Evangelical missionary activity, as I argued in the previous chapter, allowed women an increased level of participation in organised religion, and Evangelical theology accorded a new status of privilege to women and the feminine. Moreover, this redefinition of womanhood was central to Evangelical Protestantism's claim both to greater Christian fundamentalism and to greater civilisation. Clara Lucas Balfour's The Women of Scripture (1847) is typical of a genre of Evangelical writing which

5 Grace Aguilar, "On a lecture on the twenty-second Psalm, by the Rev R S Anderson, 9th Nov 1836", in Sabbath Thoughts and Sacred Communings (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1833), 2-3. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as ST.

6 In The Women of Israel, Aguilar cites Mrs Sarah Ellis, author of The Women of England: their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits (1839) and The Wives of England, their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations (1843), and Mrs Elizabeth Sandford, author of Woman, in her Social and Domestic Character (1831) and Female Improvement (1836) as examples of writers on "woman's mission" whose "education and nationality compel them to believe that 'Christianity is the sole source of female excellence'". See Grace Aguilar, The Women of Israel or Characters and Sketches from the Holy Scriptures and Jewish History illustrative of the Past History, Present Duties, and Future Destiny of the Hebrew Females, as based on the Word of God (London: Groombridge, 1870), 2.
drew on female Biblical models to confirm the superior status of women in modern Protestant Christianity. Balfour's account of Biblical women, roughly contemporary with Grace Aguilar's similar project, begins by contrasting the Judaeo-Christian tradition with other cultures' treatment of women. Finely distinguished from her Christian sister, the Muslim female, for example, lives in a
gilded and silken prison. Her life is one of monotony, indolence, ignorance, and consequent debasement and sorrow. Our travellers have been sometimes fascinated by the splendour of the habitations, the gorgeous trappings, and the graceful manners of these victims of man's caprice: but surely it must be a very superficial observer who can think that the heart of woman, with all its yearning tenderness, and the mind of woman, with all its vivacious activity, can be satisfied with the dreary, wearisome, soulless monotony of a life where bathing, dressing, stringing beads, embroidery, and passive obedience form the occupations and duties of the present life, uncheered by any assured hope of a compensating futurity.

Here, the dominant Orientalist stereotype of decadent Eastern indolence has particularly horrifying consequences for women, whose enforced passivity and subjection to "man's caprice" is implicitly opposed to the active concept of Evangelical womanhood. Appealing to an Evangelical readership with an established horror of slavery, Balfour describes a society in which women are still subjected to "debasement and sorrow". The degradation of women, according to Balfour, is directly related to the limited level of civilisation in Islamic society:

The re-action of this injustice on the national interests, collectively, is manifest. The manners are dull, the habits indolent, a lethargic supineness characterises the mind, and a luxurious cushioned ease spreads a torpor over all society. In literature no advances are made, and few improvements invade the semi-barbaric customs which ignorance has long established.

In what is also recognisable as a middle-class critique of aristocratic luxury, Balfour argues that the resulting gender relations directly inhibit progress in Eastern societies, since in such societies women are unable to exert their crucial elevating influence. In fact the degradation of women among "polished unchristian" nations proves their similarity to "barbarous savage tribes". Such an account clearly serves both Evangelical and imperial purposes: "Nothing is more affectively true, than that, from every heathen land, whether polished or rude, the agonizing cry of woman ascends, and calls on all Christian nations to compassionate her state, and labour for her

---

7 Jane Rendall describes the role of women in nineteenth-century Evangelicalism in The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860 (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1985), Chapter 3. Rendall also notes how there was an overlap between feminism and Evangelical moral reformers later in the century. She cites the feminist English Women's Journal's sympathetic reviews of work by Clara Lucas Balfour and others on temperance (256).

emancipation" (11). In this analysis, female emancipation, Christian redemption and imperial conquest are closely interdependent.

However, Balfour's text defines modern Christianity not only in contrast to the geographical East. She is also concerned to identify the barbarism at the beginning of her own civilisation and locates it in Judaism. Old Testament legislation regarding women is called to account for its failure to prohibit the degradation of women through the practice of polygamy. Thus in Balfour's account the Jews retain vestiges of orientalism:

However just might be the Mosaic laws in reference to woman in other particulars, the permission of polygamy, like a foul blot, spread over the otherwise fair page of Jewish social institutions, and depressed the condition of their women. It mattered not how high in station, how cultivated in intellect, how exalted in spiritual privileges, the Jewish women were, any custom that deteriorated the sacred domestic institutions of marriage must have been powerful in counteracting and subverting their privileges. Christianity, in purifying domestic institutions in reference to marriage and divorce, consolidated the social rights of women, and placed them on the sure foundation of equity and moral purity (207).

Amelia Bristow's Evangelical periodical *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* similarly described biblical polygamy as a "pernicious practice" and concluded "The advancement, and progress, and prevalence of religion in the world, materially depend upon the dignity and honour of Woman being clearly known, and properly respected. In our favoured nation, through the diffusion of scripture knowledge, her rights are understood, and her influence is acknowledged, more than in any country upon earth".9 In *The Women of Scripture* Balfour also uses the status of women metonymically to suggest a relationship between Judaism and Christianity in which the impure is transcended by the pure. This model structures the study as a whole. Portraits of New Testament women follow their Old Testament predecessors as "more valuable [...] models for imitation", thus demonstrating that "the Mosaic law sought the elevation of the Jews - the Christian system provides for the regeneration of the world" (218; 216). In Balfour's text the argument for colonial intervention in the name of modernity and women's "rights" is implicitly mapped onto British Jews. More explicitly, the historian of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews asked rhetorically, "Is it any wonder that the ordinary state of things was reversed, and that the women were less religious than the men, or that prejudice and ignorance prevailed amongst them? It was no uncommon thing, in the experience of missionaries, to find the wife, daughters, and female relatives violently opposed to an enquiring Jew who had been influenced by Christianity".10 The conversionist

---

9 [Amelia Bristow], "Woman - her original dignity and condition under the Patriarchal Dispensation," *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* 1 (October 1831): 51.
10 Rev. W T Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the
periodical The Jewish Herald also remarked that "the incredible ignorance of the lower class of Jews is principally shared by the female descendants of Abraham, who receive scarcely any tuition".11 Here the "degradation" of Jewish women is held to be responsible for their general impiety.

Grace Aguilar's The Women of Israel is an attempt to refute writers like Mrs Ellis, Balfour and Bristow, "female biographers of Scripture" who attribute the modern valuation of women to Christianity and claim "that the law of Moses sunk the Hebrew female to the lowest state of degradation".12 The "degradation" of the Jewish female, Aguilar contends, is a result not of religious commandment but of the degradation to which historically the Jewish people as a whole has been subject:

> If, indeed, there are such laws, they must have been compiled at a time when persecution had so brutalised and lowered the intellect of man, that he partook the savage barbarity of the nations around him, and of the age in which he lived; when the law of his God had, as a natural consequence, become obscured, and the Hebrew female shared the same rude and savage treatment which was the lot of all the lower classes of women in the feudal ages (Wl 3).

Endorsing the Evangelical view of the barbarism of polygamy, Aguilar then carefully distances Jews from it. Judaism, according to her, has as "modern" an attitude to women as Christianity.13 In an argument often used by Disraeli in the 1840s she remarks that it was with Jewish culture that such an attitude originated: "we feel neither anger nor uncharitableness towards those who would thus deny to Israel those very privileges which were ours ages before they became theirs; and which, in fact, have descended from us to them" (Wl 2). Furthermore, although she is apparently not concerned with the question of contemporary Jewish emancipation, Aguilar's rhetoric recalls William Hazlitt's 1831 appeal for the rights of the Jews, which argued against blaming them for faults which are the result of persecution, as I discussed in Chapter 2. The same argument had in fact been used earlier by Lewis Way, the Evangelical prominent supporter of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. He ascribed the vices of the Jews to the "injustice and inhumanity which they

---

11 "The Jewish Women's Bible," The Jewish Herald 3 (September 1848): 203.
12 Grace Aguilar, The Women of Israel or Characters and Sketches from the Holy Scriptures and Jewish History illustrative of the Past History, Present Duties, and Future Destiny of the Hebrew Females, as based on the Word of God (London: Groombridge, 1870; [first publ. serially 1844-5]), 2. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as Wl.
13 In aligning Jewish with Christian sexual morality, Aguilar here seeks to dissociate Judaism and orientalism. This strategy appears again in her novel The Vale of Cedars (1850), set in Inquisition Spain. The novel delineates the sympathetic friendship between a Spanish Jew and a Spanish Christian, while the heroine's Jewish husband, a loyal supporter of the Spanish monarchy, describes the other inhabitants of mediaeval Spain, the Moors, as "the blot upon a kingdom otherwise as fair and great as any other European land". See Grace Aguilar, The Vale of Cedars; or, The Martyr. A Story of Spain in the Fifteenth Century (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1850), 55, and my discussion below.
have experienced for so many centuries from men of all confessions and nations".14 As I will argue in the third part of this chapter, Aguilar's defence of the Jews, although focused on the domestic sphere and articulated in the language of Evangelicalism, was also profoundly political.

Implicit in Aguilar's suggestion that some laws could be seen historically as false, is a criticism of "Rabbinism", the term used at this time to describe the authority of the rabbinate. Jewish ecclesiastical authorities had traditionally sanctioned the "oral law", their interpretation of the written law, to be incorporated into Jewish religious practice. At the time Aguilar was writing, the principle of rabbinical authority had come under attack for "obscuring" God's law by Evangelicals like Anthony Ashley-Cooper (later Lord Shaftesbury) and Alexander McCaul, the principal missionary for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, who became Professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature at King's College, London in 1841. The critique of Rabbinism reflected Evangelical distrust of the mediation of God's word, and is evident in the conversionist texts I examined in Chapter 3, which repeatedly show a converting heroine persecuted by a pedantic and unspiritual Rabbi. The Evangelical novelist and editor Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna wrote "We are all, both Jew and Gentile, sadly entangled among human authorities: we have each our Talmud, our Mishna, our Rabbis, coming between us and the pure Scripture".15 The Rev. J W Brooks, addressing the London Society's auxiliary in Bath made the distinction between Jew and Evangelical Protestant even clearer when he accused the Jewish newspaper The Voice of Jacob of "exhorting ... to a slavish prostration of the human mind to ecclesiastical authority: both which dogmas are of the quintessence of Popery, as exhibited on the one hand by the Pharisees of old, and on the other hand by the Tractarians of modern times".16 As David Feldman has argued, "faced with what they saw as a powerful class of priests who claimed to interpret the Bible for the people and who had generated an elaborate ritual sustained by tradition, one for which there was no literal sanction in scripture, these men found in 'rabbinism' the same evils evangelicals habitually found in 'popery"'.17

It is the same wish to purge Jewish religious thought of the contaminating marks of Jewish history that impels what Aguilar sees as the overall mission of The Women of Israel, that of increasing the accessibility of the Hebrew Bible, unencumbered with

rabbinical interpretation. Aguilar links the theological critique of the tradition of rabbinism with the Enlightenment analysis of the effects of political oppression. In her "History of the Jews in England", published two years later in Chambers' *Miscellany*, she praises the haskalah (Jewish enlightenment) theologian Moses Mendelssohn for "the boldness with which he had flung aside the trammels of rabbinism, and the prejudices arising from long ages of persecution".\(^\text{18}\) *The Women of Israel* argues that, similarly, in modern, liberal England, the absence of persecution should enable a return to the pure biblical ideals of religion, apprehended directly through scripture itself: "the voice of man need no longer be the vehicle of instruction from father to son, unconsciously mingling with it human opinions, till those opinions could scarcely be severed from the word of God, and by degrees so dimmed its lustre as to render its comprehension an obscure and painful task" (WI 5). Aguilar considers that the restriction of Jewish religious and historical knowledge to "the men of Israel" has been particularly detrimental to the Jewish woman's sense of identity: she asks rhetorically, "is she on that account to remain entirely ignorant of the history of her people, in which, whether in prosperity or adversity, in patriotism or persecution, she has ever borne a distinguished part? ... How is she to reject prejudice, and to separate the true from the false, if all her information concerning the history of her people be derived from Gentile writers?" (WI 377). In *The Jewish Faith, its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope* (1846), another text aimed at strengthening Jewish women's defences against conversion, Aguilar reiterates her belief that modern Judaism must be redeemed from Jewish history and regenerated by a return to the Bible. Only then will Jews learn to define themselves in terms other than those of a hostile world: "If we would but look more into our Bibles than around us - would have but the courage to break from the trammels of custom [...] would we but feel and declare the Judaism of the Bible is the religion of God, not the Judaism of the world".\(^\text{19}\)

Aguilar's bibliocentrism and her opposition to Rabbinic Judaism have rightly been recognised by Beth-Zion Lask Abrahams as "a form of Jewish Protestantism", a remark which echoes the contemporary reception of Aguilar's work.\(^\text{20}\) Abrahams

---

\(^\text{18}\) [Grace Aguilar], "History of the Jews in England", *Chamber's Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts Vol 18*, (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1847), 25. Further references to this article will be abbreviated as HJ.

\(^\text{19}\) Grace Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith, its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope* (London: Groombridge, 1846), 446.

\(^\text{20}\) The Jewish newspaper, *The Voice of Jacob*, in a review of *Records of Israel* criticised Aguilar for not unequivocally condemning Marrano conversion: "The simulation of Catholicism is ... anti-Jewish, and although, unhappily, such things have been; ... we should have liked to see Miss A. expressing that severe condemnation of such hypocrisy, which we are quite sure she thinks due to it". See *The Voice of Jacob* 3 (10 May 1844): 142. At the same time, the conversionist periodical *The Jewish Herald* wrote in a review of *The Spirit of Judaism*, "We cannot help thinking that we see the influence of Christianity in her work ... If
ascribes this contradiction between the content and the form of Aguilar's writing to her reliance on Christian rather than Talmudic sources for her Jewish knowledge: "Indeed, one finds her on occasion even employing terms taken direct from the Christian critics of Judaism". 21 Thus, in *The Women of Israel* Aguilar contests the accusations against Judaism of texts like *The Women of Scripture* but uses the same form and terms as Balfour. In a similar way Aguilar's "History of the Jews in England" reproduces the ambivalent tone of one of her primary source texts, *The History of the Jews*, published by the Liberal Anglican clergyman Henry Hart Milman in 1829. Milman deplores the "cruelty" of the means by which money was extorted from the Jews in mediaeval England, but also refers, like Scott, to their "enterprising avarice". 22 While he is scathing about the way that the blood libel against Lincoln Jews was "proved, according to the mode of proof in those days", he also suggests with tortuous logic "the possibility, that among the ignorant and fanatic Jews there might be some who, exasperated by the constant repetition of this charge, might brood over it so long as at length to be tempted to its perpetration". 23 Aguilar's version of the history of the Jews emphasises repeatedly that "the sufferers were inoffensive and unobtrusive, seeking no vengeance, patient, and even cringing under all their injuries", but she also asserts that "the Jews in their capacity of money-lenders did exhibit an extraordinary spirit of rapacity and extortion ... [which] must be referred partly to an inherent national bent" (HJ 8, 9). Aguilar thus tries to see the Jews as both undeserving and deserving of their treatment in mediaeval England, an ambivalence which she reproduces from Milman.

But Aguilar goes even further when she christianises the story of the massacre of the Jews at York in the Middle Ages. In Milman's account of the tragedy, the Jews are besieged in York Castle by a violent mob and commit mass suicide, inspired by their Rabbi who tells them: "the God of our Fathers, to whom none can say, "What dost thou?" calls upon us to die for our Law. Death is inevitable; but we may yet choose whether we will die speedily and nobly, or ignominiously, after horrible torments and the most barbarous usage - my advice is, that we voluntarily render up our souls to our Creator, and fall by our own hands. The deed is both reasonable, and according to the Law, and is sanctioned by the example of our most illustrious ancestors". 24 Aguilar, however, renders this speech differently:

---

23 Ibid, 561-2.
24 Ibid, 556.
'...This day he commands us to die for his law - that law which we have cherished from the first hour it was given, which we have preserved pure throughout our captivity in all nations, and for which, for the many consolations it has given us, and the belief in eternal life which it communicates, can we do less than die? Posterity shall behold its solemn truths sealed with our blood; and our death, while it confirms our sincerity, shall impart strength to the wanderers of Israel' (HJ 5)

Where Milman's rabbi offers sober advice about the legality and precedent of suicide, Aguilar's rabbi gives a stirring sermon on martyrdom. He reveals not only a belief in the meaning of martyrdom beyond its "reasonableness" in this context, but also a sense of the place of this episode within the scope of Jewish history. Moreover, Aguilar's added emphasis in this speech identifies Judaism's "consolations" and its promise of immortality. Whereas Balfour pitied the life of a Muslim woman, "uncheered by any assured hope of a compensating futurity", Aguilar here insists that such is not the case for Jews, whose religion provides all the benefits of Christianity. Her defence of the Jews thus rests on an appropriation of Christological terms of value, more specifically Evangelical terms of value.

Thus, it is not simply the Christian origin of Aguilar's sources which determines her construction of Judaism and Jewish history, but rather the Evangelical inflection of the influences to which she was responding. In fact, all of Aguilar's writing closely follows an Evangelical model, and uses Evangelical terms for both her defence and critique of Judaism. For example, like the Evangelical writers I discussed in the previous chapter, Aguilar displays a prominent anti-Catholicism. Her accounts of Jewish history in Records of Israel, "History of the Jews in England" and The Vale of Cedars; or, The Martyr (1850) highlight the suffering of the Jews at the hands of Roman Catholics, whether during the Spanish Inquisition or in pre-Reformation England. In the "History" she notes the "changes and improvements" which had taken place between the Jews' expulsion from England in 1290 and their readmission in 1656: "The reformation had freed England from the galling fetters of ignorance and superstition which must ever attend the general suppression of the word of truth. Increase of toleration towards the Jews was already visible in those parts of the continent which were under Protestant jurisdiction" (HJ 12). Mostly written during the 1830s in the years following the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, these texts gained a new resonance for militant Protestants after the controversial government grant to the Catholic seminary at Maynooth in 1845, and again after 1850 when the restoration of Catholic bishops to England, the so-called "Papal aggression", provoked a forceful anti-Catholic backlash. Thus, "ignorance and superstition" are

here easily attributed to a specifically Catholic past, which has been transcended by a Protestant modernity.

Linked to Aguilar's criticism of the Catholic "suppression of the word of truth" is the bibliocentrism I explored earlier. This aspect of Aguilar's thought emerges even more clearly in the private prayers she wrote during the 1830s. In "Birthday Meditation" she describes the self-affirmation derived from contemplating the Bible: "I looked in The Book, and there were promises to soothe and cheer; for I felt they came from Thee" (ST 130). The introspection, individualism, and the sense of a direct and personal relationship with the deity which characterises this prayer and the collection as a whole is highly reminiscent of the Evangelical women's writing I discussed in Chapter 3. In "Self-Examination", an extraordinarily obsessive contemplation of personal responsibility, Aguilar's terminology is indistinguishable from that of Protestant contemporaries:

Grant, O God, that I may look upon my heart with a stern unflinching eye; that my sins and faults may stand in all their wickedness before me. That I may know and guard against them; and in the examination I am about to make, my heart and thoughts may be as open to my sight, as if they were laid bare before me. Grant this, O God, that I may become good and virtuous in Thy sight. Amen.

Have I done my duty towards my God? Did I commence this day by devotion? Have I in any way transgressed his commandments? Have I given up my own inclinations for the sake of others? Have I gained any victory over myself? Have I given way to temper, impatience or anger? Have I done evil? Have I resisted temptation? Have I done all that I resolved to do to-day? Have I done my duty towards my parents? Have I done my duty in that station where it hath pleased God to place me? What have I done? Have I done good? (ST 97)

26 In a letter to an American friend, Aguilar wrote of her reluctance to publish the prayers she had written for her own private use. She feared the reaction of British Jews, after the description of Records of Israel as "anti-Jewish". The anxiety Aguilar expresses here suggests she was aware that her work was already on dangerous ground, and that the prayers in particular, with their intensely Evangelical mood, would overturn the balance. The prayers were eventually published after her death in 1853 by her mother, presumably for financial reasons. See Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 30 October 1844, 2-3.

27 Similarly, Aguilar, contesting the charge that Judaism denies spiritual autonomy to women, argues in The Women of Israel that in fact the Christian doctrine of original sin makes true responsibility impossible for both men and women. Aguilar instead stresses what she calls the Jewish "doctrine of individual responsibility and individual power to regain the favour of the Eternal - which is completely opposed to the Gentile creed" (W 24). This doctrine was, however, an important aspect of Evangelical theology, which emphasised innate sinfulness combined with "the possibility of salvation through the conversion and rebirth of the individual [...] through self-discipline" See Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism, 74.
The neurotic repetition of the questions powerfully expresses the overwhelming sense of sin which dominates Aguilar's religious sensibility. It is this preoccupation with sin, central to Evangelical theology, which determines Aguilar's understanding of the Jews as a "chosen people". In the same volume of private writings, her essay "On Family Prayer" argues that Jewish mothers should not teach their children that the Jews alone *are worthy in the sight of God, that all else is idolatry and folly. Instead of which, we should engrave on the yielding hearts of our children, the tale of Israel's awful sin; that we were indeed the favoured of the Lord, the blest, the loved above all others - but that we rejected His gracious love, we revolted from His merciful yoke, and so awfully and ungratefully sinned, that He was compelled in justice to chastise, and that we are now, even now, suffering from the consequences of those sins" (ST 147-8). The Evangelical belief in the necessity of punishment, which Aguilar reproduces here, considerably dampens the political critique she advances elsewhere of the persecution of the Jews. She comes close to a Christian analysis of Jewish suffering as punishment incurred for the rejection of salvation.

Aguilar's interest in women's responsibility for the education and moral welfare of children points towards the most important aspect of the Evangelical influence on her work, its redefinition of the spiritual status and social role of women. Jane Rendall argues that the Evangelical Revival had a widespread impact on the position of women in Protestant Europe. To elaborate on the assumptions underlying Clara Lucas Balfour's discussion of Protestantism and women,

\[\text{For the battle against sin] the qualities ascribed to womanhood were essential. Women, assumed to be more emotional and affectionate than men, were increasingly assumed to be potentially closer to God. The prescriptive literature of the period emphasizes that latent moral superiority, in terms which suggest woman's greater power to embody the evangelical appeal.}\]

\[\text{[... the mid nineteenth-century] softening of doctrine brought an emphasis on the humanity of Christ, on his sacrifice in atoning for the sins of the world. His meekness, his humility and his voluntary renunciation were stressed [...] Christ became a personal saviour, with whom women especially could identify, and such an identification between the redemptive powers of Christ and the sacrifices demanded and expected of women could lead women to consider their own redemptive powers. Evangelical religion offered them not only a clear definition of their expected sphere but also a very positive, even exalted, role within it.}\]


29 Amanda Vickery has contested the idea that the effects of the French Revolution, leading to the rise of Evangelicalism, produced a new model for femininity in the early nineteenth century as indeed we have seen in the previous chapter. They are also central to Grace
Aguilar's thinking in both her fiction and non-fiction. *The Women of Israel* is premised on the assumption of a special relationship between religion and women, "whose portion is to suffer, whose lot is lonely" (*WI* 7). Aguilar argues further that the Jewish woman has a particular need for religious faith: "To woman of every creed, of every race, of every rank - life, though it may seem blessed, is a fearful desert without God. What then, without Him, is it to the woman of Israel, the exile and the mourner, who hath no land, no hope, no comforter, but Him?" (*WI* 35). Religion is here the compensation for persecution and political disinheritance. Yet, as in Evangelical thought, women's abjection brings them closer to the nature of the deity:

> God [...] who has so repeatedly sanctified the emotions peculiar to [women's] sex, by graciously comparing the love He bears us, as yet deeper than a mother's for her child, a wife's for her husband, having compassion on His people, as on a 'woman forsaken and grieved in spirit' [...] 'As a mother comforteth her children, so will I comfort thee' (*WI* 6).

It is this fundamentally feminine character which, Aguilar insists, constitutes Judaism's appeal for women: "there may be some meek and lowly spirits amongst the female youth of Israel, who would gladly clasp the strength and guidance which we proffer them from the Bible, could they believe that God, the great, the almighty, the tremendous and awful Being (as which they have perhaps been accustomed to regard Him) can have love and pity for themselves" (*WI* 8). But there is also here an implicit distinction between the "awful Being" and the God of love, which is a distinction between Old and New Testament as well as between male and female characteristics. In order to present Judaism as embodying an appeal to women, Aguilar has to appropriate a Christian critique of the "masculine" Old Testament deity. She recasts Jewish tradition in the feminised and personal sed terms of Evangelicalism.

Moreover, the Evangelical elevation of women's social role determines Aguilar's representation of women both in *The Women of Israel* and her other fiction. It is female influence, she argues, like Clara Lucas Balfour, that determines the moral character of nations. As Nancy Cott writes of the contemporaneous Protestant "cult of domesticity" in New England, "the literature of domesticity promulgated a Janus-faced conception of women's roles: it looked back, explicitly conservative in its attachment to a traditional understanding of woman's place; while it proposed century, offering "a vision of harmony and security in an uncertain world". She argues that "texts extolling domestic virtue and a clear separation of the realms of men and women circulated long before 1789, so it cannot be the case that political fears begat this particular theory of social organization. Secondly, while no-one would deny that evangelicalism was a crucial force in nineteenth-century society, the extent to which evangelicalism was an exclusively middle-class project is unclear". See Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History", *Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 398. However, the Evangelical texts I have considered in this and the previous chapter do clearly identify a particular and novel version of femininity as the privilege of Evangelicals. Their rhetoric also established the domestic woman as both a middle-class and particularly timely ideal. It matters less, for my purposes, whether such claims are historically justified than the extent of their contemporary currency.
transforming, even millennial results".30 In her account of Hannah, the Hebrew "martyr mother" during the reign of the Syran emperor Antiochus Epiphanes, Aguilar reads between the lines of the biblical text to ask where the male heroism it records originates:

> in the calm courage, the noble words of each of her sons, we learn the education she had given. They had probably been amongst the valiant, though unsuccessful, defenders of their land; amongst the faithful few, who, in the very face of the persecutor, dared to obey the law of Moses, and refused every effort to turn them from their God. Would this patriotism, this devotedness, have come at the moment needed, had it not been taught, infused from earliest boyhood, by example as well as precept? A mother in Israel could be herself no warrior, but she could raise up warriors - she could be no priest, but she could create priests - she could not face the battle's front, or drive the idolatrous invader from God's Holy Land - she could not stem the torrent of persecution, and of torture; but she could raise up those who would seek the one, and, by unshrinking death, bear witness to the fruitless efforts of the other; and it was these things this heroic mother did ... She must have infused within them that pure, beautiful spirit of self-devotion which is woman's own, and can only be imparted by woman to the more selfish, more calculating man (W1 409-10).

For Aguilar the heroism of the Jews demonstrates the efficacy of feminine domestic influence. Moreover the future welfare of the Jews depends not on political emancipation, but on women. Indeed, Aguilar sees this "regeneration" in Evangelical, millennialist terms: "To the women of Israel, then, is entrusted the noble privilege of hastening 'the great and glorious day of the Lord,' by the instruction they bestow upon their sons, and the spiritual elevation to which they may attain in social intercourse, and yet more in domestic life" (W1 580, 579).

There was in fact considerable confusion in the 1840s between philosemitic Protestants and those Jews involved in theological discussion, as their language and terms of debate were often identical. This overlap is evident in the ambiguous relationships between religious writers like Grace Aguilar and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, and the Jewish and Christian press. While the Jewish Voice of Jacob gave Records of Israel a lukewarm reception, the Evangelical periodical press was generally delighted with Grace Aguilar's writing. Aguilar herself complained in a letter to an American friend of her treatment by English Jews, who in reaction to her proposal for The Women of Israel expressed disbelief in my capacity to write it and my dreadful presumption to attempt it, because as a woman I could know nothing on the subject ... Understand me my dear friend. It is by the Jews by my own nation not by the English I am so regarded. From the latter I never fail to receive sympathetic appreciation, indulgence and the sweet reward of knowing that my works have been permitted to remove many prejudices, which ignorance had engendered.31

---

31 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs Cohen of Savannah, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 30 October 1844, 2-3.
Clearly, for Evangelicals the spectacle of a woman writing on religious matters was not quite so extraordinary. Indeed, many Evangelicals felt an affinity for Aguilar's aims. *The Jewish Herald*, which was published by the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, declared in a review of her work "We hail the champions of Judaism as to a great extent the champions of Christianity". Aguilar's books, it considered, were "imbued with the spirit of Christianity".32

Charlotte Elizabeth, the editor of *The Christian Lady's Magazine*, saw Aguilar as an ally in the battle against religious indifference. She praised Aguilar's "lofty tone of spirituality" and her efforts to turn Jews "from the words of men to the Word of the Living God", in which task "we ardently pray for her success".33 Both these conversionist periodicals also published Aguilar's work, and others also published obituaries commemorating her after her death.34

The interplay between the Jewish press and Evangelical writing was similarly close. *The Voice of Jacob*, the first Jewish newspaper, was established in 1841 partly because, as its opening leader stated, Jews were "constantly assailed on all sides by those who hold themselves conscientiously justified in resorting to the most

32 Unsigned review of 'The Spirit of Judaism' by Grace Aguilar, *The Jewish Herald* 2 (February 1847): 29; "Sketch of the Life of Grace Aguilar", *The Jewish Herald* 3 (July 1848): 171-2. There is a noticeable difference between the attitude to Aguilar's work of *The Englishwoman's Magazine & Christian Mother's Miscellany*, and more millennialist periodicals. In a review of *The Women of Israel*, *The Englishwoman's Magazine* wrote that "our conception of its various excellences does but enhance our sorrow, that we cannot hail its deep-feeling author as a Christian sister". The magazine's criticism of Aguilar's domestic novel *Home Influence* (1847), however, was more severe, and attacked her aspiration to appeal to Christian as well as Jewish readers: "The writer who would produce a really *Christian* story, must not only possess an acquaintance with the general doctrines of Christianity, but must be deeply imbued with its principles, and actuated by its spirit. The fullest intellectual knowledge of that divine religion will not suffice for the accomplishment of such a design; yet the votary of another faith can possess of Christianity no deeper knowledge than this". See Unsigned review of 'The Women of Israel' by Grace Aguilar, *The Englishwoman's Magazine & Christian Mother's Miscellany* 1 (October 1846): 640 and Unsigned review of 'Home Influence. A Tale for Mothers and Daughters' by Grace Aguilar, *The Englishwoman's Magazine & Christian Mother's Miscellany* 2 (August 1847): 508-9. On the other hand, *The Jewish Herald* and *The Christian Lady's Magazine*, both philosemitic Evangelical periodicals, were more enthusiastic in their praise for Aguilar, although Charlotte Elizabeth worries that she "labours assiduously to do away with the necessity, and thereby with the doctrine, of that atonement without which no sinner can for one moment stand before God" See [Charlotte Elizabeth], "Jewish Literature", *The Christian Lady's Magazine* 20 (September 1843): 224.

33 [Charlotte Elizabeth], "Jewish Literature", 223, 226.

34 "Notice of the death of Grace Aguilar", *The Jewish Herald* 2 (November 1847): 294; "Sketch of the Life of Grace Aguilar", *The Jewish Herald* 3 (July 1848): 171-2. See also "Death of Grace Aguilar" in *The Jewish Intelligence* 15 (February 1849): 42-44. The Christian interest in Aguilar's writing was not limited to the 1840s and 50s. All of her work, including her fiction on Jewish themes, continued to be considered as edifying Christian reading matter throughout the century. Collected editions of her fiction were reprinted in the 1890s by J Nisbet and Co and in 1906 by Routledge, both as part of a series of Protestant works including Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and earlier nineteenth-century novels favoured by Evangelicals like *John Halifax, Gentleman*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Naomi* by Mrs J B Webb, which I discussed in Chapter 2.
unscrupulous expedients, in order to lead us from the faith of our fathers.\textsuperscript{35} It had a similar anti-conversionist objective to Aguilar, and indeed went on to publish various articles in this vein, often attacking the fraudulent methods of missionary societies and their manifest lack of success. Like Aguilar, the paper employed Evangelical terms against conversionists. In August 1842 it attacked Evangelical anti-Catholicism: "for our part, believing simply in the word of God, as contained in scripture, we are of opinion that it is unlawful for any one who admits the divinity of Holy Writ, to revenge himself, or to hate".\textsuperscript{36} The \textit{Voice of Jacob} here implies that it is Jews, not Protestants, who are the more conscientiously bibliocentric. A letter published in May 1842, in which "the main points may be strictly relied upon", closely resembles the tales published in \textit{The Christian Lady's Magazine} and \textit{The Jewish Herald} which I discussed in Chapter 3.\textsuperscript{37} It tells of an upper-class Berkshire clergyman who attempts to convert a young Polish Jew. Instead, the clergyman's daughter, who has been present at their theological discussions, becomes convinced of the truth of Judaism, and elopes with the Jew. She then endures a life of misery, as she is disinherited by her father and abandoned by her husband. She becomes a teacher at a school for poor Jewish children, "to whom she taught the principles of that religion, the adoption of which had been, to her, the source of so much worldly misery, but, to use her own words, of 'so much spiritual comfort'". When her father dies, she is offered his fortune if she reconverts, but she insists "shall I, after having gone through so long a life, supported by only a firm reliance on the God of Israel, shall I, at the eleventh hour, renounce my hopes of Heaven?", and dies.\textsuperscript{38} The emphasis in this text, as in Aguilar's writings, is on a religion of spirit, that offers "comfort", "Heaven" and values martyrdom: as in Aguilar, these terms are clearly Evangelical. Here, then, is the same combination of anti-conversionist rhetoric and yet appropriation of conversionist language.

The contradiction became even more complex in the relationship between \textit{The Voice of Jacob} and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, the conversionist, anti-Catholic novelist, millennialist, founder of the Evangelical periodical \textit{The Christian Lady's Magazine}, and editor of \textit{The Protestant Magazine}. Jacob Franklin, editor of \textit{The Voice of Jacob}, regularly praised Charlotte Elizabeth for her "enlightenment", commissioned articles from her, and after her death from cancer in 1846 lavished a long front-page obituary on her. He described her as "this devoted friend of Israel",

\textsuperscript{35} "Address", \textit{The Voice of Jacob} 1 (16 Sept 1841): 1.
\textsuperscript{37} M.D., "Another Conversion. (A Contrast)", \textit{The Voice of Jacob} 2 (27 May 1842): 138; original emphasis.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 139.
whose death constituted "our national loss". However he went on to chart the friendship which had arisen between the respective editors after a theological altercation in the columns of their respective publications in 1842. Franklin deplored the "illiberality" with which many Jews attacked his association with Charlotte Elizabeth, insisting that in The Voice of Jacob's principles "there has never been even an apparent flexibility, for the sake of Gentile favor". At the same time, he pointed out, "the very agent accused of inveigling the Jewish editor, has been by her Christian brethren suspected and taunted of 'Judaizing,' and of compromising her Christianity for the sake of Jewish favor!" Franklin claimed that Charlotte Elizabeth later renounced conversionism and laboured on behalf of Jewish causes such as fundraising for the Jews of Mogador, and he recognised the significance of her advocacy of the Jewish cause in The Christian Lady's Magazine whose "influence was exercised on the minds of the sex which, in the Anglican church, is peculiarly prone to such impressions as result in great undertakings". In a letter to the Magazine thanking readers for their contributions to the fund for the Jews of Mogador, and referring to himself as "your elder Brother", his terms were those of millennialist Evangelicalism: "The tribulations to which the scattering of my people are subjected in these days, cannot be regarded otherwise than as premonitory of the great event to which we both look forward with faith and longing". Here Franklin saw Jewish and Evangelical objectives as identical. Charlotte Elizabeth expressed it thus: "we confidently believe that because they are Jews, God's peculiar family, they will not much longer remain under the power of any error ... the signs of the times shew that the period fast approaches which the Lord himself has fixed as the era of restoring the kingdom to Israel". Moreover in Franklin's later tribute to Charlotte Elizabeth he admitted that she "may have constantly prayed, though not audibly to us, that we might learn to believe as she believed; and we are not surprised to learn that such was literally the last declaration that passed her lips". Franklin's evident uncertainty about Charlotte Elizabeth's attitude towards the Jews, his own identification with the mission of her periodical, the language of seduction which pervades his representation of their relationship, and the public suspicion that the

39 "The Late Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna," The Voice of Jacob 5 (31 July 1846): 173. For earlier articles praising Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (who published under the name of "Charlotte Elizabeth") and her periodical The Christian Lady's Magazine see, for example, "Another aspect of Christian respect for Israel," The Voice of Jacob 4 (14 March 1945): 121. The twin concerns of The Christian Lady's Magazine were anti-Catholicism and the conversion of the Jews.

40 "The Late Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna", 174.


43 "The Late Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna", 174.
Christian editor was "Judaizing" and vice versa, suggests the instability of religious discourse at this time.

The uneasy alliance between Evangelical and Jewish writers in the 1840s reflects wider contemporary questions about the relationship between the majority culture and the Jewish minority. In many ways, Aguilar's critiques of contemporary Judaism were echoed in demands for liturgical reform within British synagogues between the 1820s and the 1840s. When the West London Synagogue was established as a secessionist congregation in 1842 significant reforms in synagogue service were introduced, with the intention of improving the devotional character of the synagogue. These changes included a shorter service, which started later, excluded parts which were not of a devotional nature and included an English sermon to promote congregants' knowledge of their religion. The synagogue celebrated one day of festivals instead of the customary two, which, they argued, had not been sanctioned by scripture. Such innovations, as David Feldman summarises,

have been seen by historians as part of the Jews' response to 'modernity': in particular, to the development in eighteenth-century Europe of universal, inclusive conceptions of humanity. This influenced Jewish life through the conduit of the haskalah - the Jewish enlightenment - whose devotees emphasised the universalist aspect of the teachings and doctrines of Judaism and relegated the significance of its particularistic rituals and observances.

As Todd M Endelman and Feldman have shown, the ideology of the German Jewish reform movement had little impact on the impulse towards reform in England, where such demands were present within orthodox congregations as well as secessionists. Instead, the character of Jewish reform reflected the specific debates which concerned Britain in the 1830s and 1840s: "in the battle to determine what the long-term consequences would be of the great constitutional reforms of 1829 and 1832, the contending forces of evangelicalism, tractarianism and liberal Anglicanism, within the Anglican establishment, and nonconformity, outside of it, ensured that religion and politics drew close in early Victorian public life. In these circumstances criticisms of the Jewish religion possessed a powerful resonance for both non-Jews and Jews."

More particularly, as David Englander has argued,

The progressives, drawn from the most acculturated elements of the elite, moved in the best circles and were not unmindful of the antagonism provoked by Rabbinical Judaism.

45 Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 53.
Christian critics identified the Talmud as the principal obstacle to the integration of the Jews into the wider society. The Talmud and its teachings were condemned as a source of superstition, separatism, sterility and subversion. It was this attachment to rabbinicism which, in the eyes of the Evangelical Englishman, reduced Judaism to the same status as Catholicism, a religion which was also held to be deficient in its respect for the word of God.47

This reconceptualisation of Judaism, which made it less "Rabbinist", more biblicocentric, and more of a religion of the heart, was, like Grace Aguilar’s writing, a response to the forcefulness and persistence of the Evangelical critique of Judaism.48 This did not go unnoticed by Evangelicals; in 1842 Charlotte Elizabeth heartily praised the "plan of rising interest and incalculable importance, as regards extensive improvements in the mode of synagogue worship".49 In fact, as Feldman indicates, a wide range of voices even within Anglo-Jewish orthodoxy, like Moses Angel, headmaster of the Jews' Free School, as well as the Jewish Chronicle newspaper, "felt bound to answer the commonplace critique of Judaism" voiced by Evangelicals.50

It was within the discourse of literature for Jewish women, where religious debate converged with a tradition of domestic writing, that the influence of Evangelicalism was most fully reproduced. Feldman argues that despite its powerful influence, aspects of Evangelical theology were resisted by Jews, such as the belief that faith in Christ’s atonement on the Cross prepared the way for redemption and salvation; "the connected emphasis on depravity and sinfulness and the need for constant vigilance against temptation, likewise, seems not to have been reproduced in the Jewish context".51 Grace Aguilar was certainly called to account by her Evangelical admirers for failing to acknowledge the doctrine of the atonement. However, as we

48 In "The Social and Religious Thought of Grace Aguilar" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1970) Philip Weinberger asserts that Aguilar was committed to orthodoxy as opposed to Reform, but he fails to acknowledge the social and political connotations of the Reform debate and the way in which they were influenced by Evangelical discourse (255). Weinberger then uses an unsubstantiated account of Aguilar's own ancestry as an Iberian Marrano to explain her particular interest in the role of women in the home (21-2). Aguilar does suggest in Records of Israel that Marranos "bowed before the imaged saints and martyrs of the Catholic, to shrine the religion of their fathers yet closer in their hearts and homes" (RI 96). But the impact of the form and style of domestic literature on her writing about Jewish women is, I would argue, a more important factor than her personal family history, whatever that may have been. Resisting the idea that Aguilar was influenced by her immediate environment, Weinberger also wrongly attributes the Christological element in her writing to the lingering effects of her ancestors' supposed conversion to Catholicism (174). Likewise he interprets Aguilar's advocation of "free private prayer" as reflecting the Marrano heritage of fear about the public demonstration of religion: similarly a misinterpretation of another clear instance of Evangelical influence (174).
50 Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 60.
51 Ibid, 63.
have seen, her concern with the duty of mothers to transmit Jewish history as "the tale of Israel's awful sin", and her writings on the private world of prayer clearly indicate that there was a gendered aspect to Evangelical discourse which made possible the inclusion in women's writing of such notions as sin and self-examination, even if they were incompatible with Jewish theology. Charlotte Elizabeth was also able to claim that not only the Old Testament but the synagogue service itself testified to the truth of the doctrine of the atonement: she used the service of the Day of Atonement "to prove how tenaciously Israel, in his dispersion and affliction, clings to the doctrine of sacrificial atonement; bewailing the privation, and groaning under the burden of sin, and of the conscious inability of man to free himself from its power". Feldman suggests that, unlike evangelicals who were trying to reconcile a post-1789 world of evil and suffering with the idea of a powerful and loving God, Jews had continuing experience of discrimination and persecution, and a "martyrological rendition of their own history". But, as my account of Aguilar's writing has shown, she was able to successfully merge such a historiography with the Evangelical impulse to explain and justify.

Jews and the domestic novel

Grace Aguilar's appropriation of the Evangelical critique of Judaism, then, reflects two themes. It illustrates the impact of a forceful current in contemporary religious discourse, and at the same time it is an aspect of the domestic genre of writing. Domestic writing, exemplified in Mrs Ellis's *Home, or The Iron Rule* (1836), was closely intertwined with the principles of Evangelicalism, which between the 1830s and the 1850s were becoming consolidated as a marker of middle-class identity. Domestic literature placed women at the centre of the enactment and reproduction of middle-class identity. In this section I want to look at the way in which questions of religious and class identity interact in Aguilar's domestic and historical fiction for women.

In the preface to what was to become her most successful work, *Home Influence. A Tale for Mothers and Daughters* (1847), Aguilar argues that the domestic content of her novel should transcend any religious difference between Jewish writer and Protestant reader:

having been brought before the public principally as the author of Jewish works, and as an explainer of the Hebrew Faith, some Christian mothers might fear that the present Work has the same tendency, and hesitate to place it in the hands of their children. [The author], therefore, begs to assure them, that as a simple domestic story, the characters in

---


which are all Christians, believing in and practising that religion, all doctrinal points have been most carefully avoided, the author seeking only to illustrate the spirit of true piety, and the virtues always designated as the Christian virtues thence proceeding.\textsuperscript{54}

While Aguilar acknowledges that she may not be able to reproduce accurately "doctrinal points", she asserts that the "spirit of true piety", common to both writer and readers can be expressed in the universal form of domestic writing. \textit{Home Influence} and its sequel, \textit{The Mother's Recompense} (1851) implicitly argue that Jewish as much as Protestant values are expressed in this cultural form. More important than "doctrinal points" is the class identity which domestic literature expresses and helps to constitute, a class identity in which Evangelical themes are a crucial reference point. \textit{Home Influence} is an example of the literary genre which grew out of a bourgeois rejection of values linked with the gentry and aristocracy. As Catherine Hall has argued, in the first part of the nineteenth century the newly powerful middle classes were increasingly "challenging land and wealth as the key characteristics of the gentleman. Instead, they asserted that real gentility was rooted in religious belief".\textsuperscript{55} Novels like \textit{Home Influence}, \textit{The Mother's Recompense} and Dinah Mulock Craik's bestselling \textit{John Halifax, Gentleman} (1857) inscribe this assertion within narratives about the ascendancy of the middle class through "religion and reason" (\textit{HI} I:307).

Aguilar's two domestic novels oppose "society", the world of aristocratic luxury and degeneracy, to the "home", which is closely associated with the pastoral. The Hamilton family, the focus of the novels, live at their rural residence "Oakwood", refer to their way of life as "retirement", and are reluctant to leave the country for London to introduce their eldest daughter because they mistrust the "temptations" of a corrupt urban society.\textsuperscript{56} The pastoral does not carry conventionally aristocratic connotations in this novel however. Mr Hamilton is a member of the landowning gentry, and has even had the chance of a title, but like John Halifax he derives his dignity from work. He personally manages his estates, a form of labour which he carries out with conscientious paternalism. For Hamilton, as for John Halifax,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Grace Aguilar, \textit{Home Influence: A Tale for Mothers and Daughters}, (London: Groombridge, 1847), I:v (original emphasis). Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as \textit{HI}. Sarah Aguilar's preface to the sequel to \textit{Home Influence}, \textit{The Mother's Recompense} (1851) states that both novels were written when her daughter was "little above the age of nineteen" i.e. during 1835-6. See \textit{The Mother's Recompense. A Sequel to Home Influence} (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1851), iii. At least twenty-nine editions of \textit{Home Influence} appeared between 1847 and 1905, and twenty-two editions of \textit{The Mother's Recompense}.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Catherine Hall, "Competing Masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and the case of Governor Eyre," in Catherine Hall, \textit{White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History} (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), 256.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Grace Aguilar, \textit{The Mother's Recompense. A Sequel to Home Influence} (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1851), 50; 46. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as \textit{MR}.
\end{itemize}
domestic paternalism also extends to the political sphere: "the home interests and
various aspects of his country were so strongly entwined with his very being, - that,
though always refusing to enter Parliament, he was the prompter and encourager of
many a political movement, having for its object amelioration of the poor and
improvement of the whole social system; closely connected with which, as he was,
they gave him neither public fame nor private emolument" (HI I:117). Here
philanthropy on a national scale is seen as an extension of the morality of the home,
and a more effective act of patriotism than participation in established government.57
Aguilar thus creates a narrative around the philosophy of neo-feudal social relations
underpinned by the concept of sanctified work, which Carlyle promoted and which
Craik exemplified in the story of a middle-class man whose credentials as a
gentleman are established not by his birth but by his Evangelical morality.

While Home Influence like John Halifax, Gentleman defines the "manly middle-
class subject" it also seeks to identify the features of middle-class femininity.58 For
the women of the novel, the bourgeois pastoral is a site for the "education of the
HEART", the avowed purpose of the novel as a whole (HI I:vi ). Aguilar opposes too
much rational education, "the mere instrucion of the MIND"; her pastoral refers back
to a biblical, Edenic archetype rather than the classical. According to The Women of
Israel, existence in paradise did not require the cultivation of the intellect: "Sources of
what is now termed wisdom, that of books and man, were indeed unknown to our first
parents; nor did they need them" (WI 13). Mrs Hamilton in Home Influence considers
a moral and religious education, which will provide fortification against "society", to
be more accessible through an appreciation of Nature than through any academic
instruction; she "earnestly long[ed] to impart a love of Nature and all its fresh pure
associations in the minds of her children while yet young, knowing that once
obtained, the pleasures of the world would be far less likely to obtain too powerful

57 Catherine Hall argues that despite the new economic power of middle class men they had
little representation in government, which was dominated by the landed class until the end of
the nineteenth century. "In this context the establishment of arenas of public prestige which
might enable them to build an alternative power base to that of the established aristocracy and
gentry, was vital. Voluntary associations provided just such an arena and the period after
1780 was marked by the proliferation of scores of these, based initially in the towns but
moving out into the countryside, with an extraordinary variety of aims and objectives ...
Together, this extensive network of voluntary associations redefined civil society and created
new arenas of power and prestige. This was the newly created public sphere of nineteenth-
century England, bypassing traditional institutions and constructing an alternative public. For
the societies were a means of extending influence for those outside traditional sites of power.*
Significantly, then, both Hamilton and Halifax refuse to participate in parliament, which they
see as corrupt, and consider the cohesiveness of the nation better served by participating in
voluntary associations. Through these novels, Aguilar and Craik justify such alternative sites
of power as more legitimate. See Catherine Hall, "Competing Masculinities", 256, 263.
58 Ibid, 258.
dominion" *(HI 1:125).* Instead of academic learning, Aguilar suggests an alternative, domestic form of "study" for mothers in the close examination, analysis and management of their children's distinctive characters.

Moreover, one of the novels' central concerns is to demonstrate the dangers of "society" for middle-class women. Once outside the protective space of the home, the Hamiltons' daughter Caroline is soon vulnerable to the manipulation of an aristocratic libertine. The novels dramatise Mrs Hamilton's struggle to uphold and effectively reproduce her distinctively sober middle-class ideals against the temptations of the world of privilege. She warns Caroline: "The world in radiant beauty will loudly call upon you to follow it alone, to resign all things to become its votary; the trial of prosperity will indeed be yours" *(MR 46).* *The Mother's Recompense* shows how Mrs Hamilton's ideology does come under attack from Caroline's friend Annie Grahame, whose own domestic environment is unhappy and mismanaged by her aristocratic mother. Annie's conspiracy to destroy Mrs Hamilton's complacency by corrupting her daughter derives from a resentment of the Hamiltons' resolute dissent from the majority culture. She and her confidante Miss Malison hope "that Mrs Hamilton may have the exquisite pleasure of seeing her daughter like other people, however different she may choose to be herself" *(MR 128).* Mrs Hamilton's devotion to the ideology of female domesticity is presented as a heroic struggle, often in the face of prejudice, the counterpart to John Halifax's battle to succeed in business against his aristocratic neighbours' corrupt practices and his employees' resistance to new technology. Indeed, Mr Hamilton describes carrying their Evangelical and domestic beliefs into society as a chivalric contest to "retain our integrity unsullied, our restraining principles unchanged in the midst of temptations" *(MR 40).* However Annie seeks to subvert Mrs Hamilton's "out of date" moral separatism through what she considers its more "natural" opposite - "human feelings", desire and power *(MR 145,128).* In particular she teaches Caroline how to exploit men's sexual desire to experience it as female power. Mrs Hamilton's belief in the possibility of progress and training in the upbringing of children are thus counterposed against an anarchic and aristocratic romanticism. Aguilar's domestic fiction is also part of a reaction against the late eighteenth-century sentimental novel which depicted feelings and passions as natural and irresistible. The tradition of domestic writing influenced by

59 In his study of nineteenth-century didactic fiction, Robert A Colby links Aguilar's novel to George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. Eliot's novel and *Home Influence* are part of the same genre of domestic fiction concentrating on the education of the young. Both *Home Influence*, which was "one of the most popular domestic novels of this period", and *The Mill on the Floss* question the moral value of academic learning. The female central characters in both novels are denied the education given to their brothers, but they grow up with a deeper moral sense, having imbibed from their close contact with nature a deep love of living things. See Robert A Colby, *Fiction with a Purpose: Major and Minor Nineteenth-Century Novels* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 229-233.
Evangelicalism had in common with Jacobin writers of the 1790s a rejection of the idea of the individual as passive, and a belief in the importance of controlling the passions by rational education.60

Also constructed in opposition to "society" in the novels is the sphere of religion. Religion in the world of Home Influence is unquestionably a private matter, centred in the home. It takes the form of daily family services and personal prayer, and the public rituals of churchgoing and Sunday school are less important: "[The Hamiltons'] great wish was to make the Sabbath a day of love, divine and domestic" (HI I:236). However their religion is not socially restrictive but universal: Aguilar notes that the servants take a full part in domestic worship. The home is a microcosm of liberal, universally accessible Christianity. Aguilar points out that such consideration promotes social stability: "Kindness begets kindness, and if superiors will but think of, and seek the happiness, temporal and eternal, of their inferiors, - will but prove that they are considered as children of one common Father, - there needs no equality of rank to create equality of happiness, or equality of refined, because true feeling" (HI II:115). Here the continuities between domestic writing and the anti-Jacobin novel of the 1790s are apparent. Women anti-Jacobin novelists like Jane West and Elizabeth Le Noir focused on rural simplicity and domestic affections, figuring revolutionary sympathies as an aspect of aristocratic decadence, while the work of Hannah More, supposedly addressed to the lower classes, used Evangelical religious discourse to uphold the hierarchical ordering of social relations.61 In this respect Aguilar's writing reflects a renewed middle-class political anxiety in the 1830s and 1840s; indeed, she also contributed a tale about pious working-class Jews to the "Cheap Jewish Library", which was clearly modelled on More's Evangelical Cheap Repository Tracts.

Furthermore, the novels seek to redefine liberty and equality through the ideology of the home, which offers freedom of worship to all classes and tolerant forgiveness to all who return to it. Annie Grahame teaches Caroline to resent the restriction of women under domestic rule, "to pine for the freedom of thought and act which I so unboundedly enjoy" (MR 35). But when Caroline, on the point of elopement with a decadent aristocrat, instead returns to her mother, she receives neither judgement or punishment. On the contrary,

It mattered not at that moment that she had been deceived, that Caroline had withdrawn alike her confidence and affection, that her conduct the last few months had been productive of bitter disappointment and extreme anguish, all, all was forgotten; the

60 See Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism, 56.
61 For an account of these two aspects of the conservative response to revolution in the 1790s, see Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830 (London and New York, Longman, 1989), 60-9.
Mrs Hamilton offers forgiveness rather than fury, and her delight at regaining the "confidence" and control of her daughter, points to her crucial symbolic role within the home, as the deputy of an Evangelical (rather than an Old Testament) God. Unlike her neighbour Mr Grahame, Mrs Hamilton believes that children should not obey in terror, but make rational choices in accordance with the precepts she has provided and the encouragement she offers. Moreover, it is through the mother's love that her child learns to see outside herself and first gains access to the consciousness of religion. Aguilar describes this process in *Home Influence* in the case of Mrs Hamilton's youngest daughter:

from that hour, as [Emmeline] felt her mother's fond return of that passionate embrace, her love became religion, though she knew it not. Her thoughts flew to her cousins and many others, who had no mother, and to others whose mothers left them to nurses and governesses, and seemed always to keep them at a distance. And she felt, how could she thank and love God enough? nor was it the mere feeling of the moment, it became part of her being, for the right moment had been seized to impress it (*HI* 1:197).

Emmeline's emotion is not only a response to her recognition of maternal love as a privilege, rather than a right. It is also an apprehension of the mother's love as a prefiguring of divine love: an apprehension of benevolence and order in the world. Mrs Hamilton feels that this is a responsibility and a sanctioning of her authority through "trust in Him, who had promised to answer all who called upon Him, and would bless that mother's toils which were based on, and looked up alone, to His influence on her child" (*HI* 1:98). The novel represents women as central in conveying, enacting and reproducing an hierarchical and ordered view of human relations.

*Home Influence* also maps the Christian idea of the dependence of fallible humans on a forgiving and redemptive deity onto the relationship between men and women. Mrs Hamilton's niece Ellen, who loyally conceals the crimes of her brother Edward, is condemned and punished by the entire household and falls dangerously ill, but is finally able by her suffering to save Edward from further vice. Ellen's martyrdom is the means of Edward's reformation, the means of his learning that the relationship between good and evil is gendered: "'Why is it,' he thought, 'that man cannot bear the punishment of his faults without causing the innocent, the good, to suffer also?' And his heart seemed to answer, 'Because by those very social ties, the strong impulses of love for one another, which would save others from woe, we may be preserved and redeemed from vice again and again, when, were man alone the sufferer, vice would be stronger than remorse, and never be redeemed'" (*HI* 11:185). The novel thus incorporates women's suffering into a purposeful and ordered universe. *Home*
Influence and The Mother’s Recompense, then, reflect the concerns of middle-class women but also contribute to the discursive construction of a particular version of femininity.

Aguilar’s historical novel The Days of Bruce: A Story from Scottish History (written 1830s, published 1852) similarly demonstrates the centrality of women in maintaining an hierarchical social order, in this case through the relationship between family and nation. Whereas Home Influence, like much bourgeois writing from the 1830s onwards including John Halifax, Gentleman, invokes an ethos of neo-mediaevalism and chivalry transposed to the home, The Days of Bruce literalises the concern with chivalry and yet at the same time also domesticates it. The novel relates the story of the fourteenth-century rebellion of the chivalric Robert the Bruce against the tyrannical Edward II of England and the protracted and eventually successful struggle to re-establish Scottish independence. The subject and genre may have been influenced by Jane Porter’s successful "historical romance" The Scottish Chiefs (1810), which was still being read in the 1840s. Porter’s novel tells the story of Robert the Bruce’s mentor Sir William Wallace, who is depicted, like Bruce in Aguilar’s tale, as an independent landed gentleman, aloof from court intrigues, an ideal family man and devoted to the cause of Scottish independence. Gary Kelly has written that "characterization and plot in The Scottish Chiefs ... present a fantasy of social reconstruction and reform through idealized and individual middle-class virtues. The fantasy bears a relation to contemporary political realities insofar as it proposes personal self-discipline, religious piety, domestic virtue, and nationalist self-dedication as solutions to political and social conflicts in the modern world".62 These ideological concerns derive from both Jacobin and Evangelical writing of the 1790s, and remained key issues in the 1830s and 40s, but it was the Porter sisters’ work, and later the novels of Scott, which first addressed them through the use of historical fiction.

The central presence in Aguilar’s narrative is Isabella of Buchan, the wife of one of the Scottish earls who does not support Robert but aligns himself with the English king and participates in the corrupt English court. Isabella, however, has been brought up as a patriot, and the founding moment in the story of Scotland’s rebirth is this “dauntless woman”’s defiance of her husband in exercising the traditional right of her family to crown Robert king of Scotland.63 Isabella’s readiness to renounce her husband’s protection is contrasted strikingly with the motivation of his friends among the Scottish earls, who "strangely and traitorously, preferred safety and wealth, in the acknowledgment and servitude of Edward, to glory and honour in the service of their

---

63 Grace Aguilar, The Days of Bruce: A Story from Scottish History (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1852), 53. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as DB.
country". Isabella, however, has less in common with the comfort-seeking aristocracy than "the middle ranks" who "yet spurned the inglorious yoke, and throbbed but for one to lead them on, if not to victory, at least to an honourable death" (DB 24). The Days of Bruce, then, like Home Influence, associates patriotism with a virtuous and disciplined middle class.

The Days of Bruce however makes clearer than the other novels what patriotism might mean for women. When the Scottish army suffer their first defeat Robert requests that the women of his court seek safety in Norway while he and his followers become outlaws. But Isabella refuses, exhorting the women

Oh, do not let us waver. Let us prove that though the arm of woman is weaker than that of man, her spirit is as firm, her heart as true; and that privation, and suffering, and hardship encountered amid the mountains of our land, the natural fastnesses of Scotland, in company with our rightful king, our husbands, our children - all, all, aye, death itself, were preferable to exile and separation (DB 122).

Aguilar seeks to refute the notion that heroic sentiment is the preserve of men. Moreover, the novel, like The Women of Israel, suggests that patriotic heroism itself derives from maternal influence. Abandoned by her husband, Isabella has "found solace and delight in molding the young minds of her children according to the pure and elevated cast of her own ... She taught them to be patriots, in the purest, most beautiful appropriation of the term, - to spurn the yoke of the foreigner, and the oppressor, however light and flowery the links of that yoke might seem" (DB 22). Isabella's daughter Agnes later demonstrates her resistance to the "yoke". When Nigel Bruce, the king's brother, is condemned to death for treason against Edward, she risks her life by disguising herself as a man and going to plead with Edward's daughter for a royal pardon. Isabella's son Allan becomes a devoted warrior in Robert's army, finally rescuing his mother from an eight-year-long captivity. Fighting for mother and country becomes inseparable for him: in the night of vigil before being invested as a knight he realises that such a vocation is the inevitable result of her maternal love: "... Can I do else than devote the life thou gavest, to thee, and render back with my stronger arm, but not less firm soul, the care, protection, love thou hast bestowed on me?" (DB 86). National consciousness and chivalric spirit are here shown to derive from the family, more particularly from the mother. Aguilar's historical novel thus underlines the central themes of her domestic novels. Similarly, Robert the Bruce earns the respect of his followers because of his familial relationship with his subjects. When Nigel is executed by Edward, and Agnes descends into madness, his concern is apparent to all: "how devotedly, how even as a father the sovereign looked on her, and cherished, fostered, aye, and grieved over that awful affliction, as if in very truth she were his own, own child. Where was the warrior, as he thus bent over her? Where the triumphant sovereign, the glorious saviour of his land?" (DB 385-6).
Robert's monarchy is modelled on the hierarchy of the family. Aguilar conceives the political sphere within the terms of her domestic ideology.

In *The Vale of Cedars; or, The Martyr* (1850) her highly successful tragic novel set during the Spanish Inquisition, the domestic, historical and Jewish themes which inform Aguilar's other work converge. The novel's crypto-Jewish heroine, Marie Morales, has been brought up at "The Vale of Cedars", a pastoral retreat like "Oakwood". For Marranos, religion has a particularly domestic nature, as religious practice is confined to the safety of the home. Marie's widower father allows her to leave the "quiet retirement of the vale" with reluctance, but does not fully understand, as a mother would have, "the dangers of an introduction to the world". The plot of the domestic novel is thus mapped onto the Spanish Inquisition setting, in which the rural retreat offers protection for the secret Jews against the dangers of exposure in Catholic society. Furthermore, "the dangers of an introduction to the world" for the Jewess are twofold: female vulnerability, a familiar theme from the domestic novel, is compounded by the political vulnerability of the Jews, so that Marie's secret identity makes her even easier prey to sexual exploitation.

From this basis the novel goes on to draw heavily on *Ivanhoe* for its story of a Jewess who "studiously and earnestly" suppresses her own love for a Christian, is preyed upon by a lecherous and vindictive inquisitor and for her resistance condemned to an unfair trial on the grounds of her Jewishness (*VC* 40). Although Marie is rescued, she finally chooses to die as a Jew rather than convert to Catholicism. As in *Ivanhoe*, the story of the Jewess is linked to a moment of crucial historical change, as the Inquisition shifts from being a clandestine and unregulated operation towards institutionalisation by the state. However *The Vale of Cedars* diminishes the significance of this historical context and foregrounds instead the story of the individual. Thus, Rebecca's self-sacrifice on behalf of a nation to which she cannot belong is replaced by Aguilar with a martyrdom seen as an affirmation of identity against the machinations of a totalitarian Catholic state. This is particularly associated with the development of a notion of female heroism in *The Vale of Cedars*, similar to her project in *The Days of Bruce*. In the final phase of the novel, Marie's former lover, the English Catholic Arthur Stanley is employed to try to lure her to conversion. But he is unable to awake in her her former guilty passion for him: "there was something in her manner which restrained him; it was no longer the timid, yielding girl, who even while she told him of the barrier between them had yet betrayed the deep love she felt; it was the woman whose martyr-spirit was her strength" (*VC* 249). Formerly, Arthur was unable to understand "that her secret was to

---

64 Grace Aguilar, *The Vale of Cedars: or, the Martyr. A Story of Spain in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1850), 28. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as *VC*. 
her sacred as his honour to him, and that she could no more turn renegade from the fidelity which that secret comprised, than he could from his honour" (VC 77-8). In this novel, Aguilar suggests that a woman's religious identity can be to her as a man's honour. More than this, she argues that female heroism is the greater: "The trial to passively endure is far more terrible than that which is called upon to act and do" (VC 188).

On the whole, however, Aguilar reduces the importance Ivanhoe ascribes to the relationship between the Jewess and her Gentile lover, replacing it instead with a detailed account of the affinity between two women, Marie and Queen Isabella. When she first sees Isabella in a procession at Segovia

> the strained gaze of Marie turned, and became riveted on the Queen, feeling strangely and indefinably a degree of comfort as she gazed; to explain wherefore, even to herself, was impossible; but she felt as if she no longer stood alone in the wide world, whose gaze she dreaded: a new impulse rose within her, urging her, instead of remaining indifferent as she thought she should, to seek and win Isabella's regard (VC 62).

Female sympathy, the theme of Aguilar's domestic novel Woman's Friendship (1850) published in the same year, is also a central concern of The Vale of Cedars. Marie's sense that the presence of the queen means that "she no longer stood alone in the wide world" points to the benevolent and personalised relationship in which Ferdinand and Isabella stand with their subjects. Like Robert the Bruce they are presented as seeking to rule the nation as a family. Despite playing on the anti-Catholicism that representing the Inquisition inevitably invokes, the novel is signficantly apologetic on behalf of Ferdinand and Isabella. The monarchy is not so much the instigator as the victim of the Inquisition, which seeks to establish a rival authority through secrecy and blackmail. In contrast the king establishes constitutional changes by which "the power of the nobles would ... be insensibly diminished and the mass of the kingdom - the PEOPLE - as a natural consequence, become of more importance, their position more open to the eyes of the sovereigns, and their condition, physically and morally, ameliorated and improved" (VC 53). The counterpart to Ferdinand's efforts at social amelioration is the queen's determination to improve female morality: "Isabella's example had ... already created reformation in her female train, and the national levity and love of intrigue had in a great degree diminished" (VC 69). The Spanish monarchy appears in the novel not as the enemy of the Jewish heroine but as a benign power seeking to restrict aristocratic influence and to establish middle-class morality; despite its subject matter, it is clear that the narrative as a whole is not a critique of established authority.

Much of the effect of such an apologia depends on the representation of Isabella in terms derived from the domestic novel. The queen's court strikingly resembles Mrs Hamilton's home:
At the farther end of the spacious chamber were several young girls, daughters of the nobles of Castile and Aragon, whom Isabella's maternal care for her subjects had collected around her, that their education might be carried on under her own eye, and so create for the future nobles of her country, wives and mothers after her own exalted stamp. They were always encouraged to converse freely and gaily amongst each other; for thus she learned their several characters, and guided them accordingly (VC 130).

Isabella also resembles Mrs Hamilton defending her errant children before her stern husband, when she intercedes on behalf of Marie, who has declared her Jewish identity and must face the Inquisition for secretly practising Judaism. The queen's championing of Marie's cause, moreover, is a function of her gender; Isabella protests "... Unbeliever though she be, offspring of a race which every true Catholic must hold in abhorrence, she is yet a woman, Ferdinand, and, as such, demands and shall receive the protection of her Queen" (VC 172). As a female figure of mercy, Isabella shows that even Catholic cruelty is capable of redemption. In an echo of Elizabeth Rigby's maternalist in *The Jewess*, Isabella reproaches her courtiers for their disapproval of her compassion for Marie: "Has every spark of woman's nature faded from your hearts, that ye can speak thus? ... Detest, abhor, avoid her faith - for that we command thee; but her sex, her sorrow, have a claim to sympathy and aid, which not even her race can remove" (VC 174). Here, Marie's gender transcends her "faith" or "race", an example of the universalist claim of feminine domestic ideology. However despite the queen's protection she is abducted and imprisoned by the Inquisition, later escaping with the help of a member of her family who has infiltrated the organisation. She returns to Isabella, who expresses both horror of the methods of the Inquisition, and reassurance of the strength of woman's friendship:

"Child of a reprobate faith and outcast race as thou art, thinkest thou that even to thee Isabella would permit injury and injustice? If we love thee too well, may we be forgiven, but cared for thou shalt be; ay, so cared for, that there shall be joy on earth, and in heaven for thee yet!"

Yet despite the apparent "perfect sympathy" between women this passage hints at the trial to come. Marie's most difficult ordeal is not resisting the Inquisitors but resisting the temptation of Isabella's love, which in its "real meaning" would have her save her life by converting to Catholicism. This aspect of the novel recalls Rowena's attempt to convert Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*. Aguilar even reproduces Rebecca's response: "'My creed may be the mistaken one it seems to thee; but oh! it is no garment we may wear and cast off at pleasure'" (VC 260). But the narrative also carries echoes of conversion
novels and tales, which stressed that the ideal context for conversion was the non-coercive setting of friendship between women. Aguilar's celebration of female friendship in the novel makes this aspect of Marie's martyrdom particularly poignant. Indeed it is in the universal terms of female friendship that Marie expresses her wish for death. Only in death will the Jewish Marie and the Catholic Isabella be able to fulfil their feminine sympathy with each other, because "in Heaven I feel there is no distinction of creed or faith; we shall all love God and one another there, and the earth's fearful distinctions can never come between us" (VC 284). She dies in the arms of her Gentile lover Arthur Stanley but speaking of Isabella: "tell her how with my last breath I loved and blessed her, Arthur; tell her we shall meet again, where Jew and Gentile worship the same God!" (VC 286). Thus while the text appears to represent a consummation, albeit in death, between Jewess and Gentile - "their hands were grasped in that firm pressure, betraying unity of feeling, and reciprocal esteem, which need no words" (VC 284) - it displaces this transgressive potential with an emphasis on relations between women.

The Vale of Cedars, then, is clearly informed by Grace Aguilar's other work in domestic and historical writing. This leads to a redefinition of Jewish identity in terms of Evangelical ideas about religion and nation, private and public. In Aguilar's essay "On a lecture on the twenty-second Psalm, by the Rev. R S Anderson, 9th Nov 1836", written at around the same time as Home Influence and The Mother's Recompense, there is further evidence of her attempt to understand the meaning of Jewish identity in terms of domestic ideology. Arguing that the psalm in question prophesies the sufferings not of Christ but of the Jews, she discusses the phrase "kindreds of the nations":

*Kindred* may well be applied to the Jews; *they are* kindreds of nations; in whatever nation or country they are scattered, they are always bound together by their faith; as if the law of Moses had the power of making one Jew kinsman to another. Wherever we are, if we meet a Jew, and the mark of God soon discovers the fact, we always with one consent claim, that is one of our people; unconsciously claiming kindred with the greatest stranger (ST 8).

Here Aguilar defines the relationship between Jew and Jew not in national terms, like the Moss sisters, nor in racial terms, like Disraeli. Instead, she sees Jewishness, like Evangelical Christianity, as an act of "faith". At the same time that "faith" binds

---

65 David Feldman has argued that the political construction of the nation in Britain in the 1840s and 50s "was centred on a relation between the individual and the state that was taken to guarantee a range of indigenous freedoms, rather than upon the people themselves and their culture. The demands for conformity in these circumstances were narrow. It was this culturally attenuated construction of the nation that provided a space in which the ideal of 'spiritual nationality' could flourish". See Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 70-1. Feldman thus suggests that the Jews' designation of their identity as a "spiritual nationality" reflects the dominant contemporary understanding of British nationality. I am suggesting a similar relationship between Jewish and Evangelical notions of nationality.
Jews together, it makes them like "one ... kinsman to another". In her "Essay on 'The Prophecies of Daniel'" she describes the Jews as "Having no nation, no country, no temple of their own" but yet constituting "One single family, divided perhaps by many miles from kith and kin" (ST 50). Aguilar here sees the Jews in terms of the central metaphor of the domestic novel, that of the family. In the next section of this chapter I will be considering the political implications of the use of such a metaphor.

**Grace Aguilar and Jewish emancipation**

Aguilar’s Evangelical-influenced emphasis on sin and punishment produced a representation of Jewish suffering in which Jews passively accepted their persecution as deserving and just. When the Spanish Jews in *Records of Israel* are devastated by Ferdinand and Isabella's edict of expulsion, their elder patriarch urges submission to the will of God:

'... as to His decree, let us bow without a murmur. Have we forgotten that on earth the exiles of Jerusalem have no resting; that for the sins of our fathers the God of Justice is not yet appeased? Oh! if we have, this fearful sentence may be promulgated to recall us to Himself, ere prosperity be to us, as to our misguided ancestors, the curse, hurling us into eternal misery. We bow not to man; it is the God of Israel we obey! ... There are some among ye who speak of weakness and timidity, in thus yielding to our foes without one blow in defence of our rights. Rights! unhappy men, ye have no rights! Sons of Judah, have ye yet to learn, we are wanderers on the face of the earth, without a country, a king, a judge, in Israel?’ (RI 46-7)

The patriarch’s determination that diaspora Jews "have no rights" underlines Aguilar’s implicit indifference, or even opposition to the campaign for Jewish rights in her own time. But in the 1840s and 1850s the theological debate about Judaism was closely intertwined with the question of the political status of the Jews, and Aguilar’s defence of Judaism against the charge of barbarism in texts like *The Women of Israel* inevitably carried political connotations. In the following section I will discuss the role of Aguilar’s writing for women in the contemporary debate on the political status of the Jews.

Although she never expressed any specific allegiance of the kind, Aguilar’s notion of a universalised Judaism divested of doctrinal specificity, which is so powerfully expressed at the climax of *The Vale of Cedars*, had considerable affinities with the ideology of Reform Judaism. It was the Reformers, as well as the Evangelicals, who described the enforcement of rabbinical authority against them as “rabbinism”, a critique echoed implicitly in Aguilar’s *The Women of Israel* and explicitly in her

---

66 The ideology of Reform Judaism redefined Jews as a religious denomination rather than a separate nation. Reform theology saw Judaism in universal terms, and asserted that the Jews were not in exile, awaiting restoration as a nation, but divinely ordained to be dispersed "to spread the Old Testament's ethical ideals among the peoples of the world". See V D Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1838* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), 21.
"History of the Jews in England". Members of the wealthier West End elite who founded the Reform congregation at the West London Synagogue were also the strongest advocates of Emancipation and would be its most obvious beneficiaries. Aguilar's writing echoed emancipationist as well as Reform rhetoric, particularly in her insistence on the private and domestic nature of religion. This reinforced an analysis of religion in which it was a personal issue and of no concern to the state. In these terms Jews were no different to Anglicans, an argument made by both reformers and those pressing for Jewish Emancipation. As Aguilar finally asserted unequivocally in "The History of the Jews in England" (1847), the Jews were Jews only in their religion - Englishmen in everything else ... In externals, and in all secular thoughts and actions, the English naturalised Jew is ... an Englishman, and his family is reared with the education and accomplishments of other members of the community. Only in some private and personal characteristics, and in religious belief, does the Jew differ from his neighbours (Hi 16).

The tensions between universalist and particularist, private and public definitions of Judaism which were part of the internal struggle among British Jews at this time, was also a reflection of their ambivalent position in Victorian Britain and their interaction with the values attached to the Anglican middle class. At mid-century Evangelical ethics were being represented as the natural correlative of respectability and social advancement. Therefore the religious question was at the same time a social and political question. British Jews' mimicry of Evangelical piety as exemplified in the writing of Grace Aguilar and the Jewish theological debate, was also a political strategy. It was a means of defining their class position in bourgeois terms at a time when their "gentility", and the civil rights which attended gentility, were under question.

It is this context that helps to explain the growing interest in Grace Aguilar's work towards the end of her life and after. Although she wrote most of her novels in the


68 Ibid, 50-1.


70 D W Bebbington writes that " Evangelicalism seemed to offer a passport to advancement in life" and the adoption of Evangelical values could indicate social aspiration. He cites Thomas Binney's *Is it Possible to make the Best of Both Worlds?* 9th ed. (London, 1855) which argued that "the Evangelical form of Christian ideas, - best produces that religious faith, - which most efficiently sustains those virtues, - which, by way of natural consequence, secure those things, - which contribute to the satisfaction and embellishment of life". See D W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 126-7.
1830s, Aguilar's writing did not begin to reach the British public until the mid-1840s, and the majority of her work was published after her death in 1847.71 On this delay John Sutherland has remarked, "Exactly why her very innocuous fiction was held back is not clear".72 One explanation may be that the books were published primarily as a source of income for Aguilar's family. Her father died in 1845 and her own health grew worse during the next two years, probably preventing the continuation of her previous employment as a teacher at the school run with her mother Sarah Aguilar. After Grace's own death her mother would have been left without a breadwinner, and she may have decided to profit from the success of her daughter's earlier novels by publishing some of the remaining manuscripts, including the collection of private prayers which Aguilar herself had not wanted to publish. This explanation is also suggested by the fact that after Sarah's death in 1854 no further works by her daughter appeared, despite the popularity of the published books and the existence of several further manuscripts.73

Another reason for the publication of Aguilar's novels to great success only after her death may have been that while her approach encountered some criticism in the 1840s, it became timely in the 1850s. Most of Aguilar's work, though it argues passionately for religious freedom, is indifferent towards the question of political emancipation for Jews. The emancipation movement itself was controversial and generally unsuccessful during the 1830s when she was producing her work. However, in the new context of the late 1840s and 1850s, it became possible to see the emancipatory implications of her conflation of Jewish and domestic themes. By 1847, the year when Aguilar died and Lionel de Rothschild was elected to Parliament (but was unable to take up his seat because it required swearing by a Christian oath), it had become clear that the emancipation campaign was not going to be fought merely on the principle of every qualifying male citizen's right to sit in Parliament. There was more at stake; if they could not be part of the Anglican nation in faith, the Jews were required to conform to the social and cultural forms of Anglican respectability. Bill Williams has written of the coercive nature of these demands in Manchester, "the elite's attachment to Anglicization was not simply a matter of cultural preference, but more particularly a function of the way in which the earliest Jewish residents had achieved acceptance and status in Manchester society. This acceptance was

71 Her earliest publication, The Spirit of Judaism (1842) was published in America.
73 The Jewish Museum, London, has five MS novels by Aguilar written in the 1830s: Legends of Time Past (1831), Françoise, a Fragment (1834), The Friends, A Domestic Tale (1834), Adah, A Simple Story (1838), and The Infant Bride (n.d.). There is also a narrative poem with notes, Leila (n.d.) and eight volumes of MS poetry (c. 1834-8). ("MS Notebooks of Grace Aguilar", Aguilar Papers, Archive collection, University College, London. MS Add 378; on loan from Jewish Museum, London).
essentially conditional: the outcome of an informal contract through which Jewish settlers received acceptance in return for cultural integration, or, to put it another way, cultural assimilation was seen as 'proof' that Jews 'deserved well' of their fellow citizens. From the 1840s the terms of the Emancipation campaign shifted so as to encompass the question of the worthiness of Jews to fulfil the role to which they could evidently now be elected.

Efforts to reform the infrastructure of the Jewish community, to render it respectable, began in earnest in the 1840s. Jewish schools to educate the children of the Jewish poor had been established in London earlier in the century in response to attempts by missionaries to attract Jewish children to their schools. But the foundation of the Jews' and General Literary and Scientific Institute at Sussex Hall in 1845 was part of a new impulse. The Voice of Jacob, which like the Jewish Chronicle was founded in 1841, stated in its opening leader that it had been established both to combat the threat of conversionists and "to establish a literary reputation for the British Jews", a hint that cultural as well as religious pride was seen as crucial for the future welfare of British Jewry. The mid-nineteenth century formation of British-Jewish communal institutions, centralising and formalising Jewish political and press representation, worship and philanthropy, sought, as David Feldman puts it, "to mediate Jewish integration with the state and to shape their image within public discourse". In this context literature by Jews had a crucial significance. The Jewish Chronicle hailed Aguilar's The Women of Israel (1845) as a great step forward in improving the culture of British Jews. The paper linked the publication of Aguilar's book with a new awareness of the need for such literature: "The very fact that we have begun to feel our poverty: that its humiliating effects begin to unsettle us from our sluggard ease; bears promise of a serious, perhaps of a great onward struggle". The Jewish Chronicle considered that Aguilar's domestic writing was as significant in this "onward struggle" as her religious writing. Its review of The Mother's Recompense declared that

whilst we can, in reply to the false accusation of the charge of the Bishop of Oxford that 'the Jews have no literature' direct his attention to our writers of ancient days, we can also

---

78 Unsigned review of 'The Women of Israel' by Grace Aguilar, Jewish Chronicle (19 September 1845): 246.
Representatives of the West London Synagogue who met Peel in 1845 to promote the cause of Emancipation stressed the development of British-Jewish culture as well as the religious reforms they had instituted, as evidence for the Jews’ improved worthiness for full civil rights.80

Aguilar’s own work at this time acknowledged the importance of this question. Her “History of the Jews in England”, published in the year of Rothschild’s election, attempts to trace the new sense of cultural pride back to the past. She argues that persecution has obscured the fact that the Jews have always had elevated thoughts. In recalling the suicide of the Jews of mediaeval York she points out that “these voluntary martyrs were mostly men forced by persecution into such mean and servile occupations as to appear incapable of a lofty thought or heroic deed” (HJ 5). Aguilar considers that the progress of history will increasingly reveal the continuity between the heroic Jewish past and an equally elevated present, and she cites the establishment of the Jews’ and General Literary and Scientific Institution as an example of the beginning of the redemption from the Jews’ history of oppression: “as time rolls on, and even the remembrance of persecution is lost in the peace and freedom which will be secured them, the mind as well as the heart will be enlarged; and that while they shall still retain their energy and skill on the Exchange and in the mart, literature and art will enliven and dignify their hours at home” (HJ 19). She thus sees literature and art as the counterpart to the capitalistic skills engendered by a history of oppression.

In the "History" more than anywhere else in her work, Aguilar offers an overt argument in favour of Jewish emancipation. Perhaps not unrelatedly, this is her least generically female piece of writing, and the Evangelical influence is somewhat counteracted by a more whiggish ideology. Employing the language of liberalism, she claims that “the disabilities under which the Jews of Great Britain labour are the last relic of religious intolerance ... Is it not discreditable to the common sense of the age that such anomalies should exist in reference to this well-disposed and, in every respect, naturalised portion of the community?” (HJ 16). She also reproduces the enlightenment argument used by Hazlitt, and by Wollstonecraft, that moral degeneracy is not innate, but caused by persecution: “Nothing degrades the moral character more effectually than debasing treatment. To regard an individual as incapable of honour, charity, and truth, as always seeking to gratify personal interest, is more than likely to make him such” (HJ 16-17). Moreover, her emancipationist

---

80 Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 62.
contention that "Only in some private and personal characteristics, and in religious belief, does the Jew differ from his neighbours" (HJ 16), which suggests that religion is a matter of private conscience, is reinforced by her other work, where religion is associated with the female and therefore domestic and private sphere. In fact her argument for Jewish emancipation in the "History" also turns on a domestic definition of identity:

The domestic manners of both the German and the Spanish Jews in Great Britain, are so exactly similar to those of their British brethren, that were it not for the observance of the seventh day instead of the first [as the Sabbath], the prohibition of certain meats, and the celebration of certain solemn festivals and rites, it would be difficult to distinguish a Jewish from a native household ... The virtues of the Jews are essentially of the domestic and social kind. The English are noted for the comfort and happiness of their firesides, and in this loveliest school of virtue, the Hebrews not only equal, but in some instances surpass, their neighbours (HJ 17-18).

Here the domestic literary genre is put to political purposes. In Aguilar's account, the Jews qualify for equity with the English because their home life so closely resembles that of the English.

Aguilar reinforces this identification between the Jews and the English by constant reference to Jewish patriotism. Her "History of the Jews in England" ends by celebrating Britain's quasi-millennial role in precipitating the end of the defining phase of Jewish history:

Now, however, the British empire has given the exiles of Judea a home of peace and freedom, and that they feel towards her an affection and reverence as strong and undying as any of her native sons, it is to be hoped that the prejudice against the Jews will ultimately disappear with the dawn of an era in which all Englishmen, however differently they may pray to the Great Father of all, shall yet, so long as they fail not in duty to their country and to each other, be regarded as the common children of the soil (HJ, 32).

Aguilar had previously rejected a proposal to write a history of Jewish persecution in England, and was perhaps only prepared to write it in this format, set within a whiggish framework.\(^{81}\) Certainly, her representation of the Iberian Inquisition is marked by pointed comparisons between the liberalism of Protestant England and the intolerance of Catholic Spain. Her Marrano protagonists in "The Escape. A Tale of 1755" finally leave Portugal for England, where "the veil of secrecy [sic] was removed, they were in a land whose merciful and liberal government granted to the exile and the wanderer a home of peace and rest; where they might worship the God of Israel according to the law He gave" (RI 138).

\(^{81}\) In *Landmarks of a Literary Life*, Mrs Crosland (Camilla Toulmin) recalled Aguilar declining the offer from the publishers Colburn, saying, "We are so well treated in England now, that it would be most ungrateful to revive the memory of those half-forgotten wrongs". Cited by Abrahams, "Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute", 144.
Aguilar also uses the Jew of Spain and Portugal as an exemplary figure of the patriot. In *Records of Israel*, invoking the love of the Jews of Eshcol for their land, as Disraeli did in describing the history of Sidonia's family in *Coningsby* (1844), published in the same year, Aguilar is not referring to a past or future Judea but to the Spain of the present. "The Edict. A Tale of 1492" opens with a passionate and grateful declaration by the heroine of her attachment to a country "doubly dear" because it has afforded the "accursed and houseless" a home (*RI* 2 3):

> it was not the mere beauty of nature which sunk so deeply on the hearts of the Eshcolites, as to create that species of *amor patriae*, of which Josephine's ardent words were but a faint reflection; it was the fact that it was, had been, and they fondly hoped ever would be, to them a second Judea. Its very name had been bestowed by the unhappy fugitives from the destruction of Jerusalem, who hailed its natural loveliness as their ancestors did the first-fruits of the land of promise. Throughout the whole of Spain, indeed, the sons of Israel were scattered, far more numerously and prosperously than in any other country. Despite her repeated revolutions, her internal wars, her constant change of masters, the Hebrews so continued to flourish that the whole commerce of the kingdom became engrossed by them; and occupying stations of eminence and trust - the heads of all seminaries of physic and literature - they commanded veneration even from the enemies and persecutors of their creed (*RI* 8-9).

Though exiled from Jerusalem, the Jews do not seek to return, but are content to live in peace and conduct "their simple worship" (*RI* 9). In her "History of the Jews in England" Aguilar explains that in contrast to the Jews' resentment towards England, the "strong feeling of local attachment which bound them, even after expulsion, so closely to Portugal and Spain" derived from their knowledge that in Iberia many Jews had been highly respected, so that "there was no remembrance of debasing misery to conquer the love of fatherland, so fondly fostered in every human heart" (*HJ* 10). Toleration, Aguilar implicitly argues, fosters a peculiarly strong love of country among the Jews. She even suggests that it was such *amor patriae* that led Jews to practise their faith in secret, rather than leave Spain and Portugal after the edict of expulsion (*HJ* 10). Such patriotism has already been demonstrated towards Britain in the case of Surinam, which guaranteed privileges to the Jews in 1665:

> As a proof of how strongly the affections of the Hebrews were engaged towards England by this exhibition of tolerance, we may mention that when Surinam was conquered by, and finally ceded to the Dutch, a though their privileges were all confirmed by the conquerors, they gave up their homes, synagogues, and lands, and braved all the discomforts of removal, and settled in Jamaica and other English colonies, rather than live under a government hostile to Great Britain (*HJ* 14).

Here Aguilar implies that Jewish fidelity to Great Britain is not so much the "local attachment" of Iberian Jews as an identification with the style of government and national culture of the British. Such an argument answers precisely the challenge which opponents of Emancipation were voicing in Parliament at the time Aguilar's
"History" was published. Rather than being simply "apologetic", her writing constituted a sophisticated response to the contemporary debate.

It was perhaps as an acknowledgment that she had aided their cause that Lady Goldsmid and the ladies of the Mocatta family, the womenfolk of the most prominent Jewish campaigners both for Reform and Emancipation, contributed to the testimonial presented to Grace Aguilar in 1847. The all-female testimonial addressed to Aguilar's achievement as a woman also suggests that it was her work in domestic discourse and writing for women that had the most impact for contemporary readers. The status of women in Judaism, which was contested between Aguilar and Evangelical women writers, had crucial implications for the Emancipation question. It was through the construction of a bourgeois Jewish literature for women that Aguilar politically redefined Jewish female subjectivity and aligned it with Anglican conceptions of femininity. This can be seen most clearly in the sexual politics of The Women of Israel. While it claims to be a defence of Judaism against the accusation that it has instituted the degradation of women, The Women of Israel is also an essay on British middle-class femininity. Eve's original sin, for example, is analysed in political terms. Her transgression is not only to do with the fruit of knowledge, but the boundaries of feminine propriety: "Curiosity, presumption, an over-weening trust in her own strength, a desire to act alone, independent of all control, to become greater, wiser, higher than the scale of being, than the station in which God's love had placed her - discontent" (W 17). However, the same rules do not apply to Sarah, wife of Abraham, whose harsh treatment of her maidservant Hagar is defended by Aguilar. Reversing the judgement of the Biblical text, Aguilar charges Hagar rather than Sarah with pride:

It must indeed have been a bitterly painful disappointment to Sarai [Sarah], that instead of receiving increased gratitude and affection from one whom she had so raised and cherished, she was despised with an insolence that, unless checked, might bring discord and misery in a household which had before been so blessed with peace and love [... Hagar's] proud spirit urged flight instead of submission, and not till addressed by the voice of the angel did those rebellious feelings subside (W 45-6).

This version of the story strenuously seeks to avoid discussing Abraham's polygamy, which would have been central to an Evangelical analysis. Instead, Aguilar

---

82 Parliamentary debates on Jewish emancipation will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.
84 In a letter to the Jewish Chronicle after her death, "A Mourner" criticised the fact that Grace Aguilar had received no patronage from the British-Jewish elite. An editorial note points out that Lady Goldsmid and some of the Mocatta family contributed to her testimonial, but not Lady Montefiore or Baroness de Rothschild. See ["A Mourner"], "Grace Aguilar and the Jewish Aristocracy", Jewish Chronicle (29 October 1847): 292-3. The latter were the wives of those who sought more gradual amelioration of the Jews' political status.
reconstructs a recognisable relationship between mistress and servant. Both stories are retold as political parables about obedience; the dispute between Sarah and Hagar is turned into an issue explicitly of class. The justification of Sarah's angry "passion" which follows this passage is not so much a defence of the Eastern temperament as it claims to be, as a sanctioning of allowable violence in the cause of maintaining the social order. Aguilar intertwines the theme of the status of women with an account of the Hebrew Bible which shows it to be a reliable source for Victorian bourgeois values. By aligning Jewish values with middle-class sexual and social politics Aguilar is constructing a women's literature designed to show the Jews' worthiness of civil and political rights.

The way in which Aguilar links Jewish and domestic themes also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the domestic and political spheres. Her representation of the Biblical prophetess and military heroine Deborah in The Women of Israel is interesting in this respect. Aguilar is unable to make of Deborah's military and political leadership a practical example to the Victorian lady reader, so she argues instead that Deborah's most significant achievements were those connected with her domestic role. She concentrates on the margins of Deborah's life - her "simplicity", sitting under a palm tree to judge Israel, in an unpresumptuous pastoral setting, a "quiet and retired mode of living" (W 213). Aguilar recreates the private context of Deborah's public life: "She never leaves her home, except at the earnest entreaty of Barak [her husband], which urges her to sacrifice domestic retirement for public good" (W 213). She emphasises Deborah's description of herself not in terms of rank or public office, but as "a MOTHER in Israel" (W 210). The political personality is thus re-presented in terms of the domestic personality. In this representation Aguilar goes further even than Clara Lucas Balfour, who, while stressing Deborah's "essentially feminine character", writes "It is manifest that Deborah's was an authority based alone on intellectual superiority". She also highlights Deborah's victory as a deliverance for all the Hebrew women from violation by the Canaanites. Deborah is "the most memorable instance on record of the Almighty elevating a woman to public dignity and supreme authority". But Aguilar turns the figure of Deborah into a metaphor for her reader:

Every married woman is judge and guardian of her own household. She may have to encounter the prejudices of a husband, not yet thinking with her on all points; but if she have really a great mind, she will know how to influence, without in any way interfering. She will know how to serve the Lord in her household, without neglecting her duty and affection towards her husband; and by domestic conduct influence society at large.

85 In her version of the story, Clara Lucas Balfour comes to the opposite conclusion, describing Hagar as "one whom [Sarah] had rashly, unwisely, and, in fact, selfishly raised". See Balfour, The Women of Scripture, 29. But the political effect is identical; through their different analyses, both Balfour and Aguilar uphold the mistress servant relationship.

86 Balfour, The Women of Scripture, 93, 92, 99-100, 103.
secretly and unsuspectedly indeed, but more powerfully than she herself can in the least degree suppose (W7 2 13-4)

Aguilar here does claim a public role for women, but not in terms of military leadership, rather through the indirect form of domestic "influence". In this text, Aguilar affirms conservative class and gender relations, showing how women and domestic discourse could implicitly but powerfully serve the cause of Jewish emancipation. Like Disraeli, she associates Jewish emancipation not with radical politics but with the upholding and strengthening of existing social hierarchies. However, as David Feldman has argued with reference to the reforming impulse in British Jewry at this time, such an emulation of Anglican values stemmed less from an easily-realised desire for social acceptance than from the more coercive context of criticism from the non-Jewish world.

Grace Aguilar: public and private

It is the relationship between Aguilar's promulgation of "separate spheres" ideology in relation to women and the constraint of writing as a Jew that I want finally to consider. There has been considerable recent debate on the significance of didactic literary texts for an analysis of nineteenth-century women's history. Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's influential account of the emergence of the ideology of separate spheres as a result of economic change and the formation of the middle class in the first decades of the nineteenth century, followed studies by Nancy Cott and Mary P Ryan of the "cult of domesticity" in the United States in the same period. However Amanda Vickery has now questioned whether Davidoff and Hall's dependence on the didactic Evangelical novels and conduct manuals which delineate "separate spheres" is a useful way of establishing appropriate categories for historical analysis. In the last chapter I suggested that the prolific publication of Jewish conversion narratives, and the extravagant claims contained therein should be read not as documentary evidence of Jewish experience, but as a series of textual strategies. Similarly, Evangelical representations of women are now being read more sceptically. Jeanne

Peterson, for example, "concludes that the ideal of the domesticated Madonna was simply an irrelevance in upper middle-class households". Vickery suggests that rather than concentrating on the rhetoric of literary publications, the private manuscripts of individual women could tell us more about women's lives, and their own complex relationship to prescribed notions of female roles. It is with this debate in mind that I want to consider in detail some of Grace Aguilar's private writings, and to examine the tensions between them and her published works of didactic literature.

Aguilar's correspondence with an American-Jewish couple, Solomon Cohen and Mrs Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, was initiated in 1842 when Mrs Cohen wrote to her praising her first publication, *The Spirit of Judaism*. Mrs Cohen also included a request which was clearly a response to Aguilar's projection of herself as a middle-class domestic woman devoted to religion and philanthropy: she asked if Aguilar could contribute some of her writings and some "fancy work" to a fair which was being held to raise money to appoint a salaried minister to the local Jewish community. Aguilar's reply, which began with a long and pious preamble about how she was not worthy of Mrs Cohen's praise since "His Spirit inspired me to write", went on to explain the demands of her domestic labour, her pupils and her "many correspondents" before agreeing to do what she could.

Aguilar's letters often insist that she was herself a firm believer in the ideology of female domesticity, suggesting that Davidoff and Hall's contention that this ideology had a significant effect on middle-class women's lives is correct. In a later letter to the Cohens she wrote "My greatest aim is that my books should always be feminine; I have an absolute horror of those of my sex who would imitate the writings of the man and so cast aside the delicacy of thought and expression and even of creation, which should be their characteristic". She believed strongly in the association of women and religion, and wrote of Maria Edgeworth "I disapprove of the drift of her works - making reason, and calculation govern every action instead of feeling and religion. I hate that cold, calculating principle of making our own individual happiness the first consideration - that even a good action is only to be done for the satisfaction it brings to ourselves". Consequently, she represented her own experience in terms of her novels' stress on female martyrdom. She wrote of the critical review she had received from the British-Jewish press: "I have some kind and encouraging friends but I do assure you, there are times when I feel as I could not struggle up against the

---

90 Ibid, 391, 413-4.
91 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs S Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 27 November 1842, 2-3, 3.
92 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mr and Mrs Solomon Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 28 September 1845, 3.
difficulties I have to encounter but my prayer is to endure far more than to receive earthly reward, and leave the end in the hands of my God." 93

After Grace Aguilar's death her mother Sarah Aguilar continued to project this myth of female martyrdom in the memoir which was printed with posthumous editions of *Home Influence*. The "Memoir" portrays an icon of middle class domestic womanhood, stressing her lifelong "want of physical energy", her fondness of nature and music, and her desire to aid poor neighbours. Despite her physical weakness, Aguilar was a pillar of moral support to her family. When her father became the victim of consumption, "he breathed his last in her arms, and the daughter, while sorrowing over all she had lost, roused herself once more to the utmost, feeling that she was the sole comforter of her mother". She likewise provided support to her brother's efforts to secure employment, "concentrating all the enthusiastic feelings of her nature in inspiring him with patience, comfort, and hope". 94 In this account, Sarah Aguilar stresses her daughter's private attributes as a domestic woman in the terms of *Home Influence*, as well as her public writings on the subject.

The nature of Aguilar's correspondence with Solomon Cohen and Mrs Cohen suggests that reproducing the domestic ideology in her writing did not necessarily entail living the confined and modest existence its precepts demanded, and could in fact involve a more complex negotiation. When Aguilar responded to Mrs Cohen's request to play the philanthropic lady by using her leisure hours to produce needlework for charitable fundraising, she included with the pincushions several copies of *The Magic Wreath*, a volume of poetry published in 1835. Her letter ended with a P.S:

I intend sending with other fancy things two copies of a little work of mine called The Magic Wreath of Hidden Flowers a kind of game - the profits of which you are welcome to keep for the purpose of the fair. Should I be induced to send more on my own speculation may I intrude on your kindness by asking you to dispose of them for me? 95

Aguilar's "speculation" initiated an important relationship between herself and the Cohens in which she wrote letters to Mrs Cohen as her woman friend and to Mr Cohen as her literary agent who arranged sales of her books in America, starting with the few copies of *The Magic Wreath* but continuing to include her more major works *Records of Israel* and *The Women of Israel*. She also asked him to find subscribers for

93 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs Solomon Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 30 October 1844, 3; ibid.
94 [Sarah Aguilar], "Memoir of Grace Aguilar", *Home Influence* (Edinburgh: W P Nimmo & Co, 1892), ix, xii, xii.
95 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs S Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 27 November 1842, 4.
In a letter of 2 July 1843 she wrote that she was "gratified at the high price" Mr Cohen had obtained for copies of *The Magic Wreath*, and eventually sent him all the remaining copies in her possession, which suggests that writing was a much-needed source of income for her from this time. In her next letter to Mrs Cohen, in response to an invitation to visit Savannah, Aguilar once again delineated her domestic duties as an unmarried daughter, whose parents were weak in health: "there is no one but me, to give them a daughter's care and love - even when my brothers are at home, for youths however kind and affectionate, are not like women round a domestic hearth". But later in the same letter she also admitted that "we no longer possess the independent competence which was once the happy portion of my dear father. We are of those, commanded by an inscrutable tho' I feel to my heart's core, still loving God - to struggle with earthly cares".

The reduced circumstances of Aguilar's family had clearly increased her reliance on her writing, and in her relationship with the Cohens she used the convention of female correspondence, which included much discussion of domestic femininity, as a means of opening up an American market that was able to supplement the family income. Her construction of a feminine and religious identity created solidarity with an American woman and established a useful international network. In this case, the recasting of Jewish identity in universalist terms was not only a product of a coercive Protestant environment. It was also the basis of an informal female network.

***

When Agnes, one of the heroines of *The Days of Bruce* expresses her desire for a pastoral domestic existence, a family and a "lowly cot", her lover reminds her that "that cot must rest upon a soil unchained ... or joy could have no resting there" (*DB* 6). Aguilar seems to argue in this novel that domestic harmony is dependent on political freedom. As her letters also indicate, the domestic sphere could not exist independent of the political sphere, and the rhetoric of the private entailed much that was public. In *The Days of Bruce* Aguilar celebrates female patriotism in the cause of Scottish national independence, but she does not, as Celia and Marion Moss were to do, connect it with her Jewish fiction. On the contrary, Aguilar seeks to present a

---

96 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mr and Mrs S Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 3 May 1844, 3-4; 1 November 1844, 3.

97 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs S Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 2 July 1843, 2.

98 Grace Aguilar, MS letter to Mrs S Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, Cohen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, MS 2639, 30 November 1843, 2, 6.
version of Jewish identity defined in terms of privacy and domesticity, which tries to eschew the question of a public and political Jewish nationality. Even in her explicit argument in favour of Jewish rights, she identifies diaspora Jewry primarily with the country of their residence, rather than with other Jews, who are merely members of the same "family". While such representations served the emancipationist cause more effectively than she may have intended, they are, I have argued, primarily an effect of Aguilar's engagement with the female-centred discourse of Evangelicalism.
CHAPTER 5

JUDEA CAPTA:

CELIA AND MARION MOSS, SLAVERY AND LIBERTY

An anonymous poem published in the Jewish newspaper *The Voice of Jacob* in 1841 suggested that the only remaining form of slavery under British rule was that of the Jew, who did not possess full civil and political rights:

... The Jew, whose birth-place is this favoured land,
Within whose veins the healthful current flows
That warms to liberty, too long withheld,
Who, with his fellow Briton, worships God,
As Mercy, Goodness, Truth and boundless Love,
Still feels the fetter, and still vainly pines
For the full measure of a Freeman's rights:-
His chain is rusting, link by link, away -
When will it cease to grate upon the ear?\(^1\)

The campaign to admit British Jews to the British Parliament was conducted mainly by an elite group of men, who stressed, like the author of this poem, Jewish patriotism and Jewish identification with British culture. But the rhetoric of sentiment, liberty and emancipation on which this poem draws was more characteristic of the literature produced by women during the battle against slavery from the 1790s onwards. In this chapter I will discuss the work of Celia and Marion Moss, looking in particular at the way in which they utilise a similar language in their representations of Jewish history. The Moss sisters continue the tradition of depicting the Jewess as a suffering victim, which they explicitly link with the plight of the exiled and exploited slave. But while *The Voice of Jacob*'s pro-Emancipation poem confidently anticipates the extension of British liberty, anticipating Grace Aguilar's hope that the Jews with other Englishmen will soon "be regarded as the common children of the soil", the Moss sisters' work articulates a number of responses to the question of both Jewish and slave emancipation. Included among these responses is the possibility of a different kind of "liberty": not "a Freeman's rights" but national autonomy. Just as Grace Aguilar eschewed the language of contemporary parliamentary debate, but used the discourse of domestic literature as a form of political commentary, the Moss sisters, in their enthusiasm for Jewish national liberty, drew not on the arguments which had been circulating in Parliament in the 1830s, but on the literary tradition of romantic nationalism.

Celia and Marion Moss were the first Jews to write Jewish history in English, the first British-Jewish writers to develop a historical consciousness. Their books were published at an important moment, when the parliamentary campaign entered a temporary hiatus between 1836 and 1847, but the context of the campaign has often been cited as a reason for dismissing their work. The perceived narrowness of both Aguilar and the Moss sisters has been linked to the genres in which they worked, the domestic novel and historical romance - genres gendered as female. Linda Gertner Zatlin, who compares the "indirect method of stylized historical romance" practised by pre-emancipation novelists with the more "critical" stance adopted by later realist writers, depicts the work of these women writers as a primitive stage in the development of the Anglo-Jewish novel. She sees this stage as stylistically limited by the writers' propagandist objectives, and, somewhat anachronistically, argues that such objectives were in fact jeopardised by the use of non-realist genres: "If these novelists wanted their English readers to gain comprehension of the Jew's special plight, their reticence, together with their reliance on stereotypes, didacticism, and heavy handed direct addresses, conspire against their purpose of inspiring sympathy and tolerance". Bryan Cheyette similarly describes these novels as "explicitly apologetic, aiming to present Jews 'sympathetically' as ideal 'good citizens' - that is, as middle-class Victorian Englishmen", an impulse which persisted throughout the nineteenth century and which indicates the continuing "dehumanizing impact on Anglo-Jewry of the ambivalent Jewish stereotype". But although they have been seen to have participated unquestioningly in the campaign for Jewish emancipation, Aguilar and the Moss sisters were neither similar nor simplistic in their methods. By reconstructing the literary and historical context in which the Moss sisters were writing, this chapter will reassess the importance and diversity of women's responses to the public debate about the historical and political status of the Jews in England.

---

2 Contemporary histories of the Jews were all written by clergymen like H H Milman, *The History of the Jews* (London: Murray, 1829) or conversionists, like Hannah Adams, *The history of the Jews from the destruction of Jerusalem to the present time* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, 1818) and *The connexion of the Old and New Testament; or, the history of the Jews, from the close of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1840).


The work of Celia and Marion Moss certainly appears "apologetic". The Dedicatory Epistle to the first of their two volumes of Jewish historical romance published in the 1840s humbly welcomes the modern waning of "prejudice existing against us as a nation" that might previously have affected judgement of their writing. Nevertheless, the book has been published with an anxious awareness that "at the present moment the attention of the whole civilized world is directed to our nation". The authors have therefore written, they say, in order to address "the fact that the English people generally, although mixing with the Jews in their daily duties, are as unacquainted with their history, religion and customs, as if they still dwelt in their own land, and were known to them but by name" (RI:viii-ix). Accordingly, in a striking resemblance to the form established by conversionist writers, the tales include various footnotes explaining Hebrew terms and customs. The authors explicitly highlight the genre chosen for this project: "we do not intend this production to be considered in the light of a history; our wish is to call the attention of the reader to the records of our people; to awaken curiosity, not to satisfy it" (RI:i). Instead they describe their work as approaching "the more flowery paths of romance", thus signalling the text's readership as women (RI:iv). The Moss sisters' tentative confidence that the English have transcended prejudice, that "the time is now arrived, or is rapidly approaching, when such narrow-mindedness, the growth of a barbarous and priest-ridden age, will disappear" uses the same anti Catholic codes as Grace Aguilar and Evangelical writers; similarly, they invoke the millennialist terms of Protestant philosemitism and historical progress (RI:iv-v). But, in striking contrast to the conversionist account of Jewish history by authors like Mrs Webb, the Moss sisters speak the language of religious liberty and Jewish emancipation. Indeed, their first publication Early Efforts (1839) was dedicated to Sir George Staunton, their local MP, and later an advocate of the Jews' admission to Parliament. The structure of the Romance underlines this aspiration. It begins by contrasting the pagan human

---

5 The Misses C and M Moss, The Romance of Jewish History (London: Saunders and Otley, 1840), i.iv. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as R. The book is dedicated to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, the reformed dandy, (at this point) Liberal MP and leading English novelist of the late 1830s who may have appealed to Celia and Marion Moss as the author of two recent bestselling historical novels, The Last Days of Pompeii (1834) and Rienzi (1835) as well as a sociology of Britain, England and the English (1833). His first publication, moreover, had been Ismael, An Oriental Tale (1820).

6 Early Efforts. A Volume of Poems, by the Misses Moss, of the Hebrew Nation, aged 18 and 16 (London: Whittaker & Co, 1839). In 1838 the "liberal Tory" Sir George Staunton, to whom the volume is dedicated, had been elected as an MP for Portsmouth, the Moss sisters' home town. In Portsmouth in 1847 a Jewish activist arranged Jewish support for Staunton and Mr Baring, who was, like Staunton, an advocate of emancipation and also an enthusiastic subscriber to Early Efforts. See Jewish Chronicle (6 August 1847), cited by Gilam, 62; list of subscribers to Early Efforts.
sacrifice rituals of the Philistines with the sober monotheism of their Hebrew adversaries, and ends with the sack of Jerusalem by Rome, now itself fallen "from the splendid despotism of the Caesars, to the pitiful tyranny of the Pope" (RI:40-2, III:67). The volume is thus framed by a reiteration of the association between the Jews, modernity and Protestantism.

However other aspects of The Romance of Jewish History (1840) and its sequel Tales of Jewish History (1843), romances based on the biblical and post biblical history of the Jews, contrast strikingly with Aguilar's domestic and historical novels. Despite their use of similar terms, the Moss sisters were not writing in the tradition of didactic literature popularised in the wake of the evangelical movement. While Aguilar's books for women made biblical heroines like Sarah and Deborah accessible to a modern English readership, and the Moss sisters similarly included anachronisms which linked modern to biblical Jews, they chose to revive a significantly different period of the Jewish past, aiming to "pourtray the Jews as they were while yet an independent people" (RI:ix). Their texts invoke not the novels and tracts of Hannah More but the Romantic poetry of oriental nationalism of Byron and Tom Moore, extracts from whose works form the chapters' epigraphs. In these terms the Moss

7 For example, Marion Moss's story "Malah, the Prophet's Daughter", though set in the biblical reign of Ahab includes a modern Jewish wedding ceremony at which a Rabbi officiates (R I:176-7). Aguilar's and the Moss sisters' anachronisms, rather than being a deliberate strategy to familiarise the alien world of Hebrew history, may suggest that the writers' knowledge of the provenance and meaning of Jewish customs was in fact limited. Grace Aguilar spent most of her youth in Devon, away from any substantial Jewish community. Celia and Marion Moss, on the other hand, grew up close to the Portsmouth synagogue in Portsea, Hampshire, where there was an established community of Jews, and certainly some connection with the debates and controversies which dominated the London Jewish population during these years. See Cecil Roth, "The Portsmouth Community and its Historical Background," Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England 13 (1936): 157-57. However if the account of Hyam Isaacs, a converted Jew, is reliable, "not one in five among British-born Jews, although very fluent in the Hebrew, can understand the meaning or interpretation of their prayers" (Hyam Isaacs, The Awakening of the Jews from their Slumbers (London, 1842), quoted by David S Katz, The Jews in the History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 330). The Moss sisters' rendering of transliterated Hebrew according to Ashkenazi pronunciation, for example "She mong yes ro lle", not translated, but explained as "a common exclamation of surprise or grief" suggests that they did not understand the Hebrew itself (RI:13). Finally, the MS of The Romance of Jewish History appears to have had Hebrew names and dates added in a different pen, for example the transliteration of the Hebrew date "Hamishsho O-sur Bo-av"; this suggests the authors did not have the relevant knowledge themselves (The Misses Moss, The Romance of Jewish History [c. 1840] Parkes Library, University of Southampton, MS 160, 37). Nevertheless the inclusion of such terms and of the explicatory footnotes does indicate that the Moss sisters were not, as Linda Gertner Zatlin argues, deliberately trying to diminish Jewish "difference", to produce a representation of Jews "without any attempt to familiarize their English audience with the enduring elements of Jewish tradition and religion" See Zatlin, The Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel, 33.

8 For example, the epigraph to Chapter 1 of "The Asmoneans":

'Live,' said the conqu'ror; 'live to share
The trophies and the crowns I bear.'
Silent that youthful warrior stood;
Silent he pointed to the flood,
All crimson with his country's blood;
Then sent his last remaining dart
sisters pay homage in their preface to the Liberal Anglican clergyman Henry Hart Milman, whose *History of the Jews* (1829), reflecting German biblical scholarship, was the first in English to treat the Jews historically, and described Judas Maccabeus, the leader of the Asmonean revolt against the Syrian empire, as the greatest "among those lofty spirits who have asserted the liberty of their native land, against wanton and cruel oppression" (*R* I:viii). Celia and Marion Moss, whose use of Milman forms an interesting contrast to Aguilar's, take from his text not only a narrative of political and social history, which forms the framework for their tales, but also the romantic philosophy of Jewish history expressed in such comments. Annie Webb in *Naomi* sees the uprising against Rome as "the misguided efforts of the Jews to regain their liberty and independence", in other words, a proud and foolhardy attempt to resist their destined punishment, but for the Moss sisters it epitomises the doomed yet heroic rebellion of the weak against the strong:

> a wronged and insulted people endeavouring to throw off the yoke of a foreign power; a small province measuring its strength against the united power of the whole civilized world - Judea against Rome, it was like matching the strength of a child against the united power of a dozen strong men. The concussion of two such powers was tremendous. Never before nor since, excepting in the time of the Maccabees, had the world witnessed such a desperate struggle for independence.  

It was also Romantic poetry, particularly Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* (1818) and Tom Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817) which influenced the Moss sisters' representations of heroic martyrdom in the cause of national liberation. Between 1807 and 1834, Moore, an Irish Catholic, was publishing the ten volumes of *Irish Melodies*. Tom Dunne has pointed out that "the audience for which the *Irish Melodies* were written was, above all, an English audience, and their main intention was the creation of a sentimental sympathy with Irish wrongs", and Moore's spectacular success with his English readership created a climate in which the Moss sisters' similar endeavour was possible. Like Moore, the Moss sisters emphasise lost glories and place a particular

---

For answer to th'invader's heart (Moore) (*R* II:128).


10 Mrs J B Webb [Annie Webb, afterwards Mrs J B Webb-Peploe], *Naomi; or, The Last Days of Jerusalem* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1841), 20; *R* III:114-5.

emphasis on the national genealogy of music and poetry - Jeremiah, "the prophet bard" and "David, the warrior minstrel" (T I: 117, 118). Nevertheless, Moore's whiggishness is tempered in the Moss sisters' writing with a more angry Romantic protest. As Marilyn Butler has argued, the "oriental" poems of Byron and Shelley, concerned with "the assault upon institutional religion, and the representation of Western states as evil, oligarchic empires - can be read as metaphorical ... The poets' selective, hostile portrayal of a tyrannous state coincides with a period of mass unrest and renewed radical polemic", unrest which was recurring in the 1840s at the time of the Moss sisters' novels.12

Indeed, the sisters' extraordinarily precocious volume of poetry, *Early Efforts*, published when they were aged sixteen and eighteen, gives a strong indication that they themselves linked radical causes, contemporary national liberation struggles, and the question of the Jews. The poems, which have a generally mournful tone, include elegies for youthful death as well as lamentations on political oppression. In Celia's poem "Stanzas" for example, an early nineteenth-century migrant addresses her "native fields and groves", the rural landscape which she has been compelled to leave "For the cruel oppressor came, / And drove us from our cot".13 Enforced expatriation is a significant preoccupation of the political poems, particularly Celia's "Lament for Poland", which similarly stresses attachment to lost national territory:

The brave Pole who wanders in southerly climes,  
Or is tossed on the tempestuous main,  
Yet hopes in better and happier times  
To view the loved-land of his childhood again (E5).

---

See Obituary of Mme Alphonse Hartog [Marion Moss], *The Jewish Chronicle* (1 November 1907): 6.

12 Butler, 59-60. Linking radicalism, Byronic nationalism and the Jewish question, Abraham Gilam has interestingly pointed to the case of the MP John Cam Hobhouse, later Lord Broughton, who was associated with Byron and radical circles in the 1820s. "Hobhouse identified strongly with oppressed nations, especially with Poles and Greeks. Loyal to the romanticist legacy of Byron, he labored on their behalf in various public committees. Such sentiments may explain his strong feelings about Jewish freedom. He first raised his voice on behalf of the Jewish cause in 1820, upon the arrival of German Jewish survivors of pogroms and riots. Hobhouse gave notice in the House of Commons of his intention to introduce a measure for the removal of the disabilities and for facilitating the naturalization of persecuted Jews in England. The Jews were indifferent to this initiative and the public did not respond warmly, so Hobhouse never brought the promised bill". See Abraham Gilam, *The Emancipation of the Jews in England 1830-1860* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1982), 29. Hobhouse was the first to suggest emancipation for the Jews in the nineteenth century, and he specifically linked religious liberty with redemption from persecution. Even though he did not finally move the resolution, his intention does indicate that the persecution of the Jews and the question of their political emancipation in Britain were being linked at this time through the influence of Romanticism. In the course of this chapter, I discuss the ways in which the Moss sisters' depictions of Jewish persecution in antiquity can be seen as a way of discussing the contemporary question of Jewish emancipation.

13 *Early Efforts*, 13. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as *E*. 
The collection includes poems about the unsuccessful liberal struggles of the 1830s, the Polish uprising of 1830-1 and the Spanish civil war, which had attracted foreign radical support in the same way as Greece in the previous decade. Celia's "The Battle of Bannockburn", like Grace Aguilar's novel celebrates the Scottish patriotism of Robert the Bruce. Marion's "Polander's Song" reiterates these sentiments and casts expatriated Polish nationalists in the role of biblical Israelites:

Our hearth-stones with blood are defiled,
Not even our religion remains;
Our warriors are dead or exiled,
And our little ones weeping in chains (E 52).

The imagery of exile and slavery, which I will discuss at length later in this chapter, links the poems of national struggle with the poems on biblical subjects. Celia's "Lament for Jerusalem" adopts virtually the same vocabulary as the poems of modern nationalism:

How long shall pagan foot profane
   Jehovah's hallow'd shrine;
And memory's [sic] alone remain
   Of all that once was thine:
How long shall we thy children roam
   As exiles from our ancient home?

To weep o'er Salem's blighted fame,
   To gaze upon her strand,
'Tis all the heritage we claim
   Within our father land;
To mourn o'er our free parent's graves
   That we their children are but slaves (E 125-6).

Celia Moss's "The Massacre of the Jews at York", perhaps the most remarkable contribution to the volume, is a long narrative poem about another tragic example of national devotion, the mass suicide of Jews in mediaeval York, besieged in York Castle by "the zealots of a barb'rous age" (E 130). The poem, with an epigraph from

---
14 For an overview of the European revolutions and nationalist movements of the 1830s see, for example, E J Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (London: Abacus, 1962), Chapters 6 and 7. The Moss sisters' youthful embracing of all contemporary struggles was typical of the time. As Hobsbawm describes, European revolutionaries "shared a common picture of what the revolution would be like", a common outlook which was "strongly reinforced by the strong tradition of internationalism ... The cause of all nations was the same ...
One accidental factor which reinforced the internationalism of 1830-1848 was exile" (159-160). Hobsbawm adds that nationalist revolutionaries regarded the connection between their own and other nations in a particular way: they "saw no contradiction between their own demands and those of other nations, and indeed envisaged a brotherhood of all, simultaneously liberating themselves. On the other hand, each now tended to justify its primary concern with its own nation by adopting the role of a Messiah for all. Through Italy (according to Mazzini) , through Poland (according to Mickiewicz) the suffering peoples of the world were to be led to freedom; an attitude readily adapted to conservative or indeed imperialist policies" (165).
Byron, is accompanied by references to Milman's *History of the Jews* and contains a strong indictment of British prejudice:

> We asked these Britons for a home,  
> A shelter from the inclement skies:  
> Have we despoil'd a Christian dome,  
> Or sought a Christian sacrifice?  
> We did but ask a dwelling place,  
> And in return our wealth we gave;  
> They spurn'd us as an outcast race,  
> And brand us with the name of slave:  
> They hate us, for we seek to tread  
> The peaceful path our fathers trod,  
> They hate us, for we bow our heads  
> Before the shrine of Israel's God (E 131).

On the other hand, Marion's "Song" presents an alternative vision of modern Britain, in a patriotic eulogy which declares that she alone has resisted the despotic profanation to which Poland, Spain and Jerusalem have been victims:

> While liberty's banner with blood hath been stained,  
> Her shrines desecrated, her altars profaned,  
> Thou still wert the home of the free and the brave,  
> And all hail thee, proud Britain, the queen of the wave (E 49).

In the same way, "The Jewish Girl's Song" by Marion ends like "Lament for Poland" on a note of hope for future liberty. The speaker, addressing once again the land, is reassuring:

> But weep not, thy day-star again shall arise!  
> Again shall thy children be rank'd with the free (E 61).

"Song", in appealing to Britain's identity as a nation which protects "liberty", links British interests with these causes of national liberation. The Moss sisters' poetry, then, makes very clear the political assumptions and literary conventions which they will bring to bear on the question of Jewish history in their later writing.

**Jewish history and the suffering Jewess**

In the tales, however, Milman's history and Byron's poetry are combined with the female genre of historical romance. The book provides "Historical Summaries" of political and military developments as a preface to each chapter, which is based on a selected episode from the *History of the Jews*. Meanwhile, against the background of

---

15 For a longer account of the "national romances" and "historical romances" of Sydney Owenson, Jane Porter and Anna Porter see Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 92-8. In particular, the Porter sisters' romances, like the Moss sisters' biblical romances, "gave mediaeval and renaissance history the character of idealized modern-day bourgeois life, thereby expropriating the 'national' past for the professional middle classes' vision of present and future" (95).
the doomed Jewish struggles for national unity and, later, national liberation, stories of women's contribution to this heroic history are imagined. The Moss sisters write about the female element that Milman leaves out; in their books women are often at the centre of the story. While non-Jewish male warriors are recruited to "the cause of freedom, religion, and Judea", women have their own role in proselytisation, so that a Greek courtesan "learned the knowledge of the true God ... listening to the sweet voice of Imla, making more musical the language of distant Greece by her rich [Hebrew] tones" (RII:187), a Judaised version of the Evangelical scenario of conversion between women. But women in these tales are heroic as well as "sweet": when Alexander, a victim of Judea's factional wars, is executed, his courage is mirrored by that of his wife: "she, the desolate wife and mother, saw with unflinching calmness her fated husband embracing his children for the last time" (R III:90-1). To some extent, the Moss sisters' heroines, like Aguilar's, embody Victorian Anglican middle-class values rather than Old Testament ideals: their virtues are domestic as well as patriotic. They visit the poor, work at their embroidery and control their emotions for the sake of their children. One woman accepts with "resolution" that her beloved has invested his affections elsewhere; another suppresses her own grief at her mother's death to become a support to her father. The heroines are fiercely protective of their modesty and, in resisting all possibility of romance with non-Jews - an "unholy passion" - cultivate a rational approach to their sexuality (RII:231). Malah, in one of Marion's tales, compares herself with a woman who loved too well and refused to live to witness her husband's infidelity; Malah "thanked the God who had given her a blessed religion, whose dictates taught her to control her passions" (RI:314). In this sense, these stories reject the German historicist reading of biblical texts, and, like Aguilar, present Old Testament religious practice in a direct continuity with contemporary feminised concepts of religion.

But the Moss sisters' Jewesses, like the oriental landscape in which they live, are alternately familiar and exotic. In contrast to Aguilar's attempt to construct an unsexual, domestic Jewish woman, Celia and Marion Moss dwell on the eroticised figure of the Jewess as part of an Oriental world of sexuality and violence. The

---

16 R II:324; The Misses C and M Moss, Tales of Jewish History (London: Miller & Field, 1843), II:36. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as T.

17 The Middle Eastern landscape appears sometimes in terms resembling the familiar English countryside: "The sky was of a clear, almost transparent blue, diversified by a few white clouds, and the wings of the merry lark, that seemed amalgamating with the sky, as if it poured its gushes of melody from the very gates of the heaven to which it soared" (T II:10) while its palaces display the "voluptuous grandeur" of "an earthly paradise" (T I:93, 95).

18 For the conjunction of sexuality and violence in Orientalist discourse see Rana Kabbani, Imperial Fictions. Europe's Myths of Orient, rev. and exp. ed. (London: Pandora, 1994), 25 and 68. In particular, Kabbani describes Moore's Lalla Rookh in these terms (34). See also her discussion of the "pittoresque barbarie" represented by French Orientalist painters of the 1820s and 1830s (74-81). In Eugene Delacroix's 'La Mort de Sardanapale' (1827), for
Moss sisters appropriate Scott's image of the sexualised Jewess and show her as a tragic victim of sexual violence. In "The Storming of the Rock", Judith's father is murdered defending her from Philistine soldiers, and their sexual intent is echoed in the prose itself:

It was an awful sight; and even those fierce barbarians, hardened as they were in deeds of blood, shrunk from interrupting the poor girl's agony. Her long hair had escaped from its confinement, and lay in thick black masses on her fair cheek, fearfully contrasting with its paleness; while her thin white dress was stained with the blood of her fond, indulgent parent, as she madly tore it up to staunch the wound (R 1:15).

For the Hebrew warriors, the physical assault symbolised by Judith's bloodstained white dress creates a motivation for national unity and a provocation to national vengeance, a "reawakened ardour" to defend the honour of women (R 1:21). The imagery of captivity and cruelty was an established aspect of Orientalist literature, and Rana Kabbani argues that "the image of the captive beauty appealed to patriarchal urges of domination, and to imperialistic urges more generally". But in the Moss sisters' romances written for women the sexual subjugation of the Jewess becomes an icon for the tragic suffering of a nation. Thus, at a time when the kingdom of Israel, though under Jewish rule, is dominated by the influence of the pagan queen Jezebel, Malah is victimised by the attentions of Jezebel's favourite, the courtier, "sensualist and ... libertine" Sadas (R 1:183). Her refusal provokes a further demonstration of the relationship between political and sexual power, as he tells her,

'... we will try what a little salutary coercion will do; and ere long, proud girl, I will make thee glad to sue to be my slave, my meanest, my most degraded slave - for me thou shalt be, that is determined on, let it be in what capacity it will; and I never yet planned, but what I executed; and when thou art kneeling at my feet, praying for mercy, I will reject thy prayers, even as thou hast rejected mine' (R 1:190).

The theme of sexual oppression dominates the Moss sisters' romances; it is their means of gendering a Jewish history of resistance and martyrdom. While men refuse to submit to military invasion, women enact a similar battle in resisting sexual coercion. In Celia's later volume of stories this is still an important preoccupation. Her tale of Jewish life in modern Morocco explains that false accusations against Jews "are oftenest used to extort money, but where darker passions are at work, fearful tragedies are sometimes enacted" (K 179). The female emphasis of the story shows how persecution is gendered: the Jew is an economic target while the Jewess is a sexual target.

However, marriage is as often forced upon an unwilling woman by tyrannical parents as by political persecutors, and this recalls a common preoccupation in

example, "the violence of the narrative is linked with its eroticism; indeed, the female bodies in the throes of death are made to take on positions of languor, of sexual abandon" (75).

19 Kabbani, Imperial Fictions, 79. See also ibid., 25, 34, 71.
conversion novels. In these stories, the Jewess herself is divided by the force of desire. Paula, the heroine of Marion's "The Twin Brothers of Nearda, a Tale of the Babylonian Jews", dutifully reads the biblical book of Ruth, a story of "pious resignation" and familial loyalty, but its lesson only temporarily suppresses her own transgressive love for her father's rebellious slave (T I:223). In Marion's "The Siege of Jotapata", set during the rebellion against Rome, the heroine Zarina, who loves her impoverished cousin Eleazar, is faced with the prospect of an enforced marriage to a proud warrior, and is cursed by her mother for disobedience. But Zarina assures Eleazar that "even the loss of that dear mother's love, much as I prize it, shall never induce me to break the faith I have plighted to thee" (R III:154). She believes that after the war with the Romans is over, her mother will agree to their marriage. Her fidelity is founded on a consciousness of the disruption of history by the threat to the Jewish state: implicitly, it is the expression of a hope for political restoration. But Eleazar has no such hopes for peace and a happy marriage:

'that will never be, Zarina,' he said, interrupting her, 'until every city, town, and village in Judea, be levelled with the ground. It will never be, until the temple, - nay, start not - till the temple is a ruin, and our conquerors ride over the necks of our prostrate countrymen. It will never be, till there is not a foot of land we can call our own. It will never be; - 'he spoke with vehemence - 'for the time for pacific measures is gone past; and unless we consent to crawl forth on our knees; nay, scarcely even then, will our taskmasters forgive our glorious though futile effort to attain our freedom. Not unless we yield tamely to a worse bondage than our forefathers endured in Egypt; and I swear by the God who redeemed those forefathers from slavery, I would be the last to counsel such a measure, the very thought of which brings shame and degradation' (R III:155-6)

Zarina's and Eleazar's love is tragically belated; it belongs to a time of Jewish political autonomy which is now past. Yet Zarina's belief in romantic love and her rejection of a pragmatic and profitable marriage is an echo of that time. The Jewess's passion, as tragic as in Ivanhoe, is here linked to a proud patriotism.

Sometimes, interestingly, the subjugated position of the beautiful Jewess is occupied by a feminised hero, a man made reflective by suffering, like Gabriel in Celia's later story "The King's Physician; a Tale of the Secret Jews of Spain", whose exiled parents imparted to him "a gravity unsuited to his years" and "a girlish softness"; or Asher, the "weak and deformed" but "sad and beautiful" youth who is subjected to an attempted seduction like the Jewesses of the Moss sisters' other tales. This characterisation of the Jewess or feminised Jew draws on the frequent scriptural personification of the Hebrew people as a grieving female victim of war. Indeed, in Celia's version of the story of the Jewish revolt against the Syrians, Mattathias, the Asmonean patriarch, sees the persecution of the Jews in the colonised Jerusalem of his day, in precisely these terms:

20 R II:23, 50-3; Mrs Levetus [Celia Moss], The King's Physician (Portsea, T Hinton, 1865), 5. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as K.
Tom Moore's Irish lyrics, which "sonorously emphasise sorrow, silence, death and, above all, the motif of slavery, so prominent a feature of the general political discourse of the age, but appropriated in a particular fashion by Irish Catholic politicians and writers" may have been one inspiration for the same motifs which permeate the Jewish romances of the Moss sisters. But the recurrent references to captivity, physical torture and scourging create intertextual resonances not only with Old Testament lamentations of the Jews' enslavement in Egypt and Babylon, but also with abolitionist literature of the previous few decades, in which "arguments based on biblical principle did most to rouse anti-slavery feeling". The Moss sisters brought to the debate about Jewish emancipation the language and associations of an older emancipation controversy, the debate on African-Caribbean slavery, in which, as Moira Ferguson and Clare Midgley have shown, women had played a crucial role.

Slavery and the Jewess

In "The Twin Brothers of Nearda" in particular, Marion Moss explicitly links the liberties of Jews, women and slaves, none of which concerns are present in the narrative of Milman's History of the Jews on which the story is based. In the tale, I would argue, Moss's treatment of these themes connects her writing to the work of women who were participating for the first time in a major public campaign. Moira Ferguson has argued that between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries anti-slavery protest in prose and poetry by Anglo-Saxon female authors contributed to the development of feminism ... These writers, moreover, displaced anxieties about their own assumed powerlessness and inferiority onto their representations of slaves. The condition

21 Dunne, "Haunted by History", 87-8.
22 According to contemporary accounts. See D W Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 72.
of white middle-class women's lives - their conscious or unconscious sense of themselves as inferior - set the terms of the anti-slavery debate.

Moreover, the participation of thousands of provincial, middle-class, preponderantly religious women - evangelical and non-evangelical alike - in mainstream controversy was the origin of a self-directed female political vanguard.24

Secondly, Ferguson shows how representations of the colonial other in the cause of anti-slavery became "more severely objectified and marginalized - a silent or silenced individual in need of protection and pity". The image of a grieving African mother was famously used by Anna Laetitia Barbauld in a volume of hymns for children in 1781 to criticise slavery for its disruption of the institution of the family. When in 1788 Hannah More, the only prominent woman in the influential Evangelical Clapham Sect, was asked by the Abolition Committee to write a poem on slavery she also stressed the sentimental pathos of the slave and the importance of family unity. But, in a similar way to the Moss sisters' stereotyping of the suffering Jewish woman, "this configuration based primarily on victimization was a positive strategy for evangelicals, given contemporary attitudes they shared toward Africans, enslaved or free". As a dissenter Barbauld was part of a tradition which, since the time of the Restoration Quakers, the first Christian denomination to evangelise slaves, had acknowledged a strong identification with the position of the persecuted. As Ferguson shows, by the late eighteenth century radical dissenters like Helen Maria Williams had begun to link explicitly the abolition of slavery with the abolition of discrimination against Dissenters.25 Moreover, Vron Ware has pointed to the way in which, from Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication to John Stuart Mill's Subjection of Women, polemicists for women's rights drew on popular sentiment against the institution of slavery. "Their constant references to slavery ... provided a powerful philosophical basis for ... writers wanting to make both rhetorical and literal points about women's subordination ... Appropriating the language of slavery was a way of claiming that theirs was a moral cause, not a revolutionary demand that threatened the whole of society".26 By the time that the Moss sisters were writing, then, the imagery of slavery was being used to discuss both religious discrimination and the subjection of women. The last of the British campaigns against slavery, the campaign against Negro apprenticeship, had taken place in 1838, just before the publication of the Moss sisters' books, and the language of abolition would have had a particular resonance at this time.

24 Ferguson, Subject to Others3, 5.
Marion Moss's tale is set during the Jews' exile in Babylon and Parthia and concerns the fortunes of Anilai and Asinai, twins of noble birth who are left without family and sold as slaves to a cruel merchant, Moses Ben Yussuf. From the outset Moss adapts Milman's text to make slavery a prominent theme: in *The History of the Jews* the brothers appear simply as "orphans" and are employed as weavers.27 After they have finally fled their master's house, Asinai returns for a short time to reveal to Ben Yussuf's daughter Paula that he has loved her for many years. Paula has been reading the lamentations of Jeremiah, "the prophet bard of the land of her fathers," and thinking of the famous psalm of exile, the source for Barbauld's and More's poems, one of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* (1815) and Rebecca's hymn in the dungeon at Templestowe. She reflects on the diasporic condition of the Jews, who are now voluntarily living in exile from Judea:

> A ray of exalted enthusiasm lighted up her large black eyes, as these thoughts filled her mind, and yielding to the spell, she arose, and forgetful of the lateness of the hour, wandered down to the side of that river, upon whose banks her captive people had hung their harps upon the willows, and sat down and wept.

> 'How, indeed, could they sing the songs of Zion in a strange land!' exclaimed the fair enthusiast, clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes to heaven: 'the tender and sublimely beautiful anthems of David, the warrior minstrel, and king of Israel, were not made to be chanted in captivity, at the bidding of the idolatrous heathen. It would have been profanity to sing the songs composed in honour of the true God, to the worshippers of images. Bitter, indeed, must be the bread of servitude, and the earth must be watered with the tears of the slave, who toilth upon it for another's gain alone, and knoweth though its graceful bosom yieldeth abundance, he hath no portion therein' (TI:117-8).

Paula sees the life of the diaspora Jew as a continued "captivity", analogous to slavery because "he hath no portion therein". Her thoughts are suddenly interrupted, or amplified, by the appearance of Asinai, who has claimed his freedom. Asinai justifies his decision to break the bond of slavery in terms of a belief in divinely-sanctioned human equality, reflecting an argument which had become particularly associated with women abolitionists:

> 'When God made this bright world, filling it with all that is good and beautiful, he created man to be its lord, and reign king over all his works. But he found there was a void in the fair creation of his hand; a something wanting, and he called woman into being, and, lo, it was perfect. But when he gave it to man, to rule over all the other works of his hand, he said not that he should tyrannise over his weaker brother, and make him the bond slave of his will. When our first parents were driven from the blessed home they had defiled with the first sin, and God said, "Thou shalt eat the bread of toil, and earn it with the sweat of thy brow," he said not, "Thou shalt take another, and make him toil for thee, giving him bread that is made of bitters and mixed with tears for his portion, whilst thou livest on the fat of the land;" neither did He who is all benevolence say, "Thou shalt reward the bondsman with stripes" (TI:119-120).28

---


28 In particular, this argument recalls the widely-read pamphlet published in 1824 by the Jacobin sympathiser and Quaker abolitionist Elizabeth Heyrick, who opposed slavery from the perspective of both natural rights philosophy and religion. She asserted that liberty is a "sacred inalienable right" and demanded immediate rather than gradual abolition of slavery.
Drawing an implicit parallel between "woman" and man's "weaker brother", neither of whom should be victims of tyranny, Moss's impassioned argument also suggests that slavery usurps God's authority which decreed that all men should work. Later in the story she describes the escaped slaves as justifiably disobeying a despotic authority:

Not that they stained their names with the darker crimes that blacken the annals of humanity; lawless and daring were they, and depending only upon God and their own good swords, they bore more resemblance to the Robin Hood of merry England, or the Rob Roy so long famous in Scottish story, than to the bands of fierce zealots who, disgracing the name of Hebrews, and of men bearing the disgraceful title of robbers, at a period only a very little later than the one we refer to, ravaged the then distracted country of Judea (T I:131-2).

Here the author clearly associates the runaway slaves not with criminals but with Walter Scott's heroes of national liberation, and soon their true worth is recognised publicly: "slaves they might have been in person, but their souls are the souls of warriors and heroes" (TII:43). The noble brotherhood of outlaws is an extension of the family bond intensified by slavery's "harshness and ill-usage", which "had served but to endear them the more to each other" (T I:84). Moss's use of ideas circulating in the public debate on the ethics of slavery also implicitly addresses the question of Jewish emancipation, a link which is made through the identification between the exiled Jewess and the slave. While male campaigners for emancipation in the 1830s and 1840s were arguing for Jewish emancipation on the rational grounds of "consistency" given that other non-Anglicans no longer suffered political disabilities, the Moss sisters here approach the issue through the Evangelical abolitionist language of biblically-sanctioned equality.

In this story as in many others in the volumes, Moss invokes another aspect of abolitionist women's writing in linking slavery with enforced marriage. Moira Ferguson's study has shown that "throughout the entire period of colonialist protest ... in references to themselves as pawns of white men, denied education as well as access to law and allied deprivations, feminists of all classes were prone to refer loosely to themselves as slaves". In "The Twin Brothers of Nearda" Moss depicts the trauma experienced by Paula when she realises that the father whom she loves is a cruel slavemaster; "she wished she could unweave the web which fate had woven during the last few weeks, and be again the trusting child, even though it were to be again

because slavery was a sin against God. This principle was taken up by many women's auxiliaries and only later adopted by the national organisation, the Anti-Slavery Society. See Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 103 109, 112 3.

29 For Parliamentary and public debate on the "inconsistency" of Jewish disabilities see Salbstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain, especially 64-5.
30 Ferguson, Subject to Others, 19.
deceived" (T1:146). Paula's loss of faith in patriarchal benevolence coincides with her discovery that she too is to be a victim of her father's tyranny and greed, coerced into a lucrative marriage:

She knew her father now, not as she had dreamed of him in her fond heart, all love and tenderness; but as the world, as Anilai had known him, for years, - a cold, callous, selfish man, calculating to the utmost, even the returns his affections, if he could be said to possess any, would bear. And, oh, the bitter agony of that knowledge! like Eve, she had bought it dearly (T1:244).

When Ben Yussuf threatens his daughter "I will have thee scourged, as I would the meanest slave who disobeyed my will", the coerced daughter is explicitly linked with the slave (T1:242). When called upon to perform music before her appointed husband, she can only sing "one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, a style of singing admirably suited to the deep pathos of her voice, and the melancholy mood of her mind" (T1:247). Once again, Paula's choice of the poetry of national suffering links her personal misery to the oppression of her people.

A further striking reference to female writing on slavery is evident in the Moss sisters' representation of relations between women. In "The Twin Brothers of Nearda" Marion Moss unusually defends biblical polygamy, the bête noire of the Evangelicals, not by historicising it but by suggesting that the wives of a gentle and just husband "had no jarring interests; there were no separate families to create division between them. They looked upon each other as sisters" (T1:188). In similar terms, the plots of several of the tales turn on the revelation of unexpected sisterly solidarity between heroines and female slaves. When Malah is taken captive by Sadoc, for example, she finds herself in the company of his Syrian wife Azah, who tells her the story of the recent war from the point of view of the defeated: "To thee, perhaps, its event gave cause for rejoicing - for it freed thy country from the yoke of a foreign invader. To me it brought misery and desolation" (R1:295). Azah relates how all the men of her family were killed in one night by the Hebrews, but she "gazed earnestly up into the pale face of Malah, and read there a look of commiseration and pity. The young Hebrew girl had wept for her sorrows" (R1:302). Malah has her own bad memories of that night's battle. Though Sadoc hopes to divide the women by jealousy, their shared grief over the war makes them realise that their common position unites them. Azah becomes Malah's avenger, and defends her from Sadoc's advances by taking her own life. In "The Asmonean", Laodice, a Greek courtesan living in luxury in a Syrian palace feels a similar affinity for Imla, another captive woman: "Was it the youth and beauty of the Hebrew girl that attracted the Grecian towards her? - or was it not rather the slave's sympathy for the slave so recently snatched from all she held dear, so unfit to bear the bitterness and degradation of her new lot; - the impulse of a young, warm heart, which, knowing and feeling misery, wished to spare to another similar
anguish?" (R II:186-7). In representing the bond between the enslaved woman and the woman who is privileged and yet unfree, the Moss sisters' writings reflect an identification established by the literature of the abolitionist movement.31

Furthermore, the instinctive bond between female slaves and slave-owners can reveal a more important source of identity, that of nation. When Miriam, Imla's daughter, is taken captive by a Syrian she is assigned a slave called Nemia, who was a Hebrew by birth; but many years residence in Syria, whither she had been carried while yet a child, and sold as a slave, had almost obliterated from her mind the remembrance of her native country and national religion. The only trace that remained, was a small silver medallion, hung round her neck by her mother at their parting, on which was engraven the name of the Most High. This talisman served to keep in her remembrance that Syria was not the land of her birth, and to warm her heart towards the unfortunate Miriam. Few had been the words of kindness that ever greeted the unfortuate Nemia. For years she had been the unresisting object of tyranny. Use had made harsh words and unjust blows familiar to her, until at length they fell unheeded on the callous ear or shrinking form of the poor slave. Yet she had been born to high estate, to wealth, and splendour. Her parents were among the many victims to the ruthless Antiochus (R II:272).

Miriam's kindness to Nemia sows the seed of national consciousness; it "thawed the apathy of despair, and aroused within the bosom of the girl feelings to which she had long been a stranger. And she who was thus kind and good, was herself a mourner. She perchance had been torn from a fond father, an adoring mother...The magic chord of sympathy was awakened in a bosom that readily responded to its call" (R II:273-4). Nemia's sympathy for Miriam is a response both to her suffering as a captive female and to her Jewish identity. In a favourite abolitionist fantasy which also coincides with Elizabeth Rigby's characterisation of the Jewess, Moss depicts a brutalised slave who is so grateful for her restoration to dignity and national belonging that she is willing to risk her life on behalf of her benefactress. In a similar way, the consciousness of being part of a national community binds together the slaves and mistresses of Zarina's household as the climax of "The Siege of Jotapata" centres on female heroism. Zarina is able to unite the women across the class interests which previously divided them, in self-sacrificing defiance of a common national enemy: "We will teach these proud Romans that even Jewish women and children can fight for their freedom, and die for their country" (R III:247).

The Jewish heroine thus provides a focus for order. Paula, for example, resembles Scott's Rebecca as a redemptive figure who reveals the humanity of even the most selfish Jewish male. Her father, the ruthless merchant Ben Yussuf is transformed in her presence:

It was a strange thing to see that hard, cold man, who could look upon human suffering, in the last extremity, with an unchanged look and an unmoved heart,- who could listen

---

31 For abolitionists' use of the concept of sisterhood, see Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 97-8.
unheeding to the cry for help from the widowed parent and the orphaned child, without a
feeling of remorse or pity, bending over that delicate and fragile being, with tears, actual
tears of love and tenderness stealing down his stony face (T 1:230-1).

However Paula functions as a figure of apologia for more than the personal failings of
her father. Her goodness compensates the cruelties of slavery itself, as Asinai later
confesses. He has also loved her, because

't from childhood that gentle and beautiful girl has been to me a guardian angel; the star of
hope burning for ever with a pure, undying flame. It was the thought of her that enabled
me to bear long, very long, with scorn, contumely, ill-treatment, and blows. Yes! blows
from the scourge,' and he spoke through his ground teeth, 'until blood has flown from my
torn and tortured flesh. Nay, more than that, - I have seen the brother of my heart writhing
beneath the lash, till my passions seemed too mighty for my frame, and every drop of
blood in my veins has seemed changed to living fire, while my brain whirled till reason
tottered; yet, when words, words of passionate agony came to my lips, the thought of that
young girl came between me and the spirit of revenge, that burned to glut itself in the life-
blood of her brutal father, who found food for enjoyment in our writhing agonies' (T
1:294-5).

The beautiful Jewess is here seen in relation both to master and to slave as a figure
who redeems the evils of slavery; her image "came between me and the spirit of
revenge", crushing the desire for rebellion.

Moss's celebration of the heroine's ability to defuse resentment and to fuse classes
in national pride expresses a fantasy of national unity in the context of the class
tension of the late 1830s, just as Disraeli's heroine in Sybil (1845) literally defuses
Chartist resentment in a novel set during this period. Moss's vision of the
reconciliatory female can also be seen as a response to intra-Jewish class tensions at
this time. During the 1840s the Jewish Chronicle, which encouraged working-class
militant agitation for the removal of Jewish civil disabilities, also consistently
criticised the governing bodies of the Jewish community for their reluctance to
increase poor relief and condemned Jewish employers who did not support their
employees' wish to observe the Sabbath. In effect, the newspaper was calling for more
community solidarity. While male members of the Jewish elite studiously ignored
lower-class manifestations of Jewish identity, stressing that their campaign was about
"Liberal principles" rather than "Jewish interests", Moss's representation of the Jewish
"nation", made cohesive through feminine agency, is a striking departure.32

Tyranny, rebellion and the shape of Jewish history

As this conservative construction of femininity suggests, Moss is finally
ambivalent about the emancipation of slaves. Responses to slavery in "The Twin
Brothers of Nearda" are more complex than Asinai's stirring speech might imply. The

heroine is in fact torn between her pity for the rebellious slaves and her belief in upholding the existing social order, despite its tyranny. When she finds that Philip, another of her father's servants, has joined the outlaws she turns all her scorn on him, "ungrateful servant of my father's house ... who, like the snake of Grecian fable, hath stung the hand that fed thee, and raised thine arm against thy father's life; how darest thou venture into my presence? Return instantly to thy duty, or begone" (T I:172). Yet his disobedience to "thy father" in joining the fugitive slaves anticipates her own desire for rebellion against "my father". Similarly, Paula's maid Billah is a victim of tyranny who still tries to defend an hierarchical social order. She loyally reiterates Paula's opposition to insubordination, yet she is cruelly beaten by Ben Yussuf for associating with the outlaws. However she continues to see her master as a "kind friend"; when Philip urges her to betray him, and points to the bruises on her shoulder, "a burning glow came over her face, but she did not reply" (T I:258-9).

Billah's silence, whether heroic or brutalised, enables Moss to leave open the question of the legitimacy of tyrannical authority. For Paula, faced with a similar choice, the theme of the Jewess divided between father and lover is cast in terms of the slavery debate, between the rival demands of established patriarchal law and the claims of sentiment and conscience.

As a whole, Moss's text is similarly inconclusive about the benefits of revolutionary emancipation. Once free, despite the bond wrought by the experience of oppression, the two slaves develop contrasting characters. While Asinai regrets the criminal activities which are now necessary for their existence, Anilai launches wholeheartedly into a programme of vengeance. Their fame spreads to the Parthian capital, and they are offered the governorship of Babylon, but power corrupts Anilai. Ignoring his brother's warning against "the snares of the ungodly", he becomes assimilated to the pagan culture over which he rules, dressing with "effeminate luxury" and resorting to murder and adultery for self-gratification - an echo of Disraeli's emancipated Jew Alroy (T II:58, 148). Anilai, the story warns, has been unable to transcend slavery; "ever of a weak and vacillating disposition, the last who strove to rule had still held his will captive" (T II:125). His revisiting of tyranny over his subjects has its roots in his own enslavement. This cycle is only complete when, as in Alroy, Anilai's erstwhile allies conspire with his enemies to destroy "this human wolf" (T II:197). By placing more emphasis on the story of Anilai than that of his brother, the sober and responsible Asinai, Moss here reflects the ambivalence of sentimental representations of slavery, which combined sympathy for the suffering of slaves with an anxiety about their potential vindictiveness if freed.

 Indeed, even in their "merry" outlaw band, the ex slaves have difficulty maintaining unity and are

---

33 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 101-4.
constantly threatened by insfighting and insurrection. Through Anilai's moral
degeneration, which eventually entails betraying Paula, it is suggested that she has
been wrong to follow her romantic sensibility instead of rational obedience to
patriarchal and social order. The heroine's martyrdom in "The Twin Brothers of
Nearda" is the story's most potent symbol of the havoc wreaked by a rebellious slave.

But, at the same time, Moss's text is not simply a warning about slave
emancipation. Indeed, it is not the brutalised sensibility of the slave that wrecks
Anilai's marriage to Paula. Character, Moss suggests, is not produced by
circumstances but is innate. Even as a young man Anilai's features possessed "a
character of indecision strongly at variance with the firm and decided expression of
his brother's countenance" (T I:79). It is not so much slavery that makes Anilai so
unsuited to power, as the effect of slavery on his dangerously "weak" personality.
Moreover, the cycle of brutality which passes from slavemaster to slave and back
seems to be less a warning about the corruption of domestic and political stability by
the institution of slavery, than an aspect of the Moss sisters' historiography of
repetition. Although those who murder Anilai claim to do it as "a duty we owe unto
our country", in fact they all harbour personal grudges against him (TI II:197). His
murder is not a restitution of rightful hierarchical order, but just another shift in the
constantly vacillating movement of power which, in these stories, constitutes Jewish
history. Even the volatile outlaw band is understood in these terms. Their constant
insfighting is not only a sign of the inevitable breakdown of order among the lawless,
it is also an aspect of the instability of Jewish political autonomy itself: "There were
rumours of outrage and constant tumult in Jerusalem, for already that long series of
oppression and revolt, that ended so disastrously for Judea, had commenced" (T
II:27). Most of the stories in the two volumes are a repetition of the same story, one
which projects into both past and future:

those mighty mountains, that for ages had towered to the sky with their lofty heads,
bowed down, and laid low in the dust, - low as their own proud nation were doomed soon
to lie. Alas! the desolation of these their natural guardians was but typical of their own
utter prostration. The scattering of those giant trees was emblematical of their own
dispersion. But surely the hand that cast down can raise up; he who scattered can gather
together again. He can, he can; and who shall dare to doubt that he, the most High, will
redeem his promise, by delivering from their present bondage his own peculiar and
chosen people - those on whom he has put a mark and a sign, - the nation whom he has
set apart from all others, - and gather them again together in their own land (R
III:135-6).

The cyclical story of rise and fall is finally not a warning about the inevitable effects
of slavery, but a metaphor for Jewish history. Here the Moss sisters' millennialist
sentiment strikingly concurs with Evangelical writing about the Jews; their analysis of
the Jewish revolt against the Romans seems structurally identical to Mrs Webb's in
Naomi. But the difference in emphasis is crucial. While Webb and Aguilar see the
"prostration" of the Jews as a sign of their deserving punishment, Celia and Marion Moss see it as a confirmation of their future prosperity.

The rhetoric of exile

It is around the question of Jewish exile and nationhood that the Moss sisters’ work inflects the metaphor of slavery to engage controversially with contemporary debate about Jewish emancipation. When Paula thinks of the Jewish diaspora as slavery, she mourns because it is a subjection which has become voluntary:

Why, when the yoke of the captive had been taken from their necks, and the fetters of their bondage which had pressed so heavily upon them for threescore years and ten were unriveted, had they lingered by the waters of Babylon; when the laughing streams of Judea uplifted their voices, in songs of rejoicing, and wooed them to their fertile banks? (TI:117).

In particular, in this story Moss associates the failure to return to Zion with Ben Yussuf’s avarice: "When the great body of the Hebrew nation, joyfully availing themselves of the generous edict of Cyrus, returned into Judea, his family preferred retaining their rich possessions and pursuing their mercantile pursuits in the land of their captivity, to returning to the Land of Promise" (T I:225). Ben Yussuf then, prioritising material prosperity before Hebrew identity, is himself a slave. Moss here revives the stereotype of the avaricious male Jew in order to indicate the folly of refusing the liberation of national autonomy. In other stories, the narrator herself is linked to the rhetoric of exile. When in "The Promise. A Tale of the Restoration" Ramah listens to Ephraim as he "sang the songs of Zion in a strange land", the narrator interjects:

O that beautiful word! whose every letter is poetry. Even as I write, I could weep and turn with the passionate yearning of the expatriated to the far-off home, beyond the blue Mediterranean. Vain yearning! futile dreams! - the inheritance of Israel is again in the hand of the stranger, and the time has not arrived for the wandering exiles to return (R II:88).

The narrator shares the patriotic sorrow of the ancient Hebrew heroine; she is living in the same epoch, the same exile. In writing of the return to Zion as a time that "has not arrived", Moss distinguishes herself from millennialist accounts of the same prophecy, which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, had dominated Evangelical attitudes toward the Jews in the preceding decades. Whereas millennialist Evangelicals expected imminent restoration, and hence concentrated their efforts into converting Jews according to the New Testament prophecy, Moss reappropriates the prophecy of restoration. The Romance ends with a strategic quotation from this prophecy in the Deuteronomy rather than the Revelation version. Moss's reference to the "yearning of the expatriated" also distinctly recalls the nationalist language of the sisters' earlier
political poetry. They look not to the spiritualised Zion of Evangelical prophetic writing but to a physical restoration of a material "inheritance of Israel", like the Poles or the Scots in *Early Efforts*. On the other hand, the second closing quotation is from Lamentations, and reiterates the identification of the Jews primarily with suffering and passivity. The volume, then, ends with a dual commitment to political restoration and to political quietism.

The narrator's millennialist pronouncements and her description of herself as "expatriated" were potentially explosive at this time. Evangelicals used this rhetoric without a clear indication of how literally they interpreted it, but they were certainly opposed to the political emancipation of the Jews. It was therefore even more extraordinary for a Jewish writer to appropriate the rhetoric of exile at a moment when the Jews were mostly trying to demonstrate their rootedness in Britain. Even though she claims to be resigned to an indefinite waiting time before national restoration this does not dispel Moss's controversial implication of disloyalty to Britain. Indeed, she states this position even more ardently in *Tales of Jewish History*.

Simon, Paula's uncle, lives in Babylon but does not share Moses Ben Yussuf's attitude to his adopted country:

> When we speak of Simon's own land, it is of Judea, not of Babylon. Whatever was, or is the country in which the Jew is for a time an indweller, he looks upon the land flowing with milk and honey as his own peculiar inheritance; and deems himself only as a sojourner in the land of the stranger. Strange and peculiar as this feeling may seem at the first glance, when it is considered that all our national reminiscences, whether for good or evil, in glory or in shame, in the bright days of our prosperity and the many sad and dark ones of our adversity, are connected with that bright Eastern land that God himself gave to our fathers; and that the people of every nation whither we have been driven to this refuge, England not excepted, hath treated us as a haughty mother-in-law does her step-children, casting us forth from her bosom; it will appear strange no longer, but justify the yearning fondness with which we turn to the homes of our fathers, in the land that was once their own. This is a long digression, but we trust it will be pardoned as a burst of that national enthusiasm which has been its theme (*TI*:232-3)

The narrating voice here is clearly identified with the subject, a Babylonian Jew who considers himself to be an expatriate, a "sojourner in the land of the stranger". Moss's narrator sees no difference between the exile of antiquity and the modern diaspora. Moreover, her "national enthusiasm" includes England in a critique of the nations who have rejected Jewish affection. Her metaphor of the "haughty mother-in-law" is a striking subversion of the patriotic personification of England as a nurturing mother, which had often been invoked by abolitionists. In this passage, in which she argues that Jews' primary loyalty is not to the country in which they live but to an imagined homeland based on "national" memory, Marion Moss's writing runs counter to almost all Jewish arguments about emancipation at this time.

**Jewish nationality and the Emancipation debate**
The idea of the Jews' separateness, particularity and national aspiration was a central aspect of the opposition to emancipation, particularly in the 1830s. On the grounds of a suspicion that the Jews were loyal firstly to other Jews, Sir Robert Inglis asserted in the House of Commons in 1833 "that a Jew could never be made an Englishman, even though he be born here". He quoted from a letter from the orthodox Rabbi Joseph Crooll: "Remember this, you can be no freemen except in the land of Canaan ... Jews, whether they spend two days, or two months, or twenty years in a country, are equally strangers and sojourners. They must look to another home and another country". The Conservative Quarterly Review argued that the law should not encode "prejudice" against "these domesticated strangers", but "to give all the rights and privileges of citizens to them whilst holding to Judaism would be to bind ourselves wholly to those who cannot so bind themselves to us; to confer on them strength which might be turned against ourselves and to compel them, of course to contract reciprocal obligations, which their highest duties in their views, national, political, religious, must force them to violate at such a call as they should believe to be that of their promised deliverer". The Quarterly Review turned the idea of Jewish and Christian nationhood into an implicit and inevitable battle, thus the "privileges" of citizenship should belong to Christians only, as in the wrong hands they "might be turned against ourselves".

Invoking the Christian nation was not only the privilege of Conservatives. In 1836, after the last parliamentary debate before the publication of The Romance of Jewish History, Thomas Arnold, "regarded by liberals as impeccably free-thinking and progressive on the main issues of social and political reform", wrote to Archbishop Whately, who had supported emancipation in the recent debate. He insisted that the Jews were "voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens, but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel ... I never have justified the practice of one race in wresting another's country from it; - I only say that every people in that country which is rightfully theirs may establish their own institutions and their own ideas; - and that no stranger has any title whatever to become a member of that nation, unless he adopts their institutions and their ideas". Here, as M C N Salbstein has rightly noted, Arnold was "choosing to treat Emancipation as a national rather than as a religious question, but yet invoking religious criteria to define nationality". In linking England with colonised

35 Cited by Salbstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain, 82.
37 Salbstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain, 73.
38 Arnold to Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, 4 May 1836 and 16 May 1836, cited by Salbstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain, 74. Arnold uses the Greek word for "sojourners in alien lands", very close to Moss's phrase describing the Jews' status outside
countries, Arnold cast the defence of established "institutions" and "ideas" as a liberal cause. Marion Moss, like Arnold and many Conservatives, uses the vocabulary of the "sojourner" and the "stranger", and similarly believed in an intrinsic link between religion and nation.

In contrast, the Whig position was in favour of Jewish emancipation on the grounds of equality before the law and the natural right of every free born subject. Early in the emancipation campaign Hazlitt had stated the case against maintaining a Christian legislature: "Religion cannot take on itself the character of law without ceasing to be religion; nor can law recognise the obligations of religion for its principles, nor become the pretended guardian and protector of the faith, without degenerating into inquisitorial tyranny". The *Edinburgh Review* considered that emancipation should not be unconditional, but based on the Jews' own renunciation of their racial and national exclusivity, and it did not share Conservative scepticism about the Jews' ability to adapt to modernity. Francis Henry Goldsmid, one of the principal leaders of the Anglo-Jewish campaign was happy to comply with these demands. He argued in a pamphlet in 1831 that there was no contradiction between Englishness and Jewishness: "[The Jews] do not, as seem to have been imagined, they cannot believe that they have now any political existence or political interest distinct from those of the country in which they live". He cited the example of the prophets during the captivity who were ministers of Babylonian kings, the same period of Jewish history that Moss fictionalises. He also argued that Jewish messianic expectations were miraculous, not literal. Gilam suggests that Goldsmid's arguments were representative of Anglo-Jewry as a whole: "Zionist programs had not yet been formulated and English Jews necessarily regarded Britain as their only homeland. The only voices in support of Jewish restoration to Zion were Christian pietists. Goldsmid rightly asserted that such Messianic hopes were based on Adventist visions popular among Christians rather than Jews". The Moss sisters' writing, however, would suggest otherwise.

---


Of the Jewish responses to the emancipation controversy, their position bears some resemblance to the "ultra-orthodox" faction. This group, as the contemporary newspaper *The Voice of Jacob* described, opposed emancipation because they dreaded a diversion of the Jewish mind from the religious interests of the Jews, as a people, through the seductions offered by the opening of new avenues to personal ambition, the ardent pursuit of which, they maintain, is calculated to estrange the individual from certain higher duties that devolve upon him with all Jews. These hold that there are public offices which a pious Jew cannot conscientiously discharge with efficiency.43

This is precisely the process which Marion Moss depicts in the decline and fall of Asinai, the Jewish administrator of gentile empire in "The Twin Brothers of Nearda". While the twin brothers initially believe, as did Goldsmid, that they are qualified for public office because God's law "teacheth his children to keep the straight path of truth, and to reverence their governors and rulers ... to administer the laws impartially, and to be in all respects a true and loyal subject", in the story public life eventually compromises Jewish practice (T II:90). Moss herself was an observant Jew, who in speaking of her distinguished teaching career later in life, said that "the great difficulty I encountered was in the teaching of religion. I found it so hard to make some of my pupils understand that, as Jews and Jewesses, they ought not to do certain things which, unfortunately, they saw done in their own homes. If only some parents would realise how hard and almost impossible they make it for a conscientious teacher to train their children in the practice of the Jewish religion!"44. However in the 1840s the only public voice for the orthodox position was the eccentric Cambridge University Hebrew tutor, Joseph Crooll, who opposed emancipation on the grounds of religious orthodoxy combined with his own more unorthodox superstitions. Crooll's writings between 1812 and 1829 were adopted enthusiastically by the anti-emancipationist lobby in Parliament.45 He believed that the Jews constitute one people, one nation at present living among other nations, which will one day be restored to Zion. He also advocated passivity in suffering, in a statement which provides one context for the Moss sisters' representations of endlessly suffering Jewesses:

> It is the order and is established as a law by God, that when the Jews are condemned to go into captivity among the nations and there to be punished during the term of their exile, if the nations slay them, pillage them, torture them, or whatsoever they do to them,

44 Obituary of Mme Alphonse Hartog [Marion Moss], 6.
the Jews, at the same time may cry aloud, weep, lament, fast, make much prayers, no redress can they obtain, God will not hear them, for suffer they must.\footnote{Joseph Crooll, \textit{The Last Generation} (1829), cited by Saltstein, \textit{The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain}, 79.}

Crooll, in spite of all his other inauthentic superstitions, here importantly wrested the explanation for a Jewish history of suffering from domination by the Christian account which ascribed it to divine punishment for the denial of Christ, and instead cited Jewish scriptural sources. Just as Crooll insists that the Jews' suffering, ancient and modern, is a divinely ordained punishment for their sins, the Moss sisters attribute Jewish persecution to the Jews' own infidelity and disunity: "they were frequently at war with the surrounding nations, by whom, when deserted by God on account of their falling into idolatry, they were conquered and oppressed; but delivered again when they returned to the religion delivered to them by their great lawgiver" (\textit{R} I:2). However, as I have shown, in an unresolved contradiction Marion Moss also uses the figure of the virtuous but persecuted Jewess, and the language of the contemporary slavery debate to argue for sympathy for the injustice of Jewish persecution.

In this respect, the Moss sisters have a more significant affinity with the prominent Jewish leader Sir Moses Montefiore, who was indeed one of the subscribers to \textit{The Romance of Jewish History}.\footnote{Obituary of Mme Alphonse Hartog [Marion Moss], 6. Significantly, Montefiore is the only Jewish subscriber to the \textit{Romance} mentioned in Marion Moss's obituary.} Montefiore, president from 1835 of the Jewish representative body, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was tentatively supportive of Jewish emancipation, but he was reluctant to participate in public agitation and tried to minimise the Board's involvement in it. Tory-leaning, he did not wish to identify himself too closely with a Liberal cause. Furthermore he feared that increased public duties would be incompatible with religious observance. More importantly, he had other campaigning priorities: "As far as he was concerned, emancipation was not the crucial matter on the agenda. Far more pressing were the oppression of Jewish minorities overseas and the development of religious life inside the community".\footnote{Gilam, \textit{The Emancipation of the Jews in England 1830-1860}, 49-50.} In 1840, the year in which the \textit{Romance} was published, Anglo-Jewish unity was in disarray with the impending secession of the Reform congregation in London and provincial resistance to the 1836 Marriage Act.\footnote{Under the 1836 Marriage Act, all synagogue Secretaries had to be certified by the Board of Deputies. This increasing centralisation of Jewish authority was strongly resisted in provincial communities. See Saltstein, \textit{The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain}, 90-93.} But that year Sir Moses Montefiore was principally concerned with events at Damascus, where, in February, Jews had been accused of ritual murder, imprisoned and tortured after the disappearance of the Catholic Father Thomas de Camangiano. Montefiore
personally investigated the Damascus case, which "stirred the English conscience to its depths". Montefiore's diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Damascus Jews crucially required the backing of the British government and public opinion.

It is this context which is, I want to argue, central for an understanding of the Moss sisters' work, as they begin The Romance of Jewish History with a clear reference to it: "We are aware ... that at the present moment the attention of the whole civilized world is directed to our nation, and we feel there could scarcely be a more opportune period for the appearance of this work" (RI:iv). Jewish emancipation had not been debated in parliament since 1836, so the topical allusion can only be to the Damascus blood libel, which is underlined by the anti-Catholic reference a few lines later. The text's enthusiasm for Jewish solidarity, potentially such a problematic subject when Emancipation was being debated, took on a crucially different meaning in the light of the events of 1840. In their historical romances, Celia and Marion Moss were not attempting to promote a chauvinistic nationalism, but, rather, seeking sympathy for oppression and admiration for the kind of international philanthropy practiced by Montefiore. The emphasis on victimisation in their work indicates that it is an appeal to the sense of British national identity which the Damascus affair had mobilised, in which patriotism was equated with the defence of the persecuted. In campaigning for the abolition of slavery in 1832-3 the Baptist missionary William Knibb had similarly "called upon his audiences to be 'patriots', which in his terms meant to be opposed to slavery - this was the true nature of the English, and therefore to his mind British, love of freedom". This, then, is the complex function of the figure of the persecuted Jewess in the work of the Moss sisters, and one important reason for their appropriation of the language of abolitionism.

50 Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews in England, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 258. Mass meetings were attended by both Jews and non-Jews. Supporters included Peel, who at this time opposed Jewish emancipation, and Lord John Russell. The British government was also motivated in this affair by a wish to undermine the hegemony of Mehemet Ali, ruler of Egypt and overlord of Syria with French support. Thus, although the personal interventions of Montefiore and the French-Jewish attorney Isaac Adolphe Crémieux were seen as exemplary philanthropic diplomacy, "the Damascus Affair was resolved by Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant". The surviving Jews were released in August 1840 and their liberation order stated that this was an act of justice, not merely a favour granted by the ruler. See Howard Morley Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, updated and exp. ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co Inc, 1977), 134-6 and Encyclopaedia Judaica 5 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd, 1971) 1249-52.

51 Montefiore was seen as champion of not only Jews but Britons. Cecil Roth describes how "when Montefiore came back in triumph from his mission, after securing the release and unconditional acquittal of the prisoners, he was received in audience by the queen and accorded supporters to his coat of arms - a recognition of the fact that this intervention on behalf of persecuted Jews was at the same time a service to the humanity of his fellow countrymen". See Roth, A History of the Jews in England, 258.

52 Catherine Hall, "Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s", in Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 244.
For Celia and Marion Moss, adapting Evangelical arguments about abolition, using the female genre of the national romance and alluding to the poetry of Romantic nationalism enabled the articulation of ideas about Jewish nationality which were all but absent from the public debate. In striking contrast to Grace Aguilar whose use of the domestic novel was linked to an identification with Anglican bourgeois values, the Moss sisters seek to evoke a Jewish romantic nationalism. I would not, however, argue that such a rejection of the apologetic politics of Emancipation constitutes a greater "authenticity" on the part of the Moss sisters. On the contrary, as I have tried to show, their work merely reflects another British construction of nationhood, which in this case appeals to the tradition of British 'liberty'.
CHAPTER 6

MUSCULAR JEWS:

DISRAELI, JEWISHNESS AND GENDER

In the parliamentary debate on Jewish disabilities of December 1847 the Evangelical Lord Ashley, later Lord Shaftesbury, articulated what was at stake in the question of Jewish emancipation. Hansard reports his speech:

Some years ago they stood out for a Protestant Parliament. They were perfectly right in doing so, but they were beaten. They now stood out for a Christian Parliament; and perhaps they would have a final struggle for a male Parliament. His noble Friend [Lord John Russell, who had proposed the motion to remove Jewish disabilities] was too candid to conceal his ultimate intentions; but he would just ask him, before he proceeded much further, to consider that, according to the principle laid down by him, not only Jews would be admitted to Parliament, but Mussulmans, Hindoos, and men of every form of faith under the sun in the British dominions. [Cheers].

Ashley, evidently supported by a good number of MPs, considered opposition to the principle of Jewish emancipation as crucial to the preservation of a white, male, Christian Parliament. He was opposing the principle of constitutional reform in this respect, but in doing so he also constructed a particular version of English national identity. Opposing Ashley in this debate was Benjamin Disraeli, who had been considering the politics of Jewish identity in his writings since the early days of the Emancipation debate. But Disraeli also reproduced in his arguments both Tory and Evangelical definitions of the nation. He ingeniously and perhaps disingenuously combined the racial politics of Scott with a millennialist concern for the destiny of the Jews, infusing his vision with an imperialising vigour uncharacteristic of either. This chapter will trace Disraeli's discussions of race, religion and nation in his novels of the 1830s and 40s, and examine the importance of notions of masculinity in these debates.

Disraeli's association with the Young England faction of the Tory party in the 1840s resulted in a rapid series of novels: *Coningsby; or The New Generation* (1844), *Sybil; or The Two Nations* (1845) and *Tancred; or The New Crusade* (1847), later known collectively as the "political trilogy". The novels articulate a Conservative response to the new power of the manufacturing class, the grievances of the Chartists, and the contemporary crisis of faith in the English national Church. They assert a

---

1 Hansard, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847): 1278.
renewed commitment to the ancient institutions of Church and monarchy but also seek a direct engagement with the modern problems of a nation irrevocably altered by constitutional change, industrialisation and capitalism. The trilogy forms a manifesto for Young England's radical version of Toryism. In particular Disraeli demands an alternative to what he terms the "Venetian republic", the long tradition of government by self-interested Whig nobles, now only sustained through "the subordination of the sovereign and the degradation of the multitude". In diagnosing the present crisis Disraeli also reassesses its past. He constructs an alternative English historiography according to which the present division of the nation derives not from the racial persecution of Saxons by Normans following the Conquest, but from the creation of a bogus, Whig aristocracy by Henry VIII after the dissolution of the monasteries. To protect their power, the Whigs supported the succession of William of Orange, who instituted "the system of Dutch finance ... to mortgage industry in order to protect property ... it has introduced a loose, inexact, haphazard, and dishonest spirit in the conduct of both public and private life. And in the end, it has so overstimulated the energies of the population to maintain the material engagements of the state, and of society at large, that the moral condition of the people has been entirely lost sight of" (S 1:44-5). Disraeli challenges the hegemony of Whig historiography, arguing that English history does not show evidence of progress; the narrator in Tancred continually asks: "Progress to what, and from whence?". Instead, the people, whose interest the Church originally represented, were disenfranchised by the Reformation, and the aristocracy, no longer linked to the organic body of feudal society, continued their habitual social irresponsibility until the present critical moment, when, as Tancred complains, "The people of this country have ceased to be a nation" (T I:102).

The crisis of the nation is embodied in the novels by the heroes, Coningsby, Egremont and Tancred, young aristocrats ill-equipped for social duty. Products of an "age of infidelity" and political "latitudinarianism", they find no models for personal or national idealism in the generation of their parents, who are equally complacent and selfish whether of the Whig or Tory tradition. Tancred tells his father despairingly, "I cannot find that it is part of my duty to maintain the order of things, for I will not call it system, which at present prevails in our country ... In nothing, whether it be religion, or government, or manners, sacred or political or social life, do

---

2 Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil; or, The Two Nations (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), I:86. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as S.

3 Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred; or, the New Crusade (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), II:119. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as T. For Disraeli's theory of English history see, in particular Coningsby, Book VII, ch ii and iv, and Sybil, Book I, ch. iii for this thesis.

4 Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, the New Generation (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), I:262, 266. Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as C.
I find faith; and if there be no faith, how can there be duty?” (T1:98-9). The national malaise has corrupted the very infrastructure of the family, and the insecurity of youth can be traced to domestic origins. Coningsby, a "solitary orphan", is denied his mother's love as a result of her premature death, cast out from her husband's family for being of a lower social class (C1:237). Egremont, the pampered younger son of a noble of Whig origins, inevitably becomes an adolescent dandy: "enjoyment, not ambition, seemed the principle of his existence". Brought up in a world of privilege where "to do nothing and get something, formed a boy's idea of a manly career", Egremont enters adulthood with a sense of enervation: "he wanted an object" (S1: 66, 79). Tancred has been affected by a similar history of domestic corruption: his overprotective father is the victim of his own parent's decadence and profligacy, forever weakened because "at a certain period of youth, the formation of character requires a masculine impulse, and that was wanting" (T1:21). The degeneration of the aristocracy is thus explicitly linked to gender dysfunction: sons of the old regime, Disraeli's heroes lack direction and conviction, they are aimless and emasculated.

Instead, it is the heroines of the "political trilogy", women from outside the English aristocracy, who represent the potential for national and individual regeneration. Edith Millbank the manufacturer's daughter, Sybil Gerard the Chartist's daughter and Eva Besso the Jew's daughter, are intelligent, articulate, determined, inspired and wise. They realise the heroic qualities so lacking in English youth, and their sexual appeal is directly related to their confident self-command. It is the Jewess Eva who rescues Tancred from captivity in the desert; it is she who embodies the virile imperiousness to which he aspires:

To Tancred, with her inspired brow, her cheek slightly flushed, her undulating figure, her eye proud of its dominion over the beautiful animal which moved its head with haughty satisfaction at its destiny, Eva seemed the impersonation of some young classic hero going forth to conquer a world (TII:289).

In contrast to the "disturbing influence" of other women in the novel, Eva represents not a distraction from but an inspiration to political idealism for Tancred (T1:220). She awakens in him imperial aspirations:

That face presented the perfection of oriental beauty ... it was in the eye and its overspreading arch that all the Orient spake, and you read at once of the starry vaults of Araby and the splendour of Chaldean skies. Dark, brilliant, with pupil of great size and prominent from its socket, its expression and effect, notwithstanding the long eyelash of the Desert, would have been those of a terrible fascination, had not the depth of the curve in which it reposed softened the spell and modified irresistible power by ineffable tenderness (TII:41-2).

Eva's physiognomy, described in terms of the oriental landscape, provokes in Tancred a simultaneous desire for both the body and the territory it speaks of, while her
feminine "tenderness" implicitly reassures him that the Desert will not itself overpower him.

However, it is precisely her difference and distance from the English aristocratic hero that constitutes the heroine's capacity to educate him: true "national character", the sole resource for political regeneration, is now embodied only in those excluded from power (C III:100). In *Sybil*, an uncorrupt Englishness lies hidden in the degraded working class, registered by the pride of Sybil Gerard: "The daughter of the lowly, yet proud of her birth. Not a noble lady in the land who could boast a mien more complete, and none of them thus gifted, who possessed withal the fascinating simplicity that pervaded every gesture and accent of the daughter of Gerard" (S I:301). She recalls Rebecca of York's pride in humility. Edith Millbank, the manufacturer's daughter, has a similar vitality, and the strength of mind to transcend the sophisticated society made accessible by her father's wealth:

Without losing the native simplicity of her character, which sprang from the heart, and which the strong and original bent of her father's mind had fostered, she had imbibed all the refinement and facility of the polished circles in which she moved. She had a clear head, a fine taste, and a generous spirit; had received so much admiration, that, though by no means insensible to homage, her heart was free; was strongly attached to her family; and notwithstanding all the splendour of Rome, and the brilliancy of Paris, her thoughts were often in her Saxon valley, amid the green hills and busy factories of Millbank (C III:35).

Edith, like Sybil and Eva, reveals an identity deeply rooted in her native landscape, in the national soil. She also leads the way forward in redefining the future England as both a factory and a garden. In fact, it is the daughter of a manufacturer and of the Saxon lower class who teaches the Norman noble the true value of English pastoral: under Edith's influence "Coningsby felt how much ennobling delight was consistent with the seclusion of a private station; and mused over an existence to be passed amid woods and waterfalls with a fair hand locked in his, or surrounded by his friends in some ancestral hall" (C III:133). Similarly, only Sybil and her Chartist father can tell the decadent, aimless Egremont who he is and what it means to be English:

It seemed to Egremont that, from the day he met these persons in the Abbey ruins, the horizon of his experience had insensibly expanded; more than that, there were streaks of light breaking in the distance, which already gave a new aspect to much that was known, and which perhaps was ultimately destined to reveal much that was now utterly obscure. He could not resist the conviction that from the time in question, his sympathies had become more lively and more extended; that a masculine impulse had been given to his mind; that he was inclined to view public questions in a tone very different to that in which he had surveyed them a few weeks back, when on the hustings of his borough (S I:303).

Through his love for a woman of the working class, a woman whose order is excluded from the political nation, Egremont begins to reshape his own political and masculine identity. He begins the process of what C J W-L Wee has called "re-
racination". Regeneration for Disraeli's heroes lies outside their own impotent class and race. Developing the multi-racial vision of the English nation in *Ivanhoe*, Disraeli advocates miscegenation as the heroic challenge which both the protagonist and the population as a whole must embrace.

Instrumental in the political education of Disraeli's heroes, moreover, are Jews and Jewish history. In *Sybil* the English working class (unlike the aristocracy) are linked, through the bibliocentric form of their dissenting Protestantism, to the Jews with whom they share the same signs of disinheritance: "little plain buildings of pale brick with the names painted on them, of Sion, Bethel, Bethesda; names of a distant land, and the language of a persecuted and ancient race; yet, such is the mysterious power of their divine quality, breathing consolation in the nineteenth century to the harassed forms and the harrowed souls of a Saxon peasantry" (*S* 1:122). Using the same Old Testament language, Oswald Millbank hails Coningsby as a new King David to deliver the oppressed nation (*C* III:112). In *Coningsby* and *Tancred* the protagonists engage more directly with the significance of Jewish history through their encounters with the eminent Jewish financier Sidonia. For Tancred this meeting facilitates his journey to the Holy Land in the footsteps of his crusader ancestor. It is a journey to the origin of his own culture, in the course of which he discovers that "he had a connexion with these regions; they had a hold upon him ... for this English youth, words had been uttered and things done, more than thirty centuries ago, in this stony wilderness, which influenced his opinions and regulated his conduct every day of his life in that distant and seagirt home" (*T* III:194). At the ruins of Jerusalem the narrative of Jewish history is revealed as a lesson not of tragedy and disinheritance, but survival: "Titus destroyed the temple. The religion of Judæa has in turn subverted the fanes which were raised to his father and to himself in their imperial capital: and the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is now worshipped before every altar in Rome" (*T* II:3).

As part of this triumphant narrative, the figure of Sidonia appears as a model of ideal masculinity; Disraeli transforms the stereotype of Jewish abjection into a mentor for English youth. Sidonia's status as a Jew creates a one-man ghetto: "His religion walled him out from the pursuits of a citizen; his riches deprived him of the stimulating anxieties of a man" (*C* II:133). Sidonia's exclusion from political and financial responsibility constitutes a compromised masculinity, yet it also guarantees an important freedom: he is "independent of creed, independent of country,  

---

independent even of character" (C II:133). His indeterminacy further manifests itself in emotional frigidity, a striking contrast to the contemporary stereotype of the lecherous Jew. So far from the stereotype is Sidonia, that "the individual never touched him. Woman was to him a toy, man a machine"; indeed, in these comedies of marriage his lack of sensibility is "perhaps a great deficiency" (C II:133-4). Disraeli ascribes hardiness, rather than profligacy, to Sidonia's "race"; it is a temperament "peculiar to the East", a psychological manifestation of its "barren" desert landscape, but one which "befits conquerors and legislators" (C II:134-5). Sidonia's cold intellectuality is impervious even to the manipulative Princess Lucretia Colonna, who finds herself defeated in a struggle to engage his attention: "She could not contend with that intelligent, yet inscrutable, eye; with that manner so full of interest and respect, and yet so tranquil" (C II:169). In this detachment, then, Sidonia sets an example to the young heroes still distracted from political ambition by female sexuality.

Moreover, for Sidonia, sprung from a family of international capitalists, inheriting the culture of cosmopolitanism without the taint of its trade, statelessness is an aid to universal wisdom. Sidonia "was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental": the wandering Jew as polymath, his toughness produced by his diasporic identity (C II:131). Solidarity with "all the clever outcasts of the world" gives him access to "knowledge of strange and hidden things" (C II:136, 137). Whereas conversionists commonly characterised Jews as "prejudiced" in resisting Christianity, Disraeli presents Sidonia's "absolute freedom from prejudice, which was the compensatory possession of a man without a country" as a political virtue (C II:132). This is where his only pleasure lies, in his ability to deconstruct the world, "to contrast the hidden motive, with the public pretext, of transactions" (C II:137). The penetrating gaze of the Wandering Jew of gothic literature is refigured as a diplomatic skill. In a country in which political culture has

6 In eighteenth-century England there was a "common prejudicial notion that Jews were exceptionally lustful and that their wealth, when put at the service of their sexual longings, was a threat to English womanhood". Todd M Endelman, The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830. Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 130. See also Frank Felsenstein, Anti-Semitic Stereotypes. A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 55.

7 For example, Joseph Ben Joseph's review in the conversionist periodical The Jewish Herald of "Faith Strengthened", a defence of Judaism translated by Moses Mocatta, uses a typical formulation: "May the Lord 'take away the stony heart' of bigotry and prejudice from our Jewish brethren". See The Jewish Herald 7 (1852): 133.

8 Matthew Lewis' Wandering Jew in The Monk (1796), for example, is described in these terms: "He was a man of majestic presence; his countenance was strongly marked, and his eyes were large, black, and sparkling; yet there was something in his look which, the moment that I saw him, inspired me with a secret awe, not to say horror". The Jew's evil eye had been part of folkloric myth since the Middle Ages, but was particularly invoked by Romantic writers using the Wandering Jew as a figure of awe and horror. For further discussion of this
become impossibly corrupted by factional interests, only the outsider is fit for the role of mentor to the new generation. Only Sidonia has a perspective beyond party politics, to see that future hope lies not in a change of government, but in a change in political organisation: he advises "England should think more of the community and less of the government" (C II:176). When Sidonia tells the admiring Coningsby "Action is not for me ... I am of that faith that the Apostles professed before they followed their Master", Disraeli is constructing, within these novels of male heroism, a role of significant status for the man compelled to inaction (C I:256-7). The unemancipated Jew, far from being politically impotent, is the man behind politics, the "dreamer of dreams" (C I:254).

Sidonia's presence in the texts also provides the occasion for several meditations on the significance of Jewish history and the Jewish diaspora. However in contrast to the novels' endorsement of national unity through miscegenation, Sidonia presents an alternative narrative of racial separatism. In the chapter on Sidonia's ancestry in Coningsby Disraeli offers an ambivalent account of the relationship between the Jewish "race" and the nations with whom they share territory and culture. The effect of the Catholic Inquisitions on the Jews of Arragon is seen, as in Aguilar's contemporaneous Records of Israel, as a tragic and misplaced severing of the relationship between a people and the culture which was its creation and therefore its rightful heritage, "the delightful land wherein they had lived for centuries, the beautiful cities they had raised, the universities from which Christendom drew for ages its most precious lore" (C II:123). Sidonia's own forebears meanwhile, are not victims, but retain their identity as crypto-Jews (Marranos) whilst rising to "great offices" in the Catholic governing and clerical institutions (C II:124). This history, like Aguilar's, implies that before and, in the case of the Marranos, despite the Inquisition, Christian Spain continued to benefit from the incorporation of the Jews in its cultural and political life. In a later generation Sidonia's father becomes "lord and master of the money-market of the world" but looks forward to directing "his energies to great objects of public benefit" (C II:126, 127). Sidonia's ancestral history, then, is one in which the Jews' privately practised religion has never compromised their national loyalty; Sidonia himself is "an Englishman, and taught from his cradle to be proud of being an Englishman" (C II:128). Dispersion and diaspora, as Eva suggests in Tancred, ensure survival: "if you wish to make a race endure, rely upon it you should expatriate them. Conquer them, and they may blend with their conquerors; exile them, and they will live apart and for ever" (T II:52). However the chapter ends with a significant shift from history to racial theory. Moving seamlessly from the

trope see Edgar Rosenberg. From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish stereotypes in English fiction (London: Peter Owen, 1960), 214.
narrative of Iberian Jewry to a more "scientific" analysis of its meaning, it offers in conclusion a racial historiography of toughness, framed coyly as Sidonia's own philosophical reflections on his origin:

Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race...

An unmixed race of a first-rate organisation are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a ceremony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncrasy.

... To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure, and to the segregating genius of their great Lawgiver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races, who presume to persecute them, but who periodically wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish, in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed (C II:138-140).

It is difficult to see precisely how this theory is to inspire Coningsby. The significance of the Jewish "race" in world history has as little relevance to a novel about the changing political culture of contemporary Britain as to Disraeli's later biography of Lord George Bentinck.9 There seems to be a striking non sequitur in the linkage of contemporary Toryism and ethnography: Sidonia tells the eager young Englishman that "the Jews, Coningsby, are essentially Tories. Toryism indeed is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe ... The fact is, you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian organization. It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature" (C II:200). Furthermore Sidonia's insistence on the principle of racial purity for historical survival disturbs the closure of each narrative, which emphasises the regenerative power of miscegenation. Daniel Bivona draws attention to a similar inconsistency in the endings of the novels, which appear to show the symbolic reunification of divided classes, but finally reveal these divisions to be less clearly marked. Coningsby discovers that his own mother nearly married Edith's manufacturer father, Egremont finds that Sybil is the heiress to the estate adjacent to his own family's, and Tancred realises his "connexion" with Eva's land and culture. Bivona identifies here "the tension between the imperative to incorporate the alien - the exogamous necessity - and the contrary demand for racial and class purity - the endogamous ideal", which fissures the texts.10

9 See Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography, (1852) chapter 24, "The Jewish Question", which similarly interrupts the narrative.

10 Daniel Bivona, Desire and contradiction. Imperial visions and domestic debates in Victorian literature (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 16. In Tancred, most explicitly of all, this tension is left unresolved at the end of the novel: "If miscegenation (and empire) is a gesture of cultural reinvigoration and revitalization - if the marriage of Eva and Tancred is to inaugurate a theologico-imperial merger of creeds and cultures - then it must take place regardless of the fact that it undermines the very Sidonian idea of race and class purity which is offered to Tancred as a model for the English aristocracy to follow" (24). Bivona, who in this chapter convincingly links the three novels in terms of their common project of "colonizing" the alien, domestic or foreign, sees the novels' contradictions as "the literary expression of an ambivalent imperial desire" (ibid). For another
One explanation for this anomaly might be that the function of a discourse on Jewish racial purity in Disraeli's writings at this time was primarily personal rather than ideological; it was part of a series of strategies through which Disraeli, in his first decade as a Member of Parliament, was able to redefine the significance of his own Jewish birth. Concentrating on Spanish history enables Disraeli to reconstruct a narrative of Jewishness which stresses the Jews' "very ancient and noble" pedigree, central role in national culture and loyal service to the state (C II:117). The creation of Sidonia, whose descent from crypto-Jews has deprived him of neither ancient heritage nor material prosperity and political power, conveniently avoids the urgent contemporary question of the Jews' political status in the British context, as Disraeli himself was doing in parliamentary debates at this time.  

During these years Disraeli refused to vote against his party's opposition to emancipation for British Jews. His construction of Jewishness in Coningsby is consistent with his strategic position at this period. He sees the Jews as a racial elite rather than a religious minority; he displaces the excluded with the exclusive. So, although he suggests that miscegenation is the destiny of England, Disraeli also theorises about the racial purity of the Jews, in order to redefine them as an elite unharmed by the march of progress and the decay of civilisations, an "aristocracy of Nature".  

Thus, Sidonia's colleague, the Jerusalem banker Adam Besso, is an embodiment of the Jewish connection to ancient purity, and his physique shows his uncompromised masculinity.  

Besso


12 Todd M Endelman suggests that Disraeli's "enthusiasm for illiberal ideas reflected his distance from mainstream Anglo-Jewry, which was then struggling to gain full political emancipation and had pinned its hopes for success on the triumph of liberalism". Todd M Endelman, "The Frankaus of London: A Study in Radical Assimilation, 1837-1967," Jewish History 8 (1994): 125. Indeed, Disraeli often sought to emphasise his distance from contemporary Anglo-Jews: in a letter to his sister Sarah in 1850, for example, he wrote satirically of "a banquet at the Antony Rothschild's, given in honour of the impending fate of a brother-in-law, Montefiore, and a daughter of Baron de Goldsmid. The Hebrew aristocracy assembled in great force and numbers, mitigated by the Dowager of Morley, Charles Vilers, Abel Smiths, and Thackeray! I think he will sketch them in the last number of Pendennis..." See Benjamin Disraeli, letter of 26 April 1850, in Lord Beaconsfield's correspondence with his sister 1832-1852, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1886), 244. The reference to wealthy London Jews as the "Hebrew aristocracy" and the "impending fate" of their marriage, is here clearly ironic; Disraeli identifies himself more closely with Thackeray who will produce a similarly satirical "sketch". The "Hebrew aristocracy" of Victorian London and the "aristocracy of Nature" of Disraeli's rhetoric are distinctly different; indeed, I would argue, embracing "illiberal" concepts like the "aristocracy of Nature" enabled Disraeli to "distance" himself from the "Hebrew aristocracy".
was a man much above the common height, being at least six feet two without his red cap of Fez, though so well proportioned, that you would not at the first glance give him credit for such a stature. He was extremely handsome, retaining ample remains of one of those countenances of blended regularity and lustre which are found only in the cradle of the human race. Though he was fifty years of age, time had scarcely brought a wrinkle to his still brilliant complexion, while his large, soft, dark eyes, his arched brow, his well-proportioned nose, his small mouth and oval cheek presented altogether one of those faces which, in spite of long centuries of physical suffering and moral degradation, still haunt the cities of Asia Minor, the isles of Greece, and the Syrian coasts. It is the archetype of manly beauty, the tradition of those races who have wandered the least from Paradise; and who, notwithstanding many vicissitudes and much misery, are still acted upon by the same elemental agencies as influenced the Patriarchs; are warmed by the same sun, freshened by the same air, and nourished by the same earth as cheered and invigorated and sustained the earlier generations (T II:13-14).

As I will be arguing in the remainder of this chapter, Disraeli's reformulations are not simply strategies to defend his own idiosyncratic position as a "Jew" within the Tory Party. Both the unifying pattern of the narratives and the discourse of racial separatism which seems to disrupt them are part of a discussion of the relationships between nation, heroism and masculinity which Disraeli was developing in the 1840s. In this he was not only revising the stereotype of Jewish manhood, but was contributing to a wider contemporary debate about masculinity and British political culture.

Disraeli had attempted to write a revisionist Jewish history several years before his election to Parliament, in The Wondrous Tale of Airoy (1833), an epic tale of tragic heroism. The story of Jewish liberation fighters offers an unconventionally tough image of mediaeval Jews, but the novel is nevertheless ambivalent about the possibility of Jewish national autonomy which it raises. Airoy is set in twelfth-century Hamadan, where the Jews, dispossessed of national autonomy, live as a tributary people under Seljuk rule. Alroy, descendant of the house of David, the messianic line, and heir to the title of "Prince of the Captivity", is a Jewish Hamlet, galled at the weakness of the Jews and his own inability to take action against the humiliation of diaspora existence. Inspired by the Cabbalist Jabaster he embarks on a journey to Jerusalem, whose ruins are now "like the last gladiator in an amphitheatre of desolation".13 But Alroy experiences a vision of a transfigured Jerusalem and a godlike figure, which he believes to be a confirmation of his own mystical election as messiah. He unites the "singular and scattered people" of the diaspora into a nation and leads them to liberation, conquest and empire (II:41). As the new "master of the East" he turns the Turks from rulers into ruled, but only to become their tyrant in his turn (II:66).

However although the novel charts the tragedy of pride - the hero finally realises that "he who places implicit confidence in his genius, will find himself some day

---

utterly defeated and deserted" - *Alroy* is also a complex discussion of relationships between race, religion and national identity, linked in interesting ways with Disraeli's later writing (III:34). While the British Parliament was debating the limits of the Protestant state, Disraeli's novel uses the story of Jewish national liberation to consider universalist and particularist definitions of the nation. *Alroy* satirises the old rabbis in Jerusalem, "the forlorn remnant of Israel, captives in their own city" but bound by religious pedantry to perpetuate their own disenfranchisement (I:213). In contrast the novel's poetic diction valorises the romantic nationalism which inspires Alroy as he looks upon a ruined city of the East:

> All was silent: alone the Hebrew Prince stood amid the regal creation of the Macedonian captains. Empires and dynasties flourish and pass away; the proud metropolis becomes a solitude, the conquering kingdom even a desert; but Israel still remains, still a descendant of the most ancient kings breathed amid these royal ruins, and still the eternal sun could never rise without gilding the towers of living Jerusalem. A word, a deed, a single day, a single man, and we might be a nation (I:100-I).

Shifting in and out of past and present, evoking the present thoughts of the hero and an unspecific, eternal present, the "we" of Alroy's people and the "we" of *Alroy*'s readers, the narrative identifies the reader with the project of national liberation and suggests the power of the nation embodied in a charismatic hero. However in the course of the novel Alroy comes to temper this mystical nostalgia with a modernising politics, and to shift his rootedness in place and past towards a concept of the nation expanding indefinitely in time and territory. Eventually he rejects Jabaster's vision of a particularist "national existence" based on a fixed history and religious affiliation: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem - ever harping on Jerusalem. With all his lore, he is a narrow-minded zealot, whose dreaming memory would fondly make a future like the past" (II:61). Instead he favours an imperial, inclusive and expansionist notion of the nation, embracing both Jews and non-Jews and defined by a chivalric ethic of tolerance. Alroy's inclusive conception of Judaism appropriates Christianity's traditional claim to universalism (as Disraeli himself was to do in a later political debate). Moreover, in the novel this universalism is the source of Alroy's military success. He understands that the only way of attaining permanent political empowerment is to renounce the narrow religious definition of Judaism for a national and inclusive one:

> 'Universal empire must not be founded on sectarian prejudices and exclusive rights. Jabaster would massacre the Moslemin like Amalek [the archetypal enemy of the Jews]; the Moslemin, the vast majority, and most valuable portion, of my subjects. He would depopulate my empire, that it might not be said that Ishmael shared the heritage of Israel. Fanatic!...We must conciliate. Something must be done to bind the conquered to our conquering fortunes' (II:100-I)

Alroy is seeking to redefine the Jews as a nation in precisely the terms that Disraeli employs to discuss the future of England in the political trilogy of the 1840s, where
racial and religious divisions are transcended in the name of a perceived common political ideal. Indeed the novel shows this to be a successful strategy: in the Jewish army "the greater part were Hebrews, but many Arabs, wearied of the Turkish yoke, and many gallant adventurers from the Caspian, easily converted from a vague idolatry to a religion of conquest, swelled the ranks of the army of the 'Lord of Hosts'" (II:46-7).

However in Alroy, in contrast to the later novels, this universalist nationalism, or imperialism, is unsustainable. While the narrative proclaims "Now what a glorious man was David Alroy, lord of the mightiest empire in the world, and wedded to the most beautiful Princess, surrounded by a prosperous and obedient people, guarded by invincible armies, one on whom Earth showered all its fortune, and Heaven all its favour - and all by the power of his own genius!" (II:171), at the same moment Alroy's generals are plotting against him, convinced that "our national existence is in its last agony" (II:187). The novel's movement towards tragedy is underscored by pessimism about the possibility of a permanent Jewish national existence. Jabaster warns "We must exist alone. To preserve that loneliness, is the great end and essence of our law...Sire, you may be King of Bagdad, but you cannot, at the same time, be a Jew" (II:140). In making the Jews conquerors, Alroy has universalised Judaism, and destroyed the particularist motivation of his fighters. Loss of military unity is inevitably linked to Alroy's own loss of identity. Empire, in fact, has made him powerless rather than powerful. He has conquered the East militarily but it has conquered him culturally: "The Lord's annointed is a prisoner now in the light grating of a bright kiosk, and never gazes on the world he conquered" (II:174). Alroy's erotic involvement necessarily compromises his ability as a national leader; the novel links his inability to maintain political vision with a loss of masculine identity. Conquest of the East, marriage with the Muslim princess Schirene, feminises him: "Egypt and Syria, even farthest Ind, send forth their messengers to greet Alroy, the great, the proud, the invincible. And where is he? In a soft Paradise of girls and eunuchs, crowned with flowers, listening to melting lays, and the wild trilling of the amorous lute" (II:174-5). Schirene's eventual betrayal is a final confirmation of the novel's mistrust of miscegenation. Indeed, it is only by reasserting his Jewish identity in martyrdom at the end of the novel, that Alroy regains his heroism. Resisting the temptation of life, and facing death rather than conversion to Islam, he enrages his captor the King of Karasmé who cannot believe that Alroy is choosing physical torture rather than a life of physical comfort. But Alroy no longer identifies himself in individualist terms, nor indeed does his martyrdom look to an eternal prosperity of the soul. Instead his words signal his self-definition in communal and historical terms: 
"... my people stand apart from other nations, and ever will despite of suffering"
In this final rejection of luxury for physical pain, Alroy reverses the identification with Schirene and re-establishes his masculine and Jewish difference. The tragic movement of the narrative in charting the collapse of the Jewish nation-state, and the reduction of Alroy from messiah to martyr is not, however, all there is to Alroy. A central function of the novel is its attempt to write the Jews into the fashionable discourse of mediaeval nostalgia. Unambiguously excluded from the European Christian tradition of chivalry recreated in Scott's influential *Ivanhoe* (1819), the Jews are in *Alroy* central to an alternative history of mediaeval warfare set in the East. In striking contrast to their role in *Ivanhoe*, they actively participate in the pageantry of masculine violence:

> The waving of banners, the flourish of trumpets, the neighing of steeds, and the glitter of spears! On the distant horizon, they gleam like the morning, when the gloom of the night, shivers bright into day (II:89)

However Alroy's warrior spirit is crucially modified by the etiquette of chivalry. His strategy of political inclusivism, for example, is represented as a form of chivalric *largesse*. The language of the envoy to Alroy from the defeated Turks stresses this understanding of political toleration:

> 'Whatever may be your decision, we must bow to your decree with the humility that recognizes superior force. Yet we are not without hope. We cannot forget that it is our good fortune not to be addressing a barbarous chieftain unable to sympathize with the claims of civilization, the creations of art, and the finer impulses of humanity' (II:80).

Alroy responds by granting protection and tolerance of faith to Bagdad, a decision which begins his renunciation of Jewish particularism, but which also defines his place in the history of chivalry as a knightly champion of national reconciliation, like Scott's Richard the Lionheart in *Ivanhoe*. Alroy's establishment of an ethos of Jewish chivalry is finally more important than his own success as a military leader. His sister Miriam consoles him in these terms when he mourns his treachery at the end of the novel:

> 'You have shown what we can do, and shall. Your memory alone is inspiration. A great career, although baulked of its end, is still a landmark of human energy. Failure, when sublime, is not without its purpose. Great deeds are great legacies, and work with wondrous usury. By what Man has done, we learn what Man can do; and gauge the power and prospects of our race' (III:76).

The specifically Christian basis of chivalric values becomes more evident as the novel progresses. When it moves into its final phase, in which Alroy is captured and humiliated, the style shifts, using shorter, simpler sentences and explicit references to the life of Christ:

> A tear stole down his cheek; the bitter drop stole to his parched lips, he asked the nearest horseman for water. The guard gave him a wetted sponge, with which, with difficulty, he contrived to wipe his lips, and then he let it fall to the ground. The Karasmian struck him.
They arrived at the river. The prisoner was taken from the camel and placed in a covered boat. After some hours, they stopped and disembarked at a small village. Alroy was placed upon a donkey with his back to its head. His clothes were soiled and tattered. The children pelted him with mud. An old woman, with a fanatic curse, placed a crown of paper on his brow. With difficulty his brutal guards prevented their victim from being torn to pieces. And in such fashion, towards noon of the fourteenth day, David Alroy again entered Bagdad (111:24-5).

Indeed it is primarily the novel's Christian and Romantic terms, which privilege uncompromising martyrdom over the pragmatic preservation of life, that enable the defeat of Alroy to be figured as triumphant. Moreover, the evocation of the story of Christ in particular suggests that the focus of the tragedy is not so much pride and its fall as the destruction of an enlightened leader by bigotry and pharisism.

Furthermore, if the novel is unable to conceive of Jewish toughness except in Christological terms, it is also unable to maintain a notion of Jewish integrity except in domestic terms. Only Alroy's sister Miriam, a figure of domestic but not erotic love, succeeds in sustaining a sense of Jewishness uncompromised by ambition or prejudice. This is only because unlike other definitions of Jewishness in the text hers does not require political expression. In the opening pages of the novel, countering Alroy's aspirations for political restoration, she suggests that liberation depends on prioritising the present moment and familial relations:

'What we have been, Alroy, is a bright dream; and what we may be, at least as bright a hope; and for what we are, thou art my brother. In thy love I find present felicity, and value more thy chance embraces and thy scanty smiles than all the vanished splendour of our race, our gorgeous gardens, and our glittering halls' (1:29).

In adversity the nature of her Jewish and feminine virtue is revealed. Her elderly, broken uncle is supported by Miriam who, "amid all her harrowing affliction, could ever spare to the protector of her youth a placid countenance, a watchful eye, a gentle voice, and a ready hand. Her religion and her virtue, the strength of her faith, and the inspiration of her innocence, supported this pure and hapless lady amid all her undeserved and unparalleled sorrows" (III:64-5). Crucially, her virtue is unaffected by her political status; national liberation means nothing to her: "For Miriam, exalted station had brought neither cares nor crimes. It had, as it were, only rendered her charity universal, and her benevolence omnipotent" (III:69). Here, feminine virtue is constructed as transcendent, independent of political status, unaffected by either oppression or autonomy. Disraeli's eulogistic language (the novel was dedicated to his own sister) suggests that it is Miriam who alone maintains an authentic Jewish identity: "She could not accuse herself - this blessed woman - she could not accuse herself, even in this searching hour of self-knowledge - she could not accuse herself, with all her meekness, and modesty, and humility, of having for a moment forgotten her dependence on her God, or her duty to her neighbour" (III:69). The contrast with
the corruption of Alroy is striking. The feminised, domesticated definition of Jewishness, which the Anglo-Jewish writer Grace Aguilar was to exploit so successfully during the 1840s, here offers a pragmatic and more enduring alternative to the romantic, militant and ultimately tragic political nationalism of Alroy. Meanwhile, Disraeli's own writings of the 1840s show a crucial reworking of Alroy's concerns with the relationships between Jewishness, masculinity and national unity.

Indeed, if martyrdom and domesticity, "feminised" constructions of Jewishness, had a certain appeal for Disraeli in Alroy, the association of Jewishness and femininity was more commonly invoked pejoratively. Disraeli's preoccupation with Jewish toughness in the "political trilogy", I believe, must be read in the context of contemporary ideas about gender and Jewishness that were constantly projected onto his writing. Despite his obvious adoption of the language and thematics of political debate in the 1840s, reviewers continued to refer to the dandy style he had paraded twenty years previously, and this was now clearly inseparable from his Jewishness. Thackeray, for example, deliberately linked Coningsby with the decadence of Disraeli's first publication, the "dandy" novel Vivian Grey (1826) rather than the political discourse through which the 1840s novels attempt to break with the past:

Coningsby possesses all the happy elements of popularity. It is personal, it is witty, it is sentimental, it is outrageously fashionable, charmingly malicious, exquisitely novel, seemingly very deep, but in reality very easy of comprehension, and admirably absurd; for you do not only laugh at the personages whom the author holds up to ridicule, but you laugh at the author too, whose coxcombs are incessantly amusing. They are quite unlike the vapid cool coxcombs of an English dandy; they are picturesque, wild, and outrageous; and as the bodily Disraeli used to be seen some years ago about town, arrayed in green inexpressibles with a gold stripe down the seams, an ivory cane, and, for what we know, a peacock's feather in his hat - Disraeli the writer in like manner assumes a magnificence never thought of by our rigid northern dandies, and astonishes by a luxury of conceit which is quite oriental.¹⁴

Thackeray uses the associations of dandyism and oriental luxury to denigrate Disraeli's realism; the satire in Coningsby is thus "amusing" rather than coherent political critique. George Henry Lewes, for whom the publication of the fifth edition of Coningsby in 1849 was an occasion to attack Disraeli's ability as both writer and statesman, drew implicit parallels between the two spheres: "It is all a show 'got up' for the occasion; and the showman having no belief in his marionettes, you have no belief in them". Lewes also questioned Disraeli's capacity for literary realism. He detected "a want of truthfulness" in Disraeli's literary production, which was essentially shallow because "he does not work from inwards, but contents himself with externals". Towards the end of his harangue, moreover, Lewes revealed the explanation for this literary style in Disraeli's "race": "His writings abound with ...

instances of tawdry falsehood. They are thrown in probably out of that love of ornament, which is characteristic of his race: they are the mosaic chains and rings with which the young 'gentlemen of the Hebrew persuasion' adorn their persons, to give a faux air de gentilhomme to that which no adornment can disguise. In this account, the Jew decorates his body in an effort to pass for a gentleman, but only succeeds in accentuating his effeminacy. Both Lewes and Thackeray link Jewishness with inauthentic representation by questioning the Jew's essential masculinity.

Moreover the "feminised" model of Jewishness was also used by Jews themselves and by their supporters during the debates about the remission of Parliamentary disabilities which continued throughout the 1840s. As I have shown in Chapter 4, Disraeli's contemporary Grace Aguilar, whose best-selling historical romances and domestic novels for Jewish and non-Jewish women avoid the language of political theory, nevertheless responded and contributed indirectly to the debate about the political status of contemporary British Jews. Whereas Disraeli remythologised the Jews as a racial elite and thus assimilated them to an aristocratic ideology, Aguilar, by using the terms of bourgeois domestic writing, refigured the Jews as pious and respectable middle-class citizens. Aguilar's desexualised Jewesses and Disraeli's asexual Sidonia are similar responses to contemporary stereotypes which endorsed the political and social exclusion of Jews by suggesting that they posed a sexual threat. Instead, as in The Vale of Cedars, or, The Martyr (1850), the virtuous heroine evokes sympathy and pity for her persecution. The genre of the domestic novel, as I have argued, was a product of the culture of Evangelicalism, typically emphasising the bibliocentric and spiritual aspects of religion, both of which were appropriated by Aguilar in her representations of Judaism. Aguilar showed Judaism too to be a feminised "religion of the heart", and, drawing implicitly on Evangelical philosemitism, insisted on the theological proximity of Anglicanism and Judaism. This enabled her to produce an "apologetic" account of contemporary Judaism, which diminished its difference from the Anglican majority culture and presented its toleration as unthreatening. Aguilar's approach is reflected in the parliamentary debate.

18 As I argued in Chapter 2, Scott's Rebecca of York in Ivanhoe (1819) was the most famous beautiful and dangerous Jewess of the first half of the nineteenth century. The lecherous Jewish male was also a common stereotype from the eighteenth-century (see note 6 above).
in the 1840s. While Whigs argued that the Jews were entitled to the right to sit in Parliament like other Englishmen, it was also important to show that this would not disturb the Anglican establishment:

They are essentially a non-proselyting people; they are a people who cannot come, like a dissenting sect or the Roman Catholic Church, into collision with the Established Church of this country; they can wage none of that warfare which distracts the different sects of professing Christians. They are men of peace, studying and pursuing the arts of peace.19

By emphasising the private nature of Jewishness, the pro-emancipationists reinforced the passive image of the Jews.

It is in this context that I want to examine Disraeli’s eventual intervention in the debate on Jewish disabilities. Although Disraeli located "the Jews" at the centre of his political thought in the 1830s and 1840s, he showed little interest in the public debate about the political emancipation of British Jews. During this time Disraeli’s only novel of Jewish liberation is set in a distant country and time, and fails to reconcile Jewishness with either diaspora or national existence; in his realist novels of contemporary England the single Jewish presence is the extraordinary figure of Sidonia, who does not require political rights to exercise power nationally and internationally, however much he finds the theoretical restriction "absurd" (C II:198). In fact, as Abraham GILAM has commented, despite the energetic discussion of the history of the Jews in Disraeli’s novels, "the enthusiasm displayed in his rhetoric was not matched by his actions" as a Member of Parliament.20

However in 1847, in response to the bill proposed by the Whig Prime Minister Lord John Russell enabling Baron Lionel de Rothschild to take up the seat to which he had been elected by the City of London, Disraeli finally broke his silence and defied his party to declare support for Jewish emancipation. Even on this occasion his terms were those of his own literary fantasy, recalling Sidonia’s eulogies to Jewish power: "Has not the Church of Christ - the Christian Church, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant - made the history of the Jews the most celebrated history in the world? On every sacred day, you read to the people the exploits of Jewish heroes, the proofs of Jewish devotion, the brilliant annals of past Jewish magnificence".21 But the 1847 debate on the Jews was also, paradoxically, an opportunity for Disraeli to

---

19 Hansard, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847): 1271. The vocabulary of violence here also draws another contrast between Catholic and Jewish emancipation. Although Whigs saw Catholic emancipation as an extension of toleration, many defendants of the Protestant state believed that Parliament had been politically blackmailed into accepting the measure; Bankes claimed "they were told that the admission of Roman Catholics into the House would entirely remove the troubles of Ireland - that it would disarm the Catholic priesthood of those powers which they illegally exercised at the altar" (1308). Romilly, in response, argued that admitting the Jews would show that indeed Catholic emancipation had been a matter of principle not expediency (1311).


21 Hansard, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847): 1328.
demonstrate his loyalty to the Tory party. The Tory opposition to the measure was based on a belief in the necessity of preserving the Christian nature of the legislature, whereas Jews had become "natural supporters of those Whiggish and other reforming groups within parliaments which, under the guidance of such politicians as Fox and Canning, moved to espouse the cause of civil and religious liberty". Disraeli's argument in favour of emancipation however eschewed the language of liberalism and replaced it with terms recognisably Tory. The Jews should not be excluded from the legislature, he argued, because their religion was the basis of the Christian state. In other words, the legislature should indeed remain exclusively Christian, but it should be recognised that the Jews were always already included in this elite. Disraeli thus denied the grounds for the definition of the Jews as a religious minority; on the contrary, he contended, the religious definition of Jewishness proved its connection with Christianity, the religious majority.

In this argument Disraeli draws out the political implications of the Evangelical theology of the 1830s and 1840s which I discussed in Chapter 3. The conversionist periodical *The Jewish Herald*, for example, had declared a few months earlier that "to the fullest extent we admit the divinity of Judaism. Christianity is founded on that admission ... What lover of his race can think without emotion of the service done to humanity and religion by the great men who were produced, nourished and cultivated by Judaism? ... what Christian can despise it when he remembers that in its lap was nurtured the greatest Being whom the world has ever seen, our Saviour and Lord?". Indeed, the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews saw Disraeli as exemplary for his philosemitic Christianity: "Though a Christian, he was proud of his Jewish origin, and ever upheld the traditions of his race". This argument also constitutes the narrative of *Tancred*, which was published in the same year as Disraeli's pro-emancipation speech. The hero's journey from England to Jerusalem enacts his return to the Jewish roots of his Christian culture, and in a slight shift of focus this is connected to the question of the status of contemporary British Jews: "The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-
working people of England are secured in every seven days a day of rest by the laws of Sinai. And yet they persecute the Jews, and hold up to odium the race to whom they are indebted for the sublime legislation which alleviates the inevitable lot of the labouring multitude" (T II:194-5). The Hebrew Bible is seen as the origin not only of Christian legislation, but of British political culture itself. Turning the Whig language of English liberties against itself, Disraeli claims that those very liberties were defined by Jewish culture: "Vast as the obligations of the whole human family are to the Hebrew race, there is no portion of the modern populations so much indebted to them as the British people. It was 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon' that won the boasted liberties of England; chanting the same canticles that cheered the heart of Judah amid their glens, the Scotch, upon their hill-sides, achieved their religious freedom" (T II:196). Whereas in Coningsby Disraeli had created a racial definition of Judaism to underpin his racialist historiography, in 1847 he linked this more closely to the religious definition of Judaism in order to reinforce Tancred's argument that religious culture could be the foundation for a new national, even imperial, unity. The strategy was useful for Disraeli personally: in place of an uncomfortable silence it reiterated his public commitment to traditional Tory values - the Church, established institutions and exclusive nation. Employing the discourse of Evangelical philosemitism in a very different way to Grace Aguilar, he declared that "I am prepared to lay down the broadest principles as to the importance of maintaining a Christian character in this House and in this country; and yet it is on this very ground you will found and find the best argument for the admission of the Jews". 26 Contrary to the fears of anti-emancipationists in his party, Disraeli argued, Jewish emancipation would reinforce rather than undermine the Christian state.27

But Disraeli's sudden public espousal of Jewish emancipation also allowed the articulation of a new kind of Toryism. Gilam suggests that Disraeli's change of heart at this stage was expedient for the Tory party as it facilitated their own necessary adjustment of strategy on Jewish emancipation. Following the passage of relief acts for Protestant Dissenters and Catholics in the 1820s and 1830s, the Tory party's continued commitment to "the exclusion of Jews on account of the form of the oaths became increasingly anachronistic. British society was in the process of establishing religious freedom and nothing now could set the clock back". 28 However, as David Feldman has argued, the debates about emancipation were not so much a simple effect of increasing liberalisation, as an expression of competing political definitions

26 Hansard, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847): 1325-6.
of the nation. Indeed, the trilogy as a whole seeks to establish a political ideology distinct from both Whig and high Tory traditions. In *Coningsby* and *Sybil* Disraeli had demonstrated the capacity of Young England ideology to embrace both middle- and working-class concerns. Similarly, in his racial representations in *Tancred* and his parliamentary speech of the same year, Disraeli was displaying the flexibility of a new Toryism which could incorporate previously excluded groups within an inclusive concept of the nation. In this sense, Disraeli's idealised Hebrews are directly connected to questions of contemporary national identity; they are part of a wide-ranging contemporary political debate on the limits of Englishness. As Egremont had argued in *Sybil*, "the future principle of English politics will not be a levelling principle; not a principle adverse to privileges, but favourable to their extension" (S III:33-4). In these writings, moreover, Disraeli was doing more than extending the Tory definition of Englishness to include the Jews. He was also seeking to alter the terms of the debate. Disraeli's argument for Jewish emancipation in 1847 was part of the attempt begun in *Coningsby* to rewrite Jewish historiography, transforming it into a virile political myth.

An important aspect of this transformation is the new relationship between Jewishness and femininity which emerges in these texts. In *Tancred*, Disraeli satirises the Laurella sisters, daughters of a Syrian merchant who "were ashamed of their race". Sophonisbe, in particular, seems to recall Aguilar's approach: emphasising toleration, modesty and an unquestioning belief in the progress of civilisation, she felt persuaded that the Jews would not be so much disliked if they were better known; that all they had to do was to imitate as closely as possible the habits and customs of the nation among whom they chanced to live; and she really did believe that eventually, such was the progressive spirit of the age, a difference in religion would cease to be regarded, and that a respectable Hebrew, particularly if well dressed and well mannered, might be able to pass through society without being discovered, or at least noticed (T III:85-6).

---

29 Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 36-8. Feldman argues that the distinction between the Whig pro-emancipationist position and Tory anti-emancipationist arguments should not only be seen as the battle of modern liberalism against anachronistic prejudice. In fact both are based on a similar concern with national identity, which each defines differently according to a distinctive historiography. Whereas Tory opposition to emancipation cited a fundamental link between Christianity, the nation and political authority, Whigs like Russell and Macaulay argued for emancipation as a civil right, although "this argument was interwoven with an equally significant concern with the nature of the collectivity to which the individuals belonged ... Because the Englishness of English history was bound to the idea of individual liberties protected by the law, the language of rights, the argument for Jewish emancipation constituted an argument about the nation as well as the individual". Feldman also points to the importance of the reform crisis as a context for debates about Jewish emancipation: "The removal of Jewish disabilities was foreseen as a significant step towards shifting the balance of the constitution. This movement, it was imagined, would be not only towards an electorate of free-choosing individuals but also towards the electorate as constituting the nation ... the struggles to remove Jewish disabilities became occasions to prescribe a new relation between the government, the nation and the people" (43-5).
Disraeli is equally resistant to the other contemporary image of Jewish female passivity, the persecuted martyr. *Tancred's* Jewish heroine Eva resembles the other heroines of the "political trilogy" more than the stereotype of the suffering Jewess (like Alroy's sister Miriam, or the Moss sisters' heroines, for example). Her sexuality manifests itself in racial pride, as she responds to insult with spirit: "Tancred looked at her with deep interest as her eye flashed fire, and her beautiful cheek was for a moment suffused with the crimson cloud of indignant passion" (*T I:II*:51). Because in terms of Disraeli's historiography the Jews are central rather than marginal to Christian civilisation, the Jewess is no longer needed to emphasise their tragic marginalisation. The liberal rhetoric of emancipation, which used the image of feminine weakness to argue for toleration, is replaced by a strikingly different image of the Jewess.

This figure owes much to Rebecca of York, Walter Scott's mediaeval Jewish heroine who, unlike her father, the stereotypically craven Jew, was ready to choose death rather than humiliation. Disraeli looks back to *Ivanhoe* more generally throughout the trilogy for the mediaeval nostalgia which Scott inaugurated with his highly successful novel.  

However, Scott, the Enlightenment rationalist, finally anticipates a modern, united England which has no place for archaic sectarianism - neither Saxon separatism, nor Jewish particularism. Disraeli, in contrast, locates ideal national unity in the past, looking on the one hand to the Jews, and on the other to feudal society for paradigms of faith and social cohesion. In both Scott and Disraeli the figure of the Jewish woman is the central feature of these differing historiographies. But instead of reproducing the vulnerability of Scott's medieval Jewess, who requires redemption by the chivalric hero and Christian society in general, Disraeli emphasises the Jewish woman's own wisdom, courage and racial pride. Eva, like Rebecca, is a wise Jewess, accomplished in theological debate, a skilled healer who opposes violence, and a devoted daughter. In this last aspect, Disraeli reinforces Scott's refutation of the more conventional image of Jessica or Abigail, the treacherous Jewess whose sexual desire makes her defy both religion and patriarchal rule. Yet both Rebecca and Eva, like all literary Jewesses, harbour unspoken desires for forbidden Englishmen. Crucially though, their active role as healer of the sick hero emphasises his subjection, rather than her passivity. Tancred, for example, associates Eva's medical skill with her moral power over him: "he ... recalled her glance of sweet solicitude when, recovered by her skill and her devotion, he recognised the fair stranger whose words had, ere that, touched the recesses of his

---

30 See, for example, Tancred's identification with his crusader ancestor Tancred de Montacute (*T I*:110-1), the link between the working-class nun Sybil and the image of the ruined medieval Abbey of Marney (*S I*:184-90), and the feudal Christmas celebrated at the hall of St Genevieve, where "All classes are mingled in the joyous equality that becomes the season" (*C III*:274).
spirit, and attuned his mind to high and holiest mysteries" (T II:118). Disraeli uses the same strategy as Scott in valorising Jewishness through heroic femininity, and thus appropriates the discourse of medievalism for the Jews insofar as it offers a history not of persecution and passivity but of heroism.

Disraeli’s resistance to the image of the victimised Jewess is, then, part of his refusal of the liberal ideology of Jewish passivity with which it was associated. His reconfiguration of the relationship between gender and Jewishness, is not, moreover, limited to his representation of the Jewish woman. In his novels and in the 1847 debate, Disraeli displaced liberalism’s passive construction of the Jews with a virile rhetoric of Jewishness. He eschewed both apologia for toleration and the plea for justice and civil rights; by publicly arguing instead that the Jews are "unquestionably those to whom you are indebted for no inconsiderable portion of your known religion, and for the whole of your divine knowledge" he reversed the power relationship between Jews and the Christian parliament which had been accepted by both pro- and anti-emancipationists.31 Disraeli’s intervention in the 1847 debate was immediately seen as a confirmation of his personal integrity, even if, as Gilam suggests, its effect was actually shrewdly calculated: "The results of this strategy were profitable; even his enemies admired his courageous and determined vindication of Jewish emancipation".32 Disraeli’s assertion of an unapologetic Jewishness was interpreted as a reinforcement of his own manliness.

Manliness, meanwhile, was not only a concern for Jews in Victorian England. If the representation of a virile Jewishness in Disraeli’s trilogy of novels and 1847 speech was a strategic means of legitimising his own position within the Tory party, it was also a way into an important contemporary debate about the relationship between religion, nation and masculinity. Catherine Hall has powerfully shown how discussions about the politics of ethnicity in the 1860s were informed by conflicting concepts of proper manhood.33 In particular these were articulated as responses to the

31 Hansard, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847): 1323. Disraeli also suggested in Coningsby that the Jews were not in fact in the subservient position implied by most of the debate. In the course of a discussion with Coningsby about the future of English politics, Sidonia warns that the continued exclusion of the Jews from political participation is "impolitic". Borrowing Macaulay’s argument in favour of emancipation Sidonia says that Jews already possess the means of power - property. Therefore it is not only inconsistent but dangerous to the stability of the state to alienate such a powerful section of the population, which at the moment has no choice but to join "the same ranks as the leveller and the latitudinarian, and [be] prepared to support the policy which may even endanger his life and property, rather than tamely continue under a system which seeks to degrade him" (C II:199). These observations are clearly linked to the larger argument of Coningsby in favour of the incorporation of the materially powerful and hence potentially dangerous bourgeoisie into the Tory idea of a ruling class.
33 Catherine Hall, "Competing Masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and the case of Governor Eyre" in Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in
controversy surrounding Governor Eyre's brutal repression of a riot in Jamaica in 1865. The Governor's action gave rise to two middle-class campaigning organisations, the Jamaica Committee led by John Stuart Mill, which pressed for Eyre's prosecution, and the Eyre Defence Committee led by Thomas Carlyle. The competing arguments about the events in Jamaica constructed opposing notions as to what ethnicity signified. For Mill, the Jamaican negroes like all other colonial and domestic subjects, were entitled to justice. For Carlyle the negroes were of an inferior race and therefore not subject to the same laws as whites. However, as Hall argues, "the debate between Carlyle and Mill was about more than the case of Governor Eyre or, indeed, an argument as to what kind of social and political organization there should be in Britain and her colonies. Also at issue between the two men and their followers were different notions as to what constituted a proper English manhood" (277). Underpinning the politics of masculinity for both Mill and Carlyle was the concept of self as independent individual (257). However Mill argued that all humans including women and slaves could with education gain independence, while Carlyle believed in an essentially hierarchical society in which both master and man had the duty of work. Dignity was only achieved through work, and he "had a deep hostility to those who would not work, whether aristocrat or black ... For Carlyle masculinity was associated with strength, with independence and with action" (280, 266).

While Mill's philosophy echoed a long tradition of middle-class abolitionism, the arguments articulated by Carlyle, as Hall shows, began to have a greater currency during the course of the 1850s, when "a more racist discourse became increasingly legitimate". By the 1860s, following the American Civil War, the Indian Mutiny, and the increasing threat of working-class activity around reform, the strength of public support for Governor Eyre indicated a decisive shift in middle-class opinion away from confidence in democracy (275-77). If Carlyle's analysis had thus become mainstream by the mid-1860s, Hall suggests that the publication of his anti-abolitionist essay "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question", in Fraser's Magazine in 1849 marked "an extremely significant moment in the movement of public opinion away from anti-slavery as the respectable orthodoxy and towards more overt forms of racism" (275). But Carlyle's articulation of an hierarchical and authoritarian theory of social organisation as early as 1849, I would argue, was not altogether surprising. These questions, as I have shown, were already being contested publicly earlier in the 1840s, in the parliamentary debate about Jewish disabilities. The pro- and anti-emancipationists based their arguments on opposed conceptions of political authority and English history similar to those of Mill and Carlyle. As David

_Feminism and History_ (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 255-295. Further references to this article will be cited in the text.
Feldman has pointed out, "The defence of Jewish disabilities expressed an hierarchical as well as a religious vision of political authority". The opponents of emancipation, who believed in an intrinsic link between Christianity and Englishness, saw Jews as "subjects" to whom privileges might be granted, whereas the supporters of the Jews saw them as "fellow-citizens" entitled to equal rights within a constitution which was not fixed but continually developing.\(^{34}\) In the same way, as Hall argues, "the different views of manhood of Carlyle and Mill were to do with the different conceptions of authority and power associated with masculinity. While Carlyle clung to a notion of hierarchy and order, with white Englishmen as the ultimate arbiters in the interests of all, Mill dreamed of a more egalitarian society in the future in which all individuals, whether black or white, male or female, would have achieved 'civilization'" (288). Questions of gender and "race" then, are clearly linked as expressions of different notions of political authority, and it is this debate which Disraeli's novels reflect and to which they contribute.

The debate about gender and English politics had in fact been raging for at least a decade. David Rosen has suggested that "writers like Carlyle and Crabbe became preoccupied with the issue of what constituted masculinity, a re-examination prompted by the growing displacement of rural laborers to factory settings and non-agricultural occupations".\(^{35}\) Working men "expressed increasing impatience with problems they conceptualized in terms of gender"; in *Sybil*, a hand-loom weaver displaced to the city describes social and economic changes as a loss of masculine identity:

> 'Why am I, and six hundred thousand subjects of the Queen, honest, loyal, and industrious, why are we, after manfully struggling for years, and each year sinking lower in the scale, why are we driven from our innocent and happy homes, our country cottages that we loved, first to bide in close towns without comforts, and gradually to crouch into cellars, or find a squalid lair like this ... It is that the Capitalist has found a slave that has supplanted the labour and ingenuity of man. Once he was an artizan: at the best, he now only watches machines; and even that occupation slips from his grasp, to the woman and the child' (S 1:263-4).

Meanwhile during the power struggle between the aristocracy, gentry and middle classes over the Reform Bill "the debate over who should rule often devolved into a debate over who belonged to that privileged group called 'men'".\(^{36}\) *Fraser's Magazine*, which published Carlyle's anti-abolitionist essay, as well as his highly influential *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4), had been engaged since the 1830s in a forceful critique of what it saw as a decline in masculine virtue in the English ruling class.

---

\(^{34}\) Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 33.


\(^{36}\) Ibid, 21.
William Maginn, the editor of *Fraser's*, analysed contemporary political culture in these terms, and attacked "the disgraceful pusillanimity and desertion by the Tories of their own principles". Fraser's also attacked fashionable literature for contributing to the culture of feminisation: "What noble faculties are addressed in such works? Are they calculated to make readers in general better or wiser? - to brace up manly energy, and promote heroic virtue? Or rather, have they not an evident tendency to effeminate and enfeeble the mind...?". Ideas about true English manhood in the post-reform period, like those underlying Fraser's campaign, were deeply influenced by Kenelm Henry Digby's widely-read eulogy to chivalry *The Broad Stone of Honour*, subtitled "Rules for the Gentlemen of England", which was first published in the 1820s.

Following the author's conversion to Catholicism the book was expanded to four volumes in 1828-9 and 1848-9, subtitled "The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry". The revised version was intended to show the connection between true chivalry and the Catholic Church, and between its degeneration and the Reformation. In a striking contrast to Scott's use of the mediaeval past, Digby did not see history as tending towards progress, but in a continual flux between good and evil. The mediaeval chivalric period represented an heroic age, and modernity a time of advancing evil whose only salvation lay in a revival of the permanently valid code of chivalry. Like Fraser's, Digby was writing partly in reaction to the dominance of Utilitarian ideas in the 1820s. He condemned the belief that society could be organised on a rational basis, and argued for absolute ethical values perceived through the imagination.

In this text, Digby redefined masculine virtue as attributable not to learning, intellect or verbal skill but to "faith", "honour", independence and physical vigour. A man's knightliness depended on his demonstrated values rather than his blood, and among the lower orders there might found the "natural aristocrat" who despite his low birth "combines natural nobility with ardour and great ability" and should be encouraged to rise in society. However Digby believed that democracy was anathema to chivalry, and hierarchical government was the best and most natural means of ordering society. For Digby then, as for Carlyle, a particular concept of masculinity was closely linked to an hierarchical notion of political authority. In *Past and Present*, a meditation on heroism and labour in the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, Carlyle wrote of masculinity as both hierarchical and combative: "Man is born to fight; he is

---


40 Ibid, 61-5.
perhaps best of all definable as a born soldier; his life 'a battle and a march,' under the right General".41 For Carlyle, the concept of "Work" was analogous to chivalric battle; this was where masculine virtue was enacted: "there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling; there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works".42 Both work and battle made possible the transformation of chaos into order, not through rationality but through violence: "a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby".43 Carlyle's emphasis on manual labour recalls William Cobbett's anti-capitalist nostalgia for a pre-industrial, rural England. For Cobbett, writing in the 1820s and 1830s, modernity was epitomised by the rise to power of the Jews, who did not work. In 1833 during a parliamentary debate Cobbett challenged a fellow Member as to "whether he could produce a Jew who ever dug, who went to plough, or who ever made his own coat or his own shoes, or who did anything at all, except get all the money he could from the pockets of the people".44 Carlyle drew on on a similar romanticisation of manual labour. For him, the political virtue of the nation was intrinsically linked to its masculine toughness: "Show me a People energetically busy; heaving, struggling, all shoulders at the wheel; their heart pulsing, every muscle swelling, with man's energy and will; - I will show you a People of whom great good is already predictable; to whom all manner of good is yet certain, if their energy endure".45 Ideas about individual and national potential, then, were linked through the language and imagery of chivalric masculinity.

The elision between moral, political and physical toughness became particularly pronounced in the "muscular Christianity" movement of the 1850s. The movement began just after Disraeli had completed the "political trilogy", with the Christian Socialist periodical Politics for the People. The periodical was set up by a group of gentlemen and clerics who, inspired by Carlyle, sympathised with the Chartists but sought to articulate a specifically Christian and counter-revolutionary response to the social unrest of the 1840s. They also expressed this response in militantly chivalric terms. Charles Kingsley, one of the leading figures of the movement, wrote in 1849 "This is a puling, quill-driving, soft-handed age".46 In contrast, he took a deliberately

45 Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present, III, xii:178.
combative approach to both atheism and revolutionary agitation, but argued, like Disraeli, that they were both produced by the "degradation" of the working man which must now be addressed publicly. Kingsley's novels Yeast (serialised in Fraser's in 1848), about agricultural workers, and Alton Locke (1850), about sweated tailoring, were part of his campaign to improve conditions for working people and to generate mutual respect rather than enmity between social classes. In the 1850s Kingsley became preoccupied with physical toughness as a means of self-improvement. He also advocated "manliness" in writing, and condemned Shelley as "girlish" and Browning as "effeminate". Kingsley and other Christian Socialists welcomed the Crimean War in 1854 and later the Volunteer movement in the 1860s as opportunities for the nation to prove its manliness. Written in response to the war, his highly successful novel Westward Ho! (1855), a story of naval enterprise and scheming Jesuits set in Elizabethan England, emphasised both the imperial and Protestant character of English chivalry. Thomas Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) and Kingsley's Two Years Ago (1857) similarly glorified the muscular male body and the noble heroism of war. The term "muscular Christianity" began to be used of this school of writing in the late 1850s. Kingsley said in 1865 that it was only acceptable if it meant a "healthy and manful Christianity, one which does not exalt the feminine virtues to the exclusion of the masculine". He defined chivalric Christianity in contrast to monastic Christianity, which was essentially effeminate and had tried to suppress the body. Protestantism had developed the ideal further as it believed that "true religion did not crush, but strengthened and consecrated a valiant and noble manhood".

In the 1860s Kingsley became a champion of the destiny of the "Teutonic" English race, which he considered "the strategy of providence"; thus "the welfare of the Teutonic race is the welfare of the world". He lost Hughes' friendship by his support for Governor Eyre, whom he probably saw as embodying his ideas about heroism. In his work most explicitly of all, English masculinity is

---

47 Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 132-6. C J W-L Wee's account of Kingsley's novels Alton Locke (1850) and Westward Ho! (1855) suggests that Kingsley's "muscular Christianity...offered a number of ways out of England's effete and fragmented condition. A primitive vigor and character could be recovered from non-European lands - from someone else's culture - where manly energy was unconstrained by modern life, or from English historical precedents, where a united nation existed" See Wee, "Christian manliness and national identity: the problematic construction of a racially 'pure' nation", 68. In this emphasis, Kingsley's narratives of national regeneration clearly echo Disraeli's in the "political trilogy"; Disraeli similarly argues that the only sources for the renewal of masculine vigour are the disenfranchised middle and working classes, and the imperial sphere.


defined in terms of the reassertion of Protestantism and the restriction of femininity; it is also associated closely with racial supremacy and imperial warfare.

Between the 1830s and the 1860s, then, different political definitions of Englishness were being expressed in terms of ideas about masculinity. The Young England movement, which began in 1842, took debates which had been circulating since Carlyle's *Signs of the Times* in 1829 to the sphere of parliamentary politics. John Manners and his fellow young Tory MPs, like many of their generation, were deeply influenced by *The Broad Stone of Honour*. Although Digby's book had been written as a guide for the behaviour of the modern gentleman, the Young England movement took his precepts seriously as the basis for a new political philosophy. They sought a revival of feudalism and the ordered society, arguing that the increased power of the church and a responsible aristocracy would improve the condition of the working classes and thus unite the nation. Disraeli, whose 1820s and 1830s novels had been part of the "fashionable literature" so notoriously representative of an irresponsible ruling class, now became part of the reaction against it. His 1840s novels, in articulating the ideology of Young England, reflect the terms and ideas of contemporary debate. Sidonia, like Carlyle, believes in a "naturally" hierarchical society; he tells Coningsby that "Man is made to adore and to obey" (C II:181). Echoing many mediaevalists he declares that the philosophy of utilitarianism has failed, because human life and its ethical questions cannot be subjected to reason but must be ruled by the instinct of honourable men: "We are not indebted to the Reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress ... Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the Imagination" (C II:180-1). Like Cobbett Disraeli cites the Protestant Reformation as the root cause of the national debt and the people's poverty. In *Coningsby* he reproduces Fraser's critique of the Tory Party, showing the Tory aristocrat Lord Monmouth's worship of money as bourgeois and degraded (C II, 56). For political critique, like so many of his contemporaries, Disraeli employs the language of gender. Contemporary political life lacks heroism, the Tory party "yields" to public opinion: a feminising democracy, a politics of effeminacy (C III:97). The narrator complains that contemporary politicians "have no conception that public reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest. They have as much idea of fame or celebrity, even of the masculine impulse of an honourable pride, as eunuchs of manly joys" (C II:225). On the other hand, Oswald Millbank, a typical member of the "New Generation", looks forward with enthusiasm to a revival of mediaeval militancy, when the Church "that struggled against the brute forces of the dark ages, against tyrannical monarchs and barbarous barons, will

---

struggle again in opposition to influences of a different form, but of a similar
tendency, equally selfish, equally insensible, equally barbarous" (C III:110-1). The
ture mission of the Tory party, Disraeli argues, is to uphold the influence of Church
and aristocracy, whose role as "the ancient champions of the people against arbitrary
courts and rapacious parliaments" is essentially knightly (S II: 312; my emphasis).

The rhetoric of mediaevalism and chivalry which structures Disraeli's vision of
national regeneration, is drawn from Carlyle. Like Carlyle, Disraeli showed sympathy
for the Chartist cause and nostalgia for the social role of the mediaeval monastery in
Sybil. Disraeli argued that the new feudalism was a means of reuniting the divided
nation, an answer to the problem posed abstractly by Sidonia, when he comments that
"England should think more of the community and less of the government" (C II:176). In
Tancred Disraeli is full of enthusiasm for the liberties of the peoples of Lebanon,
whose "feudal" combination of religion and militarism is the breeding ground for the
"Young Syria" movement of the 1840s: "in every town and village of Lebanon, there
is a band of youth who acknowledge the title, and who profess nationality as their
object" (T II:336; III:16). In the British context, Mr Millbank, an enlightened
industrialist and "Disciple of Progress", uses his wealth to create a model village,
promoting health and education for his workers, and proving that the spirit of ancient
feudalism, even if practised by the modern middle class, can redeem capitalism (C
II:41). Similarly, Trafford, a philanthropic mill-owner in Sybil, is a man of "old
English feelings", who has "a correct conception of the relations which should subsist
between the employer and the employed. He felt that between them there should be
other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages" (S II:97). Significantly, Walter
Gerard describes this kind of management as "just and manly" (S III:270). Disraeli
here follows Carlyle's belief in the socially responsible "Captain of Industry" rather
than Digby's antipathy for middle-class wealth. Hence it is Millbank, as much as
Sidonia, who teaches Coningsby about the importance of maintaining an hierarchical
social order whilst pursuing economic and technological progress. Furthermore,
whereas both Cobbett and Carlyle included a violent Jew-hatred in their evocation of
mediaeval England, Disraeli, drawing on the imagery of Alroy, incorporates the Jews
into an endorsement of chivalric values. Indeed, Disraeli echoes Past and Present
in linking inspired political principles with imagery of the tough masculine mind and
body. This understanding of manhood shapes Disraeli's representation of the Jew. In

51 Carlyle's semitic representations included his attack on mediaeval Jewish usurers in Past
and Present (1843), his call in a Latter-Day Pamphlet on "Jesuitism" (1850) for a
conflagration of "Jew old-clothes" (using the stereotype of Jewish old-clothes sellers to refer
to what he saw as the redundancy of Hebraic religion), and personal attacks on Disraeli which
stressed his Jewishness. For a detailed discussion see T. Peter Park, "Thomas Carlyle and the
the trilogy, challenging Carlyle, the masculine ideal is embodied in the Jew, Sidonia, who is youthful, energetic, as well as intellectual, and whose toughness identifies him with England: "The somewhat hard and literal character of English life suited one who shrank from sensibility, and often took refuge in sarcasm. Its masculine vigour and active intelligence occupied and interested his mind" (C II:140). The Jew's body, however, is not allowed to become over-vigorous and therefore dangerous; Sidonia maintains an English "devotion to field sports, which was the safety-valve of his energy" (C II:141).

Young England's myth of national regeneration through the renewal of masculinity is inscribed not only in the vocabulary but in the romance form of Disraeli's novels. The narratives indicate that the heroes' education in principles of national vision and purpose is the key to the restoration of their masculine identity. Egremont's awakening to his political mission through a growing awareness of the social condition of England replaces his dandyism with a new "masculine impulse" (S I:303). Coningsby finally realises that his transgressive love for Edith is inseparable from his political idealism. While erotic involvement initially threatens to distract him from political ambitions, the trial to which it is put in the course of the novel transforms it into a test of his heroism. When he refuses to become his grandfather's candidate for parliament because it would mean standing against Edith's father Mr Millbank, one of his own political mentors, Coningsby risks disinherition for the sake of his principles. At this point the novel's political and erotic narratives intersect and he finally understands the link between his public and private lives: "Coningsby felt at this moment a profound conviction which never again deserted him, that the conduct which would violate the affections of the heart, or the dictates of the conscience, however it may lead to immediate success, is a fatal error. Conscious that he was perhaps verging on some painful vicissitude of his life, he devoted himself to a love that seemed hopeless, and to a fame that was perhaps a dream" (C III:227-8). Eventually, through his loyalty to Edith, "a maiden fair enough to revive chivalry", he is able to heroically redeem history (C III:153). By re-establishing the middle-class connection suppressed by his own family, Coningsby's marriage redresses the wrong done to his mother by an earlier generation of aristocrats. In thus reviving chivalry, Coningsby demonstrates his fitness for the political career which is his final reward.

The structure of the novels also reinforces this narrative of masculine ascendency. In all three novels the heroine, initially the source of inspiration, finally submits to the guidance and protection of the newly invigorated hero. If, as I have argued, Scott's protagonist is "feminised" as part of the progress of civilisation towards peace and domesticity, Disraeli's hero, in contrast, regains his masculine authority. Thus in Sybil the process of moral and political education reverses, so that it is Sybil who must be persuaded by Egremont to give up the "prejudice" of her proudly-guarded class
identity (§ II:316). She must understand that seeing Egremont as "a Norman, a noble, an oppressor of the people, a plunderer of the church - all the characters and capacities that Sybil had been bred up to look upon with fear and aversion, and to recognise as the authors of the degradation of her race" now constitutes a misreading of English history (§ II:315). Egremont argues that this history is being rewritten:

'You look upon me as an enemy, as a natural foe, because I am born among the privileged. I am a man, Sybil, as well as a noble ... And can I not feel for men, my fellows, whatever be their lot? ... You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts are open to the responsibility of their position' (§ II:317-8)

Egremont, like Richard the Lionheart in Ivanhoe, displaces the racial historiography espoused by the Gerards. Instead of Norman oppressors and Saxon victims, he evokes a vision of national unity which transcends race and history, a unity whose basis is instinctive rather than rational and deeply connected to an understanding of manhood.

Sybil's eventual enlightenment is also accounted for as a function of her gender. During a riot at the climax of the novel she is protected from an mob of angry working-class men by the aristocratic women of Mowbray Castle, "sympathising with womanly softness with her distress". Sybil is obliged to abandon her belief in the fixity of class division as the women demonstrate a new kind of unity: "It touched Sybil much, and she regretted the harsh thoughts that irresistible circumstances had forced her to cherish respecting persons, who, now that she saw them in their domestic and unaffected hour, had apparently many qualities to conciliate and to charm" (§ III:285-6). But female solidarity here displaces a politics gendered as feminine. Sybil's devotion to the Chartist cause has been conceived in terms derived from Victorian domestic ideology. She believes that the "irresistible influence of their moral power", like the mythical "moral influence" of Victorian womanhood, can challenge injustice and effect social change. However, Sybil's faith in feminine "moral power" and her determined mistrust of violent methods, are criticised by her father as "womanish weakness", and indeed prove increasingly naïve (§ III:31, 39). With the failure of the Charter and the eruption of the riot, she finds her faith betrayed, and turns instead to the politics of Young England.

The shift in Sybil's political allegiance involves an important redefinition of the role of femininity in public life. Early on, the novel establishes an implicit link between the philanthropic, Saxon Sybil and the young Queen Victoria, who accedes to the throne at the beginning of the narrative: "Fair and serene, she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom?" (§ I:93). Sybil, whose "almost divine majesty" links her to Victoria, is similarly represented in mediaevalist
terms: she is the elevated lady who inspires a nation of knights towards heroism (S. I:151). The novel as a whole depicts and endorses a shift towards mediaevalist gender relations: Lord Marney's "tyranny" over his wife is replaced by Egremont's respect for his (S I:164). Coningsby, who resurfaces as a successful politician in Tancred, reiterates Young England's distaste for the tyranny of the ideology of separate spheres:

He wished his wife to become a social power; and he wished his wife to be amused. He saw that, with the surface of a life of levity, she already exercised considerable influence, especially over the young; and independently of such circumstances and considerations, he was delighted to have a wife who was not afraid of going into society by herself; not one whom he was sure to find at home when he returned from the House of Commons, not reproaching him exactly for her social sacrifices, but looking a victim, and thinking that she retained her husband's heart by being a mope. Coningsby wanted to be amused when he came home, and more than that, he wanted to be instructed in the finest learning in the world (TI:212-3).

In Sybil, moreover, the relationship between hero and heroine has important political resonance: it is linked metonymically to the new relationship between social classes which the novel promotes. When Sybil reflects that Egremont "was what man should be to woman ever, gentle and yet a guide", she is also implicitly acknowledging that his model for social relations is correct (S III:48). Thus, as Mowbray Castle burns, and Sybil, no longer protected by feminine sympathy, is set upon by a "band of drunken ruffians", it is left to Egremont, the lover she had previously rejected, to demonstrate his unchanged devotion and complete her conversion (S III:314). His chivalric rescue of the helpless Sybil metonymically enacts his earlier warning: "The People are not strong; the People never can be strong ... The new generation of the aristocracy of England ... are the natural leaders of the People" (S II:317-8). Over the course of the novel, then, the heroine's attachment to a particularist class or race identity is increasingly undermined, and transcended by the more universal nationalism of the hero. The trilogy reverses Alroy's pessimism about the connection between national unity, miscegenation and masculine identity.

Heroic ascendency is not only achieved by the eventual conquest of the heroine. In Tancred relationships between gender and nation are more complex, and English masculinity is defined in contradistinction not only from femininity but also from Oriental masculinity. In this novel, Syria, the sphere of regeneration for the young English hero is represented simultaneously by a Jewish woman, Eva, and an Arab man, the Emir Fakredeen. Eva's strong ethnic identity and unwavering courage present an heroic model for Tancred, and lead him to claim his own identification with the "Semitic principle". However Fakredeen, representative of the "genuine Syrian character in excess", is tantalisingly evasive and protean, "perpetually in masquerade" (T II:92; III:59). Indeterminate in gender, "fair, almost effeminate, no beard, a slight moustache, his features too delicate, but his brow finely arched, and his
blue eye glittering with fire”, he frequently adopts "the wheedling manner of a girl" in his attempts to manipulate (T II:20-1, 22). Fakredeen is a parodic double of Sidonia in his capacity "to look upon every man as a tool, and never to do anything which had not a definite though circuitous purpose ... Fakredeen had no principle of any kind; he had not a prejudice" (TII:94). Indeed, Fakredeen's lack of "prejudice", so similar to Sidonia's, indicates the way in which Disraeli revises the stereotype of the amorally scheming Jewish male in Tancred by displacing this image onto the Arab. Fakredeen's "feminine" aspects constantly compromise his effort to be detached: "though he intended to make a person his tool and often succeeded, such was his susceptibility, and so strong were his sympathetic qualities, that he was perpetually, without being aware of it, showing his cards" (T II:95). Fakredeen's refinement, like Sidonia's descended from "that Oriental intellect to which [Europeans] owed their civilization", is now in decay, maintaining imagination and energy but lacking principles (TII:7). Thus when he kidnaps Tancred he becomes aware of a homoerotic attachment which manifests itself, in striking contrast to Eva, in a desire for domination:

Tancred had, from the first and in an instant, exercised over his susceptible temperament that magnetic influence to which he was so strangely subject. In the heart of the wilderness and in the person of his victim, the young Emir suddenly recognised the heroic character which he had himself so vaguely and, as it now seemed to him, so vainly attempted to realize. The appearance and the courage of Tancred, the thoughtful repose of his manner, his high bearing amid the distressful circumstances in which he was involved, and the large views which the few words that had escaped from him on the preceding evening would intimate that he took of public transactions, completely captivated Fakredeen, who seemed at length to have found the friend for whom he had often sighed; the stedfast and commanding spirit, whose control, he felt conscious, was often required by his quick but whimsical temperament (TII:176-7).53

It is Fakredeen's lost imperial and heroic heritage as an Oriental that particularly attracts him towards the Western imperialist: he identifies with Tancred as his double and as his redeemer. Later in the novel it becomes clear that the chivalric culture

52 Edward Said's contention that "the Jew of pre-Nazi Europe has bifurcated: what we have now is a Jewish hero, constructed out of a reconstructed cult of the adventurer-pioneer-Orientalist (Burton, Lane, Renan), and his creeping, mysteriously fearsome shadow, the Arab Oriental" is clearly an apt description of Disraeli's strategy in Tancred, where Eva the Jewess is linked with the English adventurer hero in contrast with the Arab Fakredeen - although other writers (both pre- and post-Nazi) were more resistant to equating Englishman and Jew than Said implies. See Edward Said, Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 286.

53 For an account of this masochistic "servility" in later imperialist literature, see Rana Kabbani, Imperial Fictions. Europe's Myths of Orient, rev. and exp. ed. (London: Pandora, 1994), 9. See also her discussion of Richard Burton who in Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah (1855-6) describes "the savouring of animal existence; the passive enjoyment of mere sense; the pleasant languor, the dreamy tranquility, the airy castle-building, which in Asia stand in lieu of the vigorous, intensive, passionate life of Europe" (54).
learned by Tancred in the West can lead Fakredeen back to a realisation of his own potential:

virtue in an heroic form, lofty principle, and sovereign duty, invested with all the attributes calculated to captivate his rapid and refined perception, exercised over him a resistless and transcendent spell. The deep and disciplined intelligence of Tancred, trained in all the philosophy and cultured with all the knowledge of the West, acted with magnetic power upon a consciousness, the bright vivacity of which was only equalled by its virgin ignorance of all that books can teach, and of those great conclusions which the studious hour can alone elaborate (TI:64-5).

Tancred's domination of Fakredeen is "resistless" because it is already part of his consciousness. This is not an argument for "civilising" the East typical of orientalist writing. On the contrary, in Disraeli's historiography civilisation begins in the East. The crusades, according to Disraeli, far from being a Christian invasion, "renovated the spiritual hold which Asia has always had upon the North" (T1:253). In Fakredeen's vision the relationship between the Orient and the imperialist is reconfigured as redemption, a long-awaited return to origins. Moreover, the return is crucially figured in terms of gender. The East is not simply to be subject to Western power, but to be remasculinised, led to know itself more fully again under the direction of an Englishman who in the process confirms and enacts his own masculinity. And Tancred sees a direct link between his restoration of Eastern virility and a corresponding European masculinity, in a vision of imperial co-operation:

we shall go forth and sweep away the mouldering remnants of the Tataric system; and then, when the East has resumed its indigenous intelligence, when angels and prophets again mingle with humanity, the sacred quarter of the globe will recover its primeval and divine supremacy; it will act upon the modern empires, and the fainthearted faith of Europe, which is but the shadow of a shade, will become as vigorous as befits men who are in sustained communication with the Creator (TIII:178).

The return of male vigour is here dependent on imperial action. At the same time, in Tancred, like the earlier novels of the 1840s, the hero's regeneration is enacted not only through the inspiration of the exotic woman or man, but by their domination. As much as the narratives insist on the necessity for mixing races and classes in a new inclusive nation, they also hint at the mastery which is thereby regained.

Finally, these contradictory impulses in Disraeli's novels are shown to be, instead, complementary. When Tancred realises that his plans for imperial conquest cannot be realised through the treacherous Fakredeen, his political desires switch back to their original object, Eva. "Why, thou to me art Arabia,' said Tancred, advancing and kneeling at her side. 'The angel of Arabia, and of my life and spirit! Talk not to me of faltering faith: mine is intense. Talk not to me of leaving a divine cause: why, thou art my cause and thou art most divine!'" (TIII:295). His lover's rhetoric, however, is more than hyperbole. Tancred, like Egremont and Coningsby, finally sees his own route to the racial purity and "primeval vigour" advocated by Sidonia. If the marriages
which end the novels symbolically unite different classes and religions, they also herald a recovery of original racial purity. Although Eva protests "There are those to whom I belong; and to whom you belong" and Sybil similarly insists that "the gulf is unpassable", both echoing Rebecca's conviction that "there is a gulf betwixt us. Our breeding, our faith, alike forbid either to pass over it", the heroes prove to them that the gulf is not only passable but illusory. Egremont's fitness to rule is only finally confirmed with his marriage to Sybil, the true proprietor of the soil; while Tancred looks for his own redemption through a blood tie with the "daughter of my Redeemer's race" (T III:296). The symbolic marriage, apparently an act of miscegenation, is revealed to be an act of purification.

The novels' resolutions in a recovery of purity and mastery reinforce Disraeli's theory of race. The association of masculinity, chivalry and imperialism in Tancred and the muscular Christian movement indicates the extent to which the chivalric masculine ideal was by the end of the 1840s looking towards a global battlefield for its realisation. Disraeli, as much as Carlyle and Kingsley, promoted the linking of chivalry to a theory of English racial destiny. Digby had argued that there were among the lower orders "natural aristocrats" whose faith, integrity and unconscious adherence to chivalric values enabled them to transcend their social class. But Disraeli used the phrase "aristocracy of Nature" not only to reinforce the idea that the hierarchical structure of society was "natural", but also to include the notion of "race" as further evidence for this theory (C III:138). He made this link by using the paradigm of the Jews. According to Sidonia, the Tory model of social order is itself based on the "physiological fact" of racial hierarchy. This is why his apparently irrelevant harping on Jewish emancipation in fact has crucial import for the young Coningsby. What starts as an argument for the Tory party to take on the Jewish cause - "the Jews, Coningsby, are essentially Tories" - continues as an explanation of the link between political and ethnographic organisation: "Toryism indeed is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe" (C II:200). Toryism, according to Sidonia, has its basis in the "law of nature". In his digression on "The Jewish Question" in Lord George Bentinck. A Political Biography (1852) Disraeli argues that the Jews "are a living and the most striking evidence of the falsity of that pernicious doctrine of modern times, the natural equality of man". In a similar way, in the course of his discussion extolling Jewish toughness in the face of persecution, and their defiance of modernity, Sidonia expounds a "scientific" theory of race: "You must study physiology, my dear child. Pure races of Caucasus may be persecuted, but

54 T III:296; S II:324; Sir Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, ed. by A N Wilson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982; [first publ. 1819]), 517.
they cannot be despised, except by the brutal ignorance of some mongrel breed, that brandishes faggots and howls exterminations, but is itself exterminated without persecutions, by that irresistible law of nature which is fatal to curs" (C II:204). For Sidonia, considering the "primeval vigour" of the Jewish body is inseparable from accounting for its place in a political hierarchy and historical destiny (C II:140). And by the same token, the imperial ascendancy of England is assured, on the basis not of an advancing "civilisation" but of an essential, unchanging racial character: Sidonia asserts that "A Saxon race, protected by an insular position, has stamped its diligent and methodic character on the century. And when a superior race, with a superior idea to Work and Order, advances, its state will be progressive ... All is race; there is no other truth" (T I:303). Despite Carlyle's antipathy for Disraeli as a person and as a symbol, they shared a language and set of ideas about race and nation which had increasing currency by the 1850s, particularly after the publication of Robert Knox's The Races of Man. A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations (1850/1862). If Disraeli used the conjunction of race and masculinity as a defence for the Jews against their European persecutors, Carlyle could also invoke it as an argument against slave emancipation, and the muscular Christians could link it to the manliness of imperial struggle. They all used a language of virile masculinity in order to endorse an hierarchical notion of political authority as a "law of nature".

In describing Disraeli's representations of Jewishness I have used the term "muscular Jews" to indicate both his challenge to and his shared terms with Kingsley's muscular Christians. "Muscular Jewry" (Muskeljudentum), as Paul Breines points out, was in fact a phrase coined in the early twentieth century by the physician and zionist ideologue Max Nordau, and expresses Nordau's aspirations for a new Jewish physique "against the background of the regnant imagery of Jewish frailty, timidity and gentleness". At the same time the phrase also evokes the preoccupation of the major zionist theorist Theodor Herzl "with the style and image of manliness ... tastes and impulses conditioned by Herzl's immersion in the pageantry and heraldry of late-nineteenth-century European nationalism". Disraeli's representations of Jews, Judaism and Jewish history are conditioned by similar stereotypes of Jewish weakness and effeminacy in mid-nineteenth-century England, but also by the aesthetics of contemporary political debate, which imagined the future of England in

---


terms of a chivalric renewal of national masculinity. By creating "muscular Jews" and a virile Jewish history, and by arguing that both were intrinsically linked to the destiny of England, Disraeli also reinforced these definitions of national identity.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In 1865 Celia Moss published The King's Physician, a further volume of historical stories about Jewish persecution, under her married name of Mrs Levetus. The position of British Jewry had changed significantly since Emancipation in 1858, but, as David Feldman has argued, "the idea of the nation to which the Jews had been admitted was dynamic and this was one reason why Jewish emancipation did not bring the problem of Jewish integration to a close". In concluding I want to consider briefly some of the ways that Levetus's stories register these shifts and continuities.

The King's Physician, like Celia Moss's two earlier volumes of tales based on Jewish history, views the past from a female perspective. A consistent theme is enforced marriage, and the martyrdom of women who refuse to abandon their religious identity. "The Martyrs of Worms", set in medieval Germany, with shades of the Damascus incident, tells of the self-sacrifice of two Jewish men, newly arrived in Worms, to "a crowd of demons in human form" who have accused the Jews of assaulting a priest and demand a confession or the death of all Jews in Worms (K 117). But the story also emphasises the "forgotten" sorrow of Zillah, who loved one of the men and, to spare her adoptive father further grief, faithfully kept the secret that the martyr was his lost son (K 121). The stories reiterate the Moss sisters' earlier contention that the heroic spirit of martyrdom is manifest in Jews who "look upon Jews, throughout the world, as our brethren" (K 96). The volume covers a different period of diaspora history, from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, and religion, rather than political autonomy, is seen as the source for authentic Jewish identity. The challenges encountered by the protagonists of The King's Physician tend to be conversion and assimilation, and the stories depict heroic resistance as a rejection of the temptations of wealth and power in favour of family and religion. In "Gertrude: or, Clouds and Sunshine", set in present day Germany, the heroine's impoverished lover travels to England to ask help of his wealthy brother, but is shocked to find that he has married a Christian and is ashamed to admit to his origins. The lover renounces his relative, but this sacrifice is later rewarded when he is

1 Mrs Levetus [Celia Moss], The King's Physician (Portsea: T Hinton, 1865). Further references to this edition will be abbreviated as K. The author’s introduction states that the stories were planned and partially written nearly twenty years previously and that some had been published in the American journal Occident, which had also published Grace Aguilar's work. However they were not finished and collected until the 1865 edition.
rescued by a Jew he met on the journey, who demands "are not all Jews brothers?" (K 78). Levetus's modern Jews, under threat like their biblical predecessors, likewise find redemption in the notion of international Jewish solidarity.

Furthermore, Levetus reaffirms the notion of Jewish national consciousness which was so central to her earlier writing. "The King's Physician: a Tale of the secret Jews of Spain", for example, contains a vehement attack on crypto-Jews. Marranos are seen by Grace Aguilar as tragic patriots, betrayed by their own country, and by Disraeli as paragons of survival through strategy, proof not only of the Jews' capacity for self-preservation but also of their potential prosperity when unimpeded by Jewishness. But Mrs Levetus uses her hero, a Jewish physician whose parents had fled the Inquisition, to condemn Marranism: "the pure and noble mind of Gabriel revolted at a system of deceit practised through life" (K 21). In particular, the corruption of Marranism is embodied in Gabriel's sister, Anna, who had been left behind in Spain and brought up by Catholics, and whom Gabriel rediscovers on returning to Spain as physician to the King of France. Gabriel has always hoped that one day he would be able to redeem his sister, as "his mother, retaining in her memory the features of the helpless being from whom she had been so cruelly torn, had impressed upon the mind of Gabriel the necessity, should they ever meet, of his being the protector, the guide, the comforter of his sister" (K 31). But when he meets Beatrice, as she is now known, a proud and unfeminine noblewoman fiercely protective of her wealth and status, he realises that this obstinate Jewess is not a "helpless being" in need of protection. In Beatrice, Levetus creates a counter-model to Scott's Rebecca, a Jewess who values material things more than her religious identity. At the same time, Beatrice's pride and duplicity bears some resemblance to Thackeray's satirical figure of the nouveau riche Jewess, desperate to emulate an aristocracy to which she can never really belong. Levetus's new model of the Jewess appears at the moment, in the third quarter of the century, when "the spectacular commercial and social success of wealthy Jews prompted some observers to dwell upon the origins and causes of what was so distinctively Jewish about the English Jews". Terrified of discovery, Beatrice tries to force her son Leon to demonstrate his patriotism to Spain and join the army, but he does not share his mother's materialism:

"is it not enough that daily in the sight of God and man I play the hypocrite, acting a part I abhor and despise? shall I also assist in fixing on others the yoke of despotism and bigotry, making them act the part of liars, and refusing them the holiest privilege of mankind, to worship God according to their own conscience, and let them obey the dictates of nature? No! better it were that I confess myself what I am, and lose a life that is burdensome to me" (K 33)

4 Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 78.
Leon asserts that being a Marrano is hypocritical and contrary to "the dictates of nature"; moreover he shuns participation in Catholic imperialism. Beatrice, whose lack of femininity parallels her "unnatural" Marranism, warns him that he risks being identified as "the despised of all men, the outcast of the earth, that epitome of all that men call vile, a Jew", but he protests that concealing his identity is colluding with prejudice:

'Mother,' said Leon, 'in thy injustice and passion wouldst thou belie the race from which we sprang, because mankind in their cruelty both burdened and oppressed the race of Israel, until they have made them wretched outcasts? Wilt thou too aid in heaping contempt upon them? Men have treated them as the vilest of the vile, rendered them the most abject race upon the face of the earth; they trample on them, call them cowards; but hast not thyself said the noblest courage is that which endures patiently? The only base ones of the race of Israel are those whom fear or cupidity induces to deny their God' (K 35).

Eventually, Leon is unable to maintain a "double character" and, despite all Beatrice's efforts to affirm her loyalty to the state, she too is denounced to the Inquisition and obliged to flee Spain (K 34). Unlike Zarina and Paula in Moss's earlier stories, Leon's assertion of individual will against parental authority does not end in tragedy, since he is not a daughter disobeying her father. He finally gains his "freedom of worship" in the Holy Land, while Gabriel finds liberty of conscience in Africa. The story's emphasis has shifted from the earlier accounts of Jewish history to stress the importance of personal rather than national autonomy.

Indeed, the aspirations for Jewish national liberty which dominated the Romance and Tales of Jewish History seem impossible in the diaspora context of The King's Physician. In "Mordecai: a Tale of the Thirteenth Century", Jacob, the grandson of a rabbi taken prisoner by Dominicans, laments the decline of Jewish heroism since the loss of Jewish political autonomy:

'Oh,' he continued, clasping his hands together, 'oh that my brethren had hearts like their fathers, to conquer back the right to be treated as human beings, or, at least, to die like men, instead of being led like sheep to the slaughter. But who shall speak now of the valiant men of Israel, or awaken a spark of courage in their hearts? Yet why should I blame them? for, alas, we have now neither homes nor altars round which we can rally; the hand of every man is against us, and we have no means of opposing them, for the remnant of Israel is but as a grain of sand in the eyes of the mighty ones of the earth' (K 226).

In this story, Levetus returns to the Middle Ages depicted in "Neela" to produce a further critique of England's persecution of the Jews. But while Jacob mourns Jewish emasculation in the post-biblical world, the story does not endorse his wish for the return of "the valiant men of Israel". And although the text does not eschew description of the "barbarous" treatment of the Jews, it also seems to assure the reader that such treatment did not and should not have provoked violent resistance:
The Jews of England, at the period of which we write, groaned under a yoke as grievous as that of their forefathers in Egypt, and every day multiplied the acts of cruelty and oppression which the bigotry and intolerance of Edward Plantagenet loaded them. Fines, confiscations and exile daily took place amongst them, and the unfortunate Israelites found that fraud and force were alike employed to induce them to abjure their religion, but in vain, for the spirit of endurance and faith was firm in them, and they opposed to their persecutors that passive courage for which the sons of Israel have been famed in all ages—a courage nobler because founded on higher principles than resistance by force of arms (K 212, 210).

While suggesting a continuity between biblical and mediaeval history, Levitus also invokes a Jewish heritage of "passive courage" rather than "force of arms", a "nobler" unwillingness to challenge established authority. Although by 1865 the Jews had been granted civil emancipation, aspects of Levitus's later volume seem curiously more apologetic than its predecessor.

The place of the Jews in England's past and present did not cease to be discussed when they had been admitted to parliament. Levitus' foray into the history of mediaeval England is not only a reflection of the popularisation of mediaeval Jewish history in the wake of Ivanhoe. Mediaevalist historiography, particularly in the work of Freeman, Stubbs and Green, had become a key discourse through which national identity could be articulated, and Levitus is engaging with its increasingly exclusive definition of the national community. As David Feldman has argued, in the 1840s and 1850s the emancipation of the Jews had been a question of civil rights and individual liberties, and also an attempt to redefine the nation in terms of its citizenry. But in the 1860s, "marked by the agitation for and achievement of a second Reform Act, the liberal ideology of the nation acquired new dimensions ... for some Liberal intellectuals the prospect of the wider franchise led to a greater emphasis on [the] historical and cultural bonds of nationality which underpinned the relationship between the rulers and the people".5 As I argued in Chapter 2, Ivanhoe anticipated the Victorian preoccupation with these "historical and cultural bonds of nationality", which in Scott's novel were decisively violated by Rebecca's proud refusal to accept terms of compromise. In "Mordecai", as in "Neela", Levitus attempts to reforge these bonds.

In particular she seeks to show the Jews' place in the progress of civilisation, a whiggish confidence which her earlier romances had found more problematic. Rabbi Mordecai adopts a destitute Christian boy, Albert, whom he educates not in the Jewish religion but in "lessons of universal toleration which were little known and less practised in that age or country" (K 210). The Rabbi thus shows an unconscious appreciation of the principles of religious liberty which will come to characterise England after the Reformation. When Albert is later reunited with his father, an

---

5 Ibid, 73.
English noble who was himself formerly the subject of political persecution, Mordecai is able to extend his teaching from son to father. The Englishman is readily enlightened: "De Lacy felt the mists of prejudice disappear like the shades of night before the sunlight, and it needed not Albert's passionate pleading to determine the Earl to risk everything for one who had acted so nobly to him and his" (K 244). By resisting the temptation to indoctrinate the boy in his own faith, Mordecai has earned the respect of the Earl, who tells him "thou hast taught me a lesson, alas! too rarely practised, that of religious toleration, and shown me that the highest social virtues may be practised without the pale of the Christian Church" (K 251). In this text, Levetus recasts the struggle between Christians and Jews as a noble dispute between men, divested of the dangerous eroticism which had dominated Rebecca's relationship with the English hero. Moreover, the Rabbi's response to de Lacy's wish for his admittance to the Church is the question Rebecca would never have asked: "why cannot the Jew and Christian live in amity together, each pursuing the path he deems the right one?" (K 251). But in Levetus's text such a question is not seen as a threat to English identity, rather a prophecy of its future. Although Mordecai and his family, like Rebecca and Isaac, finally leave England for Spain, the Jews as a people benefit more widely from the enlightenment of de Lacy, who does what he can to help Mordecai's exploited co-religionists as they try to flee England. In enacting toleration, though constrained by historical circumstances, de Lacy becomes a redemptive figure for English nobility, conceived in Disraeli's or even Elizabeth Rigby's paternalistic terms as a chivalric champion of the Jews. Levetus' story thus becomes a vindication of the English aristocracy as much as a defence of the Jews.

In *The King's Physician*, then, Levetus reaffirms her vision of an exclusive Jewish national identity which cannot be renounced except by disobeying "the dictates of nature". But at the same time she tempers this with the conviction that England's true identity is one of religious pluralism. The volume ends in this spirit:

it would be useless to harrow up the feelings of the reader by details of suffering already too well known. These scenes were reacted throughout every Christian land, until, at length, the progress of civilization opened the eyes of the potentates of Europe to their true interest, while the introduction of the art of printing, and the consequent dissemination of education, combined with other causes, brought into action the principles of religious toleration, and paved the way for an improvement of the social condition of the Jews and the acknowledgment of those rights which had been so long and so unjustly withheld from them (K 254).

Levetus finally sees Jewish history as defined not only by the endless suffering of its heroines. She is now unwilling to reiterate too shocking a representation of England's relationship with the Jews, since modern England is no longer a "haughty mother-in-law", and, implicitly, Jews are no longer "sojourners in the land of the stranger" and no longer have need to "turn to the homes of our fathers". However, this is not merely
a grateful acknowledgment of the achievement of Jewish emancipation. Its triumphalist apologia also points to a renewed anxiety; its new argument for toleration and pluralism after the fact of emancipation indicates that such principles could not be taken for granted. Indeed, in the 1860s, with the new prospect of an expanded democracy, toleration was no longer a necessary component of liberalism. John Stuart Mill, for example, believed that representative government could not be maintained unless the country were composed of a single nationality, with a shared descent, language, religion and "national history and consequent community of recollections". Mill's vision of democracy suggested that the nation was defined not only by its institutions or citizenry but by its religion and culture, and such a vision was "antipathetic to cultural diversity".6 Levetus' invocation of civil "rights" also appeared at a time when the increased authority of race-thinking meant that the equality of British subjects was open to question.7 The cultural pluralism which Rabbi Mordecai and Earl de Lacy look to as a future aspiration for England was already receding by 1865.

Levetus' retreat in The King's Physician from her earlier identification with the rhetoric of Jewish national liberation also reflects the fact that, as Abraham Gilam has argued, in Britain "emancipation was conditional and required certain concessions on the part of the beneficiaries".8 By 1865 Levetus had adopted a more conventionally "liberal" construction of Jews and Jewesses, mostly purged of potentially controversial references to a separate Jewish nationality. Just as Evangelicals promised "toleration" but demanded conversion, the same contradiction fissures the Enlightenment concept of a universal culture, which similarly promised toleration but demanded conformity. In the work of Evangelical conversionist writers and in Ivanhoe, I have argued, this contradiction was embodied with particular force in the figure of the Jewess. Tony Kushner has written that

in a liberal-dominated culture, those who have assimilated are praised above those who maintain their own ethnic identity. There is within such dichotomies a complicating gender aspect. From Shakespeare's Jessica through Scott's Rebecca and well into the twentieth century, the repulsive ghetto male has been contrasted with the beautiful but always assimilating Jewish female ... Yet this breakdown is not so straightforward. The Jewish male is perceived as a threat to gentile women, his physical ugliness compensated

---

6 J S Mill, Considerations on Representative Government (1861), cited by Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 73.
7 See Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, 78 and also Catherine Hall's analysis of the rise of "a new racism" in the 1860s, when the Indian Mutiny and the Morant Bay riot were linked by the middle classes with the threat of domestic instability from working-class reformers, in Catherine Hall, Competing Masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and the case of Governor Eyre", in Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 275-7, 285
by the satanic power of his race. The female, despite her ability to conform, is, however, also seen to possess a mystical sexual power.9

Kushner's analysis of the semitic discourse in a liberal culture argues that the ability of Jews, or even Jewesses, to assimilate into the dominant national culture is always seen to have limits. As Bryan Cheyette has summarised, British culture constructed Jews "as both embodying the aspirations of an enlightened State and as undermining the characteristics of a particularist nation".10 The persistence of the complex stereotype of the Jewess, which combines allure with danger and conformity with alterity, suggests that indeed Emancipation has not been a linear progression with a finite end.

But it was precisely the ambivalence around the figure of the Jewess that made her a rich subject for Jewish as well as non-Jewish writers. Just as the "Emancipation contract" was an ongoing negotiation whose contours and demands changed according to different definitions of British national identity, the figure of the Jewess could be recast in a variety of forms, amenable to a variety of arguments. I have argued in this thesis that one way of reading the plurality of representations of the Jewess is by looking at the way in which writers invoked the authority of different literary genres, which, in this period, were clearly gendered. Thus, both Evangelical campaigners and the Jewish novelist Grace Aguilar imagined the Jewess in terms of the female genre of domestic literature, which linked spirituality and patriotism. Moreover, while conversionists constructed the Jewish woman as the ideal Christian martyr, persecuted by "bigoted" Jews, Celia and Marion Moss could draw on the image of the suffering Jewess as an emblem of the Jews' own political oppression, which they also linked to recent arguments by women about the abolition of slavery. Disraeli on the other hand sought authority for his discussion of the Jews by using the "masculine" language of racial science, and reinvigorated the genre of national romance which Scott had used to exclude the Jews from the English nation.

This thesis has indicated that there was a racial discourse about "the Jewess" in nineteenth-century British and British-Jewish writing which overlapped with other contemporary constructions of race. It drew on Orientalism but was not, like Orientalism, an aspect of territorial domination. Carlyle used similar arguments about Jews and black slaves, and the rhetoric of abolitionism was appropriated by writers

9 Tony Kushner, "Sex and Semitism: Jewish Women in Britian in War and Peace," in Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the Two World Wars, ed. by Panikos Panayi (New York: Berg, 1993), 141. See also Bryan Cheyette's discussion of the Jewish actresses who were "commonly constructed as succumbing to the transforming power and universality of Christianity which, by the nineteenth century, was synonymous with 'culture'". See Bryan Cheyette, Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society. Racial Representations 1875-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78.
10 Cheyette, Constructions of 'the Jew in English literature and society., 269.
like Celia and Marion Moss. But Jews were not racialised in the same way as black people: their conversion to Christianity was not sought, as it was of slaves, in order to make them "rational" or to allay fears of their rebellion.  

11 Nineteenth-century semitic discourse was not obviously part of the imperial project, although it could be used to reinforce a belief in Protestant supremacy. But representations of Jews were a means of articulating and contesting versions of British national identity. Catherine Hall has detected this process of self-construction in texts produced by Caribbean missionaries about slavery: "In their public interventions the missionaries and their allies were constructing their own identities and writing their own histories. Their mutual celebration of their effectiveness in Jamaica was important in confirming and sustaining English middle-class confidence".  

12 My study has shown how gender was a crucial aspect of such self-construction, both in terms of gendered representations and of gendered rhetoric. Scott used the "resolute" Jewess to demonstrate the scope and limits of English tolerance, Evangelical women writers affirmed their role in the spiritual renewal of the nation in writing about the converting Jewess; Aguilar defined Jews in terms of English domesticity, the Moss sisters demanded sympathy for the exiled Jewess from liberty-loving Britain, "the home of the free and the brave", and Disraeli looked forward to England's regeneration through the mastery of the Jewess's "terrible fascination" and the incorporation of her "primeval vigour".  

---


Nineteenth-century material: books


—, *Sabbath Thoughts and Sacred Communings*, London: Groombridge and Sons, 1853.


[Bristow, Amelia], *Emma de Lissau; a Narrative of Striking Vicissitudes, and Peculiar Trials: with Explanatory Notes, Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Jews*. By the author of 'Sophia de Lissau', 'Elizabeth Allen' etc etc. London: T Gardiner & Son, 1828.


[——], *The Orphans of Lissau, and Other Interesting Narratives, Immediately Concerned with Jewish Customs, Domestic and Religious, with Explanatory


[—]. Sophia de Lissau; or, a Portraiture of the Jews of the Nineteenth Century: being an Outline of the Religious and Domestic Habits of this Most Interesting Nation, with Explanatory Notes. By the Author of 'Elizabeth Allen, or the Faithful Servant'. London: Published for the Author by Gardiner & Son, Simpkin & Marshall, 1826.


Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby; or, the New Generation. London: Henry Colburn, 1844.


—, Tancred: or, the New Crusade. London: Henry Colburn, 1847.


Select Extracts from the Diary, Correspondence, &c., of Leila Ada. London: Partridge, Oakey & Co., 1854.

Levetus, Mrs [formerly Celia Moss], *The King's Physician*. Portsea: T Hinton, 1865.


Nineteenth-century material: articles, reviews, pamphlets, letters, obituaries


Charlotte Elizabeth, see [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth

"Death of Grace Aguilar," *The Jewish Intelligence and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* 15 (February 1849): 42-44.


*Hansard*, Third Series 95 (18 Nov - 20 Dec 1847).


"The Jewish Women's Bible," *The Jewish Herald* 3 (September 1848): 203.


A Lady, *An Appeal to the Females of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, more especially with reference to the degraded situation of the Poor Jewesses, That through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy.* London: B R Goakman, n. d.


Obituary of Mme Alphonse Hartog [Marion Moss], *The Jewish Chronicle* (1 November 1907): 6.


Unsigned review of 'Records of Israel' by Grace Aguilar, *The Voice of Jacob* 3 (10 May 1844): 142.


Unsigned review of 'Thirza, or the Attractive Power of the Cross'. From the German by Elizabeth Maria Lloyd, The Jewish Herald 1 (March 1846): 54-9.


Secondary material: books


Calisch, Edward N, *The Jew in English Literature, as Author and as Subject.* Richmond, Virginia: The Bell Book and Stationery Co, 1909.


Hall, Catherine, *White, Male and Middle-class. Explorations in Feminism and History.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992


**Secondary material: articles and essays**


Unpublished material


Manuscript sources

Aguilar, Grace, letters to Solomon Cohen and Mrs Cohen of Savannah, 1842-1846. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Cohen Papers MS 2639.
Aguilar papers. Archive collection, University College London. MS Add 378 (on loan from the Jewish Museum, London).

Moss, the Misses, *The Romance of Jewish History* [c. 1840]. Parkes Library, University of Southampton. MS 160.