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Anglo-Jewry and The Revolutionary Era, 1789 – 1815

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the impact of the French Revolutionary Era on Anglo-Jewry. Widespread anti-Jewish representations in the theatre, novels, songs and prints are examined and the thesis explains how and why Burke sought to take advantage of the underlying prejudices within them by associating the Revolution with Jews. Detailed archival research, however, underlines the ambiguous position of the Jewish community by demonstrating that the administration of the Alien Act of 1793, Britain's first immigration legislation, was highly legalistic and was not influenced by the presence of anti-Jewish representations.

The representations, although becoming more empathetic, highlighted the uncertainty of the Jewish community's position in England. Set against this background, the French Revolution's embrace of equality before the law and Napoleon's relationship with Jews in Europe led to doubts over the loyalty of Anglo-Jewry. Drawing on research in the fields of sociology and cultural studies, the thesis examines how the creation of nation states intensified the accusation of dual loyalty, which has subsequently been exploited to create hostility against many different transnational communities. It sets out how the Jewish community in England successfully navigated the accusation in the period by stressing and demonstrating its loyalty.

In contrast to the elite of Anglo-Jewry, which maintained a traditional diasporic fear of verbalizing opinions in public, the thesis examines certain 'dissident' Jews. David Levi, the religious defender of Judaism; the radical, John King; and the convert, George Gordon, articulated remarkably outspoken and divergent perspectives. In particular, the thesis focuses on *Vaurien*, the anti-Revolutionary novel written by Isaac D'Israeli. It examines the attitudes expressed by these 'dissidents', explaining the ground-breaking nature of these Jews forthrightly asserting their views.

Overall, it shows the complex nature of Anglo-Jewry and the attitudes towards it in this crucial period of European history.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

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I declare that this that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
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Introduction

We know who it was that drove the money-changers out of the temple. We see too who it is that brings them in again. We have in London very respectable persons of the Jewish nation, whom we will keep: but we have of the same tribe others of a very different description, — housebreakers, and receivers of stolen goods, and forgers of paper currency, more than we can conveniently hang. These we can spare to France, to fill the new episcopal thrones: men well versed in swearing; and who will scruple no oath which the fertile genius of any of your reformers can devise.¹

~ Edmund Burke.

The Jewish community in England was confronted by a number of challenges arising from the French Revolution. This thesis seeks to examine those challenges: from Edmund Burke's depiction of Jews to aspersions on their patriotism and moral character. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars witnessed the emancipation of Jews in France, the embrace of the concept of equality before the law, Napoleon's destruction of European ghettos and invasion of the Holy Land with his suggestion that Jews might return there and the calling of the Sanhedrin. Concern about the loyalty of Anglo-Jewry was, therefore, hardly surprising. This thesis will seek to examine the attitudes towards Jews in England in the period and to consider how they reacted to the political climate.²

The Jewish community facing these challenges only existed thanks to the *de facto* readmission of Jews by Oliver Cromwell. Edward I's Act of expulsion was not repealed nor was there the creation of any new statutory framework for Jews in Britain.³ This lack of legislation had the advantage that Jews did not suffer from any of the legal restrictions of the kind faced by Jewish communities in other European countries. However, given the lack of clarity on their status, Jews coming to England in the seventeenth century had an on-going struggle to establish their legal rights. Following the Restoration, earlier restrictions on religious ceremonies were reinstated. The Act of Uniformity of 1662

¹ Edmund Burke, *A Letter from Mr Burke to a Member of the National Assembly; In Answer to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs* (London: J Dodsley, 1791, 3rd edition), p. 18.

² This thesis uses the term 'Anglo-Jewry' given that there were in this period very few Jews in the United Kingdom outside England and that the term has been widely used by such historians as Todd Endelman. By extension Anglo-Jewry has been referred to as living in 'England' but 'Britain' has been used where more appropriate, for example, references to the British government.

³ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 27.

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required the use of the Book of Common Prayer in all religious services. The 1664 Conventicle Act banned any non-Anglican religious service with more than five individuals present unless they were part of the same family.⁴ Faced with hostility from City merchants, the tiny Jewish community relied on royal protection. Charles II repeatedly intervened to enable Jews to hold religious services. In 1685, James II issued an Order-in-Council to protect over thirty Jews who had been arrested for recusancy, the failure to attend an Anglican service.⁵ The wording of the Order underlines the instability of the Jewish community's position:

His Majesty's Intention being that they should not be troubled upon this account, but quietly enjoy the free exercise of their Religion, whilst they behave themselves dutifully and obediently to his Government.⁶

The nascent Jewish community had gained religious toleration, but their protection depended on their good behaviour. This had an enduring impact on the attitude of the Jewish community in England. Even in 1787, when approached by the community of Rome on the possibility of Jews emigrating from there to England, the elders of Bevis Marks emphasized that their position in England was a question of privileges rather than rights.⁷

Jews in England did not suffer from legislation which was specifically directed at them, but this does not mean they enjoyed equal legal rights with Anglican Englishmen. The Corporations Act of 1661 and the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678, were targeted at Dissenters and Catholics but barred from various offices anyone unable to take an oath in accordance with the rites of the Anglican Church. Jews in England could not, therefore, hold an office in government or a municipal corporation or the military, or become a member of Parliament or vote in elections.⁸ Moreover, though the community faced no national anti-Jewish legislation, it did suffer from specific anti-Jewish restrictions imposed by self-governing bodies. For instance, Jews were not admitted to Oxford nor could they take a degree at Cambridge.⁹ Jews faced particularly serious opposition from City

⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁶ See H.S.Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 3.

⁷ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830 Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), p. 274.

⁸ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 44. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 203.

⁹ Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 209.

merchants who feared economic competition. A maximum of twelve Jews out of a total of one hundred and twenty-four were permitted by the court of Aldermen to be commodity brokers on the Royal Exchange.¹⁰ This limit enabled the Lord Mayor to obtain substantial sums in exchange for granting licences.¹¹ Moreover, Jews were not permitted to own a shop selling to the public within the City of London itself.¹² In practice, however, this restriction could be mitigated either by creating a 'wholesale warehouse' within the City's boundaries or by creating a shop just outside.¹³

As well as these legal restrictions, Jewish first-generation immigrants to England also suffered from the disadvantages of being aliens under the law. It should be emphasized that these disadvantages arose for all aliens and again the restrictions were not targeted at Jews specifically. An alien could not own land absolutely, although since the reign of Edward I an exemption had permitted foreign merchants to own their own residences and places of business.¹⁴ Most critically for Jews arriving in England seeking to earn an income as a merchant, aliens could not possess shares in British sailing ships, could not play a role in colonial trade and were subject to alien duties.¹⁵ These additional duties were ended in 1672 for exports other than coal. However, it was only in 1784 that Pitt repealed alien duties on imports.

Losing their alien status and becoming subjects of the Crown was, however, a particularly difficult problem for Jews. Whilst foreign-born Protestants could be naturalized by a private act of Parliament, Jews were unable to adopt the same procedure because from 1609, the procedure required the alien to attend a sacramental service within a month prior to his naturalization. An alternative for immigrants to naturalization was endenization. Jews born abroad could gain the status of being a 'denizen' by purchasing a letter patent.¹⁶ Denizens could be merchants in colonial trade, but they were still subject to alien duties. Moreover, children born overseas before their father became a denizen remained aliens and still could not inherit real property.¹⁷

¹⁰ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 36.

¹¹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 22.

¹² Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 199.

¹³ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 74. Jeremy Smilg, 'What does The Jew Bill of 1753 Tell us about mid-eighteenth Century English Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Response to it?', M. Res Thesis, University of Southampton, 2013, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴ H.S.Q. Henriques, *The Law of Aliens and Naturalization including the Text of the Aliens Act 1905* (London: Butterworth, 1906), p. 4.

¹⁵ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 25.

¹⁶ Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, pp. 234-239.

¹⁷ Smilg, 'The Jew Bill of 1753', p. 10.

In 1753, the government of the Duke of Newcastle and Henry Pelham introduced a measure that would have enabled a very small number of wealthy Jews to gain British citizenship without taking holy sacrament. The measure was proposed in response to Jewish support during the 1745 Jacobite rebellion and followed lobbying by one of the few wealthy Jews in the country, Joseph Salvador. It passed with only limited opposition. The reaction to the passing of the 'Jew Bill' helps explain the enduring fears of the Jewish community later in the century. The public outpouring of protest both in serious pamphlets and in the popular press, which eventually led to its repeal, should not be underestimated. Some of the articles published in opposition to the Bill expressed virulent Christian anti-Jewish prejudices. For a short period, newspapers that supported the Tory opposition were dominated by negative images of Jews. The *London Evening Post* frequently referred to circumcision in its arguments against the Jew Bill and noted that Jews in the reign of Henry III 'had stolen a Christian child, had circumcised him and planned to have him crucified at Easter'.¹⁸ Some of the articles, reflecting the nature of mid-eighteenth century political debate, were intensely hostile to Jews but were also highly satirical. For instance, the *London Evening Post* of 14 July 1753 imagined a news article from one hundred years later when the Jews ran Britain. The article suggested that Abraham Levy would be the priest of St Paul's, Christian children would be circumcised and 'George Briton' would be jailed for illegally bringing pork into the country.¹⁹ In his study of the Bill, Thomas Perry emphasized the onslaught against the Jewish community was generated by the Bill's exploitation for cynical political purposes rather than being any form of spontaneous expression of virulent anti-Semitism.²⁰ Yet we should not underestimate the extent to which anti-Jewish prejudice provided an easy weapon for the Tory opposition.

The children of Jewish immigrants enjoyed an enormous advantage over their fathers. English feudal law held that any person born in a dominion over which the King was sovereign at the time of their birth owed allegiance to the King and was therefore considered a subject of the realm. In contrast, under Roman law and in due course the Code Napoleon, a child took the nationality of their parents.²¹ Jews born in Britain were,

¹⁸ G.A. Cranfield, 'The *London Evening Post* and the Jew Bill of 1753', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. VIII.I, 1965, pp. 16-30, pp. 22 and 24.

¹⁹ *London Evening Post*, 14 July 1753.

²⁰ Thomas Perry, *A Study of the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

²¹ Henriques, *The Jews and English Law*, p. 233.

therefore, subjects of the Crown and did not suffer from the disadvantages of being an alien. However, during the Jew Bill controversy, this view was questioned by the more extreme opponents of the Bill such as the evangelical priest William Romaine who argued that all the country's subjects had to be Christian.²² Supporters of this position made use of the arguments of medieval jurist Sir Edward Coke who had referred to Jews as infidels – perpetual inimici ‘for between them as with devils, whose subjects they be, and the Christian there is perpetual hostility and can be no peace’.²³ Moreover, even when it was accepted that Jews born in Britain were citizens, they remained to a substantial extent outside the mainstream of British society. Frank Felsenstein has demonstrated the way in which anti-Semitic stereotypes remained powerful in the eighteenth century.²⁴ He argued that the position of Jews in English society between 1660 and 1830 ‘was viewed as at least anomalous and sometimes pernicious by the majority of the indigenous population’.²⁵

The need for clarity on the definition of citizenship became even more critical as the French Revolution brought with it a new way of thinking about the nation. In France and the United States of America, individuals were no longer subjects of a monarch but were now regarded as citizens of a sovereign nation.²⁶ The National Assembly's 1789 *Declaration of the Rights Man* decreed that sovereignty resided in the Nation and that all ‘men are born and remain free and equal in rights’. The Declaration left the rights of many groups such as women, slaves and Jews ill-defined. How far were they to be part of the sovereign ‘Nation’? However, the Declaration provided a framework from which these groups could demand their rights and an intellectual construction—a belief in universalism—which encouraged other groups to seek equality.²⁷ For Jews, it opened the struggle that led to political emancipation. In his study of attitudes towards Jews in France, Ronald Schechter

²² William Romaine, *An Answer to a Pamphlet entitled Considerations on the Bill to Permit Persons Professing the Jewish Religion to be Naturalized wherein the False Reasoning, Gross Misrepresentation of Facts and Perversion of Scripture are fully laid open and detected* (London: H Cooke, 1753), p. 60.

²³ Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 186.

²⁴ The term ‘anti-Semitic’ has been spelled thus. Its use in this period is anachronistic and its meaning and, indeed, spelling are contentious, but in the context of this thesis it is used to express anti-Jewish prejudice.

²⁵ Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 21.

²⁶ Margritt Beerbühl, ‘British Nationality Policy as a Counter-Revolution Strategy During the Napoleonic Wars: The Emergence of Modern Naturalization Regulations’, in Andreas Fahrmeir, Oliver Faron and Patrick Weill (eds), *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Interwar Period* (New York: Bergbahn Books, 2003), pp. 55-73, p. 55.

²⁷ Robert Fine, ‘Two Faces of Universalism: Jewish Emancipation and the Jewish Question’, *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56:1 and 2, 2014, pp. 29-47, p. 30.

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underlined the intense nature of the debate. In the midst of revolutionary chaos, the status of Jews was referred to in thirty-two sessions during two years of National Assembly, with impassioned debates often lasting for hours. The status of Jews was also repeatedly discussed by the Constitution Committee and Finance Committee.²⁸ Eventually, Guy-Jean-Baptiste Target, the president of the Assembly, argued against a further session to discuss the issue on the grounds that ‘what we pronounce in regard to the Jews only interests a portion of men; yet fixing the order of the judiciary power, determining the number and mode of the French army, establishing regulations on finances, these are three objects that interest the whole kingdom and demand your attention’.²⁹ Schechter argued that the focus on Jews arose as they were ‘good for thinking’ about the nature of French citizenship and the nation.³⁰ Moreover, they perhaps provided a welcome diversion from more difficult topics such as democracy or the ending of slavery.³¹

The rights of those excluded from society were also raised in Britain. For instance, in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, but there was no such debate in respect of the Jewish community. Indeed, following the Jew Bill, the Jewish community, probably to its relief, played only a minor role in British public life. Edmund Burke’s attitude to the Jews is, therefore, surprising given the relatively low profile of Jews in British politics. It is also of particular interest given his role in the development of conservative thought. Burke may have been a Whig most of his life, but gradually over the nineteenth century he was adopted by the British Conservative party.³² Even more importantly, he became a standard bearer for conservative thought in America and has sometimes been referred to as the ‘father of conservatism’.³³ The impact of the French Revolution on his attitudes towards Jews is, therefore, highly relevant. Yet, Burke’s biographers have generally avoided any meaningful discussion of his anti-Jewish comments. This is despite the fact that there is widespread discussion on how Burke, the supporter of the American Revolution and scourge of the British role in India, became a ‘conservative’ political thinker and author of the leading

²⁸ Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003), p. 154.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

³² Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

diatribe against the French Revolution. In some ways the volte face in his attitudes towards Jews from the defender of the Jews of St Eustatius in 1781 to his blatant use of anti-Jewish sentiments in *Reflections* provides a clear parallel to the wider debates about the extent to which Burke's philosophy was consistent over time in. Perhaps because of the incident's connection to the American Revolution, Burke's supportive comments for the Jews of St Eustatius have received considerable attention from Guido Abbatista, John Jameson, Richard Bourke and David Bromwich, but this only serves to emphasize the relative lack of focus on Burke's later anti-Jewish comments.³⁴

Burke invoked old anti-Semitic tropes, but he also drew on new images of Jews, which had evolved in the eighteenth century, of Jews being destitute criminals and avaricious proponents of financial capitalism. He foreshadowed the future association of Jews with radicalism —later developed into conspiracy theories about the French Revolution having been created by philosophes, freemasons and Jews —and would prove foundational to developments in anti-Semitism later in the nineteenth century. Moreover, Burke's comments presaged the way in which Jews would face a pincer-like attack. Jewish communities would be denounced as the agents of radicalism and in due course of communism. At the same time, they would be denounced as the high priests of finance or later of international capitalism. Any evaluation of Burke's anti-Jewish sentiments, however, needs to contrast them with those of his radical opponents such as Paine and Price, who did not comment on Burke's anti-Jewish pronouncements and indeed made negative comments about Judaism themselves.³⁵

Neither conservatism nor radical universalism allowed for plural identities and both led to a challenge for minority communities in wartime. The question of divided loyalty was by no means a new issue in the 1790s, but it became particularly sensitive as the concept of the nation state developed. Consideration of the position of the Jewish communities in both France and England in this period demonstrates how minority

³⁴ Guido Abbatista, 'Edmund Burke, the Atlantic American War and the "poor Jews at St. Eustatius"', *Empire and Law of Nations*, *Cromohs*, Vol. 13, 2008, pp.1-39. Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2015). David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke Vol. 1 From the Sublime and Beautiful Focus to American Independence* (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 2014). John Franklin Jameson, 'St Eustatius in the American Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 8:4, July 1903, pp. 683-708.

³⁵ Carol Margaret Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Rachel Schulkins, 'Burke, His Liberal Rivals and the Jewish Question', *Otherness Essays and Studies*, Vol. 3.2, June 2013, pp. 1-32.

communities can react to the challenge. Robert Lamb and Evan Radcliffe have attempted to reconcile the position of individuals like Paine who defended both the concepts of national sovereignty and of cosmopolitanism.³⁶ More broadly, the question of divided or dual loyalties has been considered by Ilan Zvi Baron in 'The Problem of Dual Loyalty'.³⁷ Authors such as Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald have addressed the wider problems arising for transnational communities with deep connections to two or more countries or to a wider global community.³⁸ Generally, however, there has been only very limited consideration of divided loyalties. It remains a difficult issue and one which can even be challenging to raise and discuss without giving offence, particularly as the accusation of disloyalty has been exploited to justify the persecution and scapegoating of minorities. Such questions have direct contemporary relevance given similar accusations today against minority communities in many countries.

The question of the loyalty of aliens certainly worried the British government following the French Revolution and led to the 1793 Alien Act. As with so much of the legislation that impacted eighteenth-century Anglo-Jewry, the Act was not targeted at Jews but at the fear that revolutionary terrorists might be hidden amongst the surge of French Catholics fleeing France for safety in England—a debate that has clear contemporary resonance. *The Times* commented that thanks to the threat of the impending Alien Act, London was 'now cleared of hundreds of French vermin who came hither to breed rebellion and assassination'.³⁹ Unfortunately, other than the work of Margritt Beerbühl and J.R. Dinwiddy, the 1793 Alien Act has received limited attention despite being an excellent example of how immigration controls can be both remarkably enduring and have unintended consequences.⁴⁰ What had been intended as an emergency short-term measure remained on the statute books with numerous amendments until 1826.⁴¹ Nevertheless, attention to the Act's implementation has been limited, perhaps partially because the role

³⁶ Robert Lamb, 'The Liberal Cosmopolitanism of Thomas Paine', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 76, Number 3, July 2014, pp. 636-648. Evan Radcliffe, 'Burke, Radical Cosmopolitanism and the Debates on Patriotism in the 1790s', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, Vol. 28, 1999, pp. 311-339.

³⁷ Ilan Zvi Baron, 'The Problem of Dual Loyalty', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42:4, Dec 2009, pp. 1025-1044.

³⁸ Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, 'Transnationalism in Question', *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 109:5, March 2004, pp.1177-1195.

³⁹ *The Times*, 2 January 1793.

⁴⁰ J.R. Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation under the Alien Act, 1793-1826', in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *Radicalism and Reform in Britain* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), pp. 146-149.

⁴¹ Richard Plender, *International Migration Law* (Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988).

played by some of the individuals in the Alien Office in both monitoring radicalism and trying to undermine the regime in France has diverted historiographical attention from the rather more prosaic question of its administrative implementation.⁴² Whilst some of the records of the Alien Office have not been preserved, the National Archives holds under series *HO5 1-17* the outgoing correspondence of the Alien Office in respect of alien arrivals in the period. *HO1/1* to *HO1/5* holds largely incoming correspondence to the Home Office, most of which is in respect of French immigrants. This thesis will use these archives to consider the Act's implementation and, in particular, to address the question of how Jewish aliens were treated by the Alien Office.

If the Alien Act's implementation has been neglected by historians, one area of relevance to the Jewish community that has received intense scrutiny, by Jack Fruchtman and Clark Garrett among others, is the rise of millenarianism during the period.⁴³ Millenarian beliefs that the Second Coming was impending were by no means new in England and had been particularly popular amongst Puritans during the Civil War. The precise nature of these beliefs varied, but they generally involved a combination of impending natural and political catastrophes, the return of Jews to the Holy Land, their conversion to Christianity and the literal physical return of Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ Indeed, there was a strong belief that England, as the leading Protestant nation, had a specific divinely given role in assisting the Jews to return to the Holy Land.⁴⁵ Millenarianism attracted a wide range of support. Stephen Snobelen has pointed out that eighteenth-century British millenarian beliefs were developed by leading intellectuals like Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston.⁴⁶ It also attracted support from the poor and from extreme enthusiasts

⁴² On the Alien Office's 'secret service' activities, see Michael Durey, 'William Wickham, the Christ Church Connection and the Rise and Fall of the Security Service in Britain, 1793-1801', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 121:492, June 2006, pp. 714-745. Elizabeth Sparrow, 'The Alien Office, 1792-1806', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33:2, June 1990, pp. 361-384.

⁴³ Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in England and France* (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1975). Jack Fruchtman, 'The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A study in Late Eighteenth Century English Republic Millennialism', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 73:4, 1983, pp. 1-125.

⁴⁴ On the differences between pre- and post- millennialism beliefs, see Fruchtman, 'The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley', pp. 1-125, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Stephen Snobelen: *The Mystery of This Restitution of All Things: Isaac Newton on the Return of the Jews*, pp. 67-95, in James Force and Richard Popkin (eds), *The Millenarian Turn: Millenarian Context of Science, Politics and Everyday Anglo-American Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

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such as Richard Brothers. Brothers proclaimed that he had been sent by God to lead the Jews to the Holy Land, and that George III's life was in danger unless he abdicated. The 1795 James Gillray cartoon, *The Prophet of the Hebrews* shows Richard Brothers, dressed as a sans culotte, leading the Jews to the Holy Land. The opposition leaders, Charles James Fox, Sheridan and Lansdown, are in a sack on his back, marked 'Bundle of the Elect'. To the lower right of the picture are St Paul's and London burning.⁴⁷



Figure 1: James Gillray, *Prophet of the Hebrews*, 1795, British Museum, 1851,0901.724.

The rising support for millenarianism is unsurprising given the startling impact of the French Revolution. The events of the period were seen by some as the destruction of the historic and divinely ordained political and religious framework of society that must lead to divine intervention. As we shall see, even the radical Dissenter, Joseph Priestley, increasingly felt that the French Revolution and subsequent shattering wars meant that the Second Coming must be near. Its study is of particular importance given that the debates in Britain in the 1780s and 1790s had a direct impact on attitudes towards contemporary Jews, underlining their future critical role and the need to convert them. Moreover, the

⁴⁷ Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, pp. 96-97. Alfred Rubens, *A Jewish Iconography* (London: Nonpareil Publishing Company Limited, 1981), p. 22.

belief in millenarianism continues to have many supporters in contemporary American society. Donald Lewis and Richard Popkin have both suggested that millenarian beliefs in the 1790s should be seen as an essential stepping-stone in the development of Christian Zionism.⁴⁸

Millenarianism is closely interwoven with traditional Christian eschatology, but it had a political as well as a religious significance. Indeed, it would be wrong in this period to have a clear line of distinction between religion and politics. Many theological debates had political implications whilst many political beliefs reflected aspects of religion. Perhaps most critically, this can be seen in the support for radicalism amongst Dissenting churches, which arose at least in part from their position outside of the establishment. This thesis will not discuss Christian eschatological beliefs in detail but will highlight millenarianism where developments reflect political changes in attitudes towards Jews. Moreover, it should be remembered that discussions around theological issues involving Judaism attracted much greater attention in England than the public debate about legal restrictions suffered by the Jewish community or around the extent of their loyalty.

Facing the challenge of debates over its role in millenarianism and questions in respect of its loyalty was a Jewish community that in 1800 numbered approximately 20,000 individuals, of whom three quarters lived in London, out of a total population for England and Wales of approximately nine million.⁴⁹ The first Jews in England arrived from Holland and were Sephardim, descendants of Jews who had fled Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition. By the end of the eighteenth century, these numbered approximately two thousand. Among this group were the majority of wealthy Jews although about a half of the Sephardi community still lived in poverty. The Ashkenazi community had grown rapidly in the eighteenth century with the immigration from the 1770s of poverty-stricken individuals, particularly from Germany. Whilst the Ashkenazi community did include a number of wealthy Jews, these probably numbered no more than fifty, and the vast majority of the community was destitute.⁵⁰ Despite its presence in England for a hundred and thirty years, the Jewish community retained a fear of a backlash if any of its members were to express

⁴⁸ Donald M Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 25-48. David Katz, 'Popkin and the Jews', in Jeremy Popkin (ed.), *The Legacies of Richard Popkin* (Lexington: Springer, 2008), pp. 213-229, p. 214.

⁴⁹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 172 on conflicting estimates for the Jewish population. Office for National Statistics Population Data. See bibliography.

⁵⁰ Levy Alexander, *An Answer to Mr. Joshua van Oven's Letters on the Present State of the Jewish Poor in London* (London; Levy Alexander, 1802), p. 24. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 32.

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political or controversial religious views challenging Christian beliefs. The communal elite restricted itself to repeatedly stressing its loyalty to the established order. As we shall see, this was genuinely felt, but it was also generated by a concern for the security of the community, particularly during the decades of domestic reaction when England was at war with France and her allies.⁵¹ Jews in both Britain and France emphasized that their Judaism required them to support any country in which they were resident and to obey its laws. Both quoted Jeremiah's instructions to the Jews on their exile to Babylon to 'seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile, pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare'; and the Talmud which instructed Jews that 'the laws of the kingdom in which you live are the laws' (*dina de malkhuta dina*).⁵²

Yet, there were a number of Jews who were prepared to express themselves in public. This study considers what should perhaps be better seen as a different focus—rather than an outright disagreement—held by the two major historians of the Jewish community of the period. Both David Ruderman and Todd Endelman are agreed that Anglo-Jewry did not enjoy a transformative intellectual movement in the style of the German Jewish community. Moreover, they agree that the development of ideas expressed by English Jews in the late eighteenth century was quite independent of any developments in Germany. David Ruderman has, however, focussed on a number of Jewish intellectuals in England and suggested that Endelman had underplayed their role.⁵³ In his preface to the second edition of *The Jews of Georgian England*, Endelman recognises the validity of Ruderman's point whilst continuing to highlight the importance of social history in the development of Anglo-Jewry.⁵⁴ Endelman points out that the secularisation and acculturation of the Jewish community had started long before any intellectual developments, and that there is no evidence that the few Jewish intellectuals had much impact on the community. This may well be the case but, given the general communal attitude about expressing views in public, and the lack of private records, it is not possible to be sure how far their opinions had an influence on other Jews. It is necessary to consider how far these individuals were 'exceptional' Jews and how far they may to some extent have echoed the existing attitudes of other Jews who were simply not prepared to express views publicly.

⁵¹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 275.

⁵² Jeremiah (29:7). *Talmud*, Nedarim 3. The *Talmud* is the written version of rabbinical oral law dating from the second century CE and the subsequent recording of rabbinic discussions of those laws over the next three centuries.

⁵³ David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern English Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3-6.

⁵⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. xix-xx.

The contrast between a conservative communal elite frightened of any threat to its own status and radical individuals would arise repeatedly in Europe over the next century as Jewish communities came under pressure with the rise of nationalism. This thesis will focus on four Jews, in particular, prepared to express themselves in public; namely Isaac D'Israeli, David Levi, John King and Lord George Gordon. These individuals shared a willingness to be public figures, but they reflected an enormous diversity both in their opinions and Jewish backgrounds. Isaac D'Israeli, the father of the future Prime Minister, was a conservative opposed to the French Revolution. He has perhaps suffered from being largely looked at through the prism of his son Benjamin. The only biography of Isaac D'Israeli was written in 1969 by James Ogden and there is clear need for a modern biography.⁵⁵ Yet, on the basis of archival material in the Bodleian, my concern in this thesis is to re-evaluate Isaac's 1797 novel *Vaurien* and to consider if Isaac should be viewed as an isolated and unusual member the Jewish community. In contrast to Isaac D'Israeli's political conservatism, we shall consider the remarkable career of John King. As Todd Endelman has set out, John King may have been a radical but combined radicalism with criminality.⁵⁶ In contrast, whilst King and D'Israeli shared a lack of commitment to Judaism as a religion, this study will also consider two religious Jews, David Levi and Lord George Gordon. The career of David Levi has been well studied by David Ruderman and Richard Popkin.⁵⁷ As David Ruderman has pointed out, Levi was prolific. He effectively operated, in David Ruderman's words, as 'a one man Jewish antidefamation league' defending religious Judaism in a number of publications and this included debating theology with both Priestley and Paine.⁵⁸ Unlike Levi, Lord George Gordon became a Jew by conversion but it is important to take the experience of Jews who converted to or from Judaism into Jewish history.⁵⁹ His consistent support for the French Revolution and lobbying for Jewish rights, even when incarcerated in Newgate, confirmed to Burke that Gordon represented a key connection between Judaism and revolutionary radicalism. This thesis will also consider to what extent these four individuals shared any common features.

Fortunately, there are very substantial primary materials on King, D'Israeli, Levi and Gordon consisting both of primary books and newspaper articles written by them and

⁵⁵ James Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

⁵⁶ Todd Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Portland: Littman Library, 2011), pp. 171-201.

⁵⁷ Richard Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 87, 1996, pp. 79-101. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 57.

⁵⁹ On the importance of including converts from Judaism, see Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History*, pp. 82-92.

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about them. All of them wrote extensively and enjoyed a degree of contemporary discussion of their views. There is also archival material for Isaac D'Israeli in the Bodleian Library. The attitude of the wider English community towards Jews can be found in the writings of Burke and other political commentators, contemporary newspaper articles, cartoons, plays, songs and novels. There is, however, the obvious problem that attitudes expressed in public about Jews might not be the same as views held in private, for which there are far more limited sources. Far more problematically, however, is that there are relatively few sources which help to establish attitudes within the Jewish community. There are only limited primary sources relating even to the attitude of the communal elite. There does not exist any communal Jewish newspaper which might have reflected their views. Equally frustratingly, whilst the Board of Deputies of British Jews was gradually formed in the period, it rarely met, and its minutes are very limited. Moreover, even wealthy Jews in this period did not leave archives of their correspondence. It would seem that they did not consider themselves of sufficient importance to retain their papers for posterity, or at least whatever limited letters they did keep have been lost to us. Moreover, only very occasionally are the views of poor Jews expressed and it is not known if the attitudes of Jewish women were in any way different from Jewish men. The only available direct voices are those of rabbinical sermons gathered by Marc Saperstein and the comments that were expressed by Jews on the Sanhedrin.⁶⁰ In looking at rabbinical sermons, this work will follow the approach of Ronald Schechter who examined sermons of French Jewry in the period and argued that these contained vital historical information.⁶¹ The attitudes of the community can also be seen in a range of reflected sources—newspaper comments about the Jews, their role in the militia, synagogue rules and comments about the community from the few politicised Jews prepared to discuss issues in public. It is important, however, to be careful about assuming that our understanding is in any way complete. The shortage of primary resources and, in particular private documents, means that we need to treat our understanding of the 'mainstream' Jewish community cautiously.

Despite the shortage of primary resources, what can be repeatedly seen is the Jewish community stressing its loyalty and 'patriotism'. The word 'patriotism' however requires careful use. The term has been used in this thesis, but its meaning was in flux during this

⁶⁰ Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001* (Oxford and Portland Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2008).

⁶¹ Ronald Schechter, 'Becoming French: Patriotic liturgy and the transformation of Jewish identity in France, 1708-1815', Ph. D diss., Harvard University, 1993. Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003).

period. The concept had been developed by Bolingbroke in *The Idea of the Patriot King* and was associated in the eighteenth century with radicals such as John Wilkes and opposition to the corrupting role of patronage. It was linked to a foreign policy which placed a focus on naval conflict to expand British trade and overseas territories rather than supporting Hanoverian interests in Europe. Moreover, the expression could be used to indicate support for the return of what was seen as traditional Saxon liberties prior to the Norman Conquest in opposition to the power of the king and his ministers.⁶² Indeed, the radical London Corresponding Society considered calling itself ‘The Patriotic Club’ and its Manchester equivalent was, indeed, called the ‘Manchester Patriotic Society’. The term ‘patriotism’ continued to be fought over during the early nineteenth century. It was only after the French Revolution that radicalism in England became associated with cosmopolitanism on the grounds that its concepts of liberty and equality transcended national boundaries; whilst the term ‘patriotism’ gradually was understood to be a conservative virtue of loving one’s country.⁶³

In addition to reviewing the communal stress on its patriotism, there are a number of specific areas where this thesis aims to add to our understanding of Anglo-Jewry in the period. The complex position facing Anglo-Jewry described by Todd Endelman’s seminal work is supported by the primary research conducted for this thesis in respect of the Alien Act. Burke’s vituperative comments about Jews in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the widespread presence of negative representations of Jews did not lead to wider political antagonism to the Jewish community or any evidence of anti-Jewish discrimination in the administrative implementation of the Alien Act.

Nevertheless, the thesis questions whether Endelman’s stress on the successful social integration of both wealthy and poor sections of the Jewish community may lead us to overestimate the extent to which Anglo-Jewry felt confident about its own position. Work since Todd Endelman published his first edition in 1979 —particularly on the rise of nationalism by Roxann Wheeler and Linda Colley— has portrayed a rather darker

⁶² Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *Historical Workshop Journal*, Vol. 12:1, pp. 8-33, p. 9.

⁶³ J.R. Dinwiddy, ‘England’, in Otto Dann and James Dinwiddy (eds), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1988), pp. 53-71, p. 57. Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, p. 9.

perspective of tolerance in Georgian society.⁶⁴ Set against this changing historiography, this thesis suggests that the accusation of dual loyalty was of crucial importance to Anglo-Jewry as it was in its own different context to Jews in France. This thesis will, therefore, place a different focus on Anglo-Jewry's protestations of loyalty. Todd Endelman sees the 'decisive explanation for the inaction of the Anglo-Jewish elite' as being the relatively limited legal discrimination they suffered from in perusing their economic interests and daily lifestyle.⁶⁵ This thesis recognises the importance of this argument but suggests that the fear that its existing rights and position remained vulnerable was an equally powerful emotion and driving force.

This emphasis on the communal sense of vulnerability is also reflected in the approach to the very limited number of Jewish radical thinkers of the period. In particular, the thesis considers the possibility that the caustic comments expressed by David Levi about Christianity and by Isaac D'Israeli about England's treatment of Jews may have reflected far more widely held attitudes, but which most communal members were too frightened to express in public. Given the lack of evidence, it would be inappropriate to be too confident about the extent to which we can assess how widely any view was held in the Jewish community. However, the thesis aims to underline the centrality of David Levi and Isaac D'Israeli to the Jewish community and to raise the possibility that their powerfully expressed opinions may well have been more widely held within Anglo-Jewry.

In terms of structure this thesis will be split into two sections. Section One will examine attitudes towards Jews, whilst Section Two will focus on the response of the Jewish community and its dissidents. Dividing the thesis into two Sections has two major advantages. The approach enables the challenges faced by the community to be examined in detail in the first section before the Jewish response to those challenges is reviewed in Section Two. In addition, it enables us in Section One to place those challenges into the wider context of English society in the Revolutionary Era. Burke's views, the representations of Jews and the Alien Act are all instructive when considering the extent that England should be considered a tolerant nation and increase our understanding of England in the 1790s.

⁶⁴ Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Press, 2000). Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

⁶⁵ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 277.

In Chapter One the thesis will consider Burke's attitudes towards Jews, but it will also seek to explain why Burke's opponents did not highlight his use of anti-Jewish tropes. Chapter Two of this section will consider popular representations of Jews. In particular, the aim will be to consider the extent to which the Jew was considered to be the 'other' in the way in which they were represented in literature, prints and ballads. Finally, Chapter Three will consider the Alien Act and whether the representations of Jews had an impact on the way in which laws were actually applied to them. Section Two will consider the Jewish response. Chapter Four will consider the response of the 'mainstream community'. The question posed to Jews about divided loyalties in the era of the nation state will be set within the wider context of accusations over dual loyalty which have been used against a number of minority communities. The beginning of possible long-term responses to that challenge can also be seen in the views of radicals of the period. The attitudes of those Jews who were prepared to declare their opinions in public will be examined in Chapter Five. We will consider to what extent English society was comfortable with the existence of controversial Jews taking part in public debate.

Although divided into two Sections, it is the interaction between the views of Christian Britain and the Jewish response which is the overarching theme of this study. The history of Anglo-Jewry may seem relatively calm compared to the momentous events experienced by French Jewry in the period. Indeed, as Todd Endelman has pointed out, Anglo-Jewry has not been a determining force in British history. Anglo-Jewry post readmission has not suffered from any major persecutions or been responsible for any major Jewish intellectual developments.⁶⁶ Yet, as Endelman has argued, this is no reason to be defensive about its study. Jewish history is of a dual character seeking to help us to understand both Jewish history and English history. The communal response highlights how Anglo-Jewry was able to protect its position and avoid conflict. Moreover, by considering questions of dual loyalty, immigration control and the challenges faced by the members of a small immigrant community, it is possible to develop a greater understanding of the English society in which they lived and examine issues for migrant communities which continue to be of contemporary relevance.

⁶⁶ Todd M Endelman, 'Writing English Jewish History', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* Vol.27:4, Winter, 1995, pp. 623-636, p. 624.

SECTION 1:
ATTITUDES TOWARDS ANGLO-
JEWRY

Chapter 1:

Burke, Cobbett and Political Thought

The English reaction to the emancipation of the Jews in France has to be seen in the context of the generally favourable welcome of the French Revolution. It is only with hindsight that we know that the French Revolution was to lead to two decades of war. On its outbreak, William Pitt, the Tory Prime Minister, if not quite exulting over the fall of the *Ancien Régime* in the style of Charles James Fox, saw the French Revolution as a generally positive development likely to produce a constitutional monarchy in the style of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The government's attitude was that the French had learnt the wisdom of Britain's constitutional arrangements and would be moving towards a similar form of government. In February 1790, Pitt declared that once calm had returned to France, it 'would stand forward as one of the most brilliant powers of Europe; she would enjoy just that kind of liberty which he venerated'. He believed that as a result of reform she would be 'less obnoxious as a neighbour'.¹ Pitt's focus remained the maintenance of prosperity and stability. As late as February 1792, Pitt was suggesting cuts to the defence budget since he believed there would be peace in Europe.² The government's positive attitude to the Revolution continued despite Burke's condemnation of developments in France in November 1790 in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The government was surprised at what appeared to be a dramatic change in the views of Burke, who had previously been known for his support of reform and the American Revolution, but the publication of *Reflections* had no immediate impact on its thinking.³

Enthusiasm in Britain for the French Revolution declined as it became increasingly radical and this can be seen in the response of the British press. Coverage of the French Revolution was intense, which is hardly surprising given the momentous nature of events, and that reports on foreign affairs were of critical importance in promoting sales for many

¹ *Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803, from which Last-Mentioned Epoch It is Continued Downwards in the Work Entitled "The Parliamentary Debates", Vol. XXVIII comprising the period from the Eighth of May 1789, to the Fifteenth of March 1791* (London: TC Hansard, 1816), col. 351.

² *Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to 1803, from which Last-Mentioned Epoch It is Continued Downwards in the Work Entitled "The Parliamentary Debates", Vol. XXIX comprising the Period from the Twenty-Second of March 1791, to the Thirteenth of December 1792* (London: TC Hansard, 1817), col. 826.

³ Ian McCalman, 'Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte: Riot and Sexuality in the Genesis of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 35:No. 3, July 1996, pp. 343-367, pp. 343-344.

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newspapers.⁴ Frequently sourced from foreign newspapers, overseas news was often first recorded in the London press and then reprinted, sometimes word for word, in the provincial press.⁵ Clearly, given the slowness of communications, foreign news coverage was not up to date nor was it always reliable. It was, however, frequently more trustworthy than domestic news stories in which individuals would often pay newspapers for positive pieces about themselves, and at times newspapers would blackmail individuals threatening to print a particular story unless they received payment.⁶ With the change in government attitudes towards events in France, the English press became bitterly politically divided. Amongst the daily papers, the government was supported by the *Morning Herald*, the *Public Advertiser*, *The Times* and the *World* whilst the *Argus*, the *Cabinet*, the *Gazetteer*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post* and the *Star* supported the opposition.⁷ Government pressure born from the fear that events in France would inspire radicalism in Britain was to see the substantial demise of the radical press by the mid-1790s. In contrast, by the early 1790s a number of newspapers including *The Times* were receiving grants from the Treasury to ensure their hostile coverage of anyone expressing radical sentiments.⁸

In this increasingly politicised atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that attitudes in the press towards Jewish emancipation in France at least partially reflected a newspaper's wider political views. For instance, *The Times* noted:

Thus, the National Assembly, who represents France may be composed of Turks, Jews, Infidels, Negroes of every kind, any of the rabble of the Stews in Paris, —a motley heterogeneous mixture of all descriptions of men, who must, in time, even if the good sense of other nations did not interpose, overturn this wild perversion of human nature.⁹

Generally, however, newspaper coverage still tended to see any positive development for French or European Jewry as the rest of Europe catching up to British tolerance. Numerous newspapers including the *Morning Post* noted with approval that 'no people will be greater gainers than the Jews by the declaration of the rights of man in France'.¹⁰ The

⁴ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 197-9

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-91.

⁶ Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England, 1792-1793* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. 20-21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22 and 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24 and 170.

⁹ *The Times*, 16 August 1791

¹⁰ *Morning Post*, 17 January 1791. *Stamford Mercury*, 21 January 1791. *Chester Chronicle*, 28 January 1791. *Derby Mercury*, 20 January 1791.

London World also welcomed emancipation, whilst the *St James Chronicle* saw it as one element of a positive evolution in Europe towards a more enlightened treatment of Jews.¹¹ The press ignored the wider cultural aspects of anti-Semitism in England and argued that the position of Jews in British society was secure. Generally, there was a continuing self-congratulatory view amongst the press on British tolerance. For instance, even the Whig supporting *Morning Chronicle* would note in 1806:

Here they enjoy, if not equal privileges with the King's subjects of the Established Church, at least full and perfect toleration, as well as security.

The *Morning Chronicle* continued:

Here they melt more into the mass of the community; are less scrupulous of forms; and much less subject to observation and prejudice than in any other country of Europe. All prejudice against them is nearly worn out, and they feel this as a national calamity for every sect is assisted by persecution.¹²

Even newspapers that were supportive of positive developments for the Jewish community in France or, more generally, in Europe simply ignored the lack of reform in England and exaggerated the degree of tolerance enjoyed by Anglo-Jewry. The issue of Jewish political emancipation in England did not receive more than minimal public attention either in the press or Parliament.¹³ The Jewish community did not seek to be included in the attempts made in short succession in 1787, 1789 and 1790 to amend the Test and Corporation Acts so as to exclude Dissenters from their provisions. In the end, reform would only happen in 1828, but some Anglicans were concerned in the late 1780s about the extent of support for legislative reform to provide Dissenters with relief from the Acts. It was only in very rare cases that the issue of Jewish emancipation was even raised. Jews were briefly mentioned during Fox's attempt in March 1790 to amend the Acts. Sir George Turner and Jack Mannors argued for Jews also to be exempted to which Charles James Fox indicated his approval by shouting 'hear, hear'. In opposition to the measure, Mr Powys objected that repeal for Dissenters would leave the door open for 'the Jew, the Mahometan, the disciples of Brama, Confucius'.¹⁴ The *English Chronicle* noted the contrast that whilst the 'French

¹¹ *St. James Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 30 July 1791.

¹² *Morning Chronicle*, 3 September 1806.

¹³ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1814-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), pp. 277-280.

¹⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 4 March 1790. *Stamford Mercury*, 5 March 1790. *Parliamentary History of England* vol. XXVIII, 1789-1791 (London: Hansard, 1816), col. 430, 2 March 1790.

have given unlimited toleration and universal participation of privileges even to the Jews, our Parliament denies the same even to Protestant Dissenters'.¹⁵ The *Scots Magazine* of 1 December 1796 ended a sympathetic article on the history of Jews in England with the view that Parliament should approve the 'political equality of this sect (the Jews)'.¹⁶ As will be discussed later, the mainstream Jewish community strenuously avoided playing a role in politics and the risks of association with reforming Dissenters should not be dismissed. On 16 February 1790, in preparation for the debate over the Fox repeal motion, James Sayers, a London engraver, produced a print entitled 'The Repeal of the Test Act'. This represented the radical Unitarians, Priestley, Price and Lindsey as extremist seventeenth-century individuals denouncing the monarchy and the church. Flames are depicted coming from Priestley's mouth which become bubbles called Atheism, Deism, Socinianism and Arianism. Beneath them, a man is stealing Christian artefacts watched by a Jew who, speaking in broken English, is offering to buy the Church's stolen silver.¹⁷

Examining the question of political emancipation for Dissenters provides an insight into Burke's changing views. Historians have followed contemporaries in struggling to reconcile Burke's support for the American Revolution, campaign for the abolition of slavery and concern for the native population of India with his later febrile hostility to the French Revolution and support of the hereditary principle. Burke's comments about Jews need to be understood in the context of Burke's wider political perspective. In particular, it is important to understand how Burke, the sympathetic supporter of the Jews of St Eustatius, came to express virulent comments about Jews in his opposition to the French Revolution.

In 1781 Burke condemned Admiral Rodney's treatment of the inhabitants of the Dutch Caribbean island of St Eustatius, also known as Statia, which had been a key supply route for arms and munitions to be despatched to supporters of the American Revolution. As Rodney wrote to his wife 'this rock of only six miles in length and three in breadth has done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies and alone supported the infamous American rebellion'.¹⁸ Rodney may have exaggerated, but the

¹⁵ *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, 4-6 March 1790.

¹⁶ *The Scots Magazine*, 1 December 1796, Vol. 50, p. 824.

¹⁷ Iain McCalman 'New Jerusalems: prophecy, Dissent and radical culture in England, 17861-1830', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 312- 335, p. 312. *British Museum* print catalogue reference 7628.

¹⁸ John Franklin Jameson, 'St Eustatius in the American Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 8:4, July 1903, pp. 683-708, p. 695.

island's importance as a trade route for munitions going to America should not be underestimated. St. Eustatius as a Dutch colony was seen as a much safer transit port for goods being forwarded to supporters of the American Revolution than British colonies or even French colonies which were seen as more likely to be attacked. A Dutch Rear-Admiral who stayed in St. Eustatius for thirteen months during 1778 to 1779 counted the departure of 3,182 ships from St. Eustatius in the period.¹⁹ There had been a Sephardi Jewish community on the island since 1660 and the Jews played a significant role in conducting this commerce through their contacts with Sephardi Jews in Holland and America. Following the declaration of war against Holland in December 1780, St. Eustatius was rapidly attacked by overwhelming force led by Rodney and in February 1781 capitulated. Rodney expelled a number of Jewish men without their families and proceeded to seize money, goods and ships from all merchants, including British subjects, for his own personal benefit, leading in due course to a plethora of cases in the Admiralty Court. Indeed, Rodney spent so much time at St. Eustatius that Admiral Hood would later argue that the critical British defeat at Yorktown was in part due to Rodney's absence enabling the French navy to enjoy temporary superiority.²⁰

Burke was appalled by Rodney's actions, which in his eyes were both cruel and an 'unprincipled violation of the law of nations'.²¹ Despite the wider Whig support for the American Revolution, this was still a relatively brave approach for Burke to have adopted. As Burke himself noted, it required considerable political courage 'to plead against abuses of power which originate from your own country, and affects those whom we are used to consider as strangers'.²² Bromwich points out that Burke's comments on St. Eustatius are similar to his later speeches defending the rights of Indians against the East India Company and demonstrated an ability and willingness to criticise England and to defend powerless foreigners.

Burke recognised that no treaty existed that governed the conduct of war and that no law had been established 'like the law of Britain in black letter, by statute and record'.²³ Nevertheless, he argued that there were limits on the way in which a war could be conducted. Similar arguments had already been expressed by such authorities as Vattel,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 686.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 706-7.

²¹ *Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803* Vol. XXII comprising the Period from The Twenty Sixth of March 1781, to the Seventh of May 1782 (London: Hansard, 1814), col. 222.

²² Quoted in David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke Vol. 1 From the Sublime and Beautiful Focus to American Independence* (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 431.

²³ *Parliamentary History*, vol. XXII, pp. 228-229.

Pufendorf, Grotius and Gentili. In part, these arguments simply arose from the rational argument that clemency pacified an enemy. In Burke's case, this argument was supported by his view of the key role of private property. A king who conquered a territory gained new subjects and he then owed those subjects protection for their property. Above all, Burke highlighted—as he was to do during the French Revolution — the key role of precedence. He challenged Rodney's defenders to provide an example during the previous fifty years of similar behaviour and compared Rodney's abuses to the protection of property rights during both the seizure of Granada by Britain in 1759 and its recapture by the French in 1779.²⁴

Rodney's particularly harsh treatment of Jews in St. Eustatius may have had an element of anti-Semitism. In an earlier letter he had declared that the Jews of Jamaica would do 'anything for money'.²⁵ Yet his primary motives were financial greed and a genuinely held view that the Jews were dangerous to British interests:

They (the Jews of St. Eustatius) cannot too soon be taken care of—they are notorious in the cause of France and America.²⁶

In his denunciation of Rodney, Burke focussed on the way in which Rodney had behaved towards the island's Jews.²⁷ In Parliament, Burke set out in detail what had happened and why Rodney's treatment of the Jews was of particular concern:

The persecution was begun with the people whom of all others it ought to be the care and the wish of human nations to protect, the Jews. Having no fixed settlement in any part of the world, no kingdom nor country in which they have a government, a community, and a system of laws, they are thrown upon the benevolence of nations and claim protection and civility from their weakness as well as from their utility.²⁸

Burke's comments were not simply a political attack on the ministry in support of the American Revolution nor an intellectual exercise examining the rules governing the conduct of war. In his attitude to events in St. Eustatius, Burke demonstrated real

²⁴ Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 437-439. David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, Vol 1, p. 431.

²⁵ Guido Abbatista, 'Edmund Burke, the Atlantic American War and the "poor Jews at St. Eustatius"', *Cromohs*, Vol. 13, 2008, pp. 1-39, no page numbers given, endnote 62.

²⁶ Jerry Klinger, 'The Jews of St Eustatius: The Golden Rock to the Golden Door', *Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation* <http://www.jewish-american-society-for-historic-preservation.org/amjewishhistory.html>.

²⁷ Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke* Vol. 1, p. 430.

²⁸ *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XXII, cols., 223-225.:

sympathy to eighteenth-century Jews, spelling out his view that nations had a special duty to protect stateless Jews, and noting that their ‘abandoned state, and their defenceless situation calls most forcibly for the protection of civilised nations’.²⁹ His understanding that stateless individuals were particularly vulnerable showed remarkable foresight in respect to developments in the twentieth century.



Figure 2: Corneilis Brouwer, *Het Plunderen van St Eustatius* [*The Plunder of St. Eustatius*], Atlas van Stolk Collection Rotterdam, 4345(1), c.1784.³⁰

By the French Revolution, however, Burke was expressing a very different attitude. A number of his comments are set below in detail as it is relevant that he did not make incidental comments about Jews but repeatedly linked the Revolution with Jews in the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The caption reads in translation ‘Great Britain lauds the enormities of Rodney and Vaughan in the most fulsome terms to conceal their iniquity. I, for my part, filled with horror at the cruel behaviour, call Rodney, Nero and Vaughan, Caligula’. The print shows Jews being deported whilst their seized goods are piled up on the beach.

confidence that this would reduce the Revolution's appeal to the public. Burke's *Reflections* was written in response to the radical Unitarian Richard Price whose sermon in November 1789, *Love of our Country*, had fortuitously for Burke been given at Old Jewry. Burke took advantage of this fact, repeatedly referring to 'Old Jewry' in order to associate Price's speech with Jews. Burke sought to link Price with what was seen as the anarchy of the English civil war. He made it clear that he saw Price's forerunners not as past radical reformers but as the Puritan extremist, Hugh Peter, known in England in the late eighteenth century for both promoting the execution of Charles I and supporting the readmission of Jews to England.

Burke's comments were not, however, simply a rhetorical device to whip up hostility against the French Revolution. For Burke, the French Revolution had to be distinguished from previous conflicts in which men of high rank had tried to reform and improve society. The individuals who launched the English civil war were landed men, 'the ornaments of their age', whose long-term time horizons could be contrasted with the short-term greed of 'Jew brokers'.³¹ Burke was particularly concerned that the French Revolution aimed to abolish hereditary distinctions:

The next generation of the nobility will resemble the artificers and clowns, and money jobbers, usurers, and Jews, who will always be their fellows, sometimes their masters.³²

Burke's views on Jews needs to be set within the context of his powerful support of tolerance. He wrote to the lay theologian William Burgh in February 1775:

I would give a full civil protection, in which I include an immunity, from all disturbance of their publick religious worship, and a power of teaching in schools, as well as Temples, to Jews Mahometans and even Pagans; especially if they are already possessed of any of those advantages by long and prescriptive usage; which is as sacred in this exercise of Rights, as in any other.³³

As the letter to Burgh suggests, Burke's commitment to Christianity in Europe arose not simply because of a theological belief in Christianity but because it was the existing practice

³¹ Edmund Burke, in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event* (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [orig. 1790]), p. 136.

³² Ibid., p. 138.

³³ Quoted by Frans De Bruyn, 'Anti-Semitism, Millenarianism, and Radical Dissent in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 34:4, Summer 2001, pp. 577-600, p. 578.

of society. It established norms of behaviour and humility amongst the governing elite as an effective check on their actions.³⁴ It was these attributes that were the key benefits of religious belief. For example, during his prosecution of Warren Hastings for his behaviour in India, Burke stressed the key importance of Hinduism in societies where it had long been part of the tradition and culture. Burke remained a Christian and did not believe in moral relativism about religious truth, but he did believe that any religion based on divine revelation rather than reason would enhance morality and provide a desirable restraint to human behaviour.³⁵

Burke may have supported tolerance, but he was deeply concerned by the French Revolution's attack on the institution of the Church. For Burke, at the heart of society lay a series of 'prejudices' created by history and convention. One of those 'prejudices' in Europe was attachment to Christianity. The Revolution's seizure of the Church's financial assets was not merely an unacceptable attack on property rights, which Burke considered sacrosanct, but it also, in practice, undermined the Church's ability to provide moral guidance which for Burke was critical to a stable and tolerant society. Burke was only too happy to imply that Jews in England might behave in a similar fashion noting that 'the Jews in Change Alley have not yet dared to hint their hopes of a mortgage on the revenue belonging to the See of Canterbury'.³⁶

By the time he was writing the *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* in 1791, Burke was expressing his anti-Jewish views even more strongly. Describing the position in France, he deliberately mixed the biblical reference of *Matthew* 15: 22-28 of throwing the bread of children to dogs with stereotypes of Jewish financial greed:

Have not men..... been made bishops, for no other merit than having acted as instruments of atheists; for no other merit than having thrown the children's bread to dogs; and in order to gorge the whole gang of usurers, pedlars, and itinerant Jew-discounters at the corners of streets, starved the poor of their Christian flocks, and their own brother pastors? Have not such men been made bishops to administer in temples, in which . . . the churchwardens ought to take security for the altar plate, and not so much as to trust the chalice in their sacrilegious hands, so long as Jews have assignats on ecclesiastical plunder, to

³⁴ William Byrne, 'Burke's Wise Counsel on Religious Liberty and Freedom', *Crisis Magazine*, 17 July 2012.

³⁵ Ian Harris, 'Burke and Religion', in David Dwan and Christopher Insole (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 92-104, pp. 99-100.

³⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 204. Change Alley ran from Lombard Street to Cornhill. It was the site of Jonathan's and Garraway's coffeehouses which were venues for financial trading prior to the creation of the Stock Exchange.

exchange for the silver stolen from churches? I am told, that the very sons of such Jew-jobbers have been made bishops; persons not to be suspected of any sort of Christian superstition.³⁷

Burke's comments, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, combining traditional Christian anti-Jewish motifs of Christ driving out Jewish money-changers from the temple with the threat of expulsion to sections of the Jewish community, are even more pernicious. Even during the political turmoil over the Jew Bill of 1753, no senior politician issued a threat of this kind. Burke's comments mentioning expulsion and hanging—even if perhaps not intended literally—are a startling use of language for eighteenth-century England.

Burke's new hostility towards Jews must be seen in the light of his change in attitude to Dissenters. Burke had shared with many Dissenters support for the American Revolution, but he gradually came to see them as a radical political faction rather than a religious denomination deserving of toleration. As the campaign for civic equality for the Dissenters grew, it became apparent that the final demand might be for an American style separation of church and state — anathema to Burke.³⁸ In 1790, during a Parliament debate on excluding Dissenters from the restrictions of the Test and Corporation Acts, he announced that he could not support the measure. Instead, he proposed, to the consternation of Fox, his former ally, that the House of Commons form a Committee to examine the conduct of Dissenters.³⁹ It was not that Burke had abandoned his intellectual support for tolerance, but rather that his fear of the French Revolution was so great that all his views—including his attitudes to Jews and Dissenters—would after 1789 be seen through the prism of that fear.

Psychological analysis of historical figures is obviously fraught with dangers, but Frans De Bruyn has supported a suggestion by Conor Cruise O'Brien that the impact of Burke's Catholic heritage should not be underestimated in explaining his attitude to Jews. His father had converted to Protestantism largely because Catholics were barred from

³⁷ Burke, *A Letter from Mr. Burke to a Member of the French Assembly: In Answer to Some Objections to His Book on the French* (Paris and London: J Dodsley, 1791), pp. 17-18. Assignats were bank notes issue by the National Assembly in France to avoid bankruptcy and were backed by property from the Catholic Church and the Crown.

³⁸ Susan Manly, 'Burke, Toland, toleration: the politics of prejudice, speculation and naturalization', in J Whale (ed.) *Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France New interdisciplinary essays* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.145-168, p. 147.

³⁹ *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XXVIII, col. 442, 2 March 1790.

practising law in Ireland. Burke's mother and wife continued to practise Catholicism and he was often accused of being a secret Catholic. Support for reform in Ireland and the relief of restrictions imposed on Catholics in Britain were key beliefs to him. De Bruyn suggests that whilst for most Englishmen, Catholics represented the 'other' in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, for Burke this may have been displaced to the Jews.⁴⁰

Certainly, when it comes to his attitude to Lord George Gordon, who had converted to Judaism, Burke's Catholic background *is* of relevance. Gordon's attitudes will be discussed in more detail later, but the focus here is on Burke's antipathy towards him. Gordon was born in 1751 son of Cosmo, 3rd Duke of Gordon. Previously, the Gordons had been a Catholic family but in 1745 Gordon's father did not follow his brother in supporting the Jacobites but remained passive, and George Gordon was raised as a strict Protestant.⁴¹ Entering the navy and travelling to Jamaica and America, he developed a reputation for radicalism, expressed horror at the institution of slavery and was known as the 'sailors' friend' thanks to his opposition to the excessive punishments exacted on sailors. Entering Parliament in 1774, he became an early outspoken supporter of the American Revolution and opponent of slavery. Whilst a member of no political group and on occasions attacking Fox, his support for the American Revolution often meant he was speaking in Parliamentary debates on the same side as Burke and Fox.

Burke was, however, appalled by Gordon's extreme anti-Catholicism and his support for the French Revolution. Despite Burke's support for the American Revolution, he had promoted the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 as a step towards broader Catholic relief in an environment in which anti-Catholic prejudice dating back to the sixteenth century remained widespread. The Catholic community — numbering about one hundred thousand in England and Wales in 1800 — continued to suffer from legal discrimination.⁴² The Act made minor concessions to Catholics in the hope of encouraging them to serve in the British army, which following Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga and France's declaration of war was in urgent need of recruits. There was already a substantial discrepancy between the extent of anti-Catholic legislation on the statute books and the degree to which it was imposed. The impact of the Enlightenment on sections of British society had led to judicial

⁴⁰ De Bruyn, 'Anti-Semitism, Millenarianism, and Radical Dissent in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*', pp. 577-600, p. 594.

⁴¹ Marsha Keith Schuchard, 'Lord George Gordon and Cabalistic Freemasonry: Beating Jacobite Swords into Jacobin Ploughshares', in Martin Mulrow and Richard Popkin (eds), *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 183-233, p. 185.

⁴² Colin Haydon, 'Religious Minorities in England', in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *A Companion to Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2002), pp. 241-255, p. 242.

intervention to soften the implementation of anti-Catholic laws. For instance, legally, a Catholic priest could be sent to jail for life for saying Mass, whilst his congregants could suffer a year in jail or pay heavy fines. Payments to informers encouraged them to provide evidence. It was only in 1770 that Lord Chief Justice Mansfield effectively ended such prosecutions by establishing a very high evidential bar before a guilty judgement could be brought in, suggesting for instance that an informer had to speak Latin so that he could swear that the Latin being used was the celebration of a Mass.⁴³ The impact of anti-Catholic legislation had also long been mitigated in other areas with some Catholics avoiding legal discrimination by making a nominal attendance at Anglican ceremonies, whilst the use of trusts to circumvent laws on Catholics owning properties was common. The Catholic Relief Act of 1778 was limited but it did enable Catholics to purchase land legally in their own names and freed Catholics priests and schoolmasters from the risk of persecution.

This minor improvement to the legal position of Catholics set off riots in Scotland and the formation of Protestant Associations throughout the country. In December 1779, Gordon became the President of the United Protestant Association. Gordon raised the Catholic Relief Act in Parliament and subsequently harangued George III personally on the issue. Given the failure of these approaches, Gordon launched a petition and called for a meeting on 2 June 1780 at St George's Field in Southwark to march on Parliament and present it. In the riots that followed, which continued for a week, Members of Parliament were attacked on their way to the House of Commons, Newgate prison was stormed, large sections of London were set on fire, numerous homes were burnt and several Catholic chapels were destroyed including those of the Sardinian and Bavarian ambassadors. The rioting only ended with the militia shooting dead several hundred rioters.⁴⁴ Dominic Green has appropriately referred to the Gordon riots as 'the most destructive civil disturbance in British history'.⁴⁵

Burke felt that Gordon had adopted the values of the mob. Burke was particularly vulnerable during the Gordon riots as Gordon had repeatedly named him as an opponent

⁴³ Norman Poser, *Lord Mansfield: Justice in the Age of Reason* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), pp. 351-354.

⁴⁴ Ian Hayward and John Seed (eds), *The Gordon Riots Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 7.

⁴⁵ Dominic Green, 'The Making of a "Protestant Rabbin": The Cultural Transfers of Lord George Gordon', in *Grenzüberschreitende Religion. Vergleichs- und Kulturtransferstudien zur neuzeitlichen Geschichte*, ed. by Thies Schulze (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013), pp. 165-184, p. 165.

of the Protestant cause. During the riots his house was a target for destruction.⁴⁶ Indeed, he was himself in physical danger requiring him to draw his sword. The impact of the Gordon riots on the British elite should not be underestimated. For Burke and indeed for a number of his contemporaries, the Gordon riots could easily have become a full-blown revolution and represented a direct threat both to their physical well-being and the nature of British society.⁴⁷

A further, perhaps surprising, issue added to the animosity Burke felt towards Gordon, namely their differing attitudes to Marie Antoinette. In the *Reflections*, Burke, keen to stress the attractions of royalty, had waxed lyrically over Marie Antoinette. This was not simply some kind of chivalrous romantic attachment but because he saw her as a pure symbol of the *Ancien Régime*. He was enraged by the attacks in Paris on Marie Antoinette that depicted her as corrupt including the pornographic cartoons suggesting that she was both sexually insatiable and a lesbian.⁴⁸ These would later culminate in accusations during her trial that she had sexually abused her own son. Further attacks on Marie-Antoinette's reputation were made in London, which Burke associated to some extent with Gordon and the Jews. In particular, it has been suggested by Marsha Keith Schuchard drawing on the views of Percy Colson and Cecil Roth, that Gordon's conversion to Judaism was influenced by Dr Samuel Falk and that Falk himself was a political radical.⁴⁹ It should, however, be noted that David Ruderman has challenged this view.⁵⁰ Falk was a Jew born in Poland in 1710, who settled in London where he styled himself the London Ba'al Shem (master of the Kabbalistic names of God). He argued for a fusion of Judaism and Christianity, claimed to be aware of the secrets of alchemy and that he had the ability to generate political success through mystical powers. Schuchard also argues that Falk, who died in 1782, provided inspiration to the Sicilian Joseph Balsamo, who called himself Count Cagliostro. Cagliostro did provide medical assistance to the poor, but he also travelled throughout Europe under different names, claiming expertise in alchemy, clairvoyance and the provision of séances

⁴⁶ Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke Vol. 1*, p. 486.

⁴⁷ McCalman, 'Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte', pp. 343-367, p. 346.

⁴⁸ Burke may have been right to have been concerned about the political impact of pornographic attacks on Marie-Antoinette. On their influence, see Simon Schama, *Citizens A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Viking, 1989), pp. 210 and 224-227.

⁴⁹ Keith Schuchard, 'Lord George Gordon and Cabalistic Freemasonry: Beating Jacobite Swords into Jacobin Ploughshares', pp. 183-205, p.205.

⁵⁰ David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern English Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 156-168.

to contact dead relatives. He encouraged the rumour that he was the 'Wandering Jew' and used Kabbalistic mysticism as a useful cover for fraudulent activities.⁵¹ Cagliostro set out to create new masonic lodges in England and Europe associated with political radicalism. These new masonic lodges promoted mystical 'Egyptian rites' which he claimed descended from ancient Egypt. His success was due to some extent to his wife Serafina, who set up joint lodges for women, a radical move in Europe, and had affairs with men who might be of political influence. Having travelled extensively, Cagliostro went to Russia but was expelled by Empress Catherine of Russia, who saw him as a charlatan and felt that his freemason connections made him politically dangerous.⁵²

Moving to France, Cagliostro was held in the Bastille and prosecuted for his role in the Diamond Necklace Affair in France. The events of the Diamond Necklace Affair read like a bad novel, but this should not diminish its importance and it did much to destroy the last vestiges of respect for the French royal family and Marie Antoinette in particular. The Affair revolved around a fraud by Jeanne de la Motte. Through forged correspondence and having a prostitute disguise herself as the queen, de La Motte managed to convince the Cardinal de Rohan that he was complying with the queen's request to buy a diamond necklace for her as she had a short-term shortage of funds. Rohan subsequently handed the necklace over to an accomplice of de la Motte thinking they were being delivered to the queen. The subsequent trial of de La Motte and her accomplices and rumours of Marie-Antoinette's collusion in the Affair convulsed Paris. The prosecution also charged Cagliostro on the grounds that he had somehow influenced Rohan since it was well known that they were both involved in masonic circles. Acquitted, Cagliostro moved to London where he rapidly developed a relationship with Gordon, possibly through masonic connections. Indeed, Gordon accompanied him to the French embassy to ensure that he was not kidnapped. In his letters to the *Public Advertiser* of 22 and 24 August 1786, Gordon defended Cagliostro and attacked Marie Antoinette so violently that it became one of the charges for his subsequent trial for libel.⁵³ Given the links between Falk, Cagliostro and Gordon, it is perhaps not surprising that Burke referred to supporters of the Revolution as 'caballing', deliberately linking their 'plotting' with Jewish mysticism.⁵⁴

⁵¹ McCalman 'New Jerusalems: prophecy, Dissent and radical culture in England', pp. 312- 335, pp. 316-321.

⁵² Cagliostro died a prisoner of the Inquisition in Rome in 1795. Thanks to his association with radical societies and sexual intrigue he subsequently appeared in numerous works of art from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* to Goethe's *Faust*.

⁵³ Keith Schuchard, 'Lord George Gordon and Cabalistic Freemasonry', pp. 222-223.

⁵⁴ Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 120.

Gordon and Cagliostro were not the only people in London hostile to Marie Antoinette. London had long been a centre for vicious personal attacks on Marie Antoinette inspired by Théveneau de Morande, and he was joined in these efforts by Jeanne de La Motte, who having been convicted and branded in France for her role in the Affair, came to England. In fact, these émigrés were bitterly divided. De La Motte attacked Cagliostro as a swindler and de Morande, who was earning a living by acting both as a pornographer and Bourbon spy, also tried hard to discredit him.⁵⁵ However, McCalman argues that Burke conflated Gordon's defence of Cagliostro and attacks on Marie Antoinette with the more violent attacks on her—an easy link to be made especially as Cagliostro and de La Motte shared the same publisher and translator.⁵⁶

Gordon's attacks on Marie Antoinette and his inspiration of anti-Catholic sentiment ensured that Burke was delighted when Gordon was held for libel in Newgate and he was happy to use Gordon's conversion to Judaism to stir up hostility towards the French Revolution, which Gordon strongly supported. Again, Burke did not hesitate to draw on anti-Jewish motifs to strengthen his case denouncing Gordon:

In this spiritual retreat, let the noble libeller remain. Let him there meditate on his Thalmud [sic], until he learns a conduct more becoming his birth and parts, and not so disgraceful to the ancient religion to which he has become a proselyte; or until some persons from your side of the water, to please your new Hebrew brethren, shall ransom him. He may then be enabled to purchase, with the old hoards of the synagogue, and very small poundage, on the long compound interest of the thirty pieces of silver (Dr Price has shewn us what miracles compound interest will perform in 1790 years) the lands which are lately discovered to have been usurped by the Gallican church. Send us your popish Archbishop of Paris, and we will send you our protestant Rabbin. ⁵⁷

Burke's negative comments on the Jews were all made in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. Just before his death, however, he commended Augustin Barruel, a conservative French Jesuit priest, on the conspiracy theory in Barruel's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme* published in London in 1797 and based substantially on suggestions by a Scottish mathematician John Robison. Barruel argued that the Revolution was the result of an international conspiracy of philosophes, the German based Illuminati, whom he called 'the enemies of the human race, Sons of Satan', freemasons and the Templars.

⁵⁵ Iain McCalman, 'Mystagogues of revolution: Cagliostro, Louthembourg and Romantic London', in James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (eds), *Romantic Metropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 177-204, pp. 179 and 186.

⁵⁶ McCalman, 'Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte', pp. 343-367, p. 365.

⁵⁷ Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 179-180.

The theory was transparently flawed from the start given, for example, that the Illuminati had disbanded in 1786 and that they had been antagonistic to freemasons and that the Templars had ceased to exist in 1314. The suggestion of the involvement of freemasonry was particularly interesting to Burke. Given the multiplicity of lodges with differing beliefs, it is hard to assess the extent to which freemasonry in Britain at any point in the eighteenth century as a whole was radical, Jacobite or simply revered king and country.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, given the involvement of Falk, Cagliostro and Gordon with freemasonry, it is easy to understand why Burke was open to Barruel's suggestion. In approving of Barruel's thesis, Burke wrote to him that he had known five of Barruel's principal conspirators and that they had been plotting since 1773.⁵⁹ It is important to note, however, that it was only later that Barruel would extend this conspiracy to the Jews on the basis of fraudulent information which he received in 1806 from Jean-Baptiste Simonini.⁶⁰ According to this, the Jews were the real driving force behind the other conspirators and had remarkably already infiltrated the Catholic Church with some *eight hundred* clerics including bishops and cardinals in Italy. Barruel was at first cautious and later claimed not to have circulated Simonini's letter fearing that the Jews would be massacred, but in due course he was convinced of the role that Jews had played. It was only, however, later in the nineteenth century that conspiracy theories including the Jews became widespread.⁶¹ Poliakov calls Barruel's amended view the primary source for *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and it was used in support of conspiracy theories in conservative circles, which saw the Jews as the driving force behind radicalism and revolution.⁶² Given his support for Barruel's initial conspiracy theory and his negative views on Jews whom he associated with the Revolution, it may be that Burke would have welcomed the subsequent focus on the role of Jews but given the timing of its publication this can only be speculation.

Despite the strength of Burke's comments on Gordon and Jews, David Nirenberg has argued that a number of historians have ignored Burke's anti-Jewish comments.⁶³ Indeed, the problem goes even further than Nirenberg argued since even when directly questioned,

⁵⁸ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, pp. 155-156.

⁵⁹ Amos Hofman, 'Opinion, Illusion, and the Illusion of Opinion: Barruel's Theory of Conspiracy', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 27:1, Autumn, 1993, pp. 27-60, p. 29.

⁶⁰ Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996), pp. 32-33.

⁶¹ De Bruyn, 'Anti-Semitism, Millenarianism, and Radical Dissent', pp. 577-600, p. 600, ft. 58.

⁶² Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism Volume III: From Voltaire to Wagner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 283.

⁶³ For instance, Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2015). Jesse Norman, *Edmund Burke: The Visionary Who Invented Modern Politics* (London: William Collins, 2014).

some historians have failed to recognise the seriousness of Burke's comments. Thomas Copeland, who had already published a series of essays on Burke and was about to become the editor of Burke's correspondence, commented in a letter written in 1955:

I wish I could be more helpful, but I can't remember anything in Burke's Works that one would call a 'diatribe' against the Jews. Is your friend sure of there being a passage that answers this description? Some passages I remember which would be offensive today (but I imagine were at least more familiar to 18th-century ears) are some rather sneering references to Jews in the Reflections: references to the "Jews of Change Alley"; to the "Old Jewry", where Dr Price gave his sermon, as if it had from that name to be a place where only low commercial motives were understood; some references to Lord George Gordon's conversion to Hebraism. One passage which I can't seem to place a finger on but which I am sure is in the Reflections says we have in England some Jews whom we'll gladly keep, but also some we would willingly send over to you in France, or something of that kind.⁶⁴

Yet despite recognising the problem, Nirenberg himself perhaps surprisingly argues that Burke's comments were not 'anti-Semitic' but arose because:

the revolution forced him and his contemporaries to confront basic questions about the ways in which humans related to one another in society. These were questions that two millennia of pedagogy had taught Europe to ask in terms of "Judaism", and Burke had learnt the lesson well.⁶⁵

This would seem to be a very generous interpretation. Burke's linking the Jews to supporters of the French Revolution is transparent, deliberate and repeated. Burke's motivation can be explained and contextualised, but this neither justifies his belief in such views nor the use of such sentiment for political purposes. Moreover, Burke's anti-Jewish attitudes did not reflect the sentiments of the vast majority of even conservative contemporaries. Burke's belief in Barruel's conspiracy theory was equally unusual in that it was generally rejected in England at the time even by conservative opponents of the Revolution.⁶⁶ It is not possible, therefore, to argue that his views simply reflected the society in which he lived.

⁶⁴ Thomas Copeland, Letter to Miss Sutherland, 22 January 1955, Cecil Roth Papers at Southampton University, A7 151/1/B/16.

⁶⁵ David Nirenberg, *Anti-Semitism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013), p. 382.

⁶⁶ James Slack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain c. 1760-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 32-33.

Burke's greatness, however, lies in his prescience and his insights into the nature of revolutionary change. As the Tory politician George Canning would later put it, virtually all of the *Reflections* 'has been justified by the course of subsequent events; and almost every prophecy has been strictly fulfilled'.⁶⁷ Burke argued that moves in the direction of democracy left people as judges over their own actions and that free from any moral constraints of Church or history, the majority would oppress the minority without restraint.⁶⁸ For many commentators, the Terror justified Burke's views that in a society with no checks and balances, actions based on political theory rather than a respect for history and existing values would lead to unconstrained violent behaviour:

To them, the will, the wish, the want, the liberty, the toil, the blood of individuals is nothing.....The state is all in all..... It is military in its principle, in its maxims, in its spirit, and in all its movements. The state has dominion and conquest for its sole objects; dominion over minds by proselytism, over bodies by arms.⁶⁹

He feared that individuals trying to create a new society based on political principles free from concepts of existing prejudices and morality were likely to end by doing harm and create a form of government that might today be described as totalitarian. His warnings on the dangers of revolutionary societies, therefore, proved a prescient warning for Jews and other minorities.

If many later historians have ignored Burke's anti-Jewish feelings, it is also true that radical opponents of Burke at the time—including Paine, Price and Wollstonecraft—did not comment on his exploitation of anti-Jewish prejudices.⁷⁰ Carol Margaret Davison suggests that:

Paine presents an anti-Semitic portrait alongside religious tolerance and separation of Church and State. However, he indirectly undermines Judaism by indicting national religions including Judaism as political conspiracies.⁷¹

⁶⁷ George Claeys, 'The Reflections refracted: the crucial reception of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* during the 1790s', in J Whale (ed.), *Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France: New interdisciplinary essays* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 40-59, p. 50.

⁶⁸ Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 229.

⁶⁹ Edmund Burke, *Two Letters addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament, on the Proposal for Peace with France with the Regicide Directory of France* (London: Rivington, 1796), Letter II, p. 183.

⁷⁰ Rachel Schulkins, 'Burke, His Liberal Rivals and the Jewish Question', *Othemess: Essays and Studies*, Vol. 3.2, 2013, pp. 1-32, pp. 11-12.

⁷¹ Carol Margaret Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 20.

Paine did describe heathens in the ancient Gentile world as ‘just and moral people, and not addicted like Jews to cruelty and revenge’.⁷² Commenting on a prayer from Proverbs, he noted ‘the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for anything but victory, vengeance or riches’.⁷³ Moreover, he described Jews as degenerate, writing:

By the universal oeconomy [sic] of nature it is known, and by the instance of the Jews it is proved, that the human species has a tendency to degenerate, in any small number of persons, when separated from the general stock of society, and intermarrying constantly with each other.⁷⁴

His main target, however, when discussing degeneracy was clearly the aristocracy, which he argued, like the Jews, suffered from intermarriage. Moreover, many non-Jewish supporters of Jewish emancipation such as Abbé Grégoire, and indeed some Jews such as those within the developing Haskalah movement, accepted the idea that the Jews were in need of ‘regeneration’, although their focus was not on the genetic effects of intermarriage—a concept linked in the longer term with the development of racism—but rather on the need for Jews to react to emancipation by engaging in secular education to overcome the effects of centuries of discrimination in Christian Europe. As the Burke of St. Eustatius put it ‘if they have contracted some vices, they are such as naturally arise from their dispersed, wandering, and proscribed state’.⁷⁵

Yet, it is important to stress that Paine’s target was not contemporary Jewry but the Jews of the *Old Testament*. The tolerance of many Enlightenment thinkers, perhaps most noticeably Voltaire, was questioned in the second half of twentieth century. Yet, for most Enlightenment thinkers, the ‘irrationality’ of Bible stories such as the divine commandment to kill the Amalekites including their children and future generations was the focus of their hostility rather than the rights of contemporary Jews. Radical political thinkers of the 1790s generally followed earlier Enlightenment thinkers in despising what they saw as the obscurantist and intolerant views of biblical Judaism, which they connected with the intolerance of modern Christianity. As for Burke and his major opponents during the ‘Revolutionary Debate’, it may be interesting to argue for some kind of symmetry in their beliefs in respect of Jews, but this would be misleading. Anti-Jewish aspersions may have been so much part of the culture of the late eighteenth century that Burke’s comments

⁷² Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (New York: Dover, 2004 [orig. 1794-1797]), p. 126.

⁷³ Ibid., footnote p. 125.

⁷⁴ Thomas Paine, Mark Philp (ed.) *Rights of Man, Common Sense and other Political Writings*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), *Rights of Man* Part 1 [orig. March 1791], p. 135.

⁷⁵ *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XXII, cols. 224.

connecting the Revolution with Jews were ignored by his opponents, but that is not to say that his anti-Jewish sentiments were shared by Paine or the many authors who wrote in opposition to Burke's *Reflections*.

A more striking parallel is with the leading political journalist William Cobbett. Just as some historians have largely ignored Burke's views on the Jews—perhaps in some cases because of their desire to demonstrate Burke's intellectual qualities—so progressive historians have not dwelt on Cobbett's attitudes. Don Herzog has highlighted both EP Thompson and Raymond Williams in this regard.⁷⁶ Burke and Cobbett shared a hostility to contemporary Jewish financiers. Cobbett was influenced by the perspective of Tory 'Country Party' members of the early eighteenth century—as expressed by Swift and Bolingbroke—who argued that the country faced long term economic ruin due to the rise in the national debt, which benefitted financiers and corrupt politicians and which Cobbett associated with Jewish financiers. For Cobbett, Jews were partially responsible for the decline of rural, pre-industrialised England. His frequently expressed anti-Jewish sentiments became more extreme over time. By 1823 he was even expressing regret that Jews were not treated as they had been by Edward I and expelled or forced to wear a badge, noting that 'it was worthy of a Christian country to refuse their burial at all, and to cause their carcasses to be flung into the sea'.⁷⁷

Yet for all the extremity of Burke's and Cobbett's comments, what is noticeable is the lack of attention that the Jewish community received in public debate. Reviewing the press in the period, anti-Jewish *political* comments are relatively rare. Burke's book attracted numerous reviews, but it appears as if none actually commented on his remarks in respect of the Jews. *The Times* reprinted some of his comments including the statement rhetorically asking if in France 'church lands are to be sold to Jews and jobbers', but did not comment on Burke's views on Jews.⁷⁸ The *Gentleman's Magazine* review quoted from '*A Letter from Mr Burke to a Member of the National Assembly*' including the above reference to 'Jews have assignats on ecclesiastical plunder', but again made no specific comment on this statement.⁷⁹ Overwhelmingly, Burke's references to the Jews were simply ignored. If the widespread reviews of Burke's *Reflections* in the press and numerous radical publications in

⁷⁶ Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 299.

⁷⁷ John W. Osborne, 'Review Essay: William Cobbett's Anti-Semitism', p. 88 quoting *Political Register*, 25 October 1823, cols. 214-228.

⁷⁸ *The Times*, 12 November 1790.

⁷⁹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 70, 1791, p. 647.

response to him did not criticise his anti-Jewish comments, which is hardly surprising in view of the opinions discussed above of radical writers, nor do they provide any evidence of newspaper articles highlighting and agreeing with them.⁸⁰

Similarly, in Parliament, 'the Jew' was not part of the political debate. Searches of the *Parliamentary Register*, subsequently *Hansard*, for the period reveal only a very small number of references to Jews. On the other hand, these few references were largely negative. For instance, a couple of these are to Jewish criminality such as the practice of 'Jew bail'.⁸¹ In May 1789, Sir James Johnstone MP noted that a measure passed two years earlier to prevent pedlars being within two miles of a country market town, had been supported by some on the mistaken grounds that pedlars were all German Jews and smugglers. Johnstone successfully supported the measure's repeal noting that pedlars were in fact hard working.⁸² The most virulent anti-Jewish statement was at the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Commons rather than in Parliamentary debate and was therefore little reported. The elderly General Burgoyne, who had played a critical role in the American Revolution by losing at Saratoga, condemned raising new officers in independent companies in which the government sold commissions, opening the possibility of ministerial corruption, rather than using old and experienced ones on non-active duty receiving half-pay. He attributed this to the influence of the Jews and the 'sordid system of Change Alley'.⁸³

Yet, the overwhelming absence of Parliamentary concern about Jews is instructive. Anglo-Jewry did not attract political hostility in the period. The political classes, focussed on the fear of Revolution and war combined with personal political and financial ambitions, were simply not interested in Jews when it came to political debate. Burke's onslaught and Cobbett's virulent anti-Jewish views arose from a particular personal set of factors. Even if the political attacks on Anglo-Jewry were limited, however, Jews did have to face a barrage of negative representations reflecting cultural prejudices. Burke's

⁸⁰ *The Analytical Review or History of Literature: Domestic and Foreign*, Vol VIII from September, to December Inclusive 1790, pp. 295-307 and 408-414. *European Magazine*, Vol. 19 Feb 1791, pp. 117-120. *Town and Country Magazine*, Vol. 22, November/ December 1790 pp. 514-519, 555 and 558-560. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 60: Part 2, November 1790, pp. 1021-1032. *Monthly Review or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, Vol. III, from September to December 1790, pp. 313-326 and 438-465. *Public Advertiser*, 1 November 1790. *World*, 2 November 1790. *General Evening Post*, 4 November 1790. *St James Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 6 November 1790.

⁸¹ 'Jew Bail' involved an individual guaranteeing sums to obtain bail for someone else and subsequently disappearing and defaulting.

⁸² *The Parliamentary Register; or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. XXVI (London: Debrett, 1789), 18 May 1789, col. 168. The term 'pedlar' can be spelled differently but for consistency it has been spelled in this way except when found in a quotation.

⁸³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 29 March 1791.

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repeated references to Jews reflected his view that they would assist in undermining support for the French Revolution. These representations did not directly threaten the legal position of Anglo-Jewry, but they did have an impact on the daily lives of Jews, and it is these representations that we shall now examine.

Chapter 2:

Representations of Jews

Frank Felsenstein has argued that traditional stereotypes of Jews persisted long into the eighteenth century. Jews were still seen by many as Christ killers and these established Christian tropes were supported by the enduring impact of Shylock's depiction in the *Merchant of Venice*.¹ Moreover, extremely hostile Christian-inspired images of Jews were often retained in chapbooks—pamphlets illustrated with crude woodcuts.² The use of Christian anti-Semitic imagery was gradually declining over the eighteenth century thanks in part, as Todd Endelman has argued, to the increased secularization of English life as the Enlightenment and attacks on the historical accuracy of the Bible led to doubts about divine revelation.³ Hell was increasingly not seen in literal terms as a place of horror full of burning sinners.⁴ This does not mean to say, however, that Christian anti-Jewish tropes had disappeared. We have seen how Burke included *New Testament* references to Jews that had been used to support traditional Christian anti-Jewish tropes in the belief that this would intensify feelings against the French Revolution. Charles Lamb, the essayist, commenting in 1821 recognised that such attitudes and the Jewish response to them were enduring and would not disappear overnight:

Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side, —of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought, to affect the blood of the children.⁵

Anti-Jewish feeling did not disappear, but rather than being focussed on the Jews as the descendants of those who had rejected Christ and were responsible for his crucifixion, it became more secular and was popularized by negative images of the contemporary Jewish population in England. Critical to the secular images in which Jews were increasingly

¹ Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 158-187.

² Ibid., pp. 222-223.

³ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830 Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), pp. 91-97.

⁴ Todd Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), p. 31. Penelope Corfield, 'An Age of Infidelity: secularization in eighteenth century England', *Social History*, Vol. 39:22, 2014, pp. 229-247, p. 235.

⁵ Charles Lamb, *Imperfect Sympathies* (London: Bickers and Son, 1860), pp. 20-21. In 1255 the Jews of Lincoln were accused of crucifying a nine-year old boy called Hugh. This was one of several 'blood libels' in Europe or accusations of ritual murder.

represented in the period were the images of criminality and financial greed. This chapter aims to examine these representations. Popular prints and ballads will be treated together as they shared common features, whilst literature will be examined separately as it demonstrates different aspects of these changing representations. Attitudes towards Jews were becoming more diverse and nuanced, although it cannot be assumed that progress was linear or the same in all art forms. Finally, we shall examine representations of boxing, and how these may have affected popular attitudes to Anglo-Jewry and, most importantly, reduced the risk of violence towards Jews.

Jews and Criminality

Representations of Jews in the late eighteenth century repeatedly conveyed the impression that the vast majority of Jews were dishonest and could not be trusted. Indeed, the term 'Jew' continued to be a pejorative term throughout the period.⁶ The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had one meaning of 'to jew' as being 'to cheat, overreach in the way attributed to Jew traders'.⁷ According to the Francis Grose *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* of 1796 the term 'Jew' included amongst its meanings 'an over-reaching dealer' and 'extortioner'.⁸ William Holland, a Somerset parson, who had been negotiating with his non-Jewish neighbour William Landsey about keeping a horse on Landsey's land, referred to his neighbour as a 'perfect Jew' when it came to negotiations.⁹ The image of a dishonest Jew dedicated to financial gain could, when taken to an extreme, approach dehumanising Jews entirely. The anonymous author of an *Essay on the Commercial Habits of the Jew* expressed the view that:

From the cradle, the Jew directs his unvaried walk to the market; and when, after his insipid round in the region of huckster and barter, he descends at length into the grave, we see him rise again, like a true type of the insect below, in the same form, and with the same grovelling propensities, which before excited our pity and contempt.¹⁰

In Europe, Jewish communities were to a considerable extent self-governing entities. Communal autonomy provided rabbis with the authority to enforce ethical and legal

⁶ Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, pp. 48-49.

⁷ James Murray (ed.), *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. V, H to K (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901). Later renamed the Oxford English Dictionary.

⁸ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London: Hoper, 1796), no page numbers given.

⁹ Jack Ayres (ed.), *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland a Somerset Parson 1799-1818* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1984), p. 40.

¹⁰ Anon, *An Essay on the Commercial Habits of The Jews* (London: Samuel Tipper and J Hatchard, 1809), p. 35.

behaviour. In England, rabbis and communal leaders had no such authority and communal cohesion and morality came under increasing pressure. Just as wealthy Jews rapidly started to behave like wealthy English Christians, so poor Jews adopted the behaviour of poor non-Jews with whom they lived closely and interacted with frequently. For instance, by the second half of the eighteenth-century, co-habitation outside marriage was frequent both between Jews and between Jews and non-Jews. Jews ran brothels and worked as prostitutes.¹¹ Jews were ‘excommunicated’ for immoral and criminal behaviour, but such sanctions had limited impact in a society where excommunication did not, in practice, exclude an individual from social contact with other Jews. Synagogue authorities had no temporal authority and their only real power was to ban a Jew from a synagogue, which was probably not being attended in any case.

In these circumstances, the communal leadership struggled with the problem of rising criminality with determination but limited success. The *Ascamos* (regulations) of Bevis Marks even banned members from defending anyone accused of a crime.¹² Communal leaders increasingly intervened directly to maintain the community’s reputation. In 1766 the *parnasim* (wardens) of the Great Synagogue, Naphtali Franks and Naphtali Hart Myers, passed information about criminal receivers to John Fielding, the Bow Street magistrate, in order to dissociate the mainstream community from what they described as those ‘few infamous receivers of stolen goods about Duke’s Place and Houndsditch’. The Great Synagogue excommunicated the receivers and published their correspondence with John Fielding in the *Public Advertiser* of 31 May 1766.¹³

The communal leadership’s fear that the image of criminality could lead to a severe backlash against the community was justified. The Chelsea murder case of 1771 involved a gang of Jewish robbers who murdered a servant who was trying to resist a burglary. The wardens of the Great Synagogue sought publicly to disassociate themselves from the crime by identifying the robbers so that they could be arrested, excommunicating those involved and asking the government to restrict the immigration of poor Jews. Subsequently, the General Post Office issued a directive that Jews had to pay full fees on packet boats to England.¹⁴ Despite the actions of the wardens, the resulting ‘Chelsea riots’ saw a wave of

¹¹ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 58.

¹² *Ascamos or Laws and Regulations of the Congregation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, London* (London: Wertheim, Goodman and Fields, 5591-1831), p. 110.

¹³ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 197.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

anti-Jewish abuse and violence. *The Monthly Mirror* commented that during the Chelsea murder case, Jews did not dare to leave the neighbourhood of Houndsditch.¹⁵ Horace Walpole, son of Robert Walpole, commented that after the Chelsea riots, gambling declined because so many Jewish lenders had 'run away'.¹⁶ Francis Place, the radical tailor, writing many years later noted that:

Every Jew was in public opinion implicated, and the prejudice, ill will and brutal conduct this upon the Jews....did not cease for many years.I have seen many Jews brought hooted, hunted, cuffed, pulled by the beard, sat upon, and so barbarously assaulted in the streets without any protection from the passers-by or the police.¹⁷

Concern over Jewish criminality led to a public debate on the issue. Non-Jews tended to make a clear distinction between the 'Portuguese' and 'German' Jews. The Prussian military officer Wilhelm von Archenholz in his description of his travels in 1780 in England highlighted the difference he saw between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews:

One is astonished at the prodigious difference between the Portuguese and German Jews established in that Island. Dress language manners cleanliness are all in favour of the former who can scarce be distinguished from Christians.

He continued:

They the German Jews are therefore so much hated in England that the honesty of their Portuguese brethren cannot weaken the unfavourable impression which such a band of robbers has occasioned.¹⁸

Patrick Colquhoun, the magistrate, discussed the role of Jewish criminality in his *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis*. He also distinguished 'German Jews' from 'Portuguese Jews' whom

¹⁵ *Monthly Mirror*, 1 December 1802, pp. 404-405.

¹⁶ Quoted in Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 200.

¹⁷ Quoted in M Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Middlesex: Penguin 1925), p. 137.

¹⁸ Thomas Pennant and John Wallis, *London: being a complete guide to the British capital; containing, and accurate and succinct account of its origin, rise and progress interspersed with original anecdotes, eccentric biography/ faithfully abridged from Pennant's London and brought down to the present year* (London, 1810), p. 341. Wallis's *Guides to London* was an annually updated series of guidebooks to London. Archenholz wrote *England und Italien* (Carlsruhe: Schneider, 1787) with the original German edition being translated into English both directly from German and via a French translation. This was heavily drawn upon by Thomas Pennant in *An Account of London* (London: Thomas Fulder, 1790), which was subsequently abridged and added to in the *Wallis Guide*.

he felt were ‘generally opulent and respectable’.¹⁹ In contrast, he believed that the lower classes of German Jews were ‘educated in idleness from their earliest infancy, they acquire every debauched and vicious principle which can fit them for the most complicated arts of fraud and deception’.²⁰ Colquhoun’s identification of Jewish criminality in the Ashkenazi community led to a Bill being laid before Parliament—but never debated—designed to restrain Jews from ‘acts of nature, criminal and nauseous to society’.²¹ The Bill arose from a proposal promoted by the Jewish surgeon, Joshua van Oven. Under the proposal, the leadership of the German Jewish community would have been required to create a Board which would have drawn up a list of all persons in the German Jewish community. The Board would then have been given the power to raise specific taxation from those individuals. Van Oven also suggested that Jews were liable to pay rates to parishes used to finance poor relief which, for religious reasons, the Jewish poor could not access. He proposed that half of the rates paid by Jews should be re-directed to the Jewish community, adding to its existing efforts to assist impoverished Jews, rather than being paid to parishes, although he recognised that this diversion of funds would face severe opposition from many Christians.²² Although targeted at Ashkenazi Jews, these reform plans faced opposition from the Sephardi community, which feared being drawn into any arrangements to finance poor ‘German’ Jews. Fierce opposition also arose within the Ashkenazi community from the printer Levy Alexander, who was already in conflict with the Great Synagogue. Alexander feared that the burden on the limited number of Jewish tradesmen would be excessive. Moreover, in language which echoed non-Jewish radicals of the period, Alexander wrote to Patrick Colquhoun about the risks arising from the communal wealthy being given legal powers since the ‘rich impose too often the iron hand of power on the weakness of the poor’.²³ Regardless of the motives that may have led to this proposal, the

¹⁹ Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis Containing a Detail of the Various Crimes and Misdemeanours By which Public and Private Property and Security are, at present injured and endangered: and Suggesting Remedies or their Prevention* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1800), p. 319.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

²¹ Substances for Clauses to Frame a Bill to be brought into Parliament for the Better Providing for the Poor of the German Jews in the Metropolis, and the Bills of Mortality, including St. Pancras and Mary-le-Bone, Clause 1, p. 1, attached to Levy Alexander’s pamphlet *An Answer to Mr. Joshua van Oven’s Letters on the Present State of the Jewish Poor in London* (London: Levy Alexander, 1802).

²² J Joshua van Oven, *Letters on the Present State of the Jewish Poor in London with Propositions for Ameliorating their Condition, By Improving the Moral of the Youth of both Sexes; and Rendering their Labour useful and productive in a General Degree to Themselves and to the Nation* (London: W & J Richardson, 1802), pp. 19, 21-22.

²³ Levy Alexander, Undated letter to Patrick Colquhoun. The letter is attached to Levy Alexander, *An Answer to Mr. Joshua van Oven’s Letters*, p. 41.

introduction into English law of legislation specifically aimed at the Jewish community, including special taxes and lists identifying Jews, might have had serious long term implications for Anglo-Jewry. In practice, no legislation was passed, but the debate publicly demonstrated the extent of concern, both in the Jewish community and in wider English society, over the extent to which poverty in the Jewish community was inducing criminality.

As Todd Endelman has discussed, Jews *were* involved in a range of crimes including, in particular, the passing of bad coins, pick-pocketing and the handling of stolen property.²⁴ Travelling Jewish pedlars acquired goods of dubious provenance which they then sold either themselves or via other Jewish pedlars, or in extreme cases used connections on the Continent to distribute stolen goods for resale. From the 1760s, criminality in the Jewish community increased very substantially with the influx of poverty-stricken Jews from Germany and Poland. These new arrivals were frequently entirely dependent on relief from the overwhelmed existing Jewish communities, since in general they only had limited family connections in England to provide them with support, and these relations were themselves likely to be equally destitute. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the number of Jews convicted at the Old Bailey (which covered serious offences in both the City of London and the County of Middlesex— a geographical area including the majority of the Jewish community) rose over the eighteenth century with 18 Jews being convicted of crime in the 1750s, 36 in the 1760s, 74 in the 1770s, 94 in the 1780s and 68 in the 1790s.²⁵ The study by Levi and Bergman of convicts transported to Australia indicates that out of 145,000 individuals transported from 1780 to 1852 at least 1,000 were Jews.²⁶ Peter King has recently used the Newgate Calendars for 1791-1805, which provided substantial information on prisoners held at Newgate who were sent to the Old Bailey for trial. This indicated that of the 11,927 prisoners accused of a crime, forty-three were Jewish.²⁷ The data must be treated with caution, but this would indicate that approximately 0.4% of the prisoners were Jewish when Jews represented approximately 0.2% of the population. A related problem is whether Jews received equitable trials and sentencing. Michael Scrivener's review of the court cases recorded in the Old Bailey Proceedings (often referred

²⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 194-196.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 299 provides a breakdown of the data and caveats on its reliability.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Peter King, 'Immigrant Communities, the Police and the Courts in Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century London', *Crime History and Societies*, Vol. 20:1, 2016, pp. 39-69, pp. 50-53.

to as Session Papers) suggests that lawyers frequently emphasized the Jewish background of defendants so as to influence juries and judges. This might well indicate that anti-Jewish feeling was substantial and did have an impact on the legal system. Nevertheless, Scrivener concludes that being Jewish was only one influence on a case and that both social class and a genuine desire to uphold justice could also determine a case's outcome.²⁸ Moreover, Peter King's work on the Irish community indicates a similar picture and he does not find consistent prejudice against the Irish community either in conviction rates or sentencing.²⁹

Yet, the question of the extent to which criminality in the Jewish community was any different from criminality amongst similar groups of non-Jews remains. Criminality may not have been higher amongst Jews than non-Jews when allowing for the extreme poverty of the Jews concerned.³⁰ As Levy Alexander wrote:

I believe it will be found on average that as many Christians are concerned in illegal traffics as Jews, and therefore the objection cannot lay in particular, or should not lay at their door.³¹

If it is impossible to draw any firm conclusion about the relative extent of criminality, the data does provide some evidence that there *was* a real problem of criminality within the Jewish community. Yet, at the same time, the evidence is that Jews were a relatively small part of overall crime and that the vast majority of Jews seem to have been destitute but law abiding.

The overwhelming focus on the criminality of the Jewish community, therefore, reflected contemporary prejudice rather than any objective reality. As Karen Macfarlane has pointed out in her ground-breaking study of Jewish policemen of the period, prejudice was displayed by the focus on Jewish criminals, whilst the efforts of Jewish policemen to uphold the law were completely ignored.³² Joshua van Oven writing to Patrick Colquhoun argued that the latter had branded a whole group of people without providing a solution when the real answer was education.³³ William Hamilton, a non-Jewish supporter of the

²⁸ Michael Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840 After Shylock* (Palgrave, New York, 2011), pp. 44-49.

²⁹ King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey', pp. 405-414.

³⁰ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 299.

³¹ Alexander, *An Answer to Mr. Joshua van Oven's Letters*, p. 36.

³² Karen Macfarlane, 'The Jewish Policemen of Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Vol. 10:2, 2011, pp. 223-244, p. 236.

³³ Levy Alexander to Patrick Colquhoun undated included in his pamphlet *An Answer to Mr. Joshua van Oven's Letters*, p. 35.

Jewish community, noted in 1811 that communal leaders were aware and understandably alarmed by the repeated negative comments about Jews.³⁴ Newspapers almost without exception recorded the faith of Jewish criminals. Barnard van Oven, Joshua van Oven's son, noted in 1830 'the extreme publicity that is at all times given to crimes committed by Jews'.³⁵ Some commentators did recognise that the extent of Jewish criminality arose not from some inherent ethical fault but from poverty and historic discrimination. A few newspapers did try and take a more balanced view. For instance, the *Evening Mail* on 15 February 1796 mentioned that a group of Jews had committed fraud by creating a forgery of a Paris newspaper, but noted that the paper meant 'no disrespect to the general community of Jews' which had in it 'many who are men of the most tried integrity and honour'.³⁶ Nevertheless, frequent references to Jews and crimes in the press and prints only served to increase the likelihood that this representation of some Jews was seen as applying to the community in general.

Representations in Prints and Ballads

One way in which the representation of Jews as criminals can be further understood is by examining contemporary prints and popular songs. Both repeatedly returned to images of Jewish individuals presumably because of their popularity with the public. Both prints and songs displayed a degree of prejudice although it has to be recognised that exotic and strange-looking Jews speaking in poor English with unfamiliar accents made the Jews natural subjects for entertainment.

There are today three substantial collections of Jewish prints of the period: those held in the Jewish Museum in London, which holds the prints collected by Alfred Rubens, and collections in the British Museum and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Felsenstein and Mintz have estimated that of the 30,000 caricatures printed in England between 1730 and 1830, fewer than 300 involved the depiction of Jews.³⁷ Prints representing Jews were therefore approximately 1% of the total number of prints at a time

³⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 80:2, July-December 1810, p. 111.

³⁵ Barnard van Oven, *An Appeal to the British Nation on Behalf of the Jews* (London: Lupton Relfe, 1830?), pp. 46-47.

³⁶ *Evening Mail*, 15 Feb 1796.

³⁷ Frank Felsenstein and Sharon Liberman Mintz, *The Jew as Other A Century of English Caricature 1730-1830: Catalogue of an exhibition at Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1995* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1995).

when Jews comprised about 0.2% of the population. The number of prints depicting Jews was therefore disproportionally high but not massively so. Victor Gatrell has pointed out in his discussion of eighteenth-century prints that print-runs and circulation are generally unknown, making the identification of particularly popular or influential prints difficult.³⁸ However, if virulently anti-Jewish prints had been wildly popular, there would likely have been even more of them.

The diverse attitudes towards Jews shown in prints can equally be seen in popular songs. The major source of knowledge about popular songs in the period is *The Universal Songster or Museum of Mirth Forming the Most Complete, Extensive Valuable Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs in the English Language*.³⁹ First published in 1825-1826 by John Fairbairn, it was subsequently reprinted several times in the nineteenth century. The book was originally published in three separate volumes, and in each volume, songs were placed into categories with a separate category for Jews. Of the 5,000 songs, about one per cent refer to Jews, the same percentage as in prints.⁴⁰ As the title indicates, it aimed to reprint songs from a long period of English history. Frustratingly it does not provide any indication of the date of each song, but it seems reasonable to assume, given that many of the songs about Jews are about Jewish pedlars, that they were largely from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century when Jewish pedlars were most prominent. The references in the book's title to 'museum' and 'ancient' may, however, indicate that it also included earlier songs which had been popular in the early eighteenth century and continued to be sung. A number of the songs reflect the images portrayed in prints with references to pigs or Jewish pedlars acting dishonestly and speaking in broken, heavily accented English. Michael Scrivener has estimated that forty per cent of the songs contained very negative stereotypes, thirty per cent mildly stereotypical and thirty per cent ambivalent but not necessarily sympathetic. It must be noted, however, that there were six times as many songs about Irish individuals than about Jews.⁴¹ Jews were of interest but Catholics, and in particular, the Irish were scrutinized in greater detail. The Irish community in London numbered between thirty thousand and forty thousand in the late eighteenth century.⁴² It was not

³⁸ Victor Gatrell, *City of Laughter Sex and Satire in Eighteenth Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p. 14.

³⁹ *The Universal Songster or Museum of Mirth Forming the Most Complete, Extensive Valuable Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs in the English Language*, Vol. 1 (London: Jones and Co, 1834 [orig.1825-1826]).

⁴⁰ Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature*, p. 66.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² King, 'Immigrant Communities, the Police and the Courts', pp. 39-69, p. 42.

feared in quite the way it would be in mid-Victorian England, but it was still looked upon with suspicion given that it was a Catholic community frequently competing for work with working class Englishmen.⁴³

Both songs and prints made use of the motif of the Jewish pedlar. Prints about Jews often used the stock image of the Jewish pedlar dishonestly selling his merchandise. For example, Thomas Rowlandson in his series 'Cries of London' has two stereotypical malevolent Jewish pedlars negotiating to buy clothes from a naive housemaid. The finger of one Jew pointing through a tear in the trousers at the girl has clear sexual connotations and picks up the popular image of the sexually rampant Jew seducing young Christian girls. In the background a couple are coming out of a partially built Lottery office again demonstrating economic greed.

Similar sentiments were often expressed in song. For instance, *The Jew in Grain; Or, The Doctrine of An Israelite* contains the following verse:

I once was but a peddler, and my shop was in my box,
So sure as I'm a smouch, and my name is Mordecai;
And I cheated all the world, in spite of whipping-posts or stocks,
For I never sticks for trifles when dere's monies in the way.⁴⁴

⁴³ Peter King 'Ethnicity, Prejudice and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750–1825, *Journal of British Studies*, Volume 52: Number 2, April 2013, pp. 390-415, p. 411.

⁴⁴ *The Universal Songster Vol. 1*, p. 262. 'Smouch' was slang for Jews. The song bears an instruction that it should be 'sung in High German Dialect'.



Figure 3: Thomas Rowlandson, *Cries of London No 7*, 1799, Jewish Museum AR1088.

An alternative stereotype was the dishonest Jewish broker. It was the image of Jews as economically avaricious supporters of the new financial world, a perspective that, as we have seen, was supported by William Cobbett. The Rowlandson print *Get Money Still/ And then let Virtue follow if she will!* shows three unattractively caricatured old Jews talking in Duke's Place, the centre of the Jewish community. The message is clearly that the focus of Jews is financial avarice rather than virtue.



Figure 4: Thomas Rowlandson, *Get Money Still/ And then let Virtue follow if she will!*, 1808, British Museum 1871,0812.4493.

Another favourite image was to show Jews eating pork or holding pigs as a way of demonstrating their hypocrisy. In the song, *Isaac Mo; or the Jew and the Pig* a Jewish pedlar invites a pig to live with him.⁴⁵ Similarly, in the George Cruickshank print *Jews keeping Passover*, Jewish caricatures speaking in broken English are shown greedily eating a pig. Ham, lobster and oysters, other foods forbidden by Jewish law, are also on the table.

⁴⁵ *Universal Songster*, Vol. 1, p. 19.



Figure 5: George Cruickshank, *Jews keeping the Passover*, 1818, British Museum, 1878,1012.394.

An even more hostile example of the use of the figure of a pig can be seen in *Humours of Houndsditch* or *Mrs Shevi in a Longing Condition*. A plump Jewish woman kisses a pig held by an unattractive old pedlar with an outraged elderly Jew, possibly her husband, watching. A sow looks at the pig. On the right is a poster noting the theft of a sow and seven pigs.



Figure 6: Thomas Rowlandson, *Humours of Houndsditch*, 1813, British Museum, 1872,1012.5024.

Perhaps even more dangerous to Jews than prints showing them as ugly or dishonest were political prints. A cartoon by James Gillray shows Pitt on the right grinding John Bull down for guineas that are being scooped up by the Prince of Wales. On the left of the Prince of Wales stand beneficiaries of his extravagant expenditure including his mistress Mrs Fitzherbert and a Jew who in this case does not have particularly semitic or ugly features, perhaps reflecting his greater status in society as a wealthy individual rather than a poor Jewish pedlar. The Jew bears a piece of paper 'Money Lent at £500 pr cent'. This kind of representation held particular risks for the Jewish community for it depicted the Jews as economic beneficiaries of war whilst 'John Bull' suffered from high taxation. Of even more direct concern might have been the message in Thomas Rowlandson's 1800 cartoon *Downfall of Monopoly* showing a figure representing death with Britannia behind it riding down food profiteers including a Jew.



Figure 7: James Gillray, *John Bull Ground Down*, 1795, British Museum, 1851,0901.734.

Yet, in examining cartoons which represented hostile images of Jews, the extent of Georgian satirical cartoon humour must also be taken into account. On 14 April 1809, Abraham Goldsmid, the banker, arranged a visit by the Dukes of Cambridge, Cumberland and Suffolk, to the Great Synagogue. This attracted considerable attention. The cartoon is obviously designed to make fun of the Dukes for visiting the synagogue, but it is the dukes shown as Suffolk cheese, Cambridge Buttur (sic) and Cumberland Lead which are the butt of the mockery rather than the Jews meeting them. This is in no way to play down the anti-Jewish sentiments of certain prints, but it is important to place them in context and note that even the royal princes were fair subjects for merciless graphic humour.



Figure 8: Thomas Rowlandson, *A Visit to the Synagogue*, 1809, Jewish Museum AR 926.

Even in popular art forms, however, representations were not always negative. Sometimes they would exploit the unusual nature of a Jewish presence to create an attractive image of a Jew. For instance, the print below would seem to portray the Jew with a degree of sympathy, as a kindly unthreatening presence, avoiding the obvious pejorative stereotypes.



Figure 9: Unknown Artist, *A pedlar selling his wares*, Jewish Museum AR1123, 1810.

Equally when it came to popular songs, some provided a sympathetic portrait. For instance, *Nathan Solomons and Cruel Becky Marks* may have a Jew still using non-standard English but it records the sad story of Nathan Solomon's love for Becky Marks. Becky prefers Ben Cohen, whom Nathan will not fight as Cohen is very tall and 'a Mendoza'.⁴⁶ In the ballad *Lipey Solomons, The Honest Jew Pedler* a relatively sympathetic portrait is created of a Jewish pedlar:

Folks tell you a Jew is a rogue,
For scandal's the good vat they sell,
And slander is now all the vogue,
Though Christians are rogues too as well

Later on, it continues:

It isn't the cut of the coat
Dat makes a man honest or rogue,
And vether his heart's good or not,
Can't be told by the sound of the brogue,
For he's de best man of the two,

⁴⁶ *The Universal Songster*, Vol I, p. 119. Samuel Mendoza, the boxer.

And I don't care a fig for de other,
Who, whether he's Christian or Jew,
Behave to mankind like a brother.⁴⁷

The replacement of traditional anti-Jewish imagery with new hostile images showing them as criminal beggars or greedy financiers represented a change of focus in English society. For the Jews, such images were distressing. Yet, there was a very gradual movement towards more ambiguous and nuanced representations. Very slowly, it was being recognised that not all Jews could be covered by stereotypes and a more varied picture was starting to emerge.

Representations in Literature

In literature, representations of Jews become even more complex. The literary portrayal of Jews during the romantic period has been researched and discussed widely—for instance, in Judith Page's *Imperfect Sympathies*; two volumes of essays edited by Sheila Spector and Michael Scrivener's *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840 After Shylock*.⁴⁸ It is outside the scope of this thesis to consider the broader question of the links between representations of Jews and either Romanticism or Gothic writings.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, this thesis does aim to examine, by critically considering a small number of specific examples in which representations of Jews appeared to be improving, the extent to which representations of Jews had become increasingly nuanced. Yet, often these more favourable representations arose from the inclusion of what the author saw as an *exceptional* benevolent Jew. There was little attempt to produce any rounded portraits of Jews nor efforts to examine the possibility of a long term separate Jewish community with its own distinct identity. The assumption that 'good Jews' or their children would convert to Christianity remained prevalent. Such negative representations in literature, as well as in prints and ballads, are important in explaining the continuing defensive attitude of the Jewish communal elite.

⁴⁷ *The Universal Songster*, Vol. 1, p. 230.

⁴⁸ Judith Page, *Imperfect Sympathies Jews and Judaism, British Romantic Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2004). Sheila Spector (ed.), *The Jews and British Romanticism: Politics, Religion, Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2005). Sheila Spector (ed.), *British Romanticism and the Jews: History, Culture, Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2008). Michael Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840 After Shylock* (Palgrave, New York, 2011).

⁴⁹ On the connections with Gothic literature, see Carol Margaret Davison, *Gothic Cabala: The Anti-Semitic Spectropoetics of British Gothic Literature* PhD., (Montreal: McGill University, 1997).

For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, representations of Jews in literature remained hostile. Frank Felsenstein has underlined the enduring negative impact of the image of Shylock, who continued to play a critical role in English culture.⁵⁰ Even in the mid-eighteenth century the actor Charles Macklin's portrayal of Shylock as a malevolent murderous Jew was widely popular. The growth of secularism in late eighteenth-century England did, however, encourage different representations of Jews. Yet, authors found it hard to agree on particular representations of Jews since they did not fit into a neat category. As the emancipation debates would demonstrate later in the nineteenth century, it was unclear if Jews were part of the nation or outside it. For many Englishmen they represented a positive economic force closely identified with financial and economic development, and yet at the same time they were seen as a threat to traditional English life. Judith Page has noted that it was unclear if Jews should be looked upon as unnaturally wealthy or destitute individuals. They were exotic and foreign but, in the case of much of the Sephardi community and the wealthiest of Ashkenazi Jews, increasingly acculturated and integrated into British society.⁵¹ It is perhaps hardly surprising that there were many different representations of Jews in the period and individual authors found themselves expressing contradictory views within their own writings.

One perspective of a Jew was expressed by William Godwin, the radical author of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, which argued for a form of philosophical anarchism. Godwin explored the concept of the Jew as the 'other' in his novels *Things as they Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799). Godwin may have drawn on his close relationship with John 'the Jew' King in his understanding of 'the Jew' as outside society. Aspects of *St. Leon* certainly seem derived from John King. For instance, St. Leon's leaving France for Switzerland having made his family destitute through gambling can be seen as a parallel to John King fleeing England when accused of fraud. St. Leon accepted the gift of alchemy—the elixir of life, a potion that restores an individual's youth, and the ability to turn base metals into gold—from a stranger being hunted by the Inquisition who may well have been based on the tradition of the Wandering Jew.⁵² Alchemy was often seen as intrinsically linked to the magical qualities of the Jewish kabbalah. Moreover, the sudden rise in an individual's wealth in a hierarchical landed society created public suspicion. Just as King was alienated from English society, St. Leon's sudden wealth left him alienated from wider society including, most painfully, his own

⁵⁰ Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, pp. 158-187.

⁵¹ Page, *Imperfect Sympathies*, pp. 3-4.

⁵² Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature*, pp. 105-106.

family. Godwin made explicit his Jewish references in St. Leon's rescue and shelter by a Jew called Mordercai. St. Leon notes 'every thing that I observed in the Jew was apparently fair, plausible and encouraging'. Mordercai explains: 'we poor Jews, hunted on the face of the earth, the abhorrence and execration of mankind, have nothing but family affections to support us under our multiplied disgraces'.⁵³ Yet, Mordercai's reference to family underlines the fact that Godwin's references to and sympathy for Jews are incidental to the novel. His focus in *St. Leon* was on the importance of family, which was, as Godwin recognised in his preface, a change from his previous attitude which had been expressed in *Political Justice*. Insofar as *St. Leon* has a fundamental message, it is not a political novel about Jews, but its aim is to stress the importance of family over the love of money and the growth of a financial economy.

In contrast, the representation of Jews is central to Richard Cumberland's 1794 play *The Jew*. It was influenced by the ground-breaking *Nathan der Weise*, written by Gotthold Lessing, a close friend of Moses Mendelssohn, the German philosopher and leading light of the Haskalah movement for Jewish enlightenment. Cumberland was well aware of the impact of Jewish representations on the Jewish sections of the audience and earlier in 1786 had a Jewish character, Abraham Abrahams, in his series of essays in *The Observer* comment:

I observe with much concern that your great writers of plays take delight in hanging us out to public ridicule and contempt on all occasions: If ever they are in search of a rogue, an usurer or a buffoon, they are sure to make a Jew serve the turn: I verily believe the odious character of Shylock has brought little less persecution upon us poor scattered sons of Abraham, than the Inquisition itself.⁵⁴

Michael Ragussis has argued that the theatre played an important role in the development the concept of British identity with the appearance on stage of characters who were Jews, Scots and Irishmen sometimes forcing the audience to consider the issue.⁵⁵ In Cumberland's play a young couple, Frederic Bertram and Eliza Ratcliffe, have clandestinely married but are frightened by the risk of family disapproval and poverty. A Jew, Sheva, owes the Ratcliffe family a debt of gratitude as his life has twice been saved by the Ratcliffes, once from the inquisition in Spain and once from the London mob. Sheva

⁵³ William Godwin, *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, Patricia Clemit (ed.), (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994 [orig. 1799]), pp. 343-345.

⁵⁴ Richard Cumberland, *The Observer being a Collection of Moral, Literature and Familial essays*, Vol. III:38, (London: C Dilly, 1798, 5th edition), p. 83.

⁵⁵ Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 33-34.

uses his wealth so that the young couple can be reconciled with their families. Frederic Bertram, who in the first act is an anti-Semite undergoes a reformation during the play. The play echoes the *Merchant of Venice*, but its message stands in stark contrast. It is the English merchant, Frederic's father, who is obsessed with finance rather than Sheva the Jew. Where Shylock expresses hostility towards Christians, Sheva shows kindness and generosity.

However, Cumberland still provides a comic interlude by having Sheva speak with a typical Jewish accent.⁵⁶ A second Jewish character, Sheva's servant Jubal, is a figure of fun, complaining that Sheva is mean and, by describing how he would like to eat a pork sausage, reinforces a standard trope about Jews' secret desires. Moreover, Cumberland raises the question of whether Sheva should perhaps be seen as an 'exceptional' Jew. Jubal comments about Sheva:

He is no Hebrew, no more a Jew than Julius Caesar; for...he gives away his money by handfuls to the consumers of hog's flesh.⁵⁷

For William Cobbett, the appearance in Cumberland's play of even a single benevolent Jew was difficult to accept and he readily reflected Jubal's remark by declaring that 'a Jew who gives away his money for the mere pleasure of doing good without shew or profit is such a monstrous caricature as no real Jew can see without contempt'.⁵⁸ Even Cumberland remained clear that whilst Christians should be benevolent to Jews, Christianity remained superior.⁵⁹ As sympathetic as he argued that one should be to individual Jews, Cumberland believed that Jews would be civilised by enlightened values. He saw no long-term future for Jews or Judaism as distinct from Christian society.⁶⁰ Cumberland did express positive comments about Jews in his work, which challenged existing representations, but given his very ambivalent perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that the Jewish community remained sceptical about his views and that in his

⁵⁶ Page, *Imperfect Sympathies*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Richard Cumberland, *The Jew: or Benevolent Hebrew. A Comedy* (Dublin, McDonnell, 1794), p. 28.

⁵⁸ William Cobbett, *Political Register*, Vol. X from July to December 1806 (London: Cox and Baylis, 1806), pp. 403-406.

⁵⁹ Page, *Imperfect Sympathies*, p. 39.

⁶⁰ Brian Cheyette, *Constructions of 'The Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1789-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 9.

Memoirs he complained that he had not been supported by or indeed thanked by Jews.⁶¹ The play received a strong critical and popular response, perhaps in part because, as Jean Marsden has argued, it appealed to the desire of the audience to feel benevolent and reflected the audience's notion of England as a progressive country.⁶² Despite its faults, *The Jew* does represent an important development, forcing its audience to challenge their own prejudices about contemporaries. Sheva asks:

I live sparingly and labour hard, therefore I am called miser—I cannot help it—an uncharitable dog, I must endure it—a blood-sucker, an extortionist, a Shylock—hard names, Mr Frederic, but what can a poor Jew say in return, if a Christian chooses to abuse him?⁶³

Although literature raised the question of whether there could be desirable Jews, it also provided very uncertain answers. In Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and *The Absentee*, anti-Semitic stereotypes appeared. After receiving criticism about her portrayal of Jews from an American reader, Rachel Mordercai, Edgeworth wrote *Harrington* in 1817 which demonstrates an empathy for Jews.⁶⁴ The novel recounts how Harrington's nursemaid, Fowler, frightens him with anti-Semitic stories about the Jewish old clothes-man Simon and Harrington becomes obsessed by stories of the blood libel and child murder. Harrington, however, meets Jews which cause him to reconsider his sentiments and he falls in love with Berenice, a beautiful Jewess. Mowbray, Harrington's anti-Semitic school friend and son of Lady de Brantfield, is in cahoots with Fowler to prevent Harrington's marriage to Berenice. Berenice's father, Montenero, provides shelter to Lady de Brantfield challenging her view that no Jew was a gentleman, and he also provides critical financial assistance to Harrington's father. Edgeworth argued that prejudice is in the past and has been eliminated, yet she is still unable to look upon Jews as fully-formed and equal individuals.⁶⁵ By the end, the heroine, Berenice, is revealed not to be Jewish but a Protestant with a Protestant mother.⁶⁶ This rather neatly, from Edgeworth's perspective, resolves the plot but also calls into question the extent of Edgeworth's own tolerance. Jews

⁶¹ Aaron Kaiserman, 'Jews and the English Nation: An Intertextual Approach to Evolving Representations of Jews in British Fiction, 1701-1876', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2016, pp. 52-53.

⁶² Jean Marsden, 'Richard Cumberland's The Jew and the Benevolence of the Audience: Performance and Religious Tolerance', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 48:4, Summer 2015, pp. 457-477, pp. 470-472. Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen*, p. 112.

⁶³ Cumberland, *The Jew: or Benevolent Hebrew*, p. 9.

⁶⁴ A Markley, *Conversion and Reform in the British Novel in the 1790s: A Revolution of Opinions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 120.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

⁶⁶ Carol Margaret Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave, 2004), p. 50.

are to be welcomed for the economic advantages they provided, but they remain outside English society. The concept of a desirable Jewess remained uncomfortable for Edgeworth. Nevertheless, like Cumberland, Edgeworth is deliberately thought provoking, forcing the novel's reader to consider their own prejudices about Jews.

In this very ambivalent environment, it is hardly surprising that the Jewish community continued to be sensitive about unfavourable representations of Jews both in novels and the theatre. The rise in the reading of novels will be discussed later, but the importance of the theatre in late Georgian England should not be underestimated. Audiences had grown rapidly with the massive theatres at Drury Lane and Covent Garden seating over twenty-two thousand each week. By 1805 it has been estimated that there were over two hundred and seventy-nine theatres or other venues which put on shows.⁶⁷ Moreover, theatre going in the eighteenth century was very popular amongst Jews. The *Public Advertiser* recorded in 1775 that 'the number of Jews at the theatre is incredible'. On the opening of the Theatre Royal on 19 June 1789, Horace Walpole noted that 'our Jews and Gentiles throng it'.⁶⁸ Thomas Dibdin's *Family Quarrels*, first performed in December 1802, received angry protests from poorer Jewish audience members, who objected to a song about three Jewish women as prostitutes, and who disrupted performances.⁶⁹ The furore generated made a lasting impact. Thomas Rowlandson's 1803 etching, referring to Dibdin's play in its title, *Family Quarrels or the Jew and Gentile*, ignored the play's content but showed a singing competition between an unpleasantly caricatured Jew and a Gentile. As late as 1806, Dibdin's play was still having an impact with an engraving about the play called *The Jew Beauties*.⁷⁰ The incident is revealing in two respects. From a Jewish perspective, the forceful reaction shows how some poor Jews had the confidence to publicly protest about a perceived insult. On the other side, the protests by Jews generated a backlash. The December 1802 edition of the *Monthly Mirror* argued that making fun of other nations was an essential part of theatre and underlined the definition of Englishness. It pointed out that it was not simply the Jews who were shown in stereotypical terms:

The frivolity of the Frenchman, the effeminacy of the Italian, the beggarly pride of the Spanish hidalgo, the proverbial heaviness of 'your swag bellied Hollander', the blunders of the Irishmen, the irascibility of the Welch [sic], and the sycophancy of the Scot, are all in their turn displayed in full force on stage.

⁶⁷ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 217.

⁷⁰ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen*, p. 3.

The same article contained a clear warning for the Jewish community. The reaction of the Jews seemed to demonstrate excessive sensitivity and unacceptable behaviour. Yet the very comments attacking the Jewish reaction serve to emphasize why Jews were so concerned by such representations and seemed to many to be separate from the nation:

The truth is the Jews like the viper in the fable are inclined to turn and sting the hand that has fostered them.... Let them be cautious how they proceed. It is dangerous to trifle with the English nation. For these people who already enjoy perhaps more privileges than are altogether consistent with the Christian religion and who in this country are and ever have been more favoured than in any other on the face of the globe it is more particularly unsafe and unwise to render themselves obnoxious to the public.⁷¹

The portrayal of Jews in the literature of the period is extremely fluid. The image of Jews held by different writers could and did vary dramatically. Nevertheless, increasingly authors were able to create positive Jewish characters, and this was seen again with the publication of Scott's *Ivanhoe* in 1819. Many of these works did encourage the questioning of assumptions about Jews. Yet, if the period ushers in attractive Jewish characters, they are portrayed as 'exceptional Jews' rather than challenging widespread anti-Jewish stereotypes.

Violence and Boxing

One of the areas in which this gradually changing image of the Jew is visible is in depictions of boxing, and this changing image had positive consequences for Anglo-Jewry. Negative representations in literature, prints and songs underlined to Jews how isolated they were from mainstream English society. Yet, for the eighteenth-century Jewish community, the critical question was how far these anti-Jewish representations impacted their daily lives. In particular, the critical question was the relationship between these representations and the open taunts and violence that they suffered.⁷² The Jewish boxer, Daniel Mendoza, noted in his biography that as a teenager he was frequently drawn into fights with non-Jews in the neighbourhood.⁷³ Francis Place commented that in his childhood, the 1770s and early

⁷¹ *Monthly Mirror*, Vol. 14 December 1802, pp. 404-405. A hidalgo was a member of the lower Spanish nobility often with a hereditary title but no land or money.

⁷² Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 114.

⁷³ Alex Joanides (ed.), *Memoirs of The Life of Daniel Mendoza* (London: Romeville Enterprises 2011[orig. 1816]), p. 24.

1780s, Jews were ‘barbarously assaulted in the streets’ and ‘dogs could not now be used in the streets, in the manner, many Jews were treated’.⁷⁴

The greatest risk was that the negative representations would generate not simply violence against an individual but inspire a general riot against the Jewish community. Certainly during the Jew Bill of 1753 the risk of riots against the community was real, although as Thomas Perry has pointed out, even during the furore of the Jew Bill, there was an ‘astonishing lack of physical violence against individual Jews or their property’.⁷⁵ A pedlar, Jonas Levy, was killed in Wales, but it is not known if this was the result of an attempted theft or if it was linked to the Jew Bill.¹¹⁸ After 1753 there were no subsequent political issues in which the Jewish community was the focus that might have crystallised into a riot. Nevertheless, there would appear to have been real concern amongst some Jews during the Gordon Riots, at least according to Thomas Holcroft who was writing immediately after the riots, and noted that some of the Jews were so frightened that they wrote on their houses ‘This House is a True Protestant’.⁷⁶ As in 1753, Jewish properties were not attacked in 1780. Nevertheless, the riots underlined how the English responded to attempts to obtain even minor legislative reforms that challenged English national identity such as the Jew Bill of 1753 or the Catholic Relief Act of 1778.

The Chelsea murder case in 1771, discussed earlier, was one example of events which could have led to an anti-Jewish riot, but it was not unique. In 1809, the Royal Theatre in Covent Garden, which had burnt down the previous year, reopened. With the owner severely in debt and the number of seats reduced to provide boxes for aristocrats, ticket prices in the cheaper sections were substantially increased. During the Old Price riots of 1809, the manager hired a number of Jewish boxers, including Daniel Mendoza and Dutch Sam, to ensure order given the violent opposition to the increased seat prices the theatre was trying to charge. For several weeks in September and October 1809, the boxers and demonstrators engaged in abuse and conflict, with the demonstrators using such slogans as ‘Oppose Shylock and the Jews’.⁷⁷ Similarly, in 1810, a group of Jewish

⁷⁴ Quoted Mary Thale (ed.), *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), Introduction, pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁷⁵ Thomas Perry, *A Study of the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 75.

⁷⁶ Garland Garvey Smith (ed.), *Thomas Holcroft's A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Gordon Riots* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1944 [orig. 1780]), p. 11 of the Introduction and p. 30. Dickens recounts this story in *Barnaby Rudge*.

⁷⁷ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 220-221.

butchers fought with a number of Irishmen. The Irish returned with reinforcements shouting 'No Jews no Jews' but Irish anger became directed at a number of English individuals and a riot broke out between the English and Irish groups which had to be resolved by calling out the Tower Hamlets militia.⁷⁸

The risk of violence aimed at the Jewish community during wartime would have increased substantially if Jews had either become associated with radicalism or benefited financially from the war. In September 1800, leaflets had been distributed in Chelmsford calling for people to meet to protest against bread prices and signs had been put up stating 'no Quakers, no White Jews'.⁷⁹ 'White' Jews is probably a reference to Ashkenazi Jews to distinguish them from Sephardi Jews. GR Clarke, writing in 1830, noted that in Ipswich 'in the early part of the French Revolution, the Jews were unjustly suspected of being favourable to republican opinions leading them to being 'insulted and maltreated' on their way to and from synagogue. Interestingly, and perhaps indicating their confidence in their position, the Jews requested that the magistrates in Ipswich provided police constables to protect them.⁸⁰ In Birmingham in 1813, a mob attacked numerous houses of worship of Dissenter groups as well as a synagogue.⁸¹

It is also necessary to consider the possibility of violence against individual Jews. There cannot be certainty about the actual extent of that violence or the extent to which the Jewish community was frightened by the physical risk of violence, although further research into criminal cases may provide greater insight. In the case of Portsmouth, Jessica Warner has questioned the extent of violence against individual Jews noting that it was a town with widespread violence in which the Jews were both victims and perpetrators.⁸² Tony Kushner has, however, suggested Warner's desire to stress British tolerance has led her to play down the 'anti-Semitic' nature of some of the violence directed against the tiny Jewish community.⁸³ As Tony Kushner points out, there certainly were violent attacks

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 217.

⁷⁹ National Archives HO 42/51/107, pp. 262-264.

⁸⁰ G R Clarke, *The history and description of the town and borough of Ipswich, including the villages and country seats in its vicinity, more particularly those situated on the banks of the Orwell* (Ipswich: S Piper, 1830), p. 319.

⁸¹ Zoe Joseph (ed.), *Birmingham Jewry More Aspects 1740-1930* (Warley: The Birmingham Jewish History Research Group, 1984), p. 8. *Sussex Advertiser*, 5 April 1813. *Northampton Mercury*, 3 April 1813.

⁸² Jessica Warner, 'Violence against and amongst Jews in an early modern town: tolerance and its limits in Portsmouth 1718-1781', *Albion A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 35: No.3, Autumn 2003, pp. 428-448. Accessed Literary Resource Center 2 February 2016. No page numbers given.

⁸³ Tony Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066 Place, Locality and Memory* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 128 and 136.

associated with anti-Jewish feeling. For instance, in Portsmouth in April 1810, Rosa Nathan, wife of a Jewish slop seller, was assaulted and called a 'bloody Jewish bitch' by a naval officer and two others.⁸⁴ The frequency of such attacks against individual Jews or against groups of Jews is uncertain but, whilst this was a serious problem, it needs to be put into context. As Todd Endelman concludes, such attacks did 'not constitute a threat to the physical security of the Anglo-Jewish community' and that the Jews suffered less from the mob than non-Anglican Christian communities.⁸⁵ Yet, individual Jews did suffer from violence and whilst sometimes this was simply motivated by robbery, prejudice encouraged by anti-Jewish representations also played a role.

It is also important to consider the possibility that, as Tony Kushner suggests, Jews may not have always reported acts of violence against them.⁸⁶ Clearly, Jews may have been concerned that any complaint to the authorities may simply have brought further violence. It might not be unreasonable to speculate that there was a difference between the situation of Jews in London and of individual pedlars in the countryside. Reporting violence outside London would clearly have absorbed time and restricted the ability of pedlars to continue their itinerant sales. In London, supported by the presence of a large number of Jews, Jews might have been far more confident about reporting crime, and indeed, attacks on Jews may well have been limited thanks to the protection of sheer physical numbers. Moreover, Karen Macfarlane has pointed out the presence of Jewish policemen in eighteenth-century London. Policing at this point was organised at the local level and the Jewish policemen were, not surprisingly, focussed on Jewish areas and were frequently involved in apprehending Jewish criminals. They seem to have worked on a largely positive basis with non-Jewish constables and it would be interesting if further work could provide an indication that their presence encouraged Jews to report any violence they experienced in London.⁸⁷

Yet, there was a new representation developing, one which it has been suggested led directly to a decline in violence against Jews. Despite being technically illegal, boxing became a massive spectator sport by the late eighteenth century. It was sometimes referred to as 'the English way of solving a dispute'. Whilst boxers were viewed by some as dangerous ruffians, boxing was also seen as a bulwark against effeminacy and a way of

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

⁸⁵ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 115-116.

⁸⁶ Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066*, pp. 127-128.

⁸⁷ Macfarlane, 'The Jewish Policemen of Eighteenth-Century London', pp. 223-244.

attracting fighting men who might provide recruits for the army.⁸⁸ Boxing was one of the few arenas in which all sectors of society mixed, with fights often being sponsored by aristocrats like the Prince of Wales and attended by large number of middle-and working-class individuals. Contests between boxers, such as the three fights between Daniel Mendoza and the non-Jewish Richard Humphries, attracted enormous press coverage and gambling.

Perhaps amongst the most interesting prints of Jews from the period are those of Jewish boxers like Mendoza and 'Dutch Sam'. Some of the prints produced on these occasions, such as Ramberg's 1788 print *The Triumph*, rejoiced in victories of Christians over Jews. The boxer, Humphries, is shown after he had beaten Mendoza in Oldham, as a heroic Adonis, being carried off in a chair by a butcher and the Prince of Wales, emphasizing the love of boxing across social classes. In the meantime, Mendoza is comforted by a group of highly unattractive Jews with Lord George Gordon behind them reading from the Talmud. Beneath the picture the inscription on the left reads:

Lo he was sorely bruised & much dismayed for he had been dealt heavily with;
then came certain of his Tribe & minister'd unto him, among the rest a Man
named G: Moses [Gordon] lately a Convert to their faith.

The banner reads 'Long live Humphries the Victorious who in a bloody fight overcame the 12 tribes of Israel, Hallelu, Halle'. The evidence of the pleasure taken at the defeat of the Jew Mendoza is clear. Ruti Ungar has argued in her Ph. D. thesis that prints celebrating victories over Jews reflected society's anti-Jewish prejudices.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, attitudes to Mendoza were far from consistently hostile. In contrast to Ungar, Ronald Schechter has argued that there was remarkably little anti-Semitism in newspaper articles about Mendoza.⁹⁰ In fact, Georgian attitudes to Jewish boxers were often contradictory and confused. Despite the hostility to their success, there was also widespread respect. Mendoza, with his creation of the concept of 'scientific boxing', was a particular hero and his numerous victories were widely recorded. His image appeared on commemorative jugs

⁸⁸ John Whale, 'Daniel Mendoza's Contests of Identity: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Nation in Georgian Prize Fighting', *Romanticism* Vol. 14:3, 2008, pp. 259-272, pp. 259-260. R Ungar, 'The Boxing Discourse in late Georgian England, 1780-1820: A Study in Civic Humanism, Gender, Class and Race', Ph. D diss., Humboldt University of Berlin, 2010, pp. 7-9.

⁸⁹ Ungar, 'The Boxing Discourse in late Georgian England, 1780-1820', pp. 141-143.

⁹⁰ Ronald Schechter, 'Trusting Daniel Mendoza: How British Boxing Fans Came to Believe in the 'Fair Play' of an Eighteenth-century Sephardi Pugilist', *Report of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies*, 2013-14, pp.46-49, p. 48.

and mugs.⁹¹ Despite being Jewish, he could still be portrayed as a patriotic Englishman. *The English Ambassador and His Suite Before the King at Madrid* shows an English ambassador with four boxers, including Mendoza, denouncing Spanish policy. Part of the ambassador's speech at the bottom of the print reads:

Should you wish for a War we have got a new race
Of such brave fighting fellows, not the Devil dare face!
A sample I've brought, only four of our men,
Mendoza, Dick Humphries, Joe Ward, and Big Ben:
So great is their power each Lad with one blow,
Would knock down an Ox, or twelve Spaniards lay low

At home we can raise twelve hundred like these
That would crush all your Troops as easy as fleas.

⁹¹ Whale, 'Daniel Mendoza's Contests of Identity: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Nation in Georgian Prize Fighting', p 264.



Figure 10: Johann Ramberg, *The Triumph*, 1788, British Museum
1868,0808.10319.



Figure 11: Unknown artist, *The English Ambassador and His Suite Before the King at Madrid*, 1790, British Museum 1868,0808.5935.

Mendoza's success and identification as a loyal Englishmen may have had an impact on society. For instance, Francis Place noted that assaults on Jews had ended since:

the art of boxing as a science.....soon spread among the young Jews, and they became generally expert at it. The consequence was in a very few years seen and felt too. It was no longer safe to insult a Jew unless he was an old man and alone.....But even if the Jews were unable to defend themselves, the few who

would [now] be disposed to insult them, merely because they are Jews, would be in danger of chastisement from the passers-by and by punishment of the police.⁹²

Mendoza and his fellow Jewish boxers along with gradually changing attitudes to Jews may have led to a decline in violence towards Jews, but other factors may have also been at work. Robert Shoemaker has suggested that both murder and violent assaults declined during the eighteenth century particularly as changing concepts of manhood made it less critical to respond to insults.⁹³ There is a lack of evidence, but it may also be that the absence of large numbers of young men in the army and a focus on the French as the enemy reduced violence towards Jews. Crime had decreased during other periods of war in the eighteenth century although it is important to be cautious about this. The 1790s experienced recession, inflated prices of wheat especially in 1795 and riots against the impressing of men into the army, known as crimping. It was thus far from a peaceful decade.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Attitudes to Jews in the period—in prints, songs, boxing and literature—were largely negative. Traditional Christian tropes of Jews continued to exist, but these were being gradually replaced by the image of Jews as dishonest pedlars or financially corrupt brokers. It would, however, be a mistake not to recognize that many different attitudes existed towards Jews. There was a widespread belief that Sephardi Jews were honest and acceptable, whilst Ashkenazi tended to be seen as dishonest criminals. As always in Georgian society, wealthy individuals, be they Sephardi Jews or the few well-off Ashkenazi Jews, were seen as respectable. Yet, even attitudes to Ashkenazi pedlars were ambivalent and varied. Popular conceptions of Jews remained frequently negative but under the influence of the Enlightenment and the acculturation of the Jewish community, they were increasingly mixed and evolving. Progress may have been glacial and limited but representations of Jews were becoming more nuanced.

Indeed, what is perhaps more remarkable is that war and economic hardships did not lead to a popular upsurge of anti-Jewish feeling. Images associating Jews with radicalism or the French were limited. Clearly, the focus remained on the threat of France and

⁹² Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, p. 230.

⁹³ Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Hambledon, 2004), pp. 170-172.

⁹⁴ Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 331-3

Napoleon. Whilst hostility to the Jews remained a factor, it was always of secondary or indeed tertiary significance in the world of representation. Nevertheless, to the Jewish community in England at the time, the sheer frequency of negative Jewish representations was distressing, encouraging the conversion of the wealthy and helping to perpetuate a sense of isolation in the rest of the community. It is also necessary to put the position of the Jewish community into context. Negative representations of minority groups, violence and abuse were widespread issues for Georgian society. British xenophobia created problems for a wide range of ethnic groups. As Roxann Wheeler argues:

A large proportion of English subjects seemed to find most other people, both inside and outside the borders, contemptuous. This suspicion arose mainly from political and religious matters, and it could assume physical or cultural terms. Even those who resembled the English most closely, such as the French or Irish, were targets of verbal and even physical abuse in the streets of eighteenth-century Britain.⁹⁵

It may have been of limited comfort to a Jew being abused or suffering violence that other groups faced similar problems, but the negative representations they faced, which encouraged this behaviour, reflected attitudes which applied widely to minorities in Georgian society. Yet, it is the impact of such prejudice on the workings of government, and the extent to which the civil service has imbued such negative attitudes, that is often of critical importance to a minority community and this will now be examined through the prism of the Alien Act.

⁹⁵ Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Press, 2000), pp. 300-301.

Chapter 3:

The Alien Act

As has been have discussed, Britain did not have Parliamentary legislation specifically targeting its Jewish population and nothing changed in this respect between 1789 and 1815, but legislation was passed that had a substantial impact on Anglo-Jewry. The Alien Act of 1793 introduced immigration control to England — a fundamental shift in thinking which still has major contemporary implications. There has, however, been only limited work on the way in which the Alien Act was actually implemented and an even greater lack of archival work on how the Act affected Jewish aliens. This thesis will, therefore, seek to examine the treatment of Jews within the broader context of the Act's motivation and implementation for all aliens.

It is important, however, to avoid making anachronistic assumptions. Immigration control is often associated with nationalism, economic motives and, in some cases, a belief in racial superiority. Earlier in the eighteenth century, immigration had been a politically divisive issue with many Whigs seeing it as economically desirable, whilst Tories were concerned— on both religious grounds and as a matter of electoral politics— about the immigration of any groups who were not Anglican. This Tory opposition to immigration had been displayed in 1709 during the immigration of German Palatines, who were Protestants but not Anglicans, and also in the furore over the Jew Bill.¹ The 1793 Alien Act arose from a quite separate motivation, namely the fear that Jacobins might be concealed amongst the French refugees fleeing from the Revolution. It took time, however, before the government became concerned about immigration. Indeed, the government remained sceptical for some time of rumours in the press of French agents. As late as July 1791, Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, was writing to William Eden, the British ambassador at The Hague:

I send you the description I received of certain persons said to be coming over here to fire our ships and dockyards. The measure taken in consequence gave occasion to the alarm, which was not discouraged, as this is one of the cases which arise from the general impression of danger. But I strongly believe there was

¹ Thomas Perry, *A Study of the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 33.

nothing in it. No such persons ever made their appearance in England where we could trace them.²

However, Government concerns about domestic subversion grew as did its willingness to take repressive measures. The Alien Act was one element of the legislation introduced in the 1790s to stifle the possibility of any attempt in Britain to emulate the French Revolution. It was preceded by the Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings and would be followed—after the collapse of the ‘Treason Trials’—by the Treasonable Practices Act and Seditious Meetings Act of 1795, known as the Gagging Acts, whilst fear of unrest amongst workers led to the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800. The Alien Act should, therefore, be seen as part of a broader development as the combined threat of war and revolution in the 1790s led to a massive increase in the authority of the executive and undermined what had previously been perceived as traditional English liberties.

The first repressive measure was the Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings and Publications, issued in May 1792, which was used to prosecute Paine and encourage his flight to France.³ Like so much of the legislation which was to follow, including the Alien Act of 1793, it is important to understand that it was driven substantially by fear. In the case of Paine, the government’s concern was about both his content and his audience. Paine’s attack on the concepts of hereditary and property rights, particularly in Part Two of the *Rights of Man*, was always likely to create concern in government circles. Yet government fears were intensified by Paine’s use of clearly understood vernacular English and the inexpensive price of his publications that led to a very substantial readership amongst the tradesmen and artisans who provided critical membership for campaigning groups such as the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society.⁴ General Lambton would be addressed in autumn 1792 by keelmen from South Shields and Sunderland in the following terms:

Have you read this little work of Tom Paine’s? No. Then read it — we like it very much. You have a great estate, General; we shall soon divide it amongst us.⁵

Even more fundamental to the change in British attitudes toward French refugees, however, were developments in France. In August 1792, the Tuileries was stormed, the

² Historical Manuscripts Commission Fourteen the Report Appendix Part V, *The Manuscripts of J Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1894) Vol. 2, p. 136.

³ Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution, Britain in the 1790s* (London and New York, IB Tauris, 2006), p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Keelmen worked on the shallow-draught keel boats which carried coal on the Tyne and Wear rivers.

Swiss Guard massacred, and Louis XVI arrested. The September Massacres led to further condemnation, as did the abolition of the monarchy and the proclamation of a Republic. Moreover, it became clear to the Pitt government that war was impending. The declaration of the National Convention in Paris unilaterally renouncing the Barrier Treaty, which had excluded France from the Scheldt, triggered the treaties of 1713 and 1788 under which Britain had guaranteed Holland's position. Even more directly threatening to the British government was the radical Dutch uprising and the French Proclamation of Fraternity which promised assistance for 'all people who wished to recover their liberty'.⁶ Even before the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793, it was clear that the French Revolution would not lead to a limited monarchy in the style of the Glorious Revolution but to a full-blown challenge to the authority of hereditary rights and property across Europe.

As a result of developments in France, the British government was faced with a substantial influx of French refugees fleeing the Revolution. It is hard to be precise about numbers. The government-supporting *Public Advertiser* of 1 October 1792 estimated forty thousand, but twenty thousand might be a more realistic number, especially allowing for émigrés who rapidly moved on to America or the Netherlands.⁷ This is not, however, to say that even twenty thousand individuals settled in England permanently. Many émigrés returned to France either after the fall of Robespierre in 1794 or when Napoleon issued an amnesty in 1802.

Despite long-standing hostility to both the French and Catholics, the refugees, many of whom were French clergy, were at least at the start welcomed. The 1791 Catholic Relief Act permitted Roman Catholic services for the first time since the reign of Elizabeth I.⁸ Catholic priests in France faced a campaign of dechristianisation which included the requirement from November 1792 to swear an oath to the revolutionary Constitution of Clergy. Over the next two years, churches were closed, crosses and statues seized, the Christian calendar replaced, and the cults of Reason and the Supreme Being instituted. The refugees were seen as members of the French propertied classes fleeing from a

⁶ Beerbühl, 'British Nationality Policy', p. 56.

⁷ Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London 1789-1792* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999).

⁸ David Rice, 'Combine against the Devil: The Anglican Church and the French Refugee Clergy in the French Revolution', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 50:3, September 1981, pp. 271-281, p. 276.

revolutionary oppressor, whilst the success of revolutionary secularism in France was seen as a threat to all Christian states. Parliament established the Wilmot Committee, which included the Bishops of London and Durham, to raise funds from parishes.⁹ There were a number of appeals. For instance, the United Committee of the Subscribers for the Relief of the Suffering Clergy of France raised sixteen thousand two hundred and sixty pounds with donations from a number of Protestant clergy and the Royal Bank of Scotland.¹⁰

By late 1792, the government was increasingly concerned about the risks arising from the refugees. Auckland wrote to Grenville on 14 December 1792 arguing that England was being infiltrated by individuals who were being paid by Jacobins to promote revolution and by two to three hundred members of the Société de la Propagande.¹¹ It was therefore his view that ‘however ungenerous it may sound, I foresee that it will become necessary to turn them out of London, and possibly a greater proportion of them out of England.’¹² As the war continued, sympathy for the émigrés declined further. By 1794 George III, who had originally been sympathetic, was writing to Grenville suggesting ‘every one of that perfidious nation [France]’ should be ‘removed from the country’.¹³

Prior to the 1793 Act, there was no specific legislation restricting immigration. In December 1792, the government announced that given the presence of insurrectionary plots hatched by French Jacobins hidden amongst the refugees, it was introducing the Alien Act, which it pushed through Parliament within a couple of weeks. Introducing the Bill in the House of Commons the Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, stated that he had secret information about conspiracies and should be trusted by the House:

If he was called upon to state the grounds upon which he had founded his allegations, he would decline entering into any detail, and appeal to the general sense of the House to determine how far they were well founded. As this bill was grounded on suspicion and authorized the executive government to act upon that principle, it would be impossible, with any degree of propriety, to lay open the particular sources of information.¹⁴

⁹ Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 273.

¹¹ Auckland believed in the existence of a Société de la Propagande formed to spread revolution internationally.

¹² Historical Manuscripts Commission Fourteen the Report Appendix Part V, *The Manuscripts of J Fortescue Preserved at Drogheda* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1894) Vol. 2, pp. 68-9, 357.

¹³ Rice, ‘Combine against the Devil’, p. 276.

¹⁴ *Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 from which Last-Mentioned Epoch It is Continued Downwards in the Work Entitled “The Parliamentary Debates”*, Vol. XXX comprising the Period from the

Chapter 3

Support for the Bill from much of the political elite and the government press was overwhelming. Burke welcomed the Bill as it would keep out of England ‘those murderous atheists, who would pull down church and safety; religion and God; morality and happiness’.¹⁵ By this stage, fear of the Revolution had become visceral for Burke. Throwing a dagger onto the floor in the Commons, he stated:

I vote for this bill because I consider it a means of saving my life and all our lives from the hands of assassins. I vote for it, because it will...prevent the introduction of French principles and French daggers. When they smile, I see blood trickling down their faces; I see their insidious purposes; I see that the object of their cajoling is blood.¹⁶

Burke’s behaviour may have been highly theatrical, but the debate marked a critical turning point in British politics. To the dismay of Charles James Fox even the Duke of Portland’s faction, which had joined the Whig opposition when Pitt came to power in the constitutional crisis of 1784, voted with the government, marking a further major step towards its break with the opposition and admission to the government.

The Foxite opposition was deeply cynical about the government’s arguments and felt that the Bill was simply a deliberate distraction from government preparations for an unnecessary war. Retrospectively, they certainly had a case. On 21 January 1793, Louis XVI was executed, and on 1 February, war was declared. In any case, the Whig opposition remained deeply sceptical of any revolutionary conspiracy. As the Whig MP Clement Taylor pointed out during debate in the House of Commons, the only major political disturbances had not been radical riots but the loyalist ‘King and Country’ riots in Birmingham in 1791. These supposedly patriotic riots had been aimed at Baptist and Unitarian meetings houses and had resulted in the destruction of the home, library and laboratory of the radical Unitarian scientist Joseph Priestley. Taylor was concerned that a government-created myth of the risk of radical riots and revolutionary activities might lead to the suspension of Habeas Corpus for British subjects and, in fact, this suspension occurred in 1794 as repressive measures developed.¹⁷ For the radical opposition, therefore, the measures were unnecessary since such conspiracies did not exist. Moreover, some members felt that such an act was unnecessary since the Crown already had the power to deport aliens. The problem here for the government was that in December 1792 war had

Thirteenth of December 1792, to the Tenth of March 1794 (London: Hansard, 1817), p. 176. The second Gulf war demonstrates the enduring nature of this approach.

¹⁵ *Parliamentary History* Vol XXX, p. 188.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

not yet been declared and it had received a legal opinion from Serjeant George Hill that the Crown's power to deport individuals had lapsed, unless they were subjects of a state with which Britain was at war or there existed very specific circumstances:

As to subjects of states in amity, I think the king hath no power over any, if they do not offend his laws, but such as are charged by the states whose subjects they are with high treason murder or defrauding the state, or other atrocious crimes.¹⁸

Hill's opinion is not really surprising given that the Crown's prerogative in this respect had not been exercised since a widespread expulsion of aliens in 1575 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.¹⁹ Subsequently, Elizabeth ordered the deportation of a group of 'blackamoors' although it is not clear if this was racial prejudice or because they were Spanish subjects.²⁰

Reaction to the Bill was much as might be expected with newspapers like *The Times*, which supported the government and were often financed by it, being wildly enthusiastic. The *Public Advertiser* advised anyone doubting the need for the legislation to 'observe on the mysterious conduct of several Foreigners or listen to their conversations in Coffee-houses and public places'.²¹ In contrast, the opposition *Morning Post* of 11 January commented:

Government are (s)eized by the representation of Treasury SPIES, who to show themselves deserving their guinea a-week are externally obtruding lists on their employers, of rebels, traitors and Sans Culottes, who disturb the peace of the country.²²

The government's fear of insurrection was almost certainly excessive since in the early 1790s most members of bodies such as the London Corresponding Society, the Society for Constitutional Information and the Sheffield Constitutional Society sought reform rather than revolution.²³ It is necessary to be cautious, however, in accepting the opposition suggestion that revolutionary conspiracies were simply a government invention. As the summer progressed, the government was receiving information that several newly arrived

¹⁸ Sir Edward Clarke, *A Treatise upon the Law of Extradition* (London: Stevens and Haynes, 1903), p. 25. A serjeant was a barrister appointed to advise the government.

¹⁹ Cedric Thornberry, 'Dr Soblen and the Alien Law of the United Kingdom', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 12:2, April 1963, pp. 414-474, p. 416.

²⁰ Emily Bartels, 'Too many blackamoors: Deportation, discrimination and Elizabeth I', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 46:2, Spring 2006, pp. 305-322.

²¹ Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-1793* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 185 quoting the *Public Advertiser*, 5 January 1793.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

²³ Clive Emsley, 'The London "Insurrection" of December 1792: Fact, Fiction or Fantasy?', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 17:2, Spring 1978, pp. 66-86. pp. 68-69.

French émigrés were revolutionaries.²⁴ Reports of impending revolution in England by French Royalists such as Dubois de Longchamp on 30 November and 1 December were taken far more seriously than earlier in 1792.²⁵ One of Grenville's agents in Paris reported that, according to the French press, insurrection in London was imminent. It would appear that the government genuinely believed that the intelligence indicated real risks to the stability of the country. Ministers who had lived through the Gordon riots of 1780 understood how popular unrest could rapidly grow and become a serious threat. In late November the government strengthened the fortifications of the Tower of London and brought hundreds of troops into London. On 1 December 1792, the government was so concerned that it mobilised the militia of ten counties, noting the risk posed by 'evil disposed persons within this kingdom acting in concert with persons in foreign parts'.²⁶ It may well be that this fear had diminished as early as the end of December. The creation of *The Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers* by John Reeves in November 1792 was rapidly copied throughout the country, and changed the atmosphere by rallying loyalist supporters of the existing regime and enhancing government confidence. Certainly, as early as 4 January 1793, Pitt in debate in the House of Commons was referring to the evidence of insurrection as 'hearsay'.²⁷ It would appear, however, that in November and early December the government had genuinely believed in the risk of imminent insurrection.

The extent of the concern experienced by the government in December 1792 can be seen in the speed with which that the Alien Act was passed with very little thought given as to how it was to be administered. Whilst subsequently there would be scrupulous respect for the legislation, fear of revolution meant that on its introduction, the government was prepared to act ruthlessly. Nepean of the Home Office wrote in December 1792 to a magistrate in Dartford reminding him to treat aliens civilly, but he also sent Patrick McManus, one of the police officers guarding the king, to Chelmsford to examine foreigners and, if necessary, to take extreme measures. Nepean wrote to the Reverend Philip Salter, a magistrate in Essex:

²⁴ Abstract from reports 20 September 1792 *HO1/1* un-foliated.

²⁵ Emsley, 'The London Insurrection of December 1792', p.74. It may well be that Longchamp was trying to obtain funds or to push Britain into war with France. Again, for a similar more recent example, see the 'intelligence' provided by 'Curveball' prior to the Second Gulf War, *The Guardian*, 15 February 2011.

²⁶ Evans, *Debating the Revolution*, p. 20. Emsley, 'The London "Insurrection" of December 1792', p. 66.

²⁷ Emsley, 'The London Insurrection of December 1792', p. 85.

that in the performance of this service some steps may be necessary to take not exactly justifiable by Law, but in times like the present, when dangerous incendiaries are daily resorting to this Country, avowedly with mischievous intentions, it is not necessary to be very nice. If therefore in giving your assistance in this business any prosecution should be commenced against you for any thing of that sort, I am authorized to assure you of the fullest support from Government on any occasion.²⁸

It is also useful to put the Alien Act of 1793 into an international context. The American reaction to the French Revolution was remarkably similar to the British. In both countries, propertied and religious elites felt threatened by the message of the French Revolution. Additionally, French harassment of American shipping following the 1795 American-British Jay Treaty, brought the United States and France to the brink of war. In 1798 John Adams and the Federalists passed the Naturalization Act, which extended the American residence requirement to apply for citizenship from five to fourteen years; the Alien Friends Act, which enabled the government to deport aliens even during peacetime but only those who were considered a risk to the United States; the Alien Enemies Act, which enabled the government to imprison or deport any alien from a hostile nation during wartime; and the Sedition Act which enabled fines and imprisonment for false or scandalous remarks against the government or its officers.²⁹

The 1793 Alien Act was a remarkably comprehensive piece of legislation. It contained a substantial number of provisions requiring information to be provided. Inter alia these included the requirement for every ship master to declare in writing if there were any aliens on board and, if so, their names, rank and occupation. The penalty for failure to comply was the substantial sum of ten pounds with half payable to any informer. Each alien on arriving at a port had to complete a form for a local customs' official or Mayor or Justice of the Peace. These were sent to the Alien Office in London and permission sent back to the port to issue the alien with a passport to travel on to his proposed destination. The alien had to make a further declaration to a magistrate on arrival in his eventual town of residence receiving yet another form that he had made the declaration. Subsequently, an alien had to obtain specific permission to move towns. Local officials could demand

²⁸ National Archives, *HO 42/23/16 folios 43-44*.

²⁹ Whilst the other measures were repealed in 1800, the Alien Enemies Act remained on the statute book and was used by the government in 1941 to incarcerate Japanese, German and Italian citizens. Barry Wright, 'Migration, Radicalism and State Security: Legislative Initiatives in the Canadas and the United States c. 1794-1804', *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 16 :1, April 2002, pp. 48-60.

information from householders about aliens living with them.³⁰ Above all, the Act granted the Crown the power to deport aliens without any provision for legal challenge.³¹ After the Bill received Royal Assent on 22 January, an Order in Council was issued requiring aliens to apply for specific permission to be within ten miles of the coast or more than fifty miles from London.³² At least fifteen different forms were published to enable the information requirements set out in the Act to be fulfilled.³³

The administrative implementation of the Alien Act became the responsibility of the Home Office, which had been created in 1782 out of the old 'Southern Department'.³⁴ Its administration, which was the responsibility of the newly created Alien Office, is put into context if we note that the Home Office in 1792 was a tiny organisation consisting of fewer than two dozen individuals.³⁵ The Home Office, therefore, had very limited resources and often limited information. For instance, in September 1793, riots in Bristol during which fifteen people died were unknown to the Home Office until rumours circulated in London, which the Home Office then queried with local magistrates.³⁶ The Alien Office, simply consisting of William Huskisson, who held the title of Superintendent of Aliens, and two clerks, was created as an afterthought to the Act. The Alien Office made, however, extensive use of the Westminster Police Act of 1792, which had established seven extra offices in London, in addition to the existing Bow and City offices, with the Lord Chancellor having the power to appoint three salaried magistrates to each office.³⁷ With no permanent police force outside London, it looked to local magistrates to provide assistance. Moreover, it took over the Foreign Letters Office, which had been created to fight Jacobitism, with the responsibility to open, copy and reseal letters to foreign embassies.³⁸ The Post Office also provided another resource, namely a network of five hundred Post

³⁰ Alien Act 1793 available on <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/search/basic/hcppbasicsearch>.

³¹ J.R. Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation under the Alien Act, 1793-1826, in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *Radicalism and Reform in Britain* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), pp. 146-169, p. 150.

³² *London Gazette*, issue 13499, 2 February 1793, pp. 97-98.

³³ Examples of many of these forms can be found in HO1/2 and HO1/3.

³⁴ Nelson, *The Home Office 1782-1801*, Preface p. vii. The Southern Department was responsible for relations with states in 'Southern' Europe which included France, Spain, Ottoman Empire, as compared to countries such as Germany, Sweden and Russia which fell into the Northern Department. In 1782 government departments were reorganized into the Home Office and Foreign Office.

³⁵ Clive Emsley, 'The Home Office and Its Sources of Information and Investigation 1791-1801', *The English Historical Review*, Vol 94:932, July 1979, pp. 532-561, p. 532. R.R. Nelson, *The Home Office 1782-1801*, p. 46.

³⁶ Emsley, 'The Home Office', p. 537.

³⁷ Elizabeth Sparrow, 'The Alien Office 1792-1806', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33:2, June 1990, pp. 361-384, p. 363.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

Office deputies across the country who were encouraged to provide information.³⁹ The registration of aliens at ports was initially conducted by customs officials supported by local Justices of the Peace and Mayors.

As well as being responsible for the monitoring of aliens, the Alien Office was also involved in the monitoring of domestic subversion and maintaining a central registry of records about suspected individuals.⁴⁰ William Wickham, who was made Superintendent of Aliens in 1794, played a role both in the implementation of the Act and in investigating domestic revolutionaries. On 6 May 1794, just days before they were arrested, Wickham wrote a report on the leaders of the London Corresponding Society.⁴¹ The office also monitored the Society of United Irishmen, which led to the arrest of much of its executive.⁴² Moreover, certain foreign intelligence operations including attempts to encourage counter-revolution in France, were directed by Wickham and the 'Inner Office' of the Alien Office.⁴³

The government was determined to implement the Alien Act rigorously. The Duke of Portland, who became the Home Secretary in 1794, instructed Wickham that he should take 'any proper means of being well informed of the descriptions and abodes of all foreigners'.⁴⁴ A major effort was made to ensure that the Alien Act was comprehensively enforced through detailed registration. Local officials were reprimanded if the standard forms distributed by the Alien Office were not correctly completed. By an Order in Council of 23 March 1796, which was sent to the magistrates of all major ports, ship captains were only to be permitted to disembark aliens at certain ports. The magistrates at these ports subsequently became the focus of more detailed instructions. The Order was repealed with the peace of Amiens but then reissued 12 August 1803. The permissible ports varied slightly over time but included Gravesend, Harwich, Yarmouth, Dover and Southampton.⁴⁵ Depending on the pressure of work, inspectors of the Alien Office were appointed to these ports to assist customs officials. Suspicious aliens were escorted to

³⁹ Emsley, 'The Home Office', p. 537.

⁴⁰ Michael Durey, 'William Wickham, the Christ Church Connection and the Rise and Fall of the Security Service in Britain 1793-1801', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 121:492, June 2006, pp. 714-745, p. 726.

⁴¹ Durey, 'William Wickham', p. 730.

⁴² Sparrow, 'The Alien Office', p. 374.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 367-373.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁴⁵ National Archives, *HO5/1/399*, 26 March 1796. National Archives, *HO5/2/57*, 18 July 1796. National Archives, *HO5/14/63*, 28 August 1810.

London and surrendered to magistrates in Great Marlborough Street.⁴⁶ Aliens who had been given permission to remain continued to be monitored. In 1796, London residents had to furnish details of all aliens resident with them.⁴⁷ A notice inserted by the Manchester constables into *Wheeler's Morning Chronicle* of 3 December 1803 reminded local innkeepers that the failure to check the credentials of any alien lodger made the innkeeper liable to a ten pound fine.⁴⁸ The Act was still being enforced rigorously in January 1812, when all aliens in Manchester and Salford were called before the magistrates to produce their certificates of residence. Any householders or anyone else with whom aliens resided were also required to attend at the same time to provide the names of their alien lodgers.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding Nepean's correspondence with Salter, one of the striking features of the Act's administration was the Alien Office's respect for the law. A copy of the Act was sent to local mayors who were frequently admonished and sent further copies if they overstepped its provisions.⁵⁰ The Act provided for aliens to receive copies of a booklet which was to be printed in different languages informing them of their responsibilities under the law.⁵¹ This legalistic approach became even more pronounced once John Reeves became Superintendent of Aliens in 1803. He repeatedly wrote internal memoranda setting out areas in which he felt that the Alien Act was being overstepped. Reeves even argued that Americans born before independence should not be treated as aliens since they had been born in a royal dominion and so still owed a duty of allegiance to the crown.⁵² Despite his fervent opposition to the French Revolution and involvement in the formation in 1792 of Loyalist Associations, Reeves proved a highly effective Superintendent who was frequently sympathetic to aliens and received praise in 1816 from Whigs such as Brougham and Holland who held very different political views from his own.⁵³

⁴⁶ Nelson, *The Home Office 1782-1801*, p. 127.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴⁸ Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Distribution to Cornwall, National Archives *HO42/24/49*, 12 January 1793. Distribution to Mayor of Harwich, National Archives, *HO5/1/314*, 31 December 1795.

⁵¹ National Archives, *HO5/1/31*, 25 September 1794.

⁵² On John Reeves legalistic approach see Patrick Polden, 'John Reeves as Superintendent of aliens, 1803-14', *The Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 3:1, 1982, pp. 31-51.

⁵³ *The Parliamentary Debates from the year 1803 to the Present Time*, series 2 Volume XXXIV comprising the Period from Twenty Sixth day of April, to the Second Day of July 1816 (London: Hansard, 1816), cols. 971 and 1080.

Reeves was also concerned about the practicality of proposed measures. When he was asked to restrict the number of aliens with permission to visit the coast in the summer, he pointed out that some of them would simply go without permission given the lack of reliable magistrates to arrest them. Reeves, reflecting the Home Office's responsibility for monitoring radical threats, felt that in such circumstances the Alien Office then 'loses the advantages which is the last it ought to be deprived of, that of knowing where an alien resides and where they are to be looked for'.⁵⁴

The Act was originally intended as a short-term measure to be renewed annually and it was not renewed for a year following the peace treaty of Amiens in 1802. However, the Act only lapsed finally in 1826, providing however, an excellent example of how the way in which short-term measures taken in particular circumstances can be abused and result in long-term consequences. The Act, therefore, had long-term implications both for the legal rights of aliens in the country and the process under which naturalization was possible. In April 1798, the House of Lords decided that every petitioner for naturalization would have to produce a certificate issued by the Home Office noting the alien's compliance with the Alien Act and confirming that the Home Office supported the applicant's naturalization.⁵⁵ For the first time, the Home Office was the effective gatekeeper of the naturalization process.⁵⁶ The Home Office's control of naturalization would be confirmed in the 1844 Naturalization Act, but it was under the Alien Act that its role was first effectively established.⁵⁷ Any suspicion of radical sympathies led to the refusal of a naturalization application. Catholics in any case could not be naturalized until the 1829 Catholic Relief Act.⁵⁸ This hostility to naturalization actually grew over time. In particular, Viscount Sidmouth, who became Home Secretary in June 1812 in the midst of social unrest in Britain, was concerned that many of the refugees from the Continent were radicals and this concern only grew with the restoration of authoritarian monarchs post 1815. Between 1810 and 1819, only 85 foreigners were naturalized, 119 cases rejected, and 20 cases were not pursued. In comparison, from 1796-1800 there were 105 naturalizations and from 1714-1789 not a single application had been refused.⁵⁹ To make matters even more complicated, Sidmouth's approach was often arbitrary. Among aliens, he was only favourable to applications from wealthy individuals requiring naturalization as they were seeking to buy

⁵⁴ National Archives, *HO 5/15/58*, 27 December 1811.

⁵⁵ Beerbühl, 'British Nationality Policy', p. 58.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63 and 65.

property to pass on to their children. Wealth alone was not, however, sufficient for him to justify naturalisation. In 1818, it was realized that under the Bank of Scotland's charter anyone buying shares worth eighty pounds in the bank could become a Scottish, and hence a British, subject. Sidmouth rushed through emergency legislation to close the loophole but was unable to make it retroactive, and one hundred and fourteen individuals, many of them wealthy merchants, retained British naturalization.⁶⁰

Whilst naturalization became increasingly difficult, in contrast, the government used the power of deportation sparingly. According to Dinwiddy, in the 1790s there were fifty deportations per year — largely aimed at French immigrants suspected either of spying or having radical views— but deportations fell dramatically with the end of war and there were only seventeen from 1816-1826.⁶¹ *The Times* of 3 May 1816 published a table of the number of aliens 'sent out of the kingdom' under the Alien Act showing 441 individuals from 1793-1801 and 211 from 1802-1815.⁶² *The Times* did not definitively state its source but clearly implied the numbers came directly from Alien Office records. Not surprisingly, the largest number of deportations in any year was 118 in 1798 when Britain feared imminent invasion. On the basis of these estimates, given that a considerable number of Frenchmen were deported including individuals such as Talleyrand and Beaumarchais, relatively few other aliens could have been deported, although the government in some cases did deport unwanted destitute aliens.⁶³ After the appointment of John Reeves as the Superintendent of the Alien Office in 1803, however, deportations of aliens who were not radicals, even after prison sentences, became very rare. Reeves stated in 1805 that deportation should only be used in a situation that 'concerns the safety of his Majesty's Crown and Government, which was the only reason for Parliament granting the extraordinary powers that belong to the Alien Regulations'.⁶⁴

One form of abuse of the government's power of deportation may have been the treatment of creditors. In 1812 the political blackmailer Davenport Sedley was arrested. Intriguingly, the list of Sedley's private papers also includes numerous items accusing the Prince of Wales and his brothers of defaulting on bills and acting dishonourably in

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶¹ Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation', p. 163.

⁶² *The Times*, 3 May 1816.

⁶³ On the identity of individuals deported either for their political views or out of concern that they were spying, see Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation', pp. 195-204.

⁶⁴ John Reeves to the Magistrates of Thames Police Office, National Archives, *HO 5/9/368*, 4 January 1805. National Archives, *HO 5/10/366-368*, 14 May 1806.

connection with loans taken out in 1789 from Abraham and Simon Boas, Jewish Dutch financiers, and in 1790 from the French financier, de Beaune. The debts had apparently been bought up by fleeing French refugees seeking a way of moving assets to England. Moreover, Sedley's document accused the Prince of Wales and his brothers 'of causing foreigners, who applied for the payment of shares which they held under de Beaune's bond, to be sent out of the country under the Alien Act'.⁶⁵ The accuracy of the charge is hard to confirm. In 1858, however, Lord Brougham, the former Lord Chancellor, commented in the House of Lords, without referring to any specific case, that the Alien Act had been abused in this manner, leading to the death in France of bill holders who had been deported.⁶⁶

The extent to which Jews were deported is uncertain. The Act did not apply just to French refugees but to aliens in general. As discussed in the Introduction, Jews born in Britain were British subjects, but first-generation Jewish immigrants were aliens. It is unclear how many of the 20,000 strong Jewish community were immigrants and hence aliens, but it would have been a considerable number given the extent of Jewish immigration in the 1770s and 1780s. The 1793 Alien Act substantially restricted further Jewish immigration to England but in other respects the impact was limited. The 1793 Act did not apply to aliens who had arrived before January 1792 since they were not suspected of being radical revolutionaries. Moreover, merchants, who comprised the vast majority of Jews arriving, had to register on arrival but were given general licences to move around the country without obtaining new permission each time they moved.⁶⁷

The largest number of copied letters held in the outgoing correspondence files of the Alien Office (HO5) relate to permission from the Alien Office for newly arrived aliens to travel to London. These generally record in the margins the names of the individuals who had landed at a port although occasionally the letters referred to an attached list that has not been retained in the archives. Unfortunately, it may well be that these lists, indicated a far larger number of aliens on a boat making any accurate estimate impossible. From the mid-1790s, when the number of French refugees declined, the proportion of Jewish merchants among the total number of alien arrivals is striking. Many of the arriving

⁶⁵ National Archives, *TS 11/1071/5075*. Robert Huish, *Memoirs of George the Fourth* (London: Thomas Kelly, 1831), Vol. 1, pp. 137-145 and 308-316. Given Huish's hostility to George IV, this cannot be treated as an objective source.

⁶⁶ Thornberry, 'Dr Soblen and the Alien Law', p. 417.

⁶⁷ *Alien Act 1793*, clauses D, E and F.

merchants can be considered Jewish on the basis of their names. Obviously, this is not a fully scientific method, but it seems reasonable to assume that a merchant arriving from Amsterdam with a Jewish sounding name was in fact Jewish.⁶⁸ In some cases this is known to be an accurate supposition. For instance, in May 1801, Salomon Rothschild temporarily joined his brother Nathan and is simply described as ‘a merchant from Frankfurt’.⁶⁹ Very frequently, however, it is more clear-cut as Jews were described as ‘Jew merchants’ or ‘Jew dealers’. It is hard to generalise given that the arrival numbers varied depending on the progress of the war, trade and the seasons. Purely as an indication, in 1799 up to 70 aliens arrived per week in the summer months with about twenty per cent being Jewish. Perhaps not surprisingly, whilst there are examples of merchants being accompanied by their wives, very few women are on the lists. The arrival of large numbers of Jewish merchants was not unexpected given that the outbreak of war created commercial opportunities and the Jews were seen as integral to trade. As Burke described them during the St. Eustatius affair:

From the east to the west, from one end of the world to the other, they are scattered and connected; the links of communication in the mercantile chain.⁷⁰

In 1798, the Alien Act was substantially amended. Interestingly presaging future developments in immigration legislation, the new Act, unlike the 1793 Act, specifically referred to the concept of asylum noting that ‘refuge and asylum, which on grounds of humanity and justice, have been granted to persons flying from tyranny and oppression’. However, the 1798 Act strengthened previous provisions, and in particular no longer contained the 1793 exclusions either for aliens who had arrived prior to 1792 or for merchants.⁷¹ Despite the additional need for licences to move around the country, Jewish merchants continued to arrive although numbers varied according to the state of the war. Most noticeably, review of the Alien Office records indicates that the number of aliens arriving at ports, including Jewish merchants, diminished once trade was reduced in 1806, as the imposition of a British trade blockade and the retaliatory Napoleonic Continental System gradually took effect. Nevertheless, trade was able to continue to some extent with goods smuggled via Gothenburg and Heligoland.⁷²

⁶⁸ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), Appendix pp. 297-300, uses names to estimate the number of Jewish criminals also describes the problems with this methodology.

⁶⁹ National Archives, *HO5/6/388*, 8 May 1801. National Archives *HO5/6/390*, 11 May 1801.

⁷⁰ *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XXII, cols., 223-225.

⁷¹ Introduction to the *Alien Act of 1798*, sub-clauses 4, 5 and 10.

⁷² Heligoland is an island off the German coast captured by the British in 1807. Sweden was involved in the war during certain years, but the French proved unable to blockade Gothenburg effectively.

The 1798 Act's provision that brought aliens who had arrived prior to 1792 under the Act's restrictions caused considerable confusion. For instance, the Mayor of Ipswich queried if the amended legislation applied to long-term Jewish communities. William Wickham wrote to him making it clear that 'alien Jews are like all other Aliens (not specifically excepted) within all its provisions'. He implied, however, that this was essentially a bureaucratic hurdle and that licences would be immediately issued once the aliens had made the declarations and provided their details as set out in the Act and sent them to the Alien Office.⁷³ Generally, settled aliens, who had arrived before the outbreak of the war and had jobs, were allowed to continue to reside where they were. As John Reeves later wrote:

I confine what I have said to travelling aliens only.... I take for granted you have no complaint to make, as to the number or character of those aliens, who have their first abode in those parts, and who could not be removed without ruin, or great inconvenience to them, and their families.⁷⁴

Moreover, protestations of loyalty by the Jewish community had an impact. Whilst previously immigrants had to register with a magistrate, in December 1803, Reeves wrote on behalf of Charles Yorke, the Home Secretary, to John Perring, Lord Mayor of London, instructing him that in future any alien required to make a declaration under the Alien Act should do so at the Alien Office itself. However, if they were Jews, the declaration should be made 'to the Spanish and Porteguse [sic], or the Dutch and German Synagogues respectively'.⁷⁵ The responsibility was taken seriously. According to Picciotto's *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* written in 1875 'the Sephardi authorities took stringent steps to induce all foreign Jews, except those who had become free denizens, to attend the vestry room for the purposes of registration'.⁷⁶

It has been frequently argued that Jews suffered under the Alien Act and were expelled, although only limited primary evidence has been offered in support of this view. Picciotto noted that the expulsion of Jews was 'by no means rare, and pressed heavily on the community, which had to find funds for the departure from England of these aliens,

⁷³ National Archives, *HO 5/4/78*, 10 August 1798.

⁷⁴ National Archives, *HO 5/10/123-124*, 19 July 1805.

⁷⁵ National Archives, *HO 42/69/252*, 23 December 1803.

⁷⁶ James Picciotto, in Israel Finestein (ed.), *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (London: Socino Press, 1956 [orig. 1875]), p. 243.

mostly men of limited means'.⁷⁷ Hyamson noted that 'poor foreign Jews were frequently expelled from the country on the grounds of being undesirable'.⁷⁸ Dorothy George also referred to Jews being 'frequently' expelled.⁷⁹ Rather more cautiously Todd Endelman simply records that:

In Manchester, Portsmouth, and possibly in other towns, "suspicious" Jewish pedlars of foreign birth were deported under provisions of the Alien Act of 1793.⁸⁰

Jews certainly *were* deported. For instance, Bill Williams notes the deportation of Wolf Polack, a pawnbroker, from Shudehill, Manchester in February 1800.⁸¹ The Alien Office wrote to magistrates in Sussex on 27 July 1798 noting that an alien with the name of Benjamin Moses in Horsham Gaol for travelling without a passport should be expelled.⁸² Furthermore, the Alien Office instructed the Mayor of Hull in April 1799 that it would pay for the deportation of Lewis Vogel, who judging by his name may have been Jewish.⁸³ Similarly, it instructed the Mayor of Portsmouth that Moses Hart should pay for his own deportation if he had funds to pay.⁸⁴ In August 1800, the Alien Office ordered that three Jews in Sheerness without the proper licences should be taken to Gravesend and expelled, with the Alien Office meeting any costs arising.⁸⁵ In August 1801, the Alien Office wrote to Gravesend ordering the deportation at the expense of the Alien Office of Jacob Israel, Moses Simon, Solomon Isaacs and Jonas Levy.⁸⁶

There are other hints at what might have been the deportation of Jews. Dinwiddy notes that in April 1797, the Duke of Portland had received many complaints from magistrates about foreigners 'who under a pretence of selling prints, images &c. wander over the country either defrauding the people, or in many instances dispersing seditious & improper publications'.⁸⁷ In the following month 95 Italian pedlars were deported and the British ambassador at Hamburg was later instructed not to give passports to such pedlars as there were strong reasons to suspect that there had been 'a very improper and dangerous

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 212.

⁷⁸ Albert Hyamson, *A History of The Jews in England* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), p. 303.

⁷⁹ M Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1925), p. 128.

⁸⁰ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 276.

⁸¹ Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, p.18.

⁸² National Archives, *HO5/4/58*, 27 July 1798.

⁸³ National Archives, *HO5/4/322*, 3 April 1799.

⁸⁴ National Archives, *HO5/4/67*, 2 August 1798.

⁸⁵ National Archives, *HO 5/6/1*, 12 August 1800.

⁸⁶ National Archives, *HO5/7/56*, 28 August 1801.

⁸⁷ Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation', p. 161.

correspondence'.⁸⁸ Italian pedlars could have included Jews. Hardly any of the alien lists have survived, but the Bevis Marks Alien Registration list has twenty-seven Italian Jewish immigrants of the one hundred and thirty-eight names in total, although given that these were Sephardi Jews it is less likely but far from impossible that these were pedlars.⁸⁹ It is, however, more likely that Portland would have referred to the group as 'Jews' in the circumstances if they were so. Moreover, there were non-Jewish Italian pedlars in the Alien Office records. Much later in 1805, John Reeves noted:

These probably were the Jews or Italians he speaks [of]; if so, I can vouch for it, they had no permission to be within ten miles of the Coast, unless it was perhaps in some cases very particular circumstances, and those for a very short period of time, as to collect debts, or to transact some other simple business.⁹⁰

Whilst the Act did not specifically mention pedlars, there was a recognition in the Alien Office of their economic role. Following the collapse of the peace introduced by the Treaty of Amiens, the Alien Office produced an internal note on its implementation. This specifically allowed individuals with a licence for hawking and peddling —many of whom were Jews—to obtain an alien passport enabling them to travel freely around the country with the exception of coastal areas and dockyards and even this restriction could be lifted if it was felt there were specific reasons to allow it.⁹¹ In October 1806, for example, Mordercai Levy, a pedlar in rhubarb and spices, was permitted to go to Portsmouth for one month to sell his goods.⁹²

Moreover, as Tony Kushner and Todd Endelman have suggested, Jews may have been deported from Portsmouth.⁹³ William Pitt, the Garrison Commander in Portsmouth, wrote to the Secretary of War in response to an approach by local Jews to join the militia in 1798:

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ V. Lipman, 'Sephardi and other Immigrants in England in the Eighteenth Century', *Migration and Settlement: Papers on Anglo-American Jewish History*, Rapporteur Dr Aubrey Newman (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1971), p. 43.

⁹⁰ National Archives, *HO 5/10/123*.

⁹¹ National Archives, *HO1/4* un-foliated, November 1803.

⁹² National Archives, *HO5/10/25-26*, 4 October 1806.

⁹³ Tony Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 136. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 275.

I discouraged it on account of there being a great number of suspicious itinerant Jews at that time in the Town of Portsmouth, all of whom have since been found out and removed from hence by the activity and vigilance of the Magistrates.⁹⁴

However, it may be, given the government's reluctance to allow aliens in strategic sea ports, that the Jews were simply required to leave Portsmouth rather than being deported from the country. In September 1795, the Alien Office wrote to the Mayor of Dover noting that it had become aware of a number of aliens in the town without the appropriate licence and that they had to move from the coast.⁹⁵ John King of the Alien Office wrote a very similar letter in November 1795 to the Collector of Deal.⁹⁶ In both cases, the aliens were required to move but there was no suggestion they should be deported. Given its military implications, the ten-mile exclusion zone from the coast was the issue which led to the most concern and debate within government, particularly concerning who was responsible for its enforcement. In September 1800, King corresponded with Colonel Elford of the South Devon Militia who had complained about the presence of aliens in Plymouth.⁹⁷ In July 1805, Reeves sent a strongly worded letter to General Sir David Dundas in response to a complaint from General Sir John Moore that aliens were breeching this provision. Reeves was keen to stress that enforcement of this provision was not his responsibility at the Alien Office, but that responsibility fell to the local mayors and magistrates and 'I may add to the Military offices who make this (very) complaint'.⁹⁸

There is, however, no evidence to support the view that Jews were deported in any significant numbers, particularly when compared to the substantial number of Jewish aliens who arrived in England in the period or were already resident. On 23 August 1808, the Alien Office wrote to the ambassador in Gothenburg advising him that he should not give passports to those already deported and provided the ambassador with a list of those deported since 16 June 1807. Only eleven people had been deported over the fourteen months and these seem to have included only one Jew, Moses Bernhard, a 'Jew dealer' from Prussia.⁹⁹ This both supports the evidence that there were a limited total number of expulsions after the turn of the century and the view that only limited numbers of Jews were involved. The suggestion that the Jewish community had to fund the deportation

⁹⁴ National Archives, *HO50/43*, 1 June 1798.

⁹⁵ National Archives, *HO5/1/252*, 3 September 1795.

⁹⁶ National Archives, *HO5/1/297*, 28 November 1795. Note that John King of the Alien Office is in no way related or connected to John King the radical Jew.

⁹⁷ National Archives, *HO5/6/71*, 30 September 1800.

⁹⁸ National Archives, *HO 5/10/121*, 19 July 1805.

⁹⁹ National Archives, *HO5/12/238*, 23 August 1808.

seems dubious. Generally, the cost of expulsion was paid by the individual being deported or, if he had insufficient funds, by the Alien Office. It is possible that in some cases the community volunteered to pay in order to foster local goodwill, but this seems unlikely given that the community refused to defend even Jews born in England who were accused of criminality, as it did not want to be associated with them.

As we have noted, the Alien Office took a legalistic approach to the Act, but it did have areas of discretion and it was influenced by individuals of good standing who vouched for an alien. References for French émigrés were of enormous importance. This applied to Jews as well. For instance, Gabriel Emmanuel was first arrested but the Alien Office instructed the Mayor of Deal that he could be given a passport if he could get ‘a respectable inhabitant to vouch for him’.¹⁰⁰ An extreme example is Moses Hart who was twice deported in 1798 but given a passport to return in 1802 as ‘strong representation’ had been made on his behalf.¹⁰¹ On 18 October 1798, instructions were given to deport five Jews in Hull, but these were countermanded by a letter signed by the Home Secretary himself, the Duke of Portland, saying that they could stay given that they had received favourable representations from the Mayor of Hull.¹⁰² Lazarus Jacobs, who had been found in Portsmouth in January 1807 without a licence, was permitted to apply for one and remain as the Mayor had accepted that he was there on genuine business.¹⁰³ Requests were, however, turned down when they were in breach of policy. Abraham and Benjamin Goldsmid, the Jewish financiers and philanthropists, had their request for a passport for an individual to go to Jamaica rejected on the grounds that only people with an estate in Jamaica were being allowed to travel there.¹⁰⁴ Given the apologetic tone of the letter, there is no reason to believe that the refusal was because the brothers were Jewish, and ten weeks later the Alien Office made special arrangements with the General Post Office for the brothers to be able to write to France and Holland.¹⁰⁵ In May 1801, the Alien Office wrote to Carlton House turning down a request from the Prince of Wales for a French lady and her daughter returning to France to use the port of Dover since aliens were not allowed to

¹⁰⁰ National Archives, *HO 5/4/176*, 8 November 1798. National Archives, *HO 5/4/224*, 28 November 1798.

¹⁰¹ National Archives, *HO5/4/67*, 2 August 1798. National Archives, *HO5/4/74*, 8 August 1798. National Archives, *HO5/7/296*, 1 March 1802.

¹⁰² National Archives, *HO5/4/237*, 24 December 1798.

¹⁰³ National Archives, *HO5/11/137*, 31 January 1807.

¹⁰⁴ National Archives, *HO5/6/259*, 22 January 1801.

¹⁰⁵ National Archives, *HO 5/6/353*, 4 April 1801.

depart from Dover.¹⁰⁶ References from those with social standing and wealth, therefore, influenced many requests but policy and procedure could on occasion override such representations.

Generally, whilst the Home Office papers contain a substantial number of letters from local officials about ‘suspicious’ Frenchmen, there are few about Jews, perhaps underlining the view that Jewish aliens were not generally suspected of being involved in radical politics. There is a reference in a letter from the Alien Office to the Customs House at Gravesend on the need to translate the Hebrew papers of an unnamed Jew.¹⁰⁷ On 6 January 1797, John King of the Alien Office wrote a letter to the Collector of Customs at Dover, Gravesend, Norwich, Yarmouth and Hull requesting extra vigilance since forged bank notes were being smuggled into the country from Hamburg. The letter notes that ‘the agents are chiefly Jews, but any passengers having such notes in his possession should be apprehended’.¹⁰⁸ The Alien Office ordered the Mayor of Yarmouth in September 1801 to immediately send to Hamburg a Prussian Jew name Benjamin Samuel ‘of very suspicious character’. There was also a detailed investigation of Isaac Spyers of Gosport. It was suggested that he had been a French soldier and that he had misleadingly described himself as a native of Frankfurt, failing to reveal that he had left Germany as a small child and subsequently spent his life in France. His original licence had been supported by Mr Goldsmid, presumably Abraham or Benjamin Goldsmid, who even visited Gosport to support him.¹⁰⁹ It would appear that he was not deported since Isaac Spiers (Heksher Izaac Spyers), a coin and bullion trader in Gosport, was buying coins for Nathan Rothschild in 1809-1810.¹¹⁰

There is, however, no evidence of a wider interest in the Alien Office in Jews. In September 1798, Wickham learnt that Mazzinghi, the Alien Office’s inspector at Gravesend, had been accepting bribes from French agents to allow them to travel to London without the necessary paperwork. Mazzinghi was arrested and prosecuted for treason and corruption. The files include a report from a government agent, Mr Henry

¹⁰⁶ National Archives, *HO5/6/361*, 2 May 1803.

¹⁰⁷ National Archives, *HO5/2/33*, 23, May 1796.

¹⁰⁸ National Archives, *HO42/40/399*, 6 January 1797.

¹⁰⁹ National Archives, *HO1/4* un-foliated; correspondence between Reverend Bingham of Gosport and the Alien Office dated 25 June, 1 August, 10 August and 12 September 1803.

¹¹⁰ Herbert Kaplan, *Nathan Mayer Rothschild and the Creation of a Dynasty: The Critical Years 1806-1816* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 57 and 64.

Lee, who interrogated a Mr Furtado on the issue.¹¹¹ According to Furtado, Jews had in the past bribed Mazzinghi and that there was some unspecified connection between the Sephardi community in London and the French, although Furtado dismissed any suggestion that Jews in England were interested in the possibility that Napoleon's invasion of Egypt might lead to their return to the Holy Land.¹¹² The precise details of the case are far from clear and are complicated by the connections to spying and double agents, but there is no evidence in the extant files that the reference to Jews in Lee's report was followed up, perhaps again indicating the Alien Office's lack of interest in the Jewish community.

The Alien Act may have caused only a relatively small number of Jews to be deported, but Jewish immigration to England came to a virtual standstill in the period. Immigration was restricted by the Alien Act, but it was also heavily influenced by the practical difficulties of moving during wartime and in due course the decline in trade. The reform of the legal position of Jews in parts of Europe may also in some cases have reduced the pressure to emigrate. The total size of the Jewish community in England was obviously not simply determined by immigration, which had been the driving force for its increase in the 1770s and 1780s, but also by such factors as conversions to Christianity, birth and death rates. The net impact was, however, that from the 1790s growth declined and the Jewish community was roughly similar in size as late as the 1820s.¹¹³

The Alien Act also underscored questions about the Jews' status as a separate nation. John Reeves indicated that he still saw them as a separate community. In 1806 the Secretary of State, Earl Spencer, attempted to introduce a requirement for enemy aliens to obtain passports from a British ambassador who would then seek the approval of the Alien Office in London before the alien embarked on a ship for the United Kingdom. This was opposed by Reeves on several grounds including that it was impractical to operate. The proposal would have required, for example, an alien in France or Spain to apply for a passport from the British ambassador in Denmark and who would then have to seek

¹¹¹ It is speculative, but Furtado may have been Isaac Furtado who together with his children converted to Christianity in 1799. Edgar Roy Samuel, 'Anglo-Jewish Notaries and Scriveners', *Transactions of the Jewish Historic Society of England*, Vol. 17, 1951, pp. 113-159, pp. 134-135.

¹¹² National Archives, PC1/43/150, 14 November 1798.

¹¹³ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 173 and 341 ft. 7. Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis Containing a Detail of the Various Crimes and Misdemeanours By which Public and Private Property and Security are, at present injured and endangered: and Suggesting Remedies or their Prevention* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1800), pp. 120-121.

permission from the Alien Office in London prior to the individual's arrival in the country. He moved on to discuss the issue of Jews applying for passports and pointing out that the Jews:

can hardly be said to have a Country.....they are a community by themselves; they rather pass from one congregation then from one country they have no sanction or Passport but among themselves.¹¹⁴

The clear implication is that for Reeves, the Jews were not citizens of the countries in which they were resident. They might have been emancipated in France and Holland, but he did not view them as full French or Dutch citizens. In his view, they were their own community with their own identity.

Yet, regardless of the actual number of Jews deported or the extent to which it impacted immigration, the striking point of the Alien Act from a Jewish perspective was the lack of prejudice shown in its implementation. The negative attitudes in which Jews were frequently held in the period did *not* have an impact on the Act's administration. The archives do not contain language reflecting anti-Jewish prejudices. Obviously, to some extent this arose simply from the Act being aimed at French radicals. In the circumstances of revolution and war, Jews were not the focus of attention. However, it is noticeable that despite the presence of very substantial numbers of Jewish aliens, officials seem to have implemented the Act with a focus on the legal position rather than any prejudice they may have felt. Nevertheless, the very existence of the Act's requirement that alien Jews register and be subject to rigorous monitoring may well have increased anxiety in the community and increased uncertainty about its position.

We have seen in Section One of this thesis how the virulent anti-Jewish sentiments of Burke were not reflected in any wider political controversy. Politics was driven by the French Revolution and war; the Jews attracted negligible attention. Anglo-Jewry did, however, have to live with the pressure of hostile representations in prints, songs, theatre and literature. Positive representations were starting to appear, but these changes were slow and frequently ambiguous. The negative representations indicate that Jews were not fully accepted as Englishmen. The *Monthly Mirror*'s response to Jewish hostility towards Dibdin's *Family Quarrels* in which it emphasized that Jews were at risk if their behaviour was 'obnoxious to the public' underlined the conditionality of their acceptance. Burke's views,

¹¹⁴ National Archives, HO5/11/78/85, folio 84, 17 December 1806.

the representation of Jews and the need to register under the Alien Act increased the external pressure on the community. Yet, as Britain introduced its first set of immigration controls in 1793, the Jews might have gained more attention given their significance as an alien community in Britain and the continued arrival of Jewish merchants. In fact, there is extremely limited evidence that anti-Jewish representations had any impact on the way in which the Alien Act was implemented. Anglo-Jewry was, however, forced by events in Europe to focus on stressing its loyalty and in Section Two we shall consider the attitude of the communal elite and its 'dissidents'.

SECTION 2:

JEWISH RESPONSES

Chapter 4:

The Communal Leadership

Prior to the French Revolution, French Jews had both an ethnic and religious identity, and a separate legal status.¹ For most European Jews, being Jewish meant both adopting Judaism as a religion and accepting the legal and political authority of the community's leaders and rabbis. Jews lived in a separate community with its own legal rights and obligations. With the French Revolution's assertion that national sovereignty resided in a nation's citizens, Jews were faced with the question of whether they were solely a religious community or an ethnic group or whether they were a mixture of the two. They would be challenged as to whether their overriding loyalty was to the citizens of the state in which they lived or to fellow Jews. In many cases, Jews did maintain an ethnic identification with Jews in other countries and there also existed a very limited number of Jews who, as global finance and trade developed, cooperated financially with other Jews internationally. This left the Jews vulnerable to those who wished to argue that Jews did not simply share a common ethnic solidarity but were involved in an international Jewish conspiracy, be it Jewish bankers or Jewish socialists, or in Stalinist terms supporters of 'rootless cosmopolitanism'. Despite the evidence of bitter internal divisions within Jewish communities and the frequently diametrically opposing political views held by different Jews, this concept of conspiracy would become a leading element of anti-Semitism.² The accusation of dual loyalty arising from the French Revolution is, therefore, of particular importance as it would have a long-term impact on the changing nature of anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, it is by no means only Jews who have suffered from the accusation of dual loyalty. For instance, Armenians faced similar diatribes from Young Turks in the early twentieth century and US citizens of Japanese origin were interned during the Second World War having faced aspersions on their loyalty. More recently, Muslims in the United States have post 9/11 suffered from similar accusations.

¹ I am using the word 'ethnic' to refer to a number of individuals who identify with each other on the basis of some combination of shared cultural heritage, history, religion and language.

² Leonidas Donskis, *Forms of Hatred: The Troubled Imagination in Modern Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Rodopi, 2003), p. 33.

The questions which arose for French and English Jewry following the French Revolution were relevant in some form for much of European Jewry. For instance, in Germany, Fichte, the philosopher, supported human rights for Jews, but he argued in 1793 that the Jews, amongst other groups in Germany, were 'a state within a state'. Civil rights could only be granted to them if it were possible to 'cut off all their heads in one night, and to set new ones on their shoulders, which should contain not a single Jewish idea'.³ In reaction to measures to ameliorate the position of the Jewish community in some German states, the period saw the rise of anti-Jewish feeling fanned by such writers as Fichte, Arndt, Jahn and Fries. Their sentiments were adopted by student bodies such as the Burschenschaft, which, as the German Jewish writer Saul Ascher recognised in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Germanised the French idea of liberty so that it became a German myth embodying nationalism and Teutonic enthusiasm.⁴ German anti-Jewish prejudices would be reflected in the Hep-Hep riots which spread through Germany in 1819.

However, it was events in France that were to impact Anglo-Jewry directly as Jews in England sought to disassociate themselves from the Jewish community in France. Whilst it should be emphasized that French and English Jewry enjoyed different legal and social positions and the question of dual loyalty arose in very different forms, there are similarities in the reaction of both communities. This chapter will examine the nature of the accusation of dual loyalty and consider how, when the accusation arose following the French Revolution, Anglo-Jewry reacted by stressing its gratitude to be living in Britain and commitment to the British state. These expressions of loyalty can be analysed by examining sermons, the approach of Jews to joining the militia and their reaction to the Sanhedrin. The role of the Goldsmid brothers is vital to this analysis since they were considered the leading members of the community in the period and their behaviour demonstrates how the communal elite integrated into British society, ensuring a degree of acceptance for the community.

The Accusation of Dual Loyalty

Questions about dual loyalty did not begin in the 1790s, but previously the focus had been on conflicts arising from an individual's religious faith rather than his ethnic group.

³ Paul Sweet, 'Fichte and the Jews: A Case of Tension Between Civil Rights and Human Rights', *German Studies Review*, Vol. 16:1, February 1993, pp. 37-48.

⁴ Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Monarchs expected personal loyalty from their subjects, but this was challenged by the Reformation and counter-Reformation. Indeed, the conflict between the religious beliefs of individuals and those of their temporal rulers was one of the key drivers of the European religious wars ending with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which, reiterating aspects of the Treaty of Augsburg of 1555, endorsed the principle of '*cuius regio, eius religio*', meaning 'whose realm, his religion'. Under this principle each ruler in the Holy Roman Empire could determine his subjects' religion without being subject to interference on the issue by another country.⁵ This did not, however, resolve the wider issue of religious intolerance, for example, there was strong antipathy in France towards Protestants and in England towards Catholics. In England, doubts over the loyalty of Roman Catholics were used to justify a range of anti-Catholic measures which endured for over nearly three centuries.⁶ The 1558 Oath of Supremacy expressed clearly the fear of dual loyalties:

I, A. B., do utterly testify and declare in my conscience, that the Queen's Highness is the only supreme governor of this realm, and of all other [of] her Highness's dominions and countries, as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes, as temporal, and that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate, has, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, preeminence, or authority ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm; and therefore I do utterly renounce and forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers, superiorities, and authorities, and do promise that from henceforth I shall bear faith and true allegiance to the queen's highness, her heirs and lawful successors, and to my power shall assist and defend all jurisdictions, pre-eminences, privileges, and authorities granted or belonging to the Queen's Highness, her heirs and successors, or united or annexed to the imperial crown of this realm: So help me God and by the contents of this book.⁷

Following the French Revolution, Europe became focussed on the need to define citizenship in a nation state and to ensure the loyalty of their citizens. In France, the rights of Jews were consciously debated as a political question, posing an existential threat to the Jewish community. Even Clermont-Tonnerre, the supporter of Jewish emancipation, noted that it would be necessary to expel any Jew who did wish to become a citizen and desired some kind of political entity separate from the state. He was clear that it would be

⁵ Ilan Zvi Baron, 'The Problem of Dual Loyalty', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42:4, December 2009, pp. 1025-1044, p. 1028. The Treaty of Westphalia only endorsed Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism as acceptable choices for rulers.

⁶ A similar problem exists today for Catholics in China.

⁷ H.S.Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law* (Oxford: University Press, 1908 reprinted The Lawbook Exchange Limited, 2006), p. 222.

‘repugnant that there should be in the state a society of non-citizens’.⁸ The sweeping aside of all of the *Ancien Régime*’s separate corporations with their own legislative privileges meant that Jews, who had previously been part of ‘la nation juive portugaise de Bordeaux’ or ‘la nation juive d’Alsace’, eventually gained political emancipation and equality before the law. Even after the emancipation of the Sephardic Jewish communities of Bayonne and Bordeaux and the mixed community in Paris, Berr Isaac-Berr continued to argue that the Ashkenazi Jews in Alsace and Lorraine should be seen as a ‘communauté particulière’ with rabbinical courts and the power to adjudicate conflicts between Jews and enforce their decisions.⁹ The Revolutionary concept of universalism, however, meant that they now had to become citizens of France with equal rights and obligations as other citizens, and be loyal only to France. Moreover, many supporters of Jewish political emancipation did not see it as leading to a separate Jewish identity but to Jewish conversion to Christianity. There was an assumption that their ‘degeneracy’ arose from discrimination and lack of education and a belief that education and emancipation would rapidly transform them and lead to widespread Jewish conversion.¹⁰

In order to assess the appropriateness of Jewish responses in the period, both in France and England, it is helpful to consider some of the defences that Jewish communities might have employed against charges of dual loyalty and whether it was possible for them to utilise these arguments at that time. This is of particular relevance as a number of the defences currently used against accusations of dual loyalty originated during this period. Zvi Baron has suggested that, whilst dual loyalty may be raised in the context of security, the motivation of those raising the issue is fundamentally racist to some degree.¹¹ In the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, there has been a tendency simply to dismiss questions of dual loyalty. However, if such accusations are to be effectively countered, then it is important that they are discussed rather than simply rejected on the grounds that the accusation is racist or is only significant under a totalitarian government. If anything, the issue has recently become even more important with the rise of globalisation and international migration, since the number of individuals and communities who may be accused of dual or multiple loyalties has grown. Along with the

⁸ Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World A Documentary History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 115.

⁹ Lionel Kochan, *The Making of Western Jewry, 1600-1819* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 258.

¹⁰ Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ‘A Friend of the Jews: The Abbé Grégoire and Philosemitism in Revolutionary France’, in Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (eds), *Philo-Semitism in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 118-128, p. 120.

¹¹ Baron, ‘The Problem of Dual Loyalty’, p. 1034.

rise of ‘transnationals’ has been an increase in many countries’ legal acceptance of dual citizenship, a concept which challenges the very idea of a nation state with an exclusive citizenship. These trends have given rise to an academic literature in sociology that examines the position of not simply ‘transnationals’ living as isolated individuals but of transnationals living in recognisable communities in a ‘diaspora’. The presence of such a transnational community clearly brings many economic and cultural benefits to the host nation, but there have also been growing concerns about the impact on the receiving society of a wide range of diasporic individuals with some degree of loyalty to more than one country.¹² In the twentieth century, the term ‘diaspora’ had generally been used to describe diasporas of victims, those like Jews and Armenians who were forced to leave their homelands and were unable to return.¹³ The term, however, comes from the Greek and means ‘sowed widely’, referring in its first usage not to victims but to Greek colonialists in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Increasingly, the term has been more widely used to reflect its original Greek meaning and it has been used to refer to communities such as Mexicans in the United States, Turks in Germany or Chinese communities in South East Asia whose migrations have been driven by economic motives.¹⁵ These diasporic groups with their own ethnic identities are frequently equally vulnerable to questions about dual loyalties.

The accusation of dual loyalty is most likely to arise when countries are at war or in a degree of conflict, so that a genuine or perceived security issue becomes a pressing political issue.¹⁶ One possibility discussed by Stanley Renshon is the argument that the issue will not arise for ethnic groups where both countries to which they may have a loyalty are democracies since armed conflict between democracies is unlikely.¹⁷ This belief derives to some extent from Paine’s argument that republics would not go to war with each other — a belief severely challenged by France’s invasion of Switzerland in 1798, which led a number of radicals in England, such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, to renounce their support of the French Revolution.¹⁸ Kant subsequently suggested that military conflict

¹² Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, ‘Transnationalism in Question’, *American Journal of Sociology* Volume 109, Number 5 (March 2004), pp. 1177-1195. Stanley Renshon, *Dual Citizenship and American National Identity* (Washington DC Centre for Immigration Studies, 2001), pp. 5-6.

¹³ Jewish emigration in some periods also arose from economic motives.

¹⁴ Robert Cohen, ‘Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 72:3, July 1996, pp. 507-522, p. 507.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

¹⁶ Morton Weinfeld, ‘If Canada and Israel are at War, Who gets my Support? Challenges of Competing Diaspora Loyalties’, Marshall Sklare Award Lecture, *Canadian Jewish Studies*, Vol. 21, 2013, pp. 28-49, p. 36.

¹⁷ Renshon, *Dual Citizenship and American National Identity*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution Britain in the 1790s* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), p. 81.

would be limited between republics with representative government, although he did not discuss universal suffrage or what he felt representation involved. These ideas have developed into an academic literature exploring ‘democratic peace theory’, though questions about definitions of democracy and which military conflicts count as wars have led to controversy over the theory. In any case, even if mature democracies avoid war, it is far from clear that this resolves accusations over dual loyalty. Unfortunately, even tensions between democracies may create problem for ethnic communities and less extreme accusations seem to require no conflict at all. For instance, questions around the loyalties of Mexican citizens of the United States have been raised in the twenty-first century particularly by Donald Trump during the 2016 election.¹⁹ In 1990, during an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, the British Conservative politician, Norman Tebbit, questioned the integration of immigrants of Pakistani origin to the United Kingdom suggesting that support for the national cricket team of their country of origin rather than the English team reflected a divided loyalty. The ‘cricket test’ shows how problems of a divided loyalty can be raised over relatively minor issues even without war. It is, however, conflict between nations, particularly when one or both are not committed to democratic liberal values, which may bring a simmering issue of dual loyalty to the boiling point.

If the 1790s witnessed the triumph of the nation state with its need to define citizenship, it also saw the development of a possible response with a challenge to the very concept of an individual having an overriding loyalty to a state. Paine argued that an individual was a ‘citizen of the world’ with wider international responsibilities than simply to his own country. As early as *Common Sense* in 1776, he emphasized that ‘the cause of America is the cause of all mankind’.²⁰ Paine was not unique in his claim of world citizenship. Socrates, Bolingbroke, Addison, Oliver Goldsmith and Benjamin Franklin had all made similar suggestions.²¹ Moreover, as Robert Lamb has discussed, there was a tension between Paine’s support for national sovereignty and his support for universal

¹⁹ Abdi Kusow and Matt DeLisi, ‘Conceptualising American Attitudes towards Immigrants “Dual Loyalty”’, *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, Vol. 2, June 2016, pp. 1-12.

²⁰ Thomas Paine, in Mark Philips (ed.), *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 [Common Sense orig. 1776]), *Introduction to Common Sense*, p. 3.

²¹ Ian Dyck, ‘Thomas Paine: World Citizen in the Age of Nationalism’, in Joyce Chumbley and Leo Zonneveld (eds.), *Thomas Paine: In Search of the Common Good* (The Netherlands: Spokesman Books, 2009), pp. 32-38, p. 32-33.

human rights.²² Paine recognised the conflict and developed the view that global responsibilities to support the rights of man might in certain circumstances override national duties. In *The Rights of Man*, Paine argued ‘I view things as they are without regard to place or person; my country is the world and my religion is to do good’.²³ This argument was widely adopted, and often challenged the emerging concept of nation states. The London Correspondence Society wrote to the French National Convention ‘we, instead of natural enemies, at length discover in Frenchmen our fellow citizens of the world’.²⁴ Richard Price wrote that ‘love of country’ should not cause Britons to forget their ‘wider obligations as citizens of the world’.²⁵ Joseph Fawcett, the radical dissenting minister and friend of William Godwin, stated boldly that an individual may have to turn against his country ‘if his fellow countrymen oppose the rights, [or] set their face against the welfare, [or] of his fellow-men; [or] if they make an unrighteous war, [or] if they go into an unjust battle’.²⁶

A modern defence to the accusation of divided loyalties is the recognition that an individual may have a number of different loyalties—for instance, to family, city, religion and political party. The fact that a citizen is British and of Chinese origin is simply part of his overall identity.²⁷ A divided loyalty in the wider sense may arise from conflicts among any of his beliefs and backgrounds. Conflicts arising from an individual’s religion, politics or simply commitment to wider humanity rather than his/her nation might create conflicts between varying forms of loyalty and are to be expected. In practical terms, however, the question of dual loyalty arising from an individual’s attachment to a nation is often seen differently than other complex loyalties. It is very difficult to see how the argument that an individual might hold many different loyalties could have been used, in practice, by Jewish communities in the period. While John Stuart Mill held the unattractive perspective that cultures such as Breton and Basque ought to be assimilated into what he saw as the more advanced French culture, he also made the critical point that whilst one day it may be

²² Robert Lamb, ‘The Liberal Cosmopolitanism of Thomas Paine’, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 76:3, July 2014, pp. 636-648.

²³ Thomas Paine, in Mark Philips (ed.), *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings, Rights of Man [orig. Rights of Man, Part 2, 1792]*, p. 281.

²⁴ Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *Historical Workshop Journal*, Vol. 12:1, pp. 8-33, p. 19.

²⁵ Dyck, ‘Thomas Paine: World Citizen in the Age of Nationalism’, pp. 32-38, p. 34.

²⁶ Quoted Evan Radcliffe, ‘Burke Radical Cosmopolitanism and the Debates on Patriotism in the 1790s’, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, Vol. 28, 1999, p. 316.

²⁷ Renshon, *Dual Citizenship*, p. 10.

possible to transcend national identities, for now, national identity remained of paramount importance for most people.²⁸ This view may still be true in the contemporary world, sometimes with tragic consequences, but it was certainly the case in the period from 1789-1815. In practice, the Jews were, therefore, simply not in a position to provide any real intellectual defence to the accusation other than to protest their loyalty.

If in France the question of dual loyalty arose immediately in the intellectual debate arising following revolution, in England it came out of developments flowing from events in Europe. We have seen how the political emancipation of Jews in France was welcomed by sections of the English press and, similarly, the destruction of European ghettos was seen as the destruction of a European barbarity that was contrasted with English tolerance. Following Napoleon's destruction of the Venice ghetto gates in July 1797, numerous British papers positively noted that 'the friends of freedom on this occasion danced the Carmignac with the Jews—a spectacle perfectly novel at Venice'.²⁹ Yet it would not take long for the freedom of Jews to be translated into a threat to Britain by some. John Watson, the British consul in Venice, sent weekly reports in late 1797 to Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, on developments in North Italy. On 1 December 1797, he wrote to Grenville:

The French here avow publicly their intention of invading Great Britain, with three armies, which I hope with the help of God will be frustrated; however, I must signify to your Lordships that they reckon very much on the Emigrants and on the Jews. By the connivance of the Jews here, which came to my knowledge, I have reason to think that they hold a regular correspondence with their brethren in England to this purpose.³⁰

Watson offered no evidence in support of his claim and it does not seem to have been followed up by Grenville, but it is perhaps not surprising that this charge was made in Italy. The Jewish community in Italy was widely viewed as supporting the French Revolution. Given the multiplicity of Italian states, with very different Jewish communities receiving very different treatment, it is important to be careful about generalising too far. In most Italian states, however, the Jewish communities were widely perceived as being pro-French and pro-Jacobin. Modena's liberation by Napoleon in September 1796 was welcomed by

²⁸ George Crowder, *Theories of Multiculturalism: An Introduction* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press 2013), pp. 85-86.

²⁹ Carmignac was a popular French song during Revolution. *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 August 1797. *Staffordshire Advertiser* 26 August 1797. *Kentish Gazette*, 22 August 1797.

³⁰ National Archives, FO 81/12/313.

the Jewish community and Moise Formiggini, a Modena Jew, became a leading figure in the new regime.³¹ In February 1797, the Jews of Ancona, which was part of the Papal States where Jews suffered from particularly severe restrictions, rejoiced at Napoleon's arrival. The Venice community had suffered severely economically from the 1777 renegotiation of the charter setting out the legal basis under which Jews lived in Venice.³² It is, therefore, quite likely that there were Jews in Venice supporting the French before their arrival. Following the French arrival, three Jews served on the Venice municipal council.³³ As the French progress in the war in Italy varied from year to year, particularly with Napoleon's departure to Egypt in 1798, there was often a backlash against the Jews particularly from the Via Maria peasant revolt against Italian Jacobins.³⁴ In the Cisalpine republic, anti-Jewish posters in 1797 denounced the constitutional equality of religion. In the reaction of 1799 to French secular radicalism, mobs sacked the ghettos of Pittigliano, Lugo and Arezzo.³⁵ It is therefore easy to understand why Watson, writing from Italy, associated the Jews with the French. Even in England, Isaac D'Israeli, Benjamin's father, was aware of the association noting that the authorities in Italy 'probably imagine that the children of Jacob are really Jacobins, which if they were, would not be surprising'.³⁶ Correspondence between Jews in England and Italy is quite likely given that a number of British Jews, such as D'Israeli himself, were of Italian origin. However, as we shall see, given their very different legal and social positions, any form of cooperation between Anglo-Jewry and Italian Jews designed to support France seems extremely unlikely.

The fear of the dual loyalty of Jews is also demonstrated in the George Cruickshank print *Easier to Say, than to Do!* Napoleon is shown plotting England's destruction in the company of a Jew, a Dutchman and a Spaniard. Napoleon is commenting:

I cannot scrape these little Islands out of the Map – as for your Plan Mynheer, we did try to burn them once but they would not take fire – & let me tell you Don Diego that they are not so easily overrun with any flag as you may think! I believe Moses's Plan the best; that & a Threat now & then may probably do the Business.'

³¹ Frederico Francesconi, 'From ghetto to emancipation, the rise of Moise Formiggini', *Jewish History* (2010), Vol. 24, pp. 331-354, pp. 331-332.

³² Kochan, *The Making of Western Jewry*, p. 270.

³³ Ibid., p. 270.

³⁴ Geoffrey Symcox, 'The Jews of Italy in the Triennio Giacobino, 1796-1799', in David Myers, Massimo Ciavolella, Peter Reill and Geoffrey Symcox (eds), *Acculturation and its Discontents* (Toronto: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 148-164.

³⁵ Kochan, *The Making of Western Jewry*, p. 268.

³⁶ Anon [Isaac D'Israeli], *Vaurien: or sketches of our time: exhibiting views of the philosophies, religions, politics, literature and manners of the age* (London: Cadell, 1797), Vol.2, ft. pp. 241-242.

The Jew is saying 'I tink if I lend a little more monish at Turty Per Shent, it will soon annihilate dem'. Here the representation of the Jewish financier is clearly exploited to show Jewish financial wealth siding with Britain's enemies to ensure French victory. A document entitled 'Subscription to New Loan' is in the Jew's pocket.

Given the consternation which the French Revolution and the subsequent wars created in England, it is quite possible that the issue of dual loyalty could have become a real risk to the security of the Jewish community in England. Obviously, the focus was on domestic radicals and the French, but it is precisely during war and civil unrest that the issue is at its most dangerous. In such circumstances, previously accepted minority ethnic identities can face questions about their political allegiance and accusations of disloyalty. In this context, the response of Anglo-Jewry's communal elite was crucial in ensuring that allegations of dual loyalty did not become critical during the period.



Figure 12: Isaac Cruickshank, *Easier to say, than to do!*, 1803, British Museum, 1868,0808.7097.

The Fear of Expressing Political Views

The need to express its patriotism caused an immediate problem for the leadership of Anglo-Jewry. Historically, the Jewish community had been reluctant to express itself in public on *any* political issue out of the long-standing fear that any comment could be seized on and used to justify hostility towards Jews. As far back as medieval times, however, the

Jewish community in England had sent addresses to a monarch on his accession and this practice recommenced following readmission.³⁷ In 1760, it was the need to send such an address to George III that led to the establishment of a Committee of Deputies by Bevis Marks to deal with public affairs. Ashkenazi Jews had in 1760 created their own committee on public affairs and from 1789 they were on occasion invited to attend the Sephardi Committee. By 1812 one combined committee, the Board of Deputies, had emerged.³⁸ The communal desire to please is demonstrated by the message of support sent to the King on his recovery from ill health in 1789 by deputies from both synagogues noting that ‘we were *early* and *persevering* in joining the rest of your Majesty’s faithful Subjects with applications to the Omnipotent for Mercy’.³⁹

There was, however, a clear policy that political matters should be avoided and statements confined to messages to the royal family. For instance, in 1783 with the end of the American Revolutionary War, the Sephardi Committee of Deputies decided not to send an address to George III on grounds that ‘Peace or War being political concerns, addressing (them) would be taking a part in matters we ought to avoid, but an address may be proper when the subject relates to the King’s person or family’.⁴⁰ The Committee of Bevis Marks’ deputies also refused to make any comment about the return to Gibraltar of Jews who had sought refuge in Britain during the 1779-1783 French and Spanish siege of Gibraltar, on the grounds that the same problems applied to both Jews and Christians alike.⁴¹

This reluctance to express views on political matters can be seen in the rules of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue (the Ascamot). The quotes below are from the Ascamot published in 1831 but, subject to very marginal changes, this copied the 1785 Ascamot which was only in Portuguese. This, in turn, reflected the original rules, which appeared in the community’s first Ascamot of 1664, governing the conduct of the community and

³⁷ Elkan Adler, ‘Hebrew Elegies on English Monarchs’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 2, 1894, pp.141-148.

³⁸ Raphael Langham, *250 Years of Convention and Contention, A History of the Board of Deputies of British Jews* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2010), pp. 11-17.

³⁹ National Archives, *HO 55/18/18*. London Metropolitan Archives, *Board of Deputies Minutes*, 22 March 1789. No page numbers – microfiche. Italics have been added.

⁴⁰ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), p. 274. Langham, *250 Years of Convention and Contention*, p. 15.

⁴¹ London Metropolitan Archives, *Board of Deputies*, April 1783.

emphasizing the need to avoid expressing opinions or publishing texts for fear of giving offence.⁴² Rule XXIII of the 1831 Ascarnot stated:

Also no one of the Yehidim or Congregantes of the Kaal shall enter into public disputes or controversies, or print any such thing on the subject of religion, nor join in any parties or opposition which any of the people form against the government, the ministry, or judicial administration of this Kingdom, in order to avoid the serious evil that might ensue to us from such conduct, and which the Jewish nation has experienced in other times, from much more trivial causes.

Rule XXVII made it clear that this also covered writing books or articles and that political and religious debate was to be avoided:

It being one of the principal points on which depend our Union and preservation that there should be no dispute on matters of religion, between us and the people of this country, and that we should not enter into any controversy on reasons of state, from which beside the offence which they generally occasion, more disastrous consequences may result; to avoid these it is resolved that:

No person of our nation shall print or cause to be printed at any time either paper, or book, upon any point of religion – in whatever language it may be, and in the same manner no one shall print any book or paper, on the politics or government of this realm, without first asking permission of the Mahamad, who shall examine such book or paper, or cause it be examined by the Hahem or the Kaal, or some other intelligent person, and if there be nothing therein, which militates against our holy religion and established customs, or the respect over which we are bound towards the government and religion of this kingdom, the said gentlemen shall then grant the permission prayed for.⁴³

These rules were not simply retained in the Ascarnot due to oversight but were maintained when other parts of the Bevis Marks' Ascarnot were revised. In 1829, when English sermons were introduced, they had to be presented three days before use to the elders of Bevis Marks to make sure that they did not contain 'anything inimical to our religious doctrines, or any matter hostile to the established institutions of the country'.⁴⁴ The more recently formed Ashkenazi synagogues did not contain similar provisions in their rules, but it would seem from the communal reaction to David Levi's public expression of his beliefs,

⁴² Rev. Dr Moses Gaster, *History of the Ancient Synagogue of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, The Cathedral Synagogue of the Jews in England, Situate in Bevis Marks* (London: 1901), p. 15. Neville Laski, *The Laws and Charities of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of London* (London: The Cresset Press, 1952), p. 29.

⁴³ *Ascarnot or Laws and Regulations of the Jewish Congregation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (London: Wertheim, Goodman and Fields, 5591-1831), p. 122. The Mahamad was the governing body of the synagogue.

⁴⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 162.

which we shall examine in more detail shortly, that the leadership of the Ashkenazi community were equally frightened of giving public offence.⁴⁵ David Levi was born an Ashkenazi but translated Hebrew texts for both communities and had close links to the financiers, the Goldsmid brothers.⁴⁶ According to Levy Alexander, David Levi ‘owed almost intirely his Literary existence to Mr [Benjamin] Goldsmid and his family’. When Levi responded to Tom Paine’s *The Age of Reason*, Henry Lemoine, his non-Jewish friend, commented that ‘the community was in the greatest terror.....fearing the civil authority or ecclesiastical law would be moved against him and bring serious consequences upon themselves’.⁴⁷

Sermons

The community avoided making political comments but in their communal prayers, they went to great lengths to praise the royal family and stress its obedience. It is easy to dismiss prayers and sermons praising royal families as flattery but, examining such prayers in France, Ronald Schechter has argued that they must be treated seriously since they were Hebrew sermons in Hebrew addressed by religious men in synagogue before God. From their perspective, Jeremiah’s instructions to ‘seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile’, and the Talmud’s instruction that ‘the laws of the kingdom in which you live are the laws’ (*dina de malkhuta dina*), held religious force.⁴⁸ The fact that the sermons were often translated for secular purposes should not impugn their authors’ sincerity. Moreover, by eighteenth-century standards, similar language to the obsequious vocabulary used in sermons was frequently found in non-Jewish institutions’ addresses to the monarch.⁴⁹

Under the pressure of the French Revolution and during wartime, praise for the royal family continued with even greater frequency. For instance, on 26 March 1790 the

⁴⁵ *The Laws of the New Synagogue London* (London: Justins, 5584 -1824). *Law of the Congregation of the Great Synagogue Duke’s Place London* (London: J Wertheim 5585-1827). *Laws of the Congregation of the Hambros Synagogue Church Row Fenchurch St* (London: S Magnus, 5605). My gratitude to David Jacobs for access to his private collection of Ascamot.

⁴⁶ Levy Alexander, *Memoirs of the Life and Commercial Connections, Public and Private, of the Late Benj. Goldsmid, Esq. of Roehampton; Containing a Cursory View of the Jewish Society and Manners Interspersed with interesting anecdotes of Several Remarkable Characters* (London: the author: 1808), p. 91. This was written by Alexander in cooperation with Henry Lemoine. Lemoine, who was not Jewish, was a close friend of David Levi and yet expressed views challenging Jewish legal rights. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 335, ft. 8. The *Memoirs* have limited information about the Jewish community and is dominated by stories of Goldsmid’s and his friends’ romantic and sexual encounters.

⁴⁷ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. 81, January-June 1811, June 1811, p. 617.

⁴⁸ See the Introduction on quotations from Jeremiah and the Talmud used to provide religious support explaining the loyalty of Jews to their country of residence.

⁴⁹ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, p. 139.

Great Synagogue was dedicated in St. James's Dukes Place with *A Song and Praise*. The Rev. Dr Solomon Schiff argued that Jews had been exiled from Israel, but God did not break his covenant with them as he had benevolently brought them to England where they benefitted from the reign of George III:

But acted thus kindly towards us not to break his covenant.
For, it is the hand of the Lord, that hath thus given us honour and glory,
Grace, and favour, in the light of the nations, under whose shadow we dwell, and
are protected
As in this country, where GEORGE the Third always the Sceptre,
Whose sole ambition, is to promote his subjects' happiness, governing them in
virtue with kindness and equity
And whose most amiable Queen CHARLOTTE excels the most eminent women
May they enjoy a long and happy life, with GEORGE Prince of Wales and all the
Royal family.⁵⁰

In October 1795, David Levi translated into English Reverend Moses Myers' Hebrew prayer expressing relief that George III had not been killed in an attempted assassination. *The Times* of 26 October 1809 rejoiced that all religions, including Dissenters, Catholics and Jews had joined in the celebration of the King's Jubilee the day before.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the duration and increasing bitterness of the Napoleonic Wars meant that the previous prohibition on 'political' sermons such as praising British military success was abandoned. Special services were held—in response to a royal request to churches—not to simply praise the royal family but to mark military events. For instance, in 1797 there was a service at Bevis Marks in response to the naval victories of Admirals Jervis and Duncan. In 1798, Myers wrote a prayer translated by Levi to give thanks for Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile and God's support for the 'inhabitants of the island of Britain, amongst whom we dwell, and under whose shadow we take refuge'.⁵² In 1805, Solomon Hirschel gave a sermon at the Great Synagogue to celebrate Trafalgar noting 'the

⁵⁰ *A Song and Praise to be Performed at the Dedication of the Great Jews Synagogue, St James's Dukes Place, London On Friday, March 26, 1790 Composed in Hebrew by The Rev Dr Solomon Schiff High Priest of the Said Synagogue And translated into English, by Order of the Presidents and Treasurer thereof, By David Levi, Author of Lingua Sacra, &c.* (London: W. Justins, 1790).

⁵¹ *The Times*, 26 October 1809. The Jubilee was celebrated at the start of the fiftieth year of George III's reign.

⁵² Rev. Moses Myers, *A Form of Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving, And Laud; To be Chanted in the German Jews Synagogues in London with the voice of joy and gladness, on Thursday the 29th day of November 1798 being the 21st day of Kīslev, Anno Mundi 5559* (London: David Levi, 1798), p. 9. With thanks to the Hebrew Union College Library of Cincinnati for providing a copy.

justice of our [England's] cause and of its rectitude in the sight of God'.⁵³ Further special prayers were said in 1814 and again after Waterloo in 1815.⁵⁴ This was not simply a London practice. On 5 December 1805 in Birmingham, Isaiah Phillips preached a sermon of thanksgiving for the victory of Trafalgar.⁵⁵

Support for the success of the British state was continually emphasized, as was the desire to differentiate between Anglo-Jewry and French Jewry and to make it clear that the English Jewish community did not share any of the support for the Revolution and Napoleon that might have existed within the French Jewish community. In Rabbi Isaac Luria's sermon in Bevis Marks on 19 October 1803, in response to a royal edict for penitential prayer in support of the armed services, he repeatedly stressed the community's support for British military victory. Having quoted Jeremiah as biblical support for Jewish loyalty, Luria further argued that defeat for Britain would be a disaster for Jews elsewhere in Europe as many foreign Jews held British government bonds. This argument made sense in the context of the 1790s, when the Jewish economic contribution to the British war effort was valued, but in due course, this would be the kind of language used by anti-Semites to insinuate the existence of an international Jewish financial conspiracy. Above all, Luria made it clear that Anglo-Jewry did not support the prayers and fulsome praise of French Jewry for Napoleon. He repeatedly emphasized that English Jews supported the English cause and argued that if the French Jews really supported Napoleon, which he doubted, then it was only out of compulsion. Critically, he distinguished between the treatment of Jews in England and France:

If in the general form of prayers adopted by our brethren in France, or its dependencies (which I do not believe to be the case) there will be anything bordering upon asperity or fanaticism, it certainly arose from compulsion exercised over them in one way or another, for, as I have laid down, religion is the harbinger of love to mankind, and not of boundless persecution. Here—God be praised—we enjoy an unrestrained freedom of worship and are incapable of misapplying it; our intercessions at the fountain of Mercy are pure, sincere, and

⁵³ Sermon preached at the Great Synagogue Duke's Place on the 14th Kislev AM 5565 answering to 5 December 1805 being the Day Appointed For a General Thanksgiving for the Success of His Majesty's Fleet under Lord Nelson at Trafalgar by the Rev. Solomon Hirschell Presiding Rabbi (Erroneously styled The High Priest) of the German Jews' (London: T Malden 1805) reprinted in Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001*, pp. 75-104, p. 103.

⁵⁴ A fuller list of such services can be found in I. Abrahams, 'Hebrew Loyalty under the First Four Georges', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Volume 9, 1918, pp. 103-130.

⁵⁵ Zoe Joseph (ed.), *Birmingham Jewry More Aspects 1740-1930* (Warley: The Birmingham Jewish History Research Group, 1984), p. 7.

undissembled, for on the tranquillity and security of these favoured kingdoms depends not only our preservation, but likewise that of the greater part of our brethren elsewhere.⁵⁶

However, Rabbi Luria's sermon was courageous for, whilst dismissing the suggestion of any kind of agreement with French Jews given their diametrically opposed views, he openly and honestly accepted that an issue of divided loyalty did exist to a limited extent:

Are we not a nation split into innumerable divisions, interspersed in all countries over the face of the globe, awaiting the term of our captivity, for the promised restoration of pristine glory? Is it probable, then, nay possible, for brethren in one common state of affections to court a measure that would pierce their own bowels at every stroke their weapons plunged into the entrails of their same brotherhood?⁵⁷

What is particularly remarkable is that Luria was confident enough to discuss the conflict in public and to express it in graphic terms. Moreover, he made it clear that in his eyes the Jews remained a separate 'nation' in exile. Whilst stressing loyalty, Luria was not prepared to give up the claim to national self-determination or make the concessions which the Sanhedrin would shortly make. For some Jews, particularly religious Jews, the concept of Jews as an independent people seeking to return to the Holy Land remained a powerful view.

Joining the Militia

Of even greater significance was rabbinical encouragement for Jews to join the militia. In 1758, during the Seven Years War, Rabbi Hirschell Levin (also known as Hart Lyon) had stressed that the role of Jews was to pray for the king and country rather than to provide military service.⁵⁸ By 1779, during the American Revolution, the Sephardi Committee of Deputies noted approvingly that the Mahamad of Bevis Marks was advising members of the community that if there was a French invasion they should enter 'cheerfully' into Loyal

⁵⁶ Rabbi J Luria, 'A Penitential Sermon preached in the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue in Bevis Marks on 3rd Heshvan, 5564 a.m. (anno mundi) answering to the 19th of October 1803 in conformity to A Royal Edict appointed that Day to be Observed as 'A General Fast And For the Purpose of Invoking By Penitential Prayer, Success to His Majesty's Arms & c' (London: Minerva Press, 1803) reprinted in Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001* (Oxford and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2008), p. 86.

⁵⁷ Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001*, p. 85.

⁵⁸ Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800 An Anthology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 351-352.

Associations.⁵⁹ In contrast, in August 1803, Levin's son, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, preached in the Great Synagogue that Jews should 'take up arms in defence of the country' whilst observing ritual requirements such as keeping Sabbath except in emergency.⁶⁰ *The Times* of 20 October 1803 noted that Hirschell had preached a patriotic sermon the day before and in 1805 he prayed at the Great Synagogue for the success of British arms, noting that Jews should 'congratulate ourselves as fighting in a true and just cause'.⁶¹

The rabbis' call for Jews to join the militia was by no means simply a rhetorical device. Substantial numbers of Jews, both feeling genuine loyalty to Britain and seeking respectability and social status, volunteered for the militia. *The Times* of 20 October 1803 noted:

The Seventh Regiment mustered at ten o'clock, at their parade ground and proceeded to Aldgate Church. The sermon preached to them on the occasion was delivered by the Rev. Mr Hart. As many Gentlemen belonging to the Corps are Jews, when the oath of allegiance was administered to the Corps, they retired to the Vestry to receive it, according to the forms of their religion.⁶²

The correspondence sent to the War Office concerning the Jews of Portsmouth provides a rare insight into the attitude of Jews and the authorities. Following the rejection of the Portsmouth Jews' offer to join the militia, Jacob Levi, a grocer and pawnbroker, wrote on 4 May 1798 to Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State for War:

We the Jews have offered our services to enter the Different Voluntary Corps but our offers are not accepted by the Governor or Mayor alleging for a reason tis not usual with Government to enrol Jews. We feeling ourselves greatly hurt by such a refusal; with utmost respect we crave your opinion and advice. Assuring you, we have collectively and individually on all occasions afforded our best means and endeavours towards the support of Government. I may with truth assure you there exists not within his Majesty's Realm a more Loyal People than the Jews, that since their establishment they have been drawn and served in the Militia, equal with other subjects the present area is perhaps the greatest wherein man may evince his attachment to Government, and at such a time should we become prescribed would generally hurt our feelings and perhaps endanger our personal safety. Jews are now and have been prior to your last notice admitted and enrolled in the several Corps at Dover, Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, Liverpool, Gosport and many other Towns, which causes us to feel the greater disappointment. The

⁵⁹ London Metropolitan Archives, *Board of Deputies Minutes*, 1779.

⁶⁰ *London Star*, 13 August 1803. Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001*, p. 76.

⁶¹ Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001*, p. 104.

⁶² *The Times*, 20 October 1803.

Majority of us may boast the right of Native and many (without presuming of any consequence therefrom) are Freeholders. For our Moral Character as well as our Fealty, we humbly refer your enquiry to the Mayor and Justices of this Borough. Should we ultimately be refused we beg you make it known to the Public that we wish to do our Duty as good citizens and that we have used our best endeavours to obtain leave so to do.⁶³

We have already considered Pitt's comments in response to the above request in terms of the Alien Act and the authorities' attitudes towards the Jewish community, but the correspondence also demonstrates the strong desire of the Jewish community to enlist. The letter also suggests their fear that failure to enlist might have consequences for their 'personal safety'. In any case, the Jews' fervent and successful efforts to volunteer in numerous towns are clear. In Canterbury, a conflict similar to the one in Portsmouth took place. A letter to the *Kentish Weekly Post* described how Jews had volunteered for the militia but had been rejected on the grounds that a 'gentleman of French extract represented as a dangerous thing to trust those people (Jews) with arms'. Yet, whilst distrust of Jews led to a reluctance to recruit them into the militia in Canterbury and Portsmouth, in many towns there is no evidence of resistance to Jews joining the militia. The letter in the *Kentish Weekly Post*, having noted that Jews had volunteered and been accepted into the militias in Dover, Deal, Margate and Ramsgate, continued:

Several Jews came forward (in Canterbury), voluntarily, in support of their King and Country; and feel themselves slighted to have their services rejected—and unless some more substantial reason is urged, for their refusal, they shall ever consider themselves unjustly stigmatised—by the Officers and Committee.⁶⁴

Moreover, the desire to demonstrate their loyalty was true for both 'respectable tradesmen' in Portsmouth and also for wealthy Jews including those who had converted from Judaism and craved respectability. Moses Montefiore joined the militia in 1805 rising to be a Captain in the Third Surrey militia.⁶⁵ Benjamin Goldsmid's eldest son, who converted to Christianity was a member of the Putney corps.⁶⁶ In 1797, David Ricardo became a

⁶³ National Archives, HO50/43, 4 May 1798 (out of date order in the Home Office register. Filed with Pitt's letter to Dundas of 1 June 1798). Geoffrey Green, *The Royal Navy & Anglo-Jewry 1740-1820* (London: 1989), pp.62-63.

⁶⁴ *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 30 December 1794.

⁶⁵ Dr I Lowe, *The Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore, Vol 1*, (Chicago: Belford-Clarke, 1890), p. 14.

⁶⁶ Alexander, *Memoirs of the Life and Commercial Connections, Public and Private, of the Late Benj. Goldsmid*, p 129.

Lieutenant of the Loyal Lambeth Volunteers.⁶⁷ Ricardo had converted in 1793 not for the normal reason of social status, but because he had fallen in love with a non-Jewish woman. Morris (Moses) Ximenes, who had also converted, raised a troop of territorials known as the Wargrave Rangers.⁶⁸

There were other benefits to joining a militia or similar service than simply demonstrating one's loyalty. A very small payment was made when the militia was exercising. Moreover, volunteering for a militia might lead to influential local support. For instance, Lieutenant Colonel Hood of the Portsdown Yeomanry Cavalry recommended that Mr Solomon Levy 'of the Jews Persuasion' should be allowed to become a denizen since he 'has been part of the voluntary cavalry for four years, attends all parades, [and] is loyal'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it would be wrong to be cynical about Jewish support for the militia. The number in any militia company varied considerably but generally exceeded fifty. The Portsmouth militia had been increased from two companies of sixty to two companies of a hundred men in 1799.⁷⁰ William Pitt, the Garrison Commander, wrote to the War Office in response to the query generated by Levi's letter that he had suggested to the Jews 'the forming of a Company entirely of their own sect, as they have sufficient numbers for it', but given their refusal, he would distribute them amongst other companies. It would seem, therefore, that to consider the formation of a separate company, even a very small one, a high percentage of the able-bodied men of the Portsmouth community must have volunteered.⁷¹

Volunteering for the militia has to be seen in the context of the Test Act of 1673, which meant that Jews were unable hold a commission in the army or navy. In his lecture 'The Jews In the Defence of Britain', delivered against the backdrop of the Second World War, Cecil Roth was keen to stress the number of Jewish individuals who were common sailors and that several Jews had been commissioned in the armed forces either by

⁶⁷ David Weatherall, *David Ricardo A Biography* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p.37. Militias were organised on a county basis but with local companies. Volunteers were organised on a parish basis.

⁶⁸ Chris Sanham, 'Sir Morris Ximenes and the Wargrave Rangers Yeomanry Cavalry', in Rosemary Gray and Sue Griffiths (eds), *The Book of Wargrave History and Reminiscences by the People of Wargrave* (Wargrave: Wargrave Local History Society, 1987), pp. 195-199, p. 195. Wargrave is a village on the Thames in Berkshire.

⁶⁹ National Archives, *HO1/40*, 8 April 1801.

⁷⁰ National Archives, *HO 50/43*, 1 June 1798.

⁷¹ On the size of the Portsmouth community, see Cecil Roth, 'The Portsmouth Community and its Historical Community', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 13, 1932, p. 166.

conversion or by taking Holy Communion despite remaining Jewish.⁷² Nevertheless, views on the willingness of Jews to fight remained ambiguous. George Crabbe could still write:

Jews are with us, but far unlike to those.
Who, led by David, warr'd with *Israel's* Foes;
Unlike to those whom his imperial Son
Taught Truths divide—the preacher Solomon
Nor War not Wisdom yield our Jews delight,
They will not study, and they dare not fight.⁷³

In a footnote to the text, Crabbe records ‘some may object to this assertion, to whom I beg leave to answer, that I do not use the word fight in the sense of the Jew Mendoza’.⁷⁴ It is not clear what he means by this statement, but he is perhaps trying to distinguish between Mendoza who boxed for glory and financial gain and Jews who fought for Britain. Frank Felsenstein has argued that whilst Crabbe’s view reflected a contemporary prejudice, it was becoming rapidly outdated. An anonymous print of 1803 indicated a very different view than Crabbe’s by depicting a bearded Ashkenazi Jew. He is still shown speaking with a comic ‘Jewish’ accent, but he is also a loyal Englishman fighting the French. The print is titled *The Loyal Jew —and French Soldier or Beard against Whiskers!* The Jew, who has been challenged by a French soldier to surrender, responds ‘Vut Shurender Jean Bools property—never while I am a Shew—I’ll let you know Mounsheer, dat I fight for King Sheorge and, de Synagogue.’

⁷² Cecil Roth, ‘The Jews in the Defence of Britain’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 15, 1939, pp.11 and 17. See also Geoffrey Green, *The Royal Navy & Anglo-Jewry 1740-1820* (London: Geoffrey Green, 1989).

⁷³ George Crabbe, ‘The Borough’ quoted in Judith Page, *Imperfect Sympathies Jews and Judaism British Romantic Literature and Culture* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 28.

⁷⁴ Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 231 and 314 ft. 35.



Figure 13: Unknown Artist, *The LOYAL JEW and FRENCH SOLDIER or BEARD against WHISKERS*, 1803, Jewish Museum, AR 909.

Napoleon and the Sanhedrin

The need to demonstrate the Anglo-Jewry's loyalty must be seen within the context of Napoleon's growing mythic status, which was embraced by some sections of European Jewry. The image of Napoleon as liberator was one he carefully constructed, but it was widely accepted by Jews, particularly in France and Italy, where he was often referred to in poetry as Moses or the Messiah.⁷⁵ The destruction of the ghetto in Ancona was credited in Hebrew to 'Chelek Tov', which literally meant 'Good Lot', or in Italian 'Buona Parte'. This name spread amongst European Jewry and was frequently used in poetry in his honour. For instance, Elie Lévy's nine-stanza Hebrew verse on the peace of Amiens, which he had translated at his own cost into French and German, included the following verse:

See the hero who has no equal among the myriad warriors
His sword brings princes low. His wisdom conquers hearts.
Chelek Tov is his name. He is a precious gift from God in Heaven,
Who sent him earthward from the heights during the days of war
To be his land's redeemer, to be her inhabitants' eyes.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, pp. 227-230.

⁷⁶ Ronald Schechter, 'Becoming French: Patriotic liturgy and the transformation of Jewish identity in France, 1708-1815', PhD., Harvard University, 1993, p. 130.

Concern over Napoleon's relationship with the Jews only increased with his conquest of Egypt, the capture of Jaffa and the siege of Acre in 1798/99. Napoleon deliberately exploited his campaign to restore control of the Holy Land for propaganda purposes with both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences in Europe. The *Moniteur Universel* of 22 May 1799, which was to become the official government newspaper in December 1799 after Napoleon's accession to power, spread the rumour of Jewish support for Napoleon's conquest of the Holy Land and reported that Bonaparte had issued a proclamation in which he invited Jews to 're-establish the ancient kingdom of Jerusalem'.⁷⁷ Regardless of Napoleon's actual intentions, his expression of support for the Jews' return to Israel further excited sections of European Jewry and enhanced his reputation amongst them. Even in remote Vilkauskis, in what would become Lithuania, there was an enduring communal story that that on arriving in the village in 1812, Napoleon immediately returned a synagogue, which the French had occupied as a stable, to the Jewish community and informed communal leaders of his desire to rebuild the Kingdom of Israel. It is unclear whether this story is purely apocryphal or based on fact, but it demonstrates the success of Napoleon in developing a long-term image.⁷⁸

Excitement in the Jewish world rose further with Napoleon's calling of the Assembly of Notables and later the Grand Sanhedrin, named after the Grand Sanhedrin in ancient Israel a meeting of seventy-one rabbis which acted as the final court of appeal. Napoleon's motives were complex. He seems to have been genuinely concerned both about usury in Alsace-Lorraine and that Jews in France were 'a nation within a nation'.⁷⁹ His adviser, on Jewish affairs at the Sanhedrin, Molé, stated that 'His Majesty wants you to be French' but added that 'it is up to you to accept this title, and to remember to make yourselves unworthy of it would be to renounce it'.⁸⁰ Napoleon's concerns can be seen in some of the questions he raised for the Assembly of Notables, and subsequently the Sanhedrin, which included:

In the eyes of the Jews, are the Frenchmen considered as brethren or strangers?
In either case what conduct does their law prescribe towards Frenchmen not of their faith?

⁷⁷ Quoted in Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, The Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 24.

⁷⁸ Nancy Schoenburg and Stuart Schoenburg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities* (New York: Garland New York, 1991), p. 345.

⁷⁹ Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, The Jews and the Sanhedrin*, p. 49.

⁸⁰ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, p. 204.

Do the Jews born in France, and treated by the law as French citizens, consider France as their country? Are they bound to defend it? Are they bound to obey the laws, and to follow the directions of the civil code?⁸¹

In order to answer the challenge, the Assembly of Notables and in due course the Sanhedrin praised Napoleon lavishly and argued that:

France is our country, all Frenchmen our bothers, and the glorious title, whilst honouring us in our own eyes becomes a pledge of which we shall never cease to be worthy.

They drew a distinction between eternal religious Jewish principles and ‘political provisions’ which were no longer applicable ‘now that Israel no longer forms a national body’.⁸² The responses of the Assembly of Notables and Sanhedrin raised questions of whether they represented Jewish law and beliefs appropriately or simply gave Napoleon the answers they felt he wanted to hear.⁸³ Their answers led to immediate criticism of French Jewry in Britain, suggesting that the Jews of France had repudiated the long-held view of a Jewish return to the Holy Land.⁸⁴ In fact, the most debated question had not been any of the questions directly asking about the issue of loyalty, but concerned Napoleon’s queries about whether Jews could marry Christians or whether they could only marry Jews. This question led to considerable debate in the rabbinically dominated Sanhedrin, which subsequently challenged the Assembly of Notables’ answer. The final answer was a confused statement that tried to appease Napoleon by stating that ‘mixed’ marriages could happen under civil law, whilst remaining loyal to traditional religious views by stating that that such marriages could not have religious recognition.

The reaction of the French Jewish community to the Revolution and the convening of the Grand Sanhedrin set the tone for their long-term responses to the challenge of dual loyalty. Dominique Schnapper has suggested that the majority of Jews in France adopted the difficult position of underlining their loyalty as citizens who simply held a different religion. At the same time they argued that seeking to assist other Jews internationally was simply part of an effort to support all peoples, including Jews, suffering from

⁸¹ Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds), *The Jew in the Modern World*, p. 126.

⁸² Jay Berkovitz, ‘Changing Conceptions of Gentiles at the Threshold of Modernity’, in Marc Stern (ed.), *Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), pp. 129-151, pp. 141 and 143.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 129.

⁸⁴ Jay Berkovitz, ‘The Napoleonic Sanhedrin: Halakhic Foundations and Rabbinical Legacy’, *CCAR Journal A Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Winter 2007, pp. 11-35, p. 11.

discrimination, rather than evidence of some strong transnational ethnic identification.⁸⁵ Despite the continued powerful presence of anti-Semitism in France, as demonstrated by the Dreyfus affair, the vast majority of French Jewry enthusiastically adopted the universalist principles of the Revolution and enjoyed considerable pride in France's role as the promoter of Revolutionary ideals, a consensus only ruptured by Vichy's legislation in 1940 on the status of Jews and the subsequent murder of French Jews in the Holocaust.⁸⁶

Schechter has, however, argued that the short-term successes of the Sanhedrin delegates have not been properly recognised. Despite secular hostility to the Talmud, the delegates used arguments from the Talmud, demonstrating their desire to support its retention.⁸⁷ Equally, Jay Berkovitz has argued that, given the pressure from Napoleon, the delegates managed a remarkably difficult position within the boundaries of halacha. Many orthodox leaders were comfortable with the answers given at the Sanhedrin. Rabbi Sintzheim of Strasbourg, a leading Talmudic scholar and a key member of the Assembly of Notables with the biblical title of Nasi, the prince or chairman of the Grand Sanhedrin, was influenced in his answers by the Metz dayan and posek (legal judge and scholar) Rabbi Aaron Worms. Subsequently, Rabbi Sintzheim, writing to Rabbi Jeiteles in Prague expressed pleasure that he had managed effectively to resist challenges to halacha, whilst Rabbi Sofer of Hungary praised Sintzheim for having preserved orthodoxy.⁸⁸ Following Sintzheim's death, Moses Schreiber, the leading orthodox authority of the period known as the Chatam Sofer, gave a public eulogy praising him.⁸⁹

Napoleon accepted the answers of the Grand Sanhedrin, but in March 1808 he introduced three decrees. The first two organised Jewish communities around state-appointed consistorial synagogues, but the third attracted the most attention and was labelled the *Décret Infâme*. The decree, which the Sephardi Jews of South West France were exempt from, included specific rules on loans; limited Jews' ability to move to other regions of the French Empire; restricted residence in the Upper or Lower Rhine departments to Jews already living there and obliged them to obtain a *patente*, a licence, if

⁸⁵ Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, Freddy Raphaël, *Jewish Citizenship in France The Temptation of Being among One's Own* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 9.

⁸⁶ Dominique Schnapper and Penelope Johnson, 'Israélites and Juifs: New Jewish Identities in France', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, Vol. 28:1, Spring 1995, pp. 40-45.

⁸⁷ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, pp. 211 and 221.

⁸⁸ Berkovitz, 'Changing Conceptions of Gentiles at the Threshold of Modernity', pp. 129-151, pp. 134 and 139.

⁸⁹ Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, The Jews and the Sanhedrin*, p. 115.

they wished to move into commerce which required references of good conduct and had to be renewed annually. It was to last for ten years but could then be extended. In other words, the decree singled out Ashkenazi Jews, particularly of Alsace, and restricted their rights in contravention of the universalist principles of the French Revolution. They were placed, to use Simon Schwarzfuchs's expression, on 'probation'.

The Assembly of Notables and the Sanhedrin created enormous interest in a Britain already gripped by millenarian fever. Newspapers reported on the process in some detail.⁹⁰ The *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine and Review* recorded:

The circumstances of a general assembly of the Jews having been convened at Paris, naturally excited universal attention, particularly among those who regard that people as providentially preserved amidst the wreck of nations for purposes corresponding to the dictates of antient prophecy.⁹¹

Even during the Assembly of Notables and before the Sanhedrin had been called, Metternich, who at this point in his career was the Austrian ambassador to Paris, reported to Vienna that 'the Israelites have their eyes turned to the Messiah (Napoleon) who seems to free them from the yoke under which they find themselves'.⁹²

It is not part of this thesis to systematically examine European Jewry's attitude towards Napoleon and the Sanhedrin, except to stress that the attitude was not consistently enthusiastic, and it varied over time, among Jewish communities in different countries and among different groups within each community. Napoleon was welcomed by Jewish communities in Warsaw, Dresden and Frankfurt, who hoped his arrival signified emancipation or at least an improvement in their legal status.⁹³ It was, however, not just in Britain that Jews sought to prove their loyalty in the struggle against Napoleon. In other European countries, Jews also hoped that military service would lead to greater rights. Many Jews patriotically supported their native countries in the hope that it would lead to political emancipation, civil rights and their integration as part of the nation of their country of residence. Fifteen thousand Jews fought for the Habsburgs in 1803, rising to

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 12 August 1806. *The Times*, 31 March 1807. *The Times*, 8 September 1807.

⁹¹ *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine and Review*, September 1807 reprinted in *The Literary Panorama, Including a Review of Books, Magazines of Varieties and Annual Register*, November 1807.

⁹² Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, The Jews and the Sanhedrin*, p. 166.

⁹³ Schechter, 'Becoming French: Patriotic liturgy and the transformation of Jewish identity in France', p. 154.

thirty-five thousand over the course of the Napoleonic wars.⁹⁴ Following the Prussian emancipation edict, seven hundred Prussian Jews volunteered, of whom over seventy received the Iron Cross.⁹⁵ David Aberbach has argued that:

European Jewish patriotism was a hybrid of hope that the state would protect the Jews and allow them to prosper, and also of fear that it might not do unless their loyalty was total. Their patriotism welled out of the shining promises of emancipation, equality and civic rights; but also out of dread of the loss or denial of rights, and even of ultimate catastrophe.⁹⁶

Obviously, even inside each country the Jewish community frequently held very diverse views on Napoleon. For instance, in the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe, sentiment was strongly divided. In due course, on Napoleon's invasion of Russia, some, such as Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, supported Napoleon whom they saw in almost mystical terms. Others, such as Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liady, supported Czar Alexander. Immanuel Etkes has argued that Zalman's view was less a concern about Napoleon's undermining Jewish religious commitment, as had previously been suggested, than a practical political calculation influenced by Alexander's introduction of greater communal autonomy for Jews in 1804, Napoleon's declaration of the *Décret Infâme*, and Napoleon's failure to support Jews in the Duchy of Warsaw.⁹⁷

In 1806, when the Sanhedrin was called, the reaction of European Jewry was also divided. An open letter published by French Jewry in the *Moniteur Universel* of 9 October 1806 calling for all Jewish communities in Europe to send representatives to the Sanhedrin was widely reprinted in the English press.⁹⁸ For Jews and non-Jews alike, it was clear that Napoleon was hoping to attract the support of Jews in other countries.⁹⁹ The Jews of Prussia declined to send rabbis to the Grand Sanhedrin and declared that Prussia was their

⁹⁴ Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military A History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 42.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁶ David Aberbach, *The European Jews, Patriotism and the Liberal State 1789-1939 A Study of Literature and Social Psychology* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 1.

⁹⁷ Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liady: The Origins of Chabad Hasidism* (Lebanon New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 2015), pp. 259-279.

⁹⁸ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 18 October 1806. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 20 October 1806. *London Courier and Evening Telegraph*, 18 October 1806. *Hibernian Journal*, 20 October 1806.

⁹⁹ FD Kirwan, *Preface and Illustrative Notes to Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin Or Acts of the Assembly of Israelitish [sic] Deputies of France and Italy, convoked at Paris by an Imperial and Royal Decree, dated May 30, 1806, translated from the Original published by M. Diogene Tama* (London: Charles Taylor, 1807) republished (Farnborough: Greg, 1971), p. xiv.

country.¹⁰⁰ The Jews of Gothenburg were ordered to quit Sweden immediately if they were in correspondence with the Sanhedrin.¹⁰¹ Only representatives from France and Italy finally attended. In calling the first Sanhedrin since Roman times, Napoleon may have disturbed sections of Christian Europe, but he was successful in generating enormous interest amongst both Jews and Christians.

Anglo-Jewry and the Sanhedrin

Anglo-Jewry's reaction to Napoleon and the Sanhedrin was consistently hostile. The extravagant praise for Napoleon at the Sanhedrin, comparing him to the Persian Emperor Cyrus who permitted the Jews to return to the promised land, left the Anglo-Jewish community keen to answer those who expressed doubts over its position. For the *Christian Observer*, the Sanhedrin was part of Napoleon's plans to promote 'disorganization' in England and 'to institute a more extended system of *espionage* in all countries'.¹⁰² As in other countries, there was a fear in England that Napoleon, through the Sanhedrin, was seeking to appeal to Jews, which was particularly worrying given that the links of trade and family meant Jews maintained strong international connections.¹⁰³ As the anonymous Perseverans, a supporter of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst The Jews, wrote:

Knowing what a universal correspondence there is between Jews all over the world, knowing too that they usually correspond in a character totally unintelligible to all but themselves (the Rashi Letter); is it not probable that Jews in England have not communicated upon this subject with their brethren on the Continent?¹⁰⁴

Given the background, it is hardly surprising that in England the Sanhedrin produced a hostile response from Jews, but it also dismayed non-Jews who held millenarian beliefs. Common to these responses was a condemnation of the delegates to the Sanhedrin for conceding on religious issues and giving up the aspiration to return to their homeland. FD Kirwan, a pseudonym of an unknown Christian individual who translated Tama's

¹⁰⁰ *Morning Advertiser*, 19 November 1806.

¹⁰¹ *Morning Advertiser*, 24 January 1807. *Hereford Journal*, 28 January 1807. *Gloucester Journal*, 20 January 1807.

¹⁰² *Christian Observer*, September 1807, reprinted in *The Literary Panorama*, (London, November 1787), p. 603.

¹⁰³ *Morning Chronicle*, 3 September 1806.

¹⁰⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 81 Jan-June 1811, June 1811, p. 529. Rashi script was a cursive Hebrew script first used by printers of Rashi's commentary on the Bible.

Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin, attacked them for giving up the traditional Jewish belief in the hope of the expected Messiah, and of the everlasting possession of the promised land of Canaan.¹⁰⁵ In his introductory preface, Kirwan was scathing about the Jewish delegates to the Sanhedrin who praised Napoleon and:

manifested a culpable readiness to accede or even to anticipate whatever might suit the views of their government, without much regard to the precepts of their law. But for the strong opposition of the Rabbies [sic], the assembly would, as far as its authority could have gone, [have] sanctioned the marriage of Jews with Christian.¹⁰⁶

The comments in England repeatedly emphasized that the Jewish community in Britain did not share the attitude of the community in France. William Hamilton Reid, who was not Jewish, argued that England's medieval persecution of the Jews was even greater than that of other nations. Hamilton Reid had been a radical member of the London Corresponding Society in the 1790s. He was arrested in 1798 and subsequently became a government informer, seeking patronage and writing the *Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies* in 1800. Reid went on to become the editor of the *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*, but in 1806 he abandoned Anglicanism for Unitarianism, which he subsequently also left. Like Kirwan, Hamilton Reid was influenced by millenarian views and was keen to stress the independence of Anglo-Jewry from French Jews.¹⁰⁷ In *Sanhedrin Hadassah (New Sanhedrin)* he noted that:

Englishmen will revolt at the idea; but it cannot be concealed that the Jews of the Sanhedrin acknowledge the Head of the French Government as their Deliverer, and the Great Prince predicted in their sacred writings.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Kirwan, *Preface and Illustrative Notes to Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin*, p. xv.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. xiv.

¹⁰⁷ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 82. Iain McCalman, 'New Jerusalem: prophecy, Dissent and radical culture in England, 17861-1830', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.312- 335, p. 332. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, Part II, Vol 80, July-Dec 1810, 7 July 1810 (London: John Nichol and Son, 1810), pp.14 and 27.

¹⁰⁸ Anon [William Hamilton Reid], *Sanhedrin Hadassah and Causes and Consequences of the French Emperor's Conduct Towards the Jews: Including Official Documents, and the Final Decisions of the Grand Sanhedrin, A Sketch of The Jewish History since their Dispersion: Their Recent Improvements in the Sciences and Polite Literature on the Continent; And the Sentiments of principal Rabbins, fairly stated and compared with some eminent Christian Writers, Upon the Restoration, the Rebuilding of the Temple, the Millennium &c. with Considerations on the Question, Whether there is anything in the Prophetic Records that seems to point particularly to England? Plea by an Advocate for the House of Israel*, (London: M.Jones, 1807), p. vi.

In a later article, he defended the Jews in England from the charge of sharing the views of French Jews:

But if the French Jews readily acknowledge the Head of French Government as their Deliverer, and the great Prince predicted in the sacred writings, resembling Cyrus in the Old Testament, what have the English Jews to do with all of this? They have never acknowledged the validity of those proceedings, nor carried on any correspondence with those in France on the subject.¹⁰⁹

In 1807, Lazarus Cohen of Exeter attacked the Sanhedrin for bargaining away cherished beliefs in return for French citizenship. Cohen was a remarkable individual who designed a reaping machine exhibited at the Agriculture Society in Leeds in 1790 and later wrote a book on astronomy.¹¹⁰ He was clearly an acculturated Jew and made a point of thanking numerous English aristocrats for financing his agricultural equipment. His book, *Sacred Truths*, was addressed to his fellow Jews.¹¹¹ He was both distressed by the concessions made at the Sanhedrin and by the concern that Hamilton Reid's real aim in *New Sanhedrin* was to encourage eventual Jewish conversion. He strongly objected to the Sanhedrin's adoration of Napoleon as a messianic redeemer and was shocked by its views on intermarriage, arguing that it had traded religious beliefs and ethnic identity for French citizenship. Cohen's concerns were not restricted to religion, and he was well aware that his book would have a wider readership. Cohen made the standard reference to Jeremiah and then underlined once again the community's obedience to British law, its loyalty and its rejection of political activity. He emphasized, however, that he was not prepared to give up the idea of an eventual return to the Holy Land and noted that the Jews were 'in exile':

It is true in the British Empire, our lot has fallen in "pleasant places"; we have every blessing here that the heart of a Jew ought to wish for out of his own land.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ William Hamilton Reid, *Gentleman's Magazine* Vol. LXXXX Part 2, 2 July 1810, p. 12. *Sanhedrin Hadassah* had been published anonymously but Reid here acknowledges his authorship.

¹¹⁰ Bernard Susser, *The Jews of South-West England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), p. 206.

¹¹¹ Lazarus Cohen, *Sacred Truths Addressed to The Children of Israel, Residing in the British Empire, Containing Strictures on the New Book Entitled the New Sanhedrin, and Observations on some of the Proceedings of the Grand Sanhedrim [sic], Convened in Paris by Order of the French Government; tending to Shew That Jews can gain nothing by altering their present Belief, proving the local Restoration to the Land of Promise, and clearly demonstrating that Bonaparte is not the Man, the promised Messiah!* (Exeter: T. Besley, 1807).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.22.

He added:

We are happy under the British government as we can reasonably expect to be (whilst living in exile), since we enjoy here every blessing, as much as any other Jews in Europe.¹¹³

Similarly, in *A Letter to the Parisian Sanhedrin*, an anonymous English Jew was appalled by what he saw as the Sanhedrin's failure to resist Napoleon. In his eyes, Judaism would disappear if it abandoned constraints such as kashrut and the ban on intermarriage.¹¹⁴ He again emphasized the loyalty of Anglo-Jewry:

we aspire not to hold any share in the counsels of the state, content to evince our loyalty and affection by our zeal and readiness to obey its will. In this country, under the benignant and gracious reign of a mild and merciful Prince, religious toleration wears no menacing aspect. The courts of equity and justice are equally open and accessible to persons of every sect and description, without partiality or preference; unmolested in their rights of worship, and of conscience, protected in their lives and property; the Jews scarcely feel any other restraint here, than they did in their most favored land. The liberal policy of the British government has already conceded to them every immunity, and indulgence, granted to those not of the Established Church;¹¹⁵

The anonymous author continued his attack on the Jews of France, emphasizing that delegates did not attend the Sanhedrin from other countries. He noted that in England:

I am certain they [Anglo-Jewry] would hold no correspondence with you, either on religious or political subjects; especially, when the local welfare of this country so imperiously forbids it. But you have separated yourselves from the Israelites of all other nations, having sold your birth-right, as Jews, to Buonaparte; not for a mess of savoury pottage but for the unsubstantial honours of French patriotism.¹¹⁶

The extent of the protestations may seem excessive, but the risks were not imaginary. The Unitarian publication, *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, contained a remarkable review of Kirwan's *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin* and of *The New Sanhedrin*. It suggested that it was wrong to oppose everything that had originated from France and Napoleon. It took a sympathetic approach to Jewish emancipation and the calling of the

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 23.

¹¹⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 155.

¹¹⁵ Anon, *A Letter to the Parisian Sanhedrin containing Reflections on their Recent Proceedings and on their Venal Apostacy [sic] from The Mosaic Institutes: with Observations on the Conduct of Buonaparte Relative to His Projected Subversion, and Final Extermination, of the Religion of Judaism, in France By an English Israelite* (London: W. Day, 1808), pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 32. 'Savoury pottage' refers to the story of Jacob and Esau.

Sanhedrin. However, despite the generally radical approach of many Unitarians in the period, the author was so concerned by Napoleon's appeal to the Jews that he felt:

Wherever they are they will secretly favour the French cause, and like the Jesuits, will communicate important intelligence to the Emperor, distribute his bribes and, in short, become his agents.It may be necessary for the security of European states, that the Jews resident in them should take an oath of abjuration of the Grand Rabbi and Sanhedrim of Paris.¹¹⁷

Jewish protestations of loyalty did not go unnoticed. A review of Cohen's *Sacred Truths* the following year in the same Unitarian publication argued for the conversion of Jews, but noted that the 'Jews in this country we learn from the work before us look with no favourable eye upon the Grand Sanhedrim'.¹¹⁸ The loyalist sentiment of *A Letter to the Parisian Sanhedrin* was warmly commended with a brief positive review in *A Critical Review*. A further positive review in *The Anti-Jacobin Review* in 1811 declared that 'English Israelites have ever proved themselves, by their peaceful and orderly behavior, deserving every indulgence they have received'.¹¹⁹

The Goldsmids: Social Success and Acceptance

It was not simply their protestations of loyalty and proclamation of their differences with French Jewry that convinced the English 'establishment' that Anglo-Jewry could be trusted. Jewish assimilation into the highest levels of English society had an equally substantial impact. Wealthy members of Anglo-Jewry were already highly integrated into English society, having adopted the clothing and clean shaven appearance of non-Jewish Englishmen, and copied their behaviour so that they played at cards, bought country houses and had well-known mistresses.¹²⁰ Indeed, Chief Rabbi Hirschell complained in the 1790s that 'we want to be like them, dress as they dress, talk as they talk, and want to make everyone forget that we are Jews'.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ *The Monthly repository of Theology and General*, Vol. 2, January to December 1807, pp. 650-654.

¹¹⁸ *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, Vol. 3, January to December 1808, pp. 332-333.

¹¹⁹ *A Critical Review, or Annals of Toleration*, Third Series, Vol. XIV, 1808, p. 434. *Anti-Jacobin review and True Churchman's magazine, or, Monthly, political and literary censor*, 1810-1816, Vol. 38:152, p.178.

¹²⁰ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 55-57.

¹²¹ Quoted A.L. Shane, 'Isaac D'Israeli and his quarrel with the Synagogue – a reassessment', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 29, 1982-86, pp. 165-175, p. 168.

The relationship between Jews and mainstream British society is highlighted by the role of the Goldsmid brothers, Abraham and Benjamin, who were seen as communal leaders both by the Jewish community and by wider British society. For instance, Abraham Goldsmid was a key supporter of van Oven's poor relief scheme, organising for a petition in its favour to be presented by George Tierney MP to Parliament. Both Levy Alexander and the anonymous Philo Judaies, who were concerned by Van Oven's scheme for Jewish poor relief, were well aware of the need to influence Goldsmid. Philo Judaies warned him that the scheme would not work and that he would be blamed since he was the 'ostensible head of that people [the Jews]'.¹²² When in 1808 Joel, the son of Reb Leib Aleph the mohel in Portsmouth, was charged with fraud, the Portsmouth synagogue scribe wrote to Chief Rabbi Hirschell to ask for assistance.¹²³ Receiving no response, he wrote again requesting that Hirschell ask Abraham Goldsmid to intervene with the English authorities. There is no evidence that he did so, perhaps because of the reluctance to intervene in any accusation of crime against a Jew, but he did play a role, as we have seen, in assisting Jews with problems under the Alien Act.¹²⁴ It has also been suggested that Abraham Goldsmid was responsible for introducing Lewis Goldsmith to the Prime Minister Spencer Perceval. This may seem unlikely given that Lewis Goldsmith was on trial in 1809 for treason, but it is possible that he may have been known to the Goldsmids as he worked for their notary Joseph Schabracq in the 1790s.¹²⁵ Surprisingly, Goldsmith was released and subsequently produced virulent anti-French newspapers in Britain, which suggested a public subscription to finance Napoleon's assassination.

The Goldsmid brothers played an important role in raising finance for the war, but far from being dominant, they were among several competing major financial interests such as the Bank of England, the East India Company, Baring Brothers and Boyd Benfield, a major loan contractor that ran into financial difficulties in the late 1790s. Nevertheless, their role should not be underestimated. During this period, the standard method of raising revenue was for the government to ask the major finance houses to compete to be a 'loan contractor' for a newly issued government bond. These were referred to as *Omnium* and

¹²² Philo Judaies (pseud.), *A Letter to Abraham Goldsmid, Esq, Containing Strictures on Mr. Joshua Van Oven's Letters on the Present State of the Jewish Poor* (London, 1802), p. 22.

¹²³ A mohel is a Jew who is trained to perform the rite of circumcision.

¹²⁴ National Archives, *HO 5/6/259*, 22 January 1801. National Archives *HO1/4/96-101*, 25 January 1803.

¹²⁵ Alfred Rubens, 'Portrait of Anglo-Jewry 1656-1836', *Transactions of the Jewish Historic Society of England*, Vol. 19, 1955-1959, pp.13-52, pp. 40-41.

were payable in instalments, which the successful house would then sell to the public with the aim of taking a margin between the purchase and sales prices. In 1805, 1806, 1809 and 1810, the Goldsmids were successful bidders for the role of loan contractor. Other than in 1809 when they were the sole contractor, they were, however, normally only joint contractors working with partners such as the Baring Brothers.¹²⁶ The Goldsmids also sometimes worked with other wealthy Jews, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi, such as Joseph Hart Myers, Eleazar Solomons, David Mocatta, Daniel Eliason and Lyon Levy who might take junior roles in their transactions.¹²⁷ Obviously, the Goldsmids were financially motivated, but their support for fund raising was appreciated and Britain's success in raising revenue considered of prime importance. In December 1796, rather than raising money in the standard way, Pitt appealed for the public to subscribe directly to a 'Loyalty Loan'.¹²⁸ The loan for some sixteen million pounds was fully subscribed but bore such a low interest rate that the subscribers subsequently lost substantially. Subscribers included Abraham and Benjamin Goldsmid, Benjamin D'Israeli (Isaac's father), Nathan Basevi and David Samuda. *The Times* stressed the importance of the loan's success and, most significantly emphasized that the strength of the financial system of England would play a major role in determining the conflict's victor.¹²⁹

The Goldsmids also had a key role at times in maintaining financial confidence. In Newcastle in February 1797, there was a run on banks that were unable to redeem bank notes for gold. The ability of banks to circulate gold-backed notes depended on public confidence so that, in practice, few holders would actually request the notes be redeemed in gold. Pitt was forced to suspend payments so that notes could no longer be converted into gold. This led to widespread concern over the financial stability of the whole system. The Goldsmids were heavily involved when merchants agreed to take Bank of England notes, which were no longer exchangeable into gold, and circulate them, thus restoring public confidence in the value of bank notes.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Piero Sraffa (ed.), *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, Vol. 10, Biographical Miscellany (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), p. 51.

¹²⁷ Paul Emden, 'The Brothers Goldsmid and the Financing of the Napoleonic Wars', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 14, 1935, pp. 225-246, pp. 232-233.

¹²⁸ Weatherall, *David Ricardo: A Biography*, p. 32.

¹²⁹ *The Times*, 2 December 1796.

¹³⁰ Mark L Schoenfield, 'Abraham Goldsmid: Money Magician in the Popular Press', in Sheila Spector (ed.), *British Romanticism and the Jews* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 41.

Perhaps most importantly, newspapers frequently reported on the ways in which the Jewish Goldsmids were mixing at the highest levels of British society and enjoyed friendships with the Prince of Wales and Admiral Nelson. It was Abraham Goldsmid who organised the visit in 1809 of the Dukes of Cambridge, Cumberland and Sussex to the Great Synagogue, providing Rabbi Hirschell with a robe of white satin for the occasion and afterwards entertaining the royal brothers for lunch at his home.¹³¹ Abraham often entertained his neighbours Nelson and Lady Hamilton and he assisted Lady Hamilton in her financial problems after Nelson's death. Nelson even stayed at Benjamin Goldsmid's house on his final night in England before the fleet embarked to Trafalgar. Abraham Goldsmid had a particularly strong relationship with the Prince of Wales's brother, the Duke of Sussex, who became a knowledgeable Hebraist.¹³² Benjamin gave numerous major parties at his home including a fête to celebrate Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798. In 1806, Abraham organised an extravagant party at his mansion in Morden. At the party, the Prince of Wales noted that Abraham Goldsmid was 'associated with a band of brothers all benevolent like himself' and that he knew Abraham Goldsmid to be 'the tried friend of his countryever zealous for the glory and prosperity of the nation'.¹³³ In the context of late Georgian England, such socialising gave the Goldsmids immense social respectability and demonstrated to non-Jews that allowing Jews to integrate into British society was desirable and possible. The print below by Francesco Batolozzi shows Abraham, as he portrayed himself, a wealthy and distinguished English gentleman as far removed as imaginable from bearded Jewish pedlars.

¹³¹ *Bristol Mirror*, 22 April 1809.

¹³² Paul Emden, 'The Brothers Goldsmid and the Financing of the Napoleonic Wars', pp. 225-246, p. 237.

¹³³ *Kentish Weekly Post and Canterbury Journal*, 26 August 1806.



Figure 14: Francesco Bartolozzi, *Abraham Goldsmid*, 1802. British Museum: 1915,0508.607.

This process of social integration was common amongst wealthy Jews. The Goldsmids were the best known but by no means the only prominent Jews mixing in English society. On October 7th, 1812, the Lord Mayor of the City of London presided over a dinner at the London Tavern to celebrate the marriage of Joseph Abrahams, one of the first Anglo-Jewish attorneys, and Elizabeth Myers, the daughter of a wealthy fishmonger. *The Kentish Weekly Post* reported that the Mayor expressed his pleasure at finding himself at ‘the head of so numerous a party of Jews and Christians met together in friendship upon so happy an occasion’.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 16 October 1812.

One way of assimilating and integrating into English society was to demonstrate benevolence. According to Levy Alexander, Benjamin Goldsmid was responsible for instigating the Naval Asylum, which was created to look after the orphans of sailors.¹³⁵ Though Alexander may have overplayed the importance of Benjamin Goldsmid's role in its creation, both Goldsmid brothers definitely were committed supporters of the Naval Asylum.¹³⁶ Abraham Goldsmid was one of the stewards for at least some of their annual dinners.¹³⁷ This was just one of their numerous charitable donations both to institutions and individuals in need. For instance, in 1805, the *Morning Post* noted that they had also contributed to a separate charitable fund designed to look after the widows and orphans of sailors killed at Trafalgar.¹³⁸ Abraham also made contributions to the London Smallpox Hospital and The Society for the Deaf and Dumb.¹³⁹ The Goldsmids also made contributions which were overtly political, such as in 1802 for a statue for Pitt, with whose loans they were closely associated, and for Spaniards fighting against France.¹⁴⁰

The support of the Goldsmids for non-Jewish charities produced a reciprocal response. In 1795, Abraham set out to raise funds for the relief of the Jewish poor. Out of the initial eighty-seven donors, forty-one of them were not Jewish.¹⁴¹ To some extent this may have reflected a non-Jewish concern that poverty was leading to Jewish criminality, but it also reflected the influence of the Goldsmids. The scheme was put on hold for a number of years due to disagreements amongst its backers, but eventually, in 1807 led to the building of 'Jews' Hospital', which functioned as both an old age home and a trade school.¹⁴² The Goldsmids also supported other Jewish causes such as the Mashebat Nephesh, or Jewish Bread, Meat and Coal Society, founded in 1778, which included among its earliest presidents the brothers Goldsmid and also a brother-in-law, Daniel Eliason.¹⁴³

¹³⁵ Alexander, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Benj. Goldsmid*, p. 108.

¹³⁶ Emden, 'The Brothers Goldsmid and the Financing of the Napoleonic Wars', p. 232.

¹³⁷ *Morning Post*, 27 May 1802. *Morning Chronicle*, 22 May 1805. Stewards had responsibility for organising the dinner and raising and safeguarding funds.

¹³⁸ *London Morning Post*, 14 and 16 December 1805.

¹³⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March 1807. Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 250.

¹⁴⁰ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 21 June 1802. *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 16 December 1808.

¹⁴¹ Emden, 'The Brothers Goldsmid and the Financing of the Napoleonic Wars', p. 234.

¹⁴² Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 231 and 236.

¹⁴³ Albert Hyamson, 'An Anglo-Jewish Family', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 17, 1951-52, pp. 1-10, p. 5.

Mark Schoenfield has argued that, whilst the Goldsmids' support of charities was benevolent, it was also in part a response to their need to construct an image in which they would be seen as honest and reliable, particularly given their need to obtain credit for their financial transactions. In contrast to the general approbation of their behaviour, certain commentators found it unacceptable. The anonymous author of the *Commercial Habits of the Jews* attacked them, arguing that their charity was simply directed by a desire to be admired.¹⁴⁴ The author denounced Pitt's financial transactions with Jews and felt that the development of finance meant the downgrading of public virtue and the encouragement of selfish economic behaviour.¹⁴⁵ William Cobbett was even more extreme. For him, London's financial institutions were causing the decline of rural England. In his *Paper against Gold*, he condemned the 1810 bullion report, which favoured a limited extension of the suspension on the right to exchange pounds for gold. Cobbett argued that money had become for financiers an end of its own, and in this he particularly highlighted the role of the Jews. For him, the charity of the Goldsmids was simply a publicity stunt since:

With all his outward shew of liberality and generosity, he [Abraham Goldsmid] was, as to his essential practices, still a money-loving, money-amassing Jew, and nothing more.¹⁴⁶

Yet Cobbett's views were not widely accepted. Making public charitable donations was widespread among both Jewish and non-Jewish merchants and financiers, who sought at the same time to enhance their own respectability and to benefit others and would have seen no conflict between these goals.

Benjamin Goldsmid, suffering from depression, committed suicide in 1808. In 1810, Abraham Goldsmid also committed suicide, following financial pressure and depression possibly arising from his brother's death and pain from a freak accident caused by a collision involving an ox being driven along Lombard Street at high speed.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps remarkably, rather than focusing on the financial issues, the British press carried numerous obituaries expressing sorrow at their passing, repeatedly stressing their honourable business

¹⁴⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 252.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

¹⁴⁶ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 3 October 1810.

¹⁴⁷ *Leicester Journal*, 5 October 1810.

dealings and benevolence.¹⁴⁸ On the death of Benjamin, the *Morning Post* carried the following poem:

In him united shone, O! blessing rare!
The will and power of relieving all,
Who, friendless, houseless, sunk to deep despair,
Applied for succour at Roehampton hall.¹⁴⁹

The *European Magazine* ran four different articles following Abraham Goldsmid's suicide including a poem:

Based with those qualities which men hold dear
Wealthy, honour, fame, attended his career,
His death a graceful nation seem'd to feel.
So Florence mourn'd —so dropped commercial pride,
When Cosmo perish'd, and Lorenzo died.¹⁵⁰

There are references in the press coverage of the Goldsmids' deaths to their Judaism and it was noted that, although buried in a Jewish cemetery with a rabbi present, formal prayers (kaddish) were not said for them as they had committed suicide.¹⁵¹ The presence of many Jews at the graveyard was noted, but generally, the reporting on their deaths and burials was factual rather than pointed. Previously, when their charitable donations were recorded in the press, there was often no reference at all to the fact they were Jewish. For much of the press, the Goldsmids' wealth and social standing, perhaps most importantly their connections with members of the royal family and Nelson, meant that to a substantial extent, they were appropriated into English society as examples of 'good Jews' and their background often ignored.

Areas of resistance

The wealth of the Jewish community, as represented by the Goldsmid brothers, may not have promoted any improvement in the legal position of Anglo-Jewry, but they were prepared to fight fiercely when there was a threat to their existing position particularly in

¹⁴⁸ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 3 October 1810. *Bristol Mirror*, 6 October 1810. *Manchester Mercury*, 9 October 1810.

¹⁴⁹ *Morning Post*, 25 April 1808.

¹⁵⁰ *European Magazine and London Review*, October 1810, pp. 243-244.

¹⁵¹ *Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, Nov. 1810, pp. 83-832. *European Magazine and London Review*, October 1810, pp. 313-314. Mark L Schoenfield, 'Abraham Goldsmid: Money Magician in the Popular Press', in Sheila Spector (ed.), *British Romanticism and the Jews* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 37-61, p. 38. The Goldsmids were buried at the Brady Street cemetery.

respect of religious rights. The legislative measure which caused the greatest concern to the Jewish community was the Seditious Meetings Act of 1795, which aimed to restrict meetings to fifty people. The Board of Deputies rarely met in the period but in November 1795 it met twice, concerned about the risk to synagogue services. It was noted that the Bill contained a specific provision that ‘nothing in the Bill should extend to Roman Catholics or Protestant Dissenters’. The minutes are in parts frustratingly illegible, but the underlining of the above expression is in the original. The lack of reference to Jewish prayer meetings was of concern. It was agreed to lobby against it and a fee was even paid to the Attorney General. However, he returned it, for whilst he could personally charge fees in some circumstances by providing legal advice, he was unable as a government officer to express an opinion in cases of proposed legislation.¹⁵² The clause was eventually dropped and there was no subsequent suggestion that the Act covered religious meetings, but the incident again demonstrated the risks that legislation created for entirely different purposes might have an impact on the Jewish community.

The other area in which the community demonstrated a robust approach was in its battle against the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. In 1801 a converted Jew, Joseph Frey, was brought to London by the evangelical Missionary Society, which was intending to send him to Africa. However, at his suggestion he stayed in London to try and convert Jews.¹⁵³ Following study at a Christian seminary, he began in 1805 to work for the Missionary Society. Complaining about the lack of finance, he broke away from the Missionary Society and in 1809, the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews was formed. The London Society was originally founded by both Anglicans and Dissenters, but conflict arose between them over the degree of financial assistance to be provided by each denomination. Moreover, to attract Jews for conversion, separate buildings had to be maintained since Anglicans were not permitted to take a service in a place of worship used by Dissenters.¹⁵⁴ In 1815, the Dissenters withdrew from the London Society leaving evangelicals such as Lewis Way in control. Way had inherited three hundred thousand pounds from an unrelated individual named John Way, and

¹⁵² London Metropolitan Archive, *Board of Deputies minutes* 24 and 27 November 1795. Charles Emanuel, *A Century and a Half of Jewish History extracted from the Minute Books of the London Committee of Deputies of British Jews* (London, George Routledge, 1910 edition), p. 9.

¹⁵³ Robert Smith, ‘The London Jews’ Society and the Pattern of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801-1859’, *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 43:3/5, 1981, pp. 275-290, pp. 275-276.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

subsequently became dedicated to the conversion of Jews. Having bought a large country house in Stansted in Sussex, he invited Jews there to educate them in Christianity.¹⁵⁵ The Society was dominated by evangelicals in the Clapham Sect with the governing Committee including friends of Way such as Wilberforce, Simeon, Drummond and Babbington.¹⁵⁶ For such evangelicals, conversion of the Jews was an essential step towards the imminent Second Coming.

With limited success, the Society set out to convert Jews by focussing first on impoverished Ashkenazi Jews, aiming to exploit their poverty by offering financial assistance. Poor Ashkenazi Jews were considered more likely to convert and assisting them also reflected the humanitarian benevolence of most Evangelicals. In particular, the Society tried to attract Jewish children by offering places in a free school it had created, but this targeting of poor Jews and children was strongly disapproved of by some Christians as well as by Jews.¹⁵⁷ Further problems arose for the Society as doubts grew about the extent of its expenditure and the genuineness of some of the converts. In 1816, it was revealed that Frey had enjoyed a sexual affair with a reformed prostitute, who was the wife of a zealous convert.¹⁵⁸

The reaction to the Society's efforts involved all sections of the Jewish community in a conflict that would endure for decades and was particularly robust once it was clear that children were being targeted. Rabbi Hirschell reacted to the opening of a school by the Missionary Society by preaching two sermons on 3 and 10 January 1807. In the latter sermon, he stated the he felt it was necessary to

caution the congregation in general that no one do send or allow to be sent any child ... to this or any such school established by strangers to our religion ... all such persons therefore who do act contrary to this prohibition . . . will be considered as if they had themselves forsaken their religion and been baptized; and shall lose all title to the name of Jews and forfeit all claims on the Congregation both in life and death.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Rev. James Parkes, 'Lewis Way and his Times', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 20, 1959, pp. 189-210.

¹⁵⁶ Smith, 'The London Jews' Society', p. 278.

¹⁵⁷ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁹ Rabbi Meirovich, 'Ashkenazic Reactions to the Conversionists, 1800-1850', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 26, 1974, pp. 6-25, p. 12.

Hirschell and the wardens of the Great Synagogue also sent a delegation in 1807 to the London Missionary Society to express their opposition to the Society.¹⁶⁰ Six months after the opening of the London Missionary Society's school, the Goldmid- supported Jews' Hospital, which included employment training for the young as well as care for the elderly, finally opened. This was followed by the opening of the Westminster Jews' Free School in 1811 and Jews' Free School in Spitalfields, under Bernard van Oven's influence, in 1817.¹⁶¹

A number of Jewish authors wrote books opposing the Society, including Jacob Niklesburger and Joseph Crool. These attacks on the London Society emphasized the Jews' loyalty to England and that it was only the Society rather than Christianity itself to which they objected.¹⁶² Crool, a Hebrew teacher in Cambridge, challenged Frey to a debate in 1811 but subsequently pulled out, possibly under pressure not to debate religion in public.¹⁶³ In 1812, however, Crool published *The Restoration of Israel* attacking the Society. Significantly, these efforts to counter the London Society included all sections of the community. Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, a nephew of Benjamin and Abraham Goldsmid, protested twice to the Duke of Kent, patron of the London Society, that its activities violated the principle of religious freedom. The Duke reminded a dinner for the Society in May 1813 that conversion must be voluntary, and that offence should not be given to the Jewish community.¹⁶⁴ The reaction of the Jewish working class was rather more direct. Mr Cooper was attacked in 1804 whilst trying to make a speech to Jews in Duke's Place. A missionary, Mr Helmore, who was distributing missionary tracts around Duke's Place, stopped doing so after he had been threatened. In 1811, the directors of London Society recorded that Frey was frightened that he might be attacked by 'the lower order of Jews'.¹⁶⁵

For all the substantial sums given to it by evangelical supporters, the Society made few conversions, possibly only converting a hundred Jews between 1809 and 1817, of whom half may have been children.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, there is a clear contrast between the

¹⁶⁰ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 285.

¹⁶¹ Rabbi Meirovich, 'Ashkenazic Reactions to the Conversionists', p. 14. *Salmond Levin*, 'The Origins of the Jews' Free School', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 1955, Vol. 19, pp. 97-114, pp. 112-113.

¹⁶² Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: 'The Jewish Question' and English National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 19-20.

¹⁶³ Rabbi Meirovich, 'Ashkenazic Reactions to the Conversionists', p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 285- 286.

¹⁶⁵ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 286.

¹⁶⁶ Mel Scult, 'English Missions to the Jews: Conversions in the Age of Emancipation', *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 35:1, January 1973, pp. 3-17, p. 9.

considerable conversion of Sephardi Jews driven by social rather than spiritual motivation, and the failure of the Society to convert substantial numbers of Ashkenazi by convincing them of the truth of Christianity.¹⁶⁷ In part, this arose from the growing scepticism of Jews, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, in any religion based on revelation. The fierce reaction of the mainstream community may only have played a minor role in the Society's minimal success. Yet the reaction is significant. While the mainstream community was not prepared to fight for new rights such as equality before the law, it was prepared to use its influence to maintain its existing position and to resist any direct external attack on the tolerance Anglo-Jewry had enjoyed.

Conclusion

It would be easy to be cynical about the behaviour of the Goldsmids and about prayers and translated rabbinical sermons made available to the wider public, so it is important to understand their motivation. It would seem unlikely that the Anglo-Jewish expressions of loyalty arose, as they did in some European countries, from the hope of political reform. The legal position of Anglo-Jewry was already substantially better than the vast majority of European Jewry. Anglo-Jewry may have suffered restrictions, but they were aware that these applied to other non-Anglican English citizens. They were not being uniquely singled out, and the restrictions were of limited importance to the vast majority of the community. Todd Endelman has commented that even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, the bitter campaign for Jewish political emancipation in England attracted the active support of few Jews, even after the emancipation of Catholics and Dissenters, although Geoffrey Alderman has suggested that from mid-century it was at least followed enthusiastically by Jews even if the narrow issue of political emancipation was irrelevant for the vast majority.¹⁶⁸

Moreover, the widespread hostile representations of Jews were hurtful and alienating, but in comparison to the situation of Jewish communities in Europe, Anglo-Jewry genuinely appreciated its position. The emancipation of Jews was a critical turning point in European Jewish history, but the Sanhedrin and the Décret Infâme showed how vulnerable their position remained even in France. Napoleon may have freed Jews from the ghettos but the fact that ghettos still existed at the end of the eighteenth century along with detailed

¹⁶⁷ Smith, 'The London Jews' Society', p. 285.

¹⁶⁸ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 278. Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 52.

anti-Jewish legislation in many European countries demonstrated the vulnerable state of many European Jewish communities. The community in Rome laboured under medieval restrictions. *Editto Sopra Gli Ebrei* was promulgated by Pius VI in 1775 and then re-enacted in 1793 setting out oppressive measures under which the Jews of Rome lived. The rules were exhaustive, covering everything from regulations about living in the ghetto to the need to wear yellow badges, controls on Hebrew books and even the amount of milk that Jews could buy.¹⁶⁹ Alexander I's 'Constitution of the Jews' may in many senses have been reforming but would — if implemented — have resulted in large numbers of Russian Jews expelled from the countryside into towns. In 1790, the British press reported the rape and murder of Jews in Morocco.¹⁷⁰ Jews in England would also have been aware from the press that Jews in Tuscany who had supported the French Revolution suffered severe reprisals when conservative forces temporarily regained control.¹⁷¹ In many countries, political emancipation and reforms introduced in the period to ameliorate the position of Jews would not survive peace in 1815.

It would seem likely that for much of the community's elite, life in England was genuinely preferable to what they knew of Jewish life in other European countries. It is reasonable, therefore, to accept that to a considerable extent the protestations of loyalty and gratitude made by the communal elite genuinely reflected their views. Yet, there were a very small number of Jewish individuals, who were confident in expressing their beliefs in public and whose attitudes were very far from simply praising English benevolence to the Jews, and it is their views to which we will now turn.

¹⁶⁹ Nancy Nowakowski Robinson, *Pope Pius VI and the "Edict concerning the Jews" in the Context of the Inquisition and the Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003).

¹⁷⁰ *The Times*, 15 June 1790.

¹⁷¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 1 August 1799.

Chapter 5:

‘Dissident’ Voices

If the mainstream community was reluctant to express views other than statements of loyalty in public, there were a number of Jews who were prepared to declare their opinions, and these were at times both controversial and stridently expressed. This chapter will focus on four of those Jews, namely Isaac D’Israeli, David Levi, John King, and George Gordon. The individuals under consideration held a very divergent range of perspectives and came from very different Jewish backgrounds. This group of ‘dissident’ Jews comprised both political conservatives and radicals, the virtuous and the criminal, the religious and those whose religious beliefs were either non-existent or highly volatile. We shall consider the possibility that the opinions expressed by these very different individuals were not unique to them but represented different strands of opinion held within the Jewish community. Finally, we shall consider the reaction of non-Jews to the presence of Jews vigorously expressing their views.

Other individuals could have been selected. For instance, when it comes to political radicals, John King and Lord George Gordon were part of a tiny number of radical Jewish figures in the period, but they were not unique.¹ David Ruderman has highlighted Abraham Ben Naphtali Tang, who wrote on theological subjects but also expressed a radical perspective during the Wilkes Affair.² John Wilkes, who supported the American opponents of British rule, was repeatedly elected to Parliament by the Middlesex constituency and then expelled from the House of Commons. In 1770, Tang wrote a publication supporting Wilkes and asserted his confidence in being Jewish by giving it the ironic title of *A Discourse Addressed to the Minority*, signing it ‘by a primitive Ebrew’ and within the text also making it clear that the author was Jewish.³ In 1795, Lewis Goldsmith, who later violently opposed to Napoleon, wrote a preface to the second volume of Joel Barlow’s *Advice to the Privileged Orders* calling on the monarchy and aristocrats to give up their

¹ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), p. 276.

² David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry’s Construction of Modern English Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 18.

³ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 139.

privileges.⁴ The first volume had attracted considerable attention but the second volume was effectively suppressed.⁵ In 1801, he published *The Crimes of Cabinets* which attacked Pitt and accused the government of printing counterfeit assignats and of being the aggressor in the war against France.⁶ Given its radicalism, booksellers and publishers in England refused to be connected with it and Goldsmith had to self-publish and advertise it directly to the public.⁷ Having moved to Paris during the peace of Amiens, he was directed by Talleyrand to produce an English language newspaper, the *Argus, or London Review'd in Paris*, attacking the English government.⁸

The selected individuals expressed very different and indeed at times conflicting views but had in common a willingness to speak out and be involved in public debate. It is clear that a small number of Jews did not share the need to simply stress their loyalty, but had the confidence take a more aggressive approach. This growing confidence in their position was encouraged by the impact of the Enlightenment on English politics and on the Anglican Church. The simplistic interpretation of the Enlightenment as a secular anti-religious movement that led to toleration has long been challenged. For instance, Arthur Hertzberg's suggestion that Voltaire adapted medieval anti-Semitism into a form suitable for the modern world has also led to a focus on the very narrow nature of the toleration advocated by some of the philosophes.⁹ More nuanced views of the Enlightenment include examining such issues as when the Enlightenment started, its different national characteristics, its complex interaction with religion that led to changing attitudes within religious communities, and even whether there are sufficient unifying factors to consider

⁴ John Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors* (New York: James Pott & Co: 1904), p. 105. Alfred Rubens, 'Portrait of Anglo-Jewry 1656-1836', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. XV, 1946, pp.13-52, p. 40.

⁵ Percy Boynton, 'Joel Barnett advises the Privileged Orders', *New England Quarterly* Vol. 12:3, September 1939, pp. 477-499, p. 496.

⁶ Lewis Goldsmith, *The Crimes of cabinets, or, a review of their plans for the annihilation of the liberties of France and the dismemberment of her territories* (London: self-published, 1811).

⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, 26 December 1801.

⁸ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 121. *Souvenirs et Mémoires* No. 3, 1899, <http://www.le-prince-de-talleyrand.fr/lgoldsmith.html>.

⁹ Adam Sutcliffe, 'Toleration, Integration, Regeneration and Reform: Rethinking the Roots and Routes of Jewish Emancipation', in Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (eds), *Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume Seven, The Early Modern World 1500-1815* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 1058-1089, pp. 1058-1059. Harvey Chisick, 'Ethics and History in Voltaire's Attitudes towards the Jews', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 35:4, Summer 2002, pp.577-600.

the Enlightenment as one intellectual movement.¹⁰ Critically, from the perspective of this thesis, the Anglican version of religious Enlightenment would have important consequences for eighteenth-century Anglo-Jewry.

The position of Jews in Georgian England would have been far more precarious if the Church of England had reflected the attitudes of such eighteenth-century Anglicans as Henry Sacheverell and William Romaine. The success of the Dissenters following the Toleration Act of 1689 was perceived as a threat by those committed to the supremacy of the Anglican Church.¹¹ Sacheverell's speeches, which triggered riots and assisted the Tories in the election of 1710, referred to native Protestant Dissenters as these 'monsters and vapours in our bosom' who were crucifying the Anglican church in the way that Jews had crucified Christ.¹² The London parish clergy actively supported him and prayed for his success against Whig efforts to impeach him.¹³ In a similar way, the furore over the Jew Bill of 1753 was largely created by the Tory opposition using hostility to the measure for electoral purposes.¹⁴ It was, however, the medieval Christian tropes used by a small number of Anglican clerics such as William Romaine, in opposition to the Jew Bill, that underlined the continuing risks to the Jewish community. For Romaine, contemporary Jews were the 'Abettors of their Ancestors' Crimes, who crucified Christ'.¹⁵

Yet, even whilst medieval stereotypes continued in England, the Church of England experienced a dramatic internal change during which excessive religious 'enthusiasm' came to be frowned upon.¹⁶ The religious Enlightenment in many European countries was partially a reaction to the religious wars of the sixteenth century. Not surprisingly, it had its own identity in England, engineered in part by the religious conflicts during the Civil War between what many Anglican leaders saw as the anarchism of puritanism and the

¹⁰ David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 1-21. John Pablo Dominguez, 'Introduction: Religious Toleration in the Age of the Enlightenment', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 43:4, 2017, pp. 273-287.

¹¹ Geoffrey Holmes, 'The Sacheverell Riots: The Crowd and the Church in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *Past and Present*, Number 72, August 1976, pp. 63 and 69.

¹² Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren both in Church and State* (London: 1709), pp. 15 and 17.

¹³ Holmes, 'The Sacheverell Riots', p. 69.

¹⁴ Thomas Perry, *A Study of the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 194.

¹⁵ William Romaine, *A Modest Apology for the Citizens and Merchants of London who petitioned the House of Commons against Naturalizing the Jews* (London: W Webb, Second Edition 1753), p. 4.

¹⁶ Jeremy Gregory, 'Articulating Anglicanism The Church of England and the Language of the 'Other' in the Eighteenth Century', in Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee (eds), *Religion, Language and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 143-167, pp. 148-150.

despotism of Catholicism.¹⁷ Moderate Anglicans were anxious to play down divisive doctrinal issues. The majority of the Church of England hierarchy sought to avoid religious conflict. Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, noted that ‘enthusiasm is a very horrid thing’.¹⁸ The 1689 Act of Toleration had only extended religious toleration to Trinitarian Protestants, but it ensured broad acceptance of the principle of toleration, which was increasingly seen as a sign of liberty of which England could be proud.¹⁹ Whereas it had earlier been held that one church was crucial in binding society together, this was now increasingly questioned. The Church of England remained the established church and a powerful body in society, but the presence of numerous churches enabled an individual to think about selecting a different church or even to consider going to no church at all.²⁰ For some High Church Anglicans, anything which undermined the Church’s position was anathema, but many in the Church of England took a different view. The Jew Bill produced a clear split between Anglican bishops, who were generally highly educated and influenced by the Enlightenment, and local vicars. Horace Walpole described how ‘the little curates preached against the bishops for deserting the interests of the Gospel’.²¹ Living in a country where much of the senior clergy had been imbued with Bishop Warburton’s belief in ‘heroic moderation’, the risks to the Jewish community from prejudice inspired by the Church were limited.²² English concepts of religious toleration owe much to John Locke’s intellectual thought, but it was the practical politics of the period and, in particular, the success of the Whigs in the first half of the century which ensured that the Church was dominated by bishops imbued with the tolerance promoted by the Enlightenment.²³ The vast majority of Christians still wished to convert Jews, a desire enhanced by the rise of millenarianism and evangelicalism, but Anglo-Jewry did not live under a church that was actively promoting traditional Christian anti-Semitic tropes.

One further critical point which needs to be considered in terms of the ‘public space’ available to Jews is the gradual acceptance during the eighteenth century not merely of the

¹⁷ Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 3-8.

¹⁸ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), p. 69.

¹⁹ Penelope Corfield, ‘An Age of Infidelity: secularization in eighteenth century England’, *Social History*, Vol. 39:22, 2014, pp. 229-247, p. 233.

²⁰ Corfield, ‘An Age of Infidelity’, p. 232.

²¹ Horace Walpole, in John Brooke (ed.), *Memoirs of King George II*, Vol. 1, Book 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 238-239.

²² Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 25.

²³ Jeremy Smilg, ‘What does The Jew Bill of 1753 Tell us about mid-eighteenth Century English Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Response to it?’, M. Res Thesis, University of Southampton, 2013, pp. 48-53.

freedom to enjoy religious tolerance but also the intellectual freedom to think and publish. The right to express radical ideas, which Spinoza amongst others had called for, was gradually accepted in England during the eighteenth century. The lapse of the Licencing Act in 1695 still left newspapers vulnerable to post publication charges of seditious libel but enhanced their ability to publish critical articles. The growing middle class translated into a rapid growth in newspaper readership. By the late eighteenth century, there were over thirty-five newspapers in London and over seventy in the provinces. The average sale of a London newspaper was between 2,500 and 3,500 copies, but it has been estimated that each copy might have been read ten times in coffee houses and reading societies.²⁴ Criticism of the government, both inside and outside of Parliament, was seen as respectable and indeed expected. Many members of Parliament opposed the government during the Wilkes affair and the American Revolution. The eighteenth century saw substantial freedom of the press and political opposition, but it would be a mistake to consider these developments as inevitable. Indeed, the repressive Pitt legislation of the 1790s resulted in a dramatic decline in freedom and demonstrated how in conditions of war and fear of revolution, a society that had been tolerant of opposition could rapidly change. If a few Jews in England reflected the prevailing intellectual climate in their attitudes to philosophy and intellectual thought, their willingness to express their convictions also reflected wider acceptance of the public expression of views which defied a conservative consensus. This applied most clearly to radical political opinions, but it also applied, as we shall see, to the willingness of Isaac D'Israeli, to defend Anglo-Jewry and comment on developments for the Jewish community in France.

Isaac D'Israeli and Vaurien

The Jew who expressed himself most clearly in the 1790s on the question of Jewish rights in England was Isaac D'Israeli.²⁵ Isaac has very largely been studied as the father of Benjamin rather than in his own right. There has been substantial interest in Isaac's dispute with Bevis Marks, his role in the conversion of Benjamin, his influence on Benjamin's novels and Benjamin's handling of hostility to his Jewish roots by embracing a racial concept of

²⁴ H.T. Dickinson, 'Lesser British Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin Writers during the French Revolution', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, Vol. 29, 2014, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ On the spelling of the D'Israeli name, see Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (New York, Schocken, 2008), pp. 8-12.

descent from a Sephardi elite, which he argued was on a par if not superior to the British aristocracy.²⁶ Isaac may subsequently have converted his children to Christianity and held fiercely anti-religious views, but in *Vaurien* in 1797 he launched a powerful defence of the Jewish community and denounced the treatment of Jews in England. *Vaurien*, therefore, represents an extreme contrast to the submissive response of the official Jewish community. The biting satire of the chapter discussing Jews titled, ‘A Dissertation on the Jews, tending to prove that they should not be burnt’, demonstrates D’Israeli’s strength of feeling on the subject.²⁷

James Ogden wrote the only biography of Isaac D’Israeli in 1969.²⁸ In his note on sources, Ogden commented that:

The Hughenden archives in particular contain masses of material which seem to have been steadily gathering dust since the days of Money Penny and Buckle, and an intensive examination of all the sources would require a team of researchers such as probably could only be got together in America.²⁹

Matters have improved since the 1960s with further research and indexing having been conducted on the ‘Hughenden archives’ which are now held by the Bodleian Library, and this thesis has benefitted from research into those archives.³⁰ Moreover, there has been a revival of interest in the Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels of the 1790s of which *Vaurien* is an example. In 2001, Nicola Trott published an edited version of *Vaurien* with a number of review articles that had been published contemporaneously. Her work is part of a series of republished anti-Jacobin novels seeking to examine the reaction of conservative authors to the fear that novels written by radicals —such as William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* or Thomas Holcroft’s *Anna St. Ives* —would undermine society both politically and in terms of family structure.³¹ Literacy rose sharply in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, following the publication of Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* in 1722 and Samuel

²⁶ Todd Endelman, ‘The Myth of Sephardi Superiority’, in Todd Endelman and Tony Kushner (eds), *Disraeli’s Jewishness* (London and Portland: Valentine Mitchell, 2002), pp. 23-40.

²⁷ Anon [Isaac D’Israeli], *Vaurien: or sketches of our time: exhibiting views of the philosophies, religions, politics, literature and manners of the age* (London: Cadell, 1797), Vol. 2, p. 214.

²⁸ James Ogden, *Isaac D’Israeli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

³⁰ It can only be regretted that the publication by J Gunn and M Wiebe of Benjamin Disraeli’s letters did not extend to Isaac D’Israeli.

³¹ Morgan Rooney, ‘Anti-Jacobin Fiction and the Eighteenth-Century Traditions of the Novel: Robert, Bisset, Isaac D’Israeli, and the Novel Reclamation’, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 48:2, Winter 2015, pp. 221-238.

Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740, the reading of novels grew rapidly.³² There was particular concern about the impact of novels on female readers whom it was feared might develop ideas that led them to challenge traditional male dominated structures.³³ This fear is reflected in *Vaurien* when D'Israeli expressed concern that the ideas held by women may be particularly volatile.³⁴ Moreover, many authors felt the novel was an inferior form of literature, and Isaac D'Israeli shared this perspective. He wrote to his anonymous female correspondent 'P' that:

I am no reader of novels – except those, and they are few, of the very first order.....As for V-n it is unworthy of me; there is something vain in this but I never imagined that the author wd [sic] even be guessed at. It was the hasty effusion of a few weeks. I shall not write Novels, but I think one of these days, to form a volume for the ladies, & to prefix my name so that it will be written, at least, with all my feeble powers.³⁵

Technically, *Vaurien* was written anonymously but it cannot be assumed this was an attempt to hide that the fact that the book, with its chapter on Jews, had been written by D'Israeli, a Jew. Approximately eighty per cent of novels published between 1750 and 1790 were published anonymously.³⁶ This may have been because novels were seen as not quite respectable and publishing anonymously became a common literary approach until a novelist was so well established that his or her name would increase sales. Moreover, many novels were only formally anonymous and contained references to other publications by the same author. At this point in his career, D'Israeli was hungry for success and did not, in practice, hide his authorship. He wrote repeatedly to Dr Griffiths, the editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, asking why the reviews of *Vaurien* had been delayed.³⁷ The *Monthly Mirror* of 1

³² J. Paul Hunter, 'The novel and social/cultural history', in John Richetti (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 9-40, pp. 19-20.

³³ Nancy Johnson, 'The French Threat in Anti-Jacobin Novels of the 1790s', in Thomas DiPiero and Pat Gill (eds), *Illicit Sex: Identity Politics in Early Modern Culture*, (Athens Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1997), pp. 181-203. M.O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel, British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 17. J. Paul Hunter, 'The novel and social/cultural history', p. 22.

³⁴ Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 79. D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 1, p. 135, Vol. 2, p. 173.

³⁵ Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden, G1 246/1 folios 46-47.

³⁶ James Raven, 'The Anonymous Novel in Britain and Ireland 1750-1830', in Robert Griffin (ed.), *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 141-167, p. 143.

³⁷ Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden, G1 244/4 folios 112-115.

March 1797 referred to D'Israeli by name as the author although, perhaps surprisingly, his identification as the author was not mentioned by a number of other reviewers in 1797.³⁸

In *Vaurien*, D'Israeli combines the romantic story of the naive Charles, who comes to London and courts Emily, with the activities of Vaurien, a French revolutionary agent. Vaurien is in London to spread radical ideas, spy on the country and plot revolution, but he also attempts to seduce Emily. His character is reflected in his name, which comes from the French 'vaut rien' or in English a 'worthless individual'. Charles' relative, Lord Belfield, is the patron of a radical group. The combination in *Vaurien* of an individual who is both a radical and a disreputable seducer is a common device in anti-Jacobin literature representing a desecration of both the state and female virtue.³⁹ Lisa Wood has suggested that whilst this combination is common, D'Israeli prioritises the political story and the book increasingly focused on Vaurien's political efforts to the extent that the reconciliation between Charles and Emily is not even spelled out at the end of the novel.⁴⁰ In the preface to *Vaurien*, D'Israeli commented that he had 'chosen the form rather than the matter of a novel'.⁴¹ Obviously, he had also chosen the subject matter, but D'Israeli's focus on the 'form' emphasized his desire to stress that he had written a political anti-Jacobin novel rather than a romance. He was not the first—his friend William Pye had already written *The Democrat*—but *Vaurien* is an early example of such writing. D'Israeli was equally disingenuous in stating that no one in the novel was based on a single person but at the same time noting there was 'not one character, and scarcely one incident, which is not founded on facts'.⁴² There may be some truth to D'Israeli's argument that the characters were compilation figures and there are some doubts over the precise identification of Belfield's radical group with contemporary radicals, but the character Subtile has generally been recognised as William Godwin, Reverberator as Thomas Holcroft and Dragon as John Thelwall.⁴³ It is harder to identify Lord Belfield, the aristocrat who is radical until it comes to the question of property distribution, but he may be a composite character based

³⁸ *Monthly Mirror*, 1 March 1797 reprinted in Isaac D'Israeli (published anon), in Nicola Trott (ed.), *Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times*, W. M. Verhoeven (series editor) Anti-Jacobin Novel Vol. 8 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005), pp. 292-295.

³⁹ Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel British Conservatism and the French Revolution*, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Lisa Wood, *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism and the Novel after the French Revolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), pp. 54-55.

⁴¹ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 1, p. xvi.

⁴² D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Advertisement, p. xx.

⁴³ Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel British Conservatism and the French Revolution*, p. 226, ft. 25. Trott (ed.), *Vaurien*, pp. xiii-xiv.

on Whig aristocrats, such as Bedford and Shelburne, who continued to support Charles James Fox. Yet, in a wider sense, D'Israeli was telling the truth since his real target was not particular individuals but what he saw as the absurdity of radical philosophy.

Vaurien clearly demonstrates D'Israeli's interest in politics. Benjamin's statement that his father was not interested in politics was simply not accurate.⁴⁴ If he was not interested in everyday party-political matters, he was concerned about the wider field of political ideas. D'Israeli was not blind to the faults of the *Ancien Régime*. Indeed, to begin with, as he stated in a footnote in *Vaurien*, he welcomed the Revolution, as did most people in England, even those from conservative backgrounds.⁴⁵ In 1794, *Domestic Anecdotes of the French Revolution* was published.⁴⁶ Ogden suggests it is unclear how much of *Domestic Anecdotes* was written by D'Israeli and how much he simply translated the writing of two émigrés from France with whom he was friendly.⁴⁷ Its preface sets out the reason for writing the book and demonstrates both his criticism of the *Ancien Régime* and hostility to the revolution:

It is to shew our COUNTRYMEN what are the disorders that led to Revolution and remind them still further, that A TOO SUDDEN REVOLUTION MAY BE MORE TERRIBLE THAN THE DISORDERS IT WOULD RECTIFY.⁴⁸

Vaurien reflects this attitude and is a clearly conservative novel expressing the concern that radicals were seeking to destroy English society and that revolutionaries were hidden amongst the French émigrés to England. In the Preface to *Vaurien*, D'Israeli states:

France has now shewn the world the eternal conflicts, the personal hatreds, and the incalculable horrors of republicanism; it is these men we fear, and it is these men some traitors of England aspire, and secretly study, to emulate.⁴⁹

Yet, there are elements in *Vaurien* that are surprisingly radical, and which challenged conservative assumptions about the nature of English society. It mocks the gambling and sexual promiscuity of the English upper classes. In contrast, it sympathetically portrays Mrs Wilson, a prostitute whose husband was ruined by the cost of legal action commenced by a

⁴⁴ David Cesarani, *Disraeli The Novel Politician* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 17.

⁴⁵ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 291.

⁴⁶ Anon [Isaac D'Israeli?], *Domestic Anecdotes of the French Revolution, During the Last Thirty Years, Indicative of the French Revolution* (London, C. and G. Kearsley, 1794).

⁴⁷ Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Anon [Isaac D'Israeli?], *Domestic Anecdotes of the French Nation*, p. A10. Capitals are as in the original. James Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Preface p. xix.

litigious neighbour over the accidental theft of apples, and who only became a prostitute to feed her children. *Vaurien* begins with the story of the naive Charles' surprise when he comes to London 'where the most finished gentleman is the most noted pickpocket; the oldest thief an officer of justice; and a prostitute a virtuous and affectionate parent'.⁵⁰ Conservative reviewers who generally approved of the book's opposition to the French Revolution were disturbed by its treatment of Jews and prostitutes, which was, in contrast, welcomed by radical reviewers even when they disagreed with the book's overall political stance.⁵¹

The chapter on Jews, in which Vaurien visits a Jewish philosopher, has a clear political message and stands out in many ways from the rest of the novel. Much of the book can be described as rambling, with whole chapters neither advancing the plot nor developing the attack on radical philosophy. The book's subtitle, 'sketches of our time: exhibiting views of the philosophies, religions, politics, literature and manners of the age', provided D'Israeli with free reign to roam widely, but the result, as the *Critical Review* noted, was that 'there is no regular story that serves to bind the whole together'.⁵² It is only at page 190 that Vaurien himself appears. As Marvin Spevack has argued, the chapter in *Vaurien* on the Jewish philosopher is 'interposed' into the novel.⁵³ It reads like an opportunistic chapter to defend the Jewish community, and there can be no doubt of its importance to D'Israeli. The longest chapter in the book, it contains a larger number and more detailed footnotes than any other chapter. Their significance was immediately picked up in an otherwise generally favourable review in the conservative *Anti-Jacobin Review*:

The chapter attempting to give the preference to the Jewish religion over the Christian, although the dissertation be in the person of a Jewish Philosopher, and not of the author himself, is very reprehensible and some positions indecent to blasphemy. As the arguments of the Jewish Philosopher are left unanswered by the author in the text, and as they are supported by him in footnotes, it is not unfair to conclude that they contain his own sentiments. Be that as it may, they are silly, frivolous, and false, even in the point of intellectual merit, they are very unworthy of the rest of the work.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 1, p. 26.

⁵¹ For an example of a radical reviewer praising his attitude towards prostitutes and Jews, see *Analytical Review* 27 April 1798, pp. 425-428 reprinted in Trott (ed.), *Vaurien*, pp. 298-301.

⁵² *Critical Review* 2nd series, 21 November 1797, reprinted Trott (ed.), *Vaurien*, pp. 293-300, pp. 297-298.

⁵³ Marvin Spevack, 'D'Israeli and Disraeli and the Genius of Judaism', *Ashkenas Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* Vol. 15, Issue 1, 2005, pp. 135-149, p. 135.

⁵⁴ *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1 December 1798, pp. 685-690 reprinted in Nicola Trott (ed.), *Vaurien*, pp. 301-304.

Vaurien is rejected by a Jewish philosopher modelled on the German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, who played a key role in the development of the Haskalah, the German Jewish religious enlightenment. Indeed, Vaurien finds the Jewish philosopher is reading Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*. Shortly afterwards, in July 1798, D'Israeli wrote an article on Mendelssohn, whom he called 'a sublime genius', that he entitled a 'biographical sketch of the Jewish Socrates'.⁵⁵ Yet, Mendelssohn would have been shocked by D'Israeli's courage. It is not just that in *Vaurien* D'Israeli defended the Jewish community but that he did so with such intensity and anger in a book clearly aimed at an English non-Jewish audience. There are no traces of fear or hesitancy in his satire condemning the medieval belief that Jews crucified children for their blood at Passover:

I know not of any Jew who was hanged for crucifying a child, but I know, that when these accusations were formed, the king was very poor, and the fines were very heavy. The Jews have never used any wood for the purpose of crucifying Christians, but the Christians have employed a great deal for burning Jews.⁵⁶

In late eighteenth-century England, few people still believed that Jews actually crucified children but D'Israeli clearly felt that non-Jews needed to be reminded of the barbaric nature and irrationality of anti-Jewish prejudice. D'Israeli was equally forthright in facing more contemporary areas of criticism and he defended even the most unpopular elements of the community. Like Levy Alexander, he asked if Jews were really different. Whilst not denying criminality among the Jewish poor, he questioned whether there was any real difference between the criminality of poverty stricken Jewish and Christian peddlars.⁵⁷

He was equally unafraid to deal forthrightly with attacks on Jewish financiers. Given the extent of aristocratic gambling, card playing and conspicuous expenditure in the period, it was hardly surprising that the need for debt was significant. For instance, Charles James Fox and the Prince of Wales received satirical attention for the extent of their debt and reliance on Jewish lenders. Given their unpopularity, D'Israeli robustly and bravely defended Jewish financiers, stressing that Jews were not the only lenders. He pointed out that there had been no shortage of usurious lenders in England following the expulsion of Jews in the Middle Ages. D'Israeli equally queried where blame should lie since 'such cases only shew that the prudent Jew knows the value of money, and the imprudent Christian is an abject slave of his unsubdued passions'.⁵⁸ D'Israeli demonstrated a willingness not just to

⁵⁵ *Monthly Magazine*, July 1798, pp. 38-44.

⁵⁶ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 235.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

confront widely held Christian prejudices about Jews, but to do so using pejorative language about Christians.

Moreover, in *Vaurien*, D'Israeli did not simply defend the Jewish community from prejudice. He took an aggressively offensive posture. He denounced Parliament's failure to repeal the medieval decrees of expulsion and noted:

The state of the modern Jews is not less severe than that of the ancient. They groaned in ages of persecution, and in ages of toleration they are degraded. In England it is doubtful whether the Jew be citizens; they are merely tolerated inhabitants; even this expression is too gentle.⁵⁹

Obviously, D'Israeli was writing to make a political point and permitted himself a degree of hyperbole. As previously discussed, a Jew born in any part of the king's dominions was the king's subject. He was, however, making an important political point about the failure of Parliament, in contrast to France, to clarify the rights of Jews.

The question that needs to be asked is why D'Israeli chose to incorporate the chapter on the Jewish philosopher at all and why he wrote in such strong terms. A number of possible motives exist, and they are not contradictory. At least in part, D'Israeli's comments were written in direct response to Burke's 'diatribe' against the Jews, for which he blamed Burke's 'black imagination' noting that Burke's beautiful style should not be used for such offensive subjects as it 'is a gilding sunshine that exhausts its splendour on a dunghill'.⁶⁰ However, whilst D'Israeli may have been affronted by Burke's comments on the Jews, he shared Burke's conservative perspective on the French Revolution. Indeed, like Burke, he was attracted by Barruel's conspiracy theory. The Bodleian archives hold a comment in a hitherto neglected letter to his anonymous correspondent Mrs 'P':

I send you with this a little pamphlet, which contains the heads of Barruel's Memoires of Jacobinisme. The Honble Mr Clifford, the Translator, gave it to me, & if you have not read the work, I recommend it to your perusal particularly the 3 & 4 vols. [relative] to the Illuminés who are still active, & patronised.⁶¹

D'Israeli was not, however, simply reacting to Burke in the chapter on Jews. Before visiting the Jewish Philosopher, Vaurien visits the 'Platonist', a character based on Thomas Taylor

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 239-240.

⁶⁰ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, ft. pp. 221/222.

⁶¹ Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden, G1 246/1 folio 84. Full title for Barruel's work is *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme*. The missing word is hard to read but probably 'relative'. The underlining is in the original.

whose *Vindications of the Rights of Brutes* has been taken as a satire mocking radical thought by transferring it to animals and arguing for their rationality. James Vigus has, however, suggested that Taylor was in his own way genuinely radical and to an extent was a supporter of both vegetarianism and animal rights.⁶² D'Israeli portrays the Platonist as an eccentric talking to animals, but Vaurien visits him hoping for the Platonist's support as they share an agenda to 'overthrow the religion of Jesus'.⁶³ In particular, Vaurien considers that the Platonist is 'among the characters selected..... whose talents and dispositions seemed adapted to coalesce with his [Vaurien's] general view'. D'Israeli made it clear that Vaurien subsequently visits the Jewish philosopher 'for the same purpose he had visited the Platonist'.⁶⁴ It appears that D'Israeli was concerned that his readers would believe that Jews in Britain found revolutionary views appealing.

Indeed, Vaurien specifically refers to the emancipation of Jews in France as a way of appealing to the Jewish philosopher.⁶⁵ In response, D'Israeli thus felt the need to demonstrate that revolutionary ideals, as represented by Vaurien, would be rejected by the Jews, as represented by the Jewish philosopher. The mainstream community's reaction to this risk was simply to stress its loyalty, but D'Israeli's views were more nuanced and conflicted. The Jewish philosopher rejects Vaurien's approach but has no hesitation in spelling out the inequity of Britain's treatment of its Jewish population.

It is also likely that the legal status of Benjamin D'Israeli, Isaac's father's, provided a separate influence on the chapter in *Vaurien*.⁶⁶ In Benjamin's memoirs of his father, *On the Life and Writing of Mr Disraeli by His Son*, written after his father's death for the fourteenth edition of Isaac's *Curiosities of Literature*, he noted that his grandfather had become a denizen on his arrival in England in 1748.⁶⁷ Both Ogden and Roth noted in passing that this was an error and that Benjamin D'Israeli (Isaac's father) actually became a denizen in 1801, but they did not draw any implication from this.⁶⁸ Focus has fallen on Disraeli's claim to

⁶² James Vigus, 'Adapting Rights: Thomas Taylor's A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes', in Cian Duffy, Peter Howell and Caroline Ruddell (eds), *Romantic Adaptions: Essays in Meditation and Remediation* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp. 41–57, pp. 42–45.

⁶³ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, pp. 187, 212.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 214–215.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶⁶ Both Isaac's father and son were called Benjamin.

⁶⁷ Fourteenth corrected version, Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature* (Boston and London: William Veazie, 1879), p.4 accessed <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn28q4;view=1up;seq=28>.

⁶⁸ Cecil Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 5. Neither Roth nor Ogden provide a reference, but they are correct in their 1801 date. National Archives *PSO 6/7* Privy Seals Office Index to Docquet Book confirms he became a denizen in August 1801, as does *PSO 5/27* Privy Seals Office Docquet Book for August 1801. Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden *F1 241/1* and *241/2*.

be descended from Sephardi nobility, but the date of his grandfather's endenization in fact deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. It may be that this date was a simple error by Benjamin but, given that the appropriate petition and certificates were in his father's papers, it is quite possible that he deliberately backdated his grandfather's status. The date of Benjamin senior becoming a British denizen is, however, certainly important for our understanding of Isaac since his views in *Vaurien* may have been influenced by his father's alien status at the time it was written. It would seem highly likely that Benjamin would have been on the Bevis Marks alien list of 1803 if he had not been endenized in 1801. Isaac was certainly very conscious of its provisions. The Alien Act is used to expel Vaurien at the end of the novel, although Isaac was not the first author to use this plot device as it had already been exploited by Pye in *The Democrat*.⁶⁹ *Vaurien* also directly refers by name to a real individual, Monsieur De La Blancherie, as having been threatened by expulsion under the Alien Act.⁷⁰ The review in the *Monthly Review* by the radical William Taylor was concerned that a 'wholly unfounded denunciation is pointed at an individual, unfortunate, and insecure already beneath the despotism of the alien bill'.⁷¹

One of the issues on which Isaac D'Israeli felt particularly strongly was the extent to which Jews had the right to hold property. The Jewish Philosopher complains that in Britain 'the Jew cannot purchase the house which he inhabits'.⁷² *Vaurien's* comments on the ability of Jews to purchase property may not have been technically accurate but they demonstrate the uncertainty in the community on the issue. As was noted in the Introduction, aliens could not buy freeholds regardless of their religion, and this would continue until 1870. This clearly had an impact on Jewish immigrants such as Isaac D'Israeli's father, but this restriction arose because they were aliens and not because they were Jewish. It was generally believed that Jews born in England could buy property but even for them, there was some doubt over the legal position. This had been aired in the vitriolic debate in 1753 over the Jew Bill. A number of different arguments were advanced to argue that Jews could not purchase property. These included Jews being banned from buying freeholds under the common law; that Jews, even if born in the king's dominions, could not be citizens as they were, in the opinion of the medieval jurist Edward Coke, infidels who were 'perpetui inimici' (perpetual enemies); and finally, and perhaps most

⁶⁹ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 323.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁷¹ *Monthly Review*, 24 September 1797, pp. 33-36, reprinted in Trott (ed.), *Vaurien*, pp. 295-296.

⁷² D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 240.

worryingly for Jews, that the statutes passed in 1270 (55 Henry III) and in 1275 the Statute de Judaismo (18 Edward I), prior to the expulsion of Jews in 1290, had never been formally repealed and were still in force. These banned Jews from acquiring certain forms of property.⁷³ There was, therefore, doubt over the right of Jews to one of the most fundamental rights in any society: the right to hold property on the same terms as other members of society.

D'Israeli's caustic comments in *Vaurien* are therefore easy to understand. Following re-admittance to the United Kingdom, Jews had started buying property in trust so that they were registered in the name of a non-Jewish lawyer or family friend. For instance, Benjamin Goldsmid's properties were held in the name of Mr Hamerton, his steward and tutor to his children.⁷⁴ Regardless of the actual legal position, some Jews were nervous about the right to own property and this can only have intensified when houses around Skinner Street in the City were sold by a lottery that was specifically authorized by Parliament in the City Lottery Act 1806 and amended in 1809. An advertisement appeared in *The Times* in 1810 encouraging Jews and foreigners to take part in the sale as this was a way for them to obtain a freehold 'which, by the law of the land, he cannot by any other means obtain'.⁷⁵

As the eighteenth century progressed, Jews did start buying freeholds in their own names, but it remained an issue of concern within the community. Isaac D'Israeli writing in 1833 in *The Genius of Judaism* commented that in the past lawyers had insisted that Jews could not even purchase the house in which they lived but later lawyers had dismissed this 'obsolete opinion'.⁷⁶ In fact, despite D'Israeli's confidence, the position was still not completely free of doubt even when he was writing *The Genius of Judaism*. In 1830, Lewis Levy, an owner of turnpike roads, argued that Jews had no interest in voting or sitting in Parliament but they did desire legislation confirming the rights of Jews to hold real estate.⁷⁷

⁷³ Smilg, 'The Jew Bill of 1753', pp. 80-87.

⁷⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian*, p. 113.

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 22 October 1810. *London News*, 21 October 1810. *London Independent Whig*, 21 October 1810.

⁷⁶ D'Israeli, *The Genius of Judaism* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833), p. 249.

⁷⁷ H.S.Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 192. Philip Carteret Webb, *The Question, Whether a Jew, Born Within the British Dominions, was, Before the Making the Late Act of Parliament, a Person Capable, by Law, to Purchase and Hold Lands to Him, and His Heirs, Fairly Stated and Considered* (London: Roberts, 1753). Joseph Grove, *A Reply to the Famous Jew Question* (London: J. Robinson, 1754).

In his support for reform, the barrister, John Elijah Blunt, was forced to concede that there was still a strong argument that Jews did not have the right to buy property.⁷⁸

As powerfully expressed as D'Israeli's support for Jewish civil rights was in *Vaurien*, his views on Jews and Judaism were ambiguous and at times hostile. He believed Judaism has been corrupted by the 'superstitions' of the Talmud, which he described in *Curiosities of Literature* as 'the complete system of barbarous learning of the Jews'.⁷⁹ D'Israeli was possibly following Voltaire, whom he greatly admired, in his hostility to the Talmud.⁸⁰ D'Israeli urged Jewish communities to improve secular education and abandon study of the Talmud. His hostility was shared by many Christians, who accepted the *Old Testament* as part of Christianity but argued that Judaism had been corrupted by the obscurantist rabbinical doctrines of the Talmud. Hostility to the Talmud influenced English Jews as well as Christians in the nineteenth century. Anglo-Jewry increasingly associated it with what they saw as narrow minded Jewish immigrants to England.⁸¹ Far from recognising the argument that the Talmud in many cases watered down the harshness of the Torah, many Jews in the nineteenth century followed D'Israeli's advice in *The Genius of Judaism* and relegated it to the top shelf to be read as a 'curiosity of antiquity'.⁸² For this period, however, D'Israeli's view on the Talmud was relatively unusual for a Jew. Some of the Maskilim, European supporters of the Haskalah movement of Jewish Enlightenment, were also critical of the Talmud, but they did not hold a uniform opinion. Generally, the Maskilim did not accept that the Talmud was divinely inspired, but some like Saul Berlin and Isaac Satanow argued that the Talmudic sages enjoyed substantial scientific, as well as religious, knowledge, and that their legal decisions were supported by reason. For the vast majority it was still considered a work of importance for Jews and worthy of study.⁸³

Part of Isaac's dislike for the Talmud was that it contained decisions such as the requirement for circumcision, which he felt were deliberately designed to stop Jews from assimilation.⁸⁴ He would later develop these ideas in *The Genius of Judaism* setting out the

⁷⁸ John Elijah Blunt, *A History of the Establishment and Residence of the Jews in England with an Enquiry into their Civil Disabilities* (London: Saunders and Benning, 1830), pp. 121-129.

⁷⁹ Quoted Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p. 194.

⁸⁰ Chisick, 'Ethics and History in Voltaire's Attitudes towards the Jews', pp. 577-600, p. 585.

⁸¹ David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840-1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 292.

⁸² D'Israeli, *The Genius of Judaism*, p. 265.

⁸³ Moshe Pelli, 'The Attitudes of the First Maskilim in Germany towards the Talmud', *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXVII*, 1982, pp. 243-260.

⁸⁴ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 227.

features of Judaism, in particular kashrut, Sabbath and circumcision, which he felt were responsible for ‘separating the Israelite from the Christian’.⁸⁵ The Jewish philosopher in *Vaurien* is eating a pork chop, a traditional anti-Jewish trope demonstrating Jewish hypocrisy that would have horrified the kosher Mendelssohn. Nevertheless, D’Israeli was perhaps right to highlight the issue of kashrut. In England, social acceptability, rather than any intellectual movement, drove wealthy Jews towards conversion. As the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, Henry Home, Lord Kames, put it:

The Jews, while they suffered the severest persecution in Christian countries, continued obstinate in their religion. In England, being now treated with humanity, they daily become converts to Christianity, not being able to bear with patience the slight contempt their religion lies under nor the unsociableness of their ceremonies, which oblige them to eat separately from others.⁸⁶

Isaac D’Israeli echoed the view of many European reformers that Jews first had to ‘regenerate’ by shedding fanatical religious misconceptions and obtaining a wider education before they could be politically emancipated and fully integrated into society. Yet, in a remark that may already have indicated D’Israeli’s long-term doubts, the Jewish philosopher comments that Jewish emancipation is not desirable since ‘at present they are unworthy of it. Their superstitions are perhaps never to be extirpated’.⁸⁷

It is true that in his interest in history, philosophy and work as an author, particularly of literary curiosities, Isaac was an unusual member of the Jewish community. Todd Endelman has said of Isaac D’Israeli that he was ‘very much the outsider, he evoked no response from other Jews’.⁸⁸ Yet, it is important to remember that, as Todd Endelman himself has emphasized, conversion was by no means rare for wealthy members of the Sephardi community. In this sense, the D’Israeli family was not unusual. Between the mid-eighteenth century and the accession of Queen Victoria, despite considerable immigration, the Sephardi population remained reasonably constant at two thousand individuals, with the number of marriages declining sharply between 1740 and 1800.⁸⁹ Socialising with non-Jews, who often by the late eighteenth century had a weak and in some cases a negligible commitment to Christianity, inevitably led wealthy Jews to question the desirability and

⁸⁵ D’Israeli, *The Genius of Judaism*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Lord Kames, *An Introduction to the Art of Thinking* (Edinburgh: Creech, 1789), p. 131 quoted in Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 116-117.

⁸⁷ Isaac D’Israeli, *Vaurien*, Vol. 2, p. 246.

⁸⁸ Todd Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), p. 70.

⁸⁹ Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11.

validity of their own religious identity. Given the extent of conversion within the Sephardi community, it is necessary to reconsider the suggestion that the D'Israelis were in this respect an unusual Sephardi Jewish family or particularly distant from their Jewish roots. Isaac was not an 'outsider' to the community. His father, Benjamin D'Israeli, was married to Rebecca Furtado and then on her death to Isaac's mother, Sarah Shiprut de Gabay Villareal, the daughter of Isaac Shipurt de Gabay an Italian Jewish jeweller from Livorno, who brought with her substantial wealth and restored Benjamin's finances. According to her grandson, Benjamin Disraeli, Sarah was, however, alienated from Judaism by her social rejection by non-Jews in Enfield:

My grandmother, the beautiful daughter of a family, who had suffered much from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are too apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt.⁹⁰

According to Benjamin, his grandfather did not socialise with the Jewish community, which Benjamin suggested may have been due to concerns he felt about the hostility generated by the Jew Bill.⁹¹ Yet again, this should perhaps be seen as a politically motivated statement. Benjamin D'Israeli (senior) married two Jewish women and remained an active member of the Jewish community and his business in the stock market, straw hats, diamonds and the coral trade was dominated by Jewish contacts. His two sisters died in Venice where they had been running a Jewish school.

Isaac married Maria Basevi, whose father had served as an official at Bevis Marks and in 1801 became the president of the Board of Deputies.⁹² Through marriage to Maria, he became related to many of England's most prominent Jewish families—the Lindos, Mocattas, de Costas, Montefiores, Ximenes and Goldsmids.⁹³ Maria's brother Joshua and sister Sarah both married Lindos, and their very different trajectories were typical of Sephardi families of the period. Joshua (George) moved to Brighton, his family converted, and he eventually became deputy Lord Lieutenant. Joshua remained a close friend of another convert, David Ricardo. Sarah's husband, David Abarbanel Lindo, in contrast, acted as a mohel, circumcising Benjamin D'Israeli, and remained a steadfast member of Bevis Marks strongly opposed to the reform movement.⁹⁴ Isaac had shown his

⁹⁰ Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli*, p. 15.

⁹¹ Marvin Spevack *Curiosities Revisited: The Works of Isaac D'Israeli* (Zurich and New York: George Olms, 2007), p. 403.

⁹² Cesarani, *Disraeli*, p. 21.

⁹³ Lucien Wolf, 'The Disraeli Family', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 5, 1902, pp. 202-218, 215.

⁹⁴ Cesarani, *Disraeli*, p. 7.

independence from his father in his choice of career as an author rather than a merchant and was independently wealthy thanks to an inheritance from his grandmother. Given that Isaac married in 1802 at the age of forty-two, it is unlikely that his choice of a Jewish bride was simply in deference to his father. Isaac did not have the religious knowledge of David Levi or the intellectual abilities of Moses Mendelssohn. However, even if his writings on the Talmud are not deep or learned, they do show at least a familiarity with certain sections of some tractates.⁹⁵ At his death, few books on Jewish subjects were included in the sale of his library, but the sale was only of a 'considerable portion' of his library and, as Todd Endelman has pointed out it, may well be that much of his library on Jewish subjects had been given to Benjamin.⁹⁶ Isaac held many views that traditional Judaism found unacceptable. His opinions about Judaism would develop over time leading to the conversion of his children and his belief that Jews would assimilate. Yet, he still felt passionately about the Jewish people, writing *The Genius of Judaism* in 1833 and being intimately involved in Benjamin Disraeli's own novels on Jewish subjects.⁹⁷

Indeed, although D'Israeli often referred to Jews in the third person, he must have been aware that not merely did he consider himself a Jew, but that he would have been seen as such by contemporary society. Although *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1823 believed that not everyone might be aware that he was 'by birth a member of the Hebrew nation', it was known by many from an early stage that he was Jewish.⁹⁸ Indeed, *The Monthly Mirror* of December 1796 stated that:

He is a rare instance of a person of (Jewish) origin acquiring a literary reputation. But he is truly a philosopher, and we believe, although a descendant of Israel, is disgraced by no vulgar superstition, and, as he says, has quite forgotten his Hebrew alphabet.⁹⁹

One 'review' of the book in the Bodleian archive must have particularly troubled him, though, and it has not received any historiographical attention. The 'review' focused on an 'insult' to Godwin over his father's employment, but it is the anonymous letter's reference to 'mean jewish appeal' that is striking. Ironically, the letter is signed by a 'hater of illiberality'. It reads as follows:

⁹⁵ Isaac D'Israeli, 'The Talmud', *Curiosities of Literature* (Paris: Baudry, 1835), Vol. 1, pp. 94-100.

⁹⁶ Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden, 271/2. Endelman, 'Benjamin Disraeli and The Myth of Sephardi Superiority', pp. 23-40, p. 38 ft. 36.

⁹⁷ Marvin Spevack, 'In the Shadow of the Son: Isaac D'Israeli and Benjamin Disraeli', *Jewish Culture and History*, Vol. 8:2, May 2006, pp. 73-92.

⁹⁸ Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p. 194.

⁹⁹ *Monthly Mirror*, December 1796.

I have just taken up *Vaurien* and lay it down to take up my pen to tell you how much I hate and despise the wretch who is capable of telling a lie a mean invidious lie to endeavour to depreciate the character of the man with whom he cannot even form the pretence of an acquaintance how dare he and I repeat dare he advance a falsehood to lower the respectable Person whom he mentions under the name of Subtile. It is a mean jewish appeal to the feeling of the people by whom he wishes his book to be received. Mr G. Sir was the Son of (a) Clergyman in Norfolk—and not a Butcher as you lyingly advance—for shame Mr D’Israeli—is it thus you exhibit a picture of Men of....! Sir I have read only a few pages as I get on if you have patience you shall hear further from —a hater of illiberality,¹⁰⁰

Isaac D’Israeli only kept a small selection of his incoming correspondence so this letter must have been of significance to him. It is hard to connect this letter directly to the conversion of his children in 1817, yet his retention of the letter must indicate an awareness that for some he would always be viewed as a Jew and be subject to a degree of prejudice.

Vaurien's robust defence of the Jewish community stands in contrast to Isaac D’Israeli’s later articles in the *Monthly Magazine* on the Sanhedrin, which carefully avoided any controversy.¹⁰¹ Large parts of the articles simply repeat the closing statement of the president, Abraham Furtado, who in fact was a distant relative.¹⁰² D’Israeli hinted that there were positive elements to the Sanhedrin. He stated that ‘I will abstain from any kind of reflections, for I will neither hazard approbation nor censure where much of both is loudly called for’.¹⁰³ He simply adopted an attitude which very much reflected the mainstream communal line:

After due enquiry, I can assert that the Jews in this country have never communicated with the Sanhedrin; its principles can never be those of an English Hebrew, whose shoulders were never scarred by that yoke of degrading servitude which the French, the German and the Italian Hebrews, have been doomed to endure. The recent sufferings of this unhappy people in those countries can almost apologise, if anything could, for that apostacy from Judaism which these acts indicate; and the humiliating eloquence of their orators only blends with that of the vacillating nation which protects them, and who address their monarchs, their directors, their consuls, and their emperors with more devotion than they do their God.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Bodleian Archives, Department Hughenden *G1 246/4 folio 57*. Underlining of the words including ‘jewish’ is in the original.

¹⁰¹ *Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 24, August 1807, pp. 34-38. *Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 24, September 1807, pp. 134-136. *Monthly Magazine*, October 1807, Vol. 24, pp. 243-248.

¹⁰² Cesarani, *Disraeli*, p. 10.

¹⁰³ *Monthly Magazine or British Register*, Vol. 24, August 1807, pp. 34-38, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

This caution may simply reflect the changing political climate. In 1797, despite the overall government suppression of radical ideas, D'Israeli still felt able, admittedly in an anti-Jacobin novel, to criticise English society including its treatment of Anglo-Jewry. By 1806, supporting anything undertaken by Napoleon would have been extremely difficult. Early British attitudes to Napoleon had been uncertain, but the invasion scare of 1803 caused genuine fear in England, partially exacerbated by a government propaganda campaign. This anxiety had been eased following Trafalgar in 1805, but Napoleon by this point had become a figure of fear in the popular imagination. It was believed that his armies would have committed atrocities if they had been able to invade. In 1797, D'Israeli felt able to powerfully defend the Jewish community, yet by 1807 actually saying *anything* positive about Napoleon's calling of the Sanhedrin might have been controversial. Ogden suggests that D'Israeli might have thought it 'too early to start pointing morals for the edification of the British government'.¹⁰⁵

In many ways Isaac D'Israeli was a remarkably modern Jew. His hostility to Judaism as a religion, whilst at the same being appalled by the treatment of Jews, was one that would be shared by an ever-increasing number of Jews as the nineteenth century progressed. D'Israeli may have been no Moses Mendelssohn in intellectual terms, but *Vaurien* represents a far more forthright defence of a Jewish community than other Jews were prepared to express during the period both in England and the Continent. Above all, it is important to be careful about seeing D'Israeli as detached from the Jewish community. His family and domestic life revolved around Jews, many of whose families were on the same journey towards conversion. Speculation clearly has its dangers, but it is very possible that D'Israeli's caustic views on Britain's treatment of Jews were privately held by others in Anglo-Jewry. At the very least, given the numerous reviews of the section in *Vaurien* on the Jews, it would have been read by others in Anglo-Jewry and no one sought to disassociate the community from D'Israeli's perspective.

David Levi

David Levi shared D'Israeli's political conservatism, but he was religiously orthodox, and he expressed his views in defence of Judaism. Nevertheless, with some justice, David

¹⁰⁵ Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p. 198.

Ruderman has argued that David Levi was the primary Jewish radical of the period.¹⁰⁶ Levi became involved in a remarkable range of exchanges including intellectual debates with the Anglican theologian Henry Prideaux, the radical Joseph Priestley, Tom Paine, Christian scholars such as Benjamin Kennicott and Bishop Robert Lowth, and the millenarian MP Nathaniel B Halhed.¹⁰⁷ Levi was born in 1742 into a poor Jewish Ashkenazi family. His great grandfather was a rabbi in Poland, but Levi seems to have been largely self-taught.¹⁰⁸ In a Jewish community where few could speak Hebrew or understand basic prayers. Levi was deeply knowledgeable about Judaism. He supported himself by working as a shoemaker but after his business failed, he earned a living as a hatter and then a printer. He was responsible for the translation of Jewish prayer books and wrote many of the communal dedications to the royal family. As an integral part of the community—he translated for both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities—he was well aware of the concerns about speaking out publicly. While at the heart of the Jewish community, Levi also had Christian friends and obtained Christian texts from his friend, the journalist Henry Lemoine, for his debate with Priestley.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, despite Levi keeping kosher, both he and Lemoine used to dine at the house of the bookseller, Henry Lackington.¹¹⁰

Levi's debate with Priestley was initiated by Priestley's *A Letter to the Jews: inviting them to an Amicable Discussion of the Evidence for Christianity*, which was an attempt to convince Jews that the rational course was to convert to Christianity.¹¹¹ Priestley recognized that the Jews had been abused by Christians, but he argued that prejudice was declining given the rise of tolerance in an enlightened Europe.¹¹² The Jews suffered from 'divine displeasure' but this would cease if they converted.¹¹³ Not merely did Priestley address Anglo-Jewry in writing,

¹⁰⁶ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Scrivener, 'British-Jewish Writing of the Romantic Era and the Problem of Modernity: The Example of David Levi', in Sheila Spector (ed.), *British Romanticism and the Jews* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 159-179, p. 162.

¹⁰⁸ Anon [David Lemoine], *European Magazine and London Review* May 1799, Vol. 35, pp. 291-294.

¹⁰⁹ Iain McCalman, 'New Jerusalem: prophecy, Dissent and radical culture in England, 17861-1830', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 312- 335, p. 317.

¹¹⁰ Michael Scrivener, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in the Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1776-1832* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), p. 166.

¹¹¹ Joseph Priestley, *A Letter to the Jews: inviting them to an Amicable Discussion of the Evidence for Christianity* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1786).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

but he sought to meet Jews by developing contacts in the Birmingham Jewish community, sending copies of his book to Rabbi Schiff, visiting the Jewish scholar Eliakim Ben Hart, and visiting Mr Rebello, a Sephardi merchant where he met a number of other Jews.¹¹⁴ He was disappointed when no one of authority in the Jewish community responded. David Levi suggested that the lack of a communal response to Priestley was largely the result of Anglo-Jewish leaders' views that avoiding religious and political controversy was of paramount importance. In his response to Priestley, Levi noted the communal fear of any statement that:

might be construed as reflecting on or tending towards disturbing the national religion, as by law established. This hath hitherto been studiously avoided by all those of our nation, in all parts of our dispersion.¹¹⁵

Levi was consciously aware that challenging Priestley and Paine in debate caused enormous concern amongst the communal elite. In his 1789 *Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to his Letters to the Jews Part II*, Levi explained that the majority of Jews had been thrown into 'consternation' by his first response to Dr Priestley 'blaming my temerity into thus entering into a contest which might cost them dear'. Levi admitted that he had 'not able to calm their fears'.¹¹⁶

Unlike Isaac D'Israeli, Levi consciously avoided overtly political writings, either about the state of the Jewish community in England or about contemporary political developments.¹¹⁷ On religious issues, however, David Levi was prepared to express himself without restraint, though politics and religion were frequently deeply interconnected in the eighteenth century and many of his debating opponents were political as much as religious figures. As mentioned in the Introduction, the explosion of belief in millenarianism triggered by the French Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of the Middle East was of

¹¹⁴ Simon Mills, 'Joseph Priestley's connections with Catholics and Jews', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, Vol. 24.3 2009, pp. 176-191, pp. 178-184.

¹¹⁵ David Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley in Answer to those He Addressed to the Jews; inviting them to an amicable discussion of the Evidence of Christianity* (London: D Levi, 1787), pp. 4 and 5.

¹¹⁶ David Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to his Letters to the Jews Part II, occasioned by Mr. David Levi's Reply to the former Part. Also Letters to 1. Dr Cooper in Answer to his 'One Great Argument in Favour of Christianity from a single Prophecy'. 2. To M. Bicheno. 3. To Dr. Krauter. 4. To Mr. Swain. 5. To Anti-Socinus, alias Anselm Bayly. Occasioned by their remarks to Mr. David Levi's Answer to the Dr. Priestley's First Letters to the Jews*, (London: Walker and Parsons, 1789), pp. 3 and 4.

¹¹⁷ Quoted Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 135.

particular importance to radical Unitarians such as Joseph Priestley and Richard Price.¹¹⁸ For them, the quest for liberty and civic virtue was a critical step that would bring forward Christ's restoration.¹¹⁹ Millenarianism was not a distraction from radicalism but was the end goal to which their politics would lead.¹²⁰ Millenarians like Priestley felt that their beliefs were the rational outcome of scholarly bible study and they deplored any version, such as that of Richard Brothers, whose beliefs were based on visions and enthusiasm.¹²¹ Priestley's eschatological views were fluid and, as John Mee has pointed out, few individuals fit neatly and consistently into the pre- and post- millennialist categories. Generally, however, he took a post-millennialist perspective early on, arguing that human rationality would create the millennial epoch of peace and justice, which did not require political and natural catastrophes to foreshadow it, and that Christ's arrival at this stage was purely figurative. By 1794, looking at the momentous events of the French Revolution, he adopted a more pre-millennialist view, which focussed on impending divine intervention, and argued that a physical Second Coming of Christ was drawing near.¹²²

Both Price and Priestley rejected the idea of the Trinity, which they considered absurd, although both argued that belief in certain miracles should be accepted since they were supported by reason. For Priestley, belief in such miracles as the rebirth of Christ and on Christ's ability to bring people back from the dead was rational. Price went further, believing in the virginal conception of Jesus and the concept of original sin. Price, moreover, preached an Arian form of Unitarianism in which Christ pre-existed his arrival on earth so that he was not a mere man but had certain divine characteristics. In contrast, Priestley preached a Socinian version in which he denied the pre-existence of Christ.¹²³ He argued that Christ revealed God's message, but he was a man rather than divine. Priestley believed that the Jews had suffered grievously from Christian persecution, but his Socinian

¹¹⁸ The terms millenarianism, millennialism, pre-millennialism and post-millennialism have not been used consistently by historians. See Jack Fruchtman, 'The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A study in late Eighteenth Century English Republican Millennialism', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 73:4, 1983, pp. 1-125, pp.4-6. John Mee, 'Apocalypse and Ambivalence: The Politics of Millenarianism in the 1790s', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 95, 1996, pp. 671-697, pp. 675-676.

¹¹⁹ Fruchtman, 'The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley', pp.1-125, p. 29.

¹²⁰ Joseph Priestley's views on millennialism and their metamorphosis over time are discussed in J van. Berg, 'Priestley, the Jews and the Millennium', in David Katz and Jonathan Israel (eds), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews* (Leiden and New York: EJ Brill, 1990), pp. 256-275.

¹²¹ Mee, 'Apocalypse and Ambivalence', p. 672.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 674-676.

¹²³ Fruchtman, 'The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley', p. 36.

version of Unitarianism created a route for their conversion. Jews could convert to Christianity without rejecting their Jewish practices. They could maintain a separate 'church' and keep certain Jewish customs such as observing Sabbath on Saturday.¹²⁴ Priestley argued that Jews should feel comfortable with his version of Unitarianism, which rejected such concepts as a literal interpretation of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity or the miraculous conception of Christ.

In his debate with Priestley, Levi was highly combative. As a believer in the sacredness of the words of Scripture, he did not believe that one could reconcile Christian belief with the Unitarian rationalist approach. He queried whether Priestley, a Unitarian, who did not believe in the virgin conception, could actually be considered a Christian.¹²⁵ Levi argued that Priestley was simply adopting those parts of the *New Testament* which suited him. According to Levi, a religious Christian had to accept the entirety of the *Bible*, just as a Jew had to accept the entirety of the *Old Testament*.¹²⁶ Levi poured further scorn on Unitarianism by quoting Joseph Tucker's 1774 defence of an orthodox Trinitarian view in *A Brief and Dispassionate View of the Difficulties Attending the Trinitarian, Arian and Socinian Systems* in which Tucker argued that if Socinian beliefs were correct then 'the scriptures of course must be false, and Christ and his apostles be ranked among the greatest hypocrites and impostors that ever appeared on earth'.¹²⁷ Even Levi was concerned that people might find this quote offensive coming from a Jew, and made it clear that he was not expressing his own view but merely quoting a 'reverend and dignified clergyman of the church of England'.¹²⁸ Levi was, however, quite comfortable expressing in his own name that it was obvious that Jesus was not the Messiah, noting for a start that his presence had not introduced an immediate era of peace.¹²⁹ By the *Dissertations* Levi was writing:

It is clear from all history that Christianity cannot be the Peaceable Kingdom of the Messiah as foretold by the Prophet (Isaiah). But need we that authority of History in proof of this. Have we not the evidence of our own senses. Can any

¹²⁴ van Berg, 'Priestley, the Jews and the Millennium', p. 263.

¹²⁵ Levi, *Letters to Dr Priestley*, Part II, pp. 10-13.

¹²⁶ Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley*, Part II, pp. 13-15.

¹²⁷ Levi, *Letters to Dr Priestley*, p. 90.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Richard Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 87:1.2, July-October 1996, p. 84.

honest impartial person lay his hand on his heart, and declare the known world at present enjoys such universal peace? Surely Not!¹³⁰

Levi suggested that Jesus had simply been a preacher.¹³¹ He argued that Christians had misinterpreted and mistranslated prophecies in the *Old Testament* to justify a belief that they foretold the arrival of Jesus as the Messiah. Levi denied that the Gospels prophesied a Second Coming and even suggested that the belief in the Second Coming had been invented as an argument to convince Jews to convert.¹³²

For a Jew like Levi to express such views on Christianity in English and aimed at a Christian audience was a revolutionary departure. There were theological debates between Christians and Jews in the seventeenth century in Amsterdam particularly the exchange in the 1680s initiated by Orobio de Castro, who was Jewish, with Phillip van Liborch.¹³³ Theological debates had, however, been extremely rare. Jews had long understood the risks of entering into religious debates which risked upsetting their temporal rulers. Moses Mendelssohn went to great lengths to avoid entering into disputes even when challenged by Lavater to comment on the proofs of Christianity offered by French theologian Charles Bonnet or to convert. Levi, in contrast, voluntarily entered into the debate and expressed himself in English, using language that at times can only be described as aggressive, even by the standards of the forthright debates of the late eighteenth century.

From a Jewish perspective, however, Levi's comments were not radical. His views had been discussed discreetly by Jews in the past. Among themselves, Jews had expressed cynical opinions about Jesus as far back as the Talmud and in the parody of Jesus's life *Toledot Yeshu*, which was written in the first millennium, though the exact date is uncertain. Just occasionally, such attitudes would be expressed in public. Nachmanides, in the Disputation of Barcelona, ordered by James I of Aragon in 1263, argued:

From the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering.....Yet according to the prophet, the advent of the Messiah would

¹³⁰ David Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament Containing all Such Prophecies as Are Applicable to the Coming of the Messiah the Restoration of the Jews, and the Resurrection of the Dead Whether so applied by Jews or Christians*, Vols. 1-III (London: David Levi, 1793-1800), Vol. 1, pp.117-118. Richard Popkin, *The Third Force in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 302.

¹³¹ Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', pp. 79-101, p. 83.

¹³² Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, pp. 286-289. Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', p. 89.

¹³³ Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 247.

bring [a world in which] “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares....nations shall not lift up sword against nation”.¹³⁴

While Nachmanides may have expressed critical views, he had been very reluctant to take part in the debate, even though he was speaking at the end of the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry when the community still had a considerable degree of confidence in its position.¹³⁵ Even Spinoza made sure that his ground breaking criticism of existing theological beliefs was, at least formally, directed against the *Old Testament* rather than expressing a view on the *New Testament* and Christ.¹³⁶

There was, however, one area of prophecy on which religious Jews and Christians could agree. By the late eighteenth century, the accuracy of prophecy was a central area for theological debate particularly as the belief in biblical miracles declined. David Hume was not the first philosopher to attack the belief in miracles. For instance, philosophers such as La Peyrère, Hobbes and Spinoza had previously argued inter alia against accepting the bible as a reliable historical record and believed that one should not accept that miracles had taken place. In England, there was substantial debate on the reliability of miracles in the eighteenth-century.¹³⁷ Hume’s onslaught against the concept of miracles in his 1748 *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* was part of the gradual weakening of belief in the existence of supernatural events. Hume did not claim that miracles were impossible but argued that a rational man with direct experience of the laws of nature should set an incredibly high evidential barrier before accepting that a miracle had taken place. It was more likely that the individual making the report had either been deceived or was pretending than that there actually had been a miracle in violation of the laws of nature.¹³⁸ Hume noted, without discussion, at the end of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* that everything he had said about miracles applied to prophecy.¹³⁹ However, eighteenth-

¹³⁴ Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982), p. 52. Biblical quote is *Isaiah* 2:4.

¹³⁵ Sutcliffe, *Judaism and the Enlightenment*, p. 168. Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, pp. 11, 12 and 29.

¹³⁶ Daniel Lasker, ‘Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics in the Early Modern Period: Change or Continuity?’, in Chanita Goodblatt and Howard Kreisel (eds), *Tradition, Heterodoxy and Religious Culture: Judaism and Christianity in the early Modern Period*, pp.469-488 (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University, 2006), p. 477.

¹³⁷ Peter Harrison, ‘Prophecy, Early Modern Apologetics, and Hume’s Arguments against Miracles’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 60:2, April 1999, pp. 241-256, pp. 242-248.

¹³⁸ James Force, ‘Hume and Johnson on Prophecy and Miracles: Historical Context’, *Journal of The History of Ideas*, July 1982, Vol. 43:3, July-September 1982, pp. 463-475, p. 473.

¹³⁹ Harrison, ‘Prophecy, Early Modern Apologetics, and Hume’s Arguments against Miracles’, pp. 241-256, pp. 241-242.

century Christian theologians, who under the influence of the Enlightenment sought to provide rational evidence in support of the bible, increasingly believed that the fulfilment of prophecy was the clearest evidence of the truth of Christianity.¹⁴⁰ They argued that the *Old Testament* contained a number of prophecies such as of the virginal conception of Christ in Isaiah. Levi disputed these prophecies during his debate with Priestley and then examined them in more detail in his three volume *Dissertations on Prophecies*.¹⁴¹

Equally importantly, Levi also focussed in *Dissertations on Old Testament* prophecies for the future of the Jews. Unlike reports of miracles, the survival of Jews could be verified by an individual's own senses rather than relying on historic reports. For both orthodox Christians and Jews, therefore, the fulfilment of *Old Testament* prophecies of Jewish dispersal and survival were seen as amongst the strongest evidence in support of reliability of the bible.¹⁴² It was argued that no ordinary human could have foreseen that the Jews, exiled and dispersed among many countries, would have survived with a separate identity for two thousand years.¹⁴³ This argument was widely held by eighteenth-century intellectuals such as William Whiston, Bishop Thomas Newton, David Hartley, Bishop Robert Clayton and, indeed, Joseph Priestley.¹⁴⁴ Orthodox Jews such as Levi agreed, although obviously they argued that dispersal arose from the failure of the Jews to be sufficiently orthodox rather than a divine punishment for their failure to accept Christ as the Messiah. Both in *Dissertations* and in responding to Paine's attacks on religion in the *Age of Reason*, Levi argued that Moses's prophecies had been fulfilled:

What nation hath subsisted as a distinct people even in their own country, for long as these have done, though dispersed in all countries, without having any place they can call their own? And what a standing miracle is this, thus exhibited to the view and observation of the whole world?¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Michael Lee, *The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 11.

¹⁴¹ On Levi's challenge, based on the Septuagint's mistranslation of the Hebrew, to the view that Isaiah had forecast the immaculate conception of Jesus, see Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to his Letters to the Jews Part II, Letter to Dr Cooper*, pp. 111-125.

¹⁴² *Deuteronomy* 28:64 'And the Lord will scatter you among all the peoples from end of the earth to the other'. Also *Leviticus* 26:33.

¹⁴³ Popkin, *The Third Force in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 306.

¹⁴⁴ Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', pp. 79-101, p. 87.

¹⁴⁵ David Levi, *A Defence of the Old Testament in a Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book, entitled, The Age of Reason, Part the Second, being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (New York: Davis, 1797), p. 30.

In both *Dissertations* and his *Defence of the Old Testament* he asked, ‘what stronger proofs can we have or desire of the Divine legislation of Moses?’¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Levi took the argument even further, suggesting that the reluctance of even irreligious Jews to stop being Jews was proof of the prophecy of the survival of the Jewish people:

For even those of the nation who have not the least grain of religion in them, would yet be highly offended at being called Goy, a Christian, or a Gentile, or Meshumad an Apostate.¹⁴⁷

Levi’s defence of the *Old Testament* had little impact in its Enlightenment critics. Paine attacked the bible in *The Age of Reason* as a ‘history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalise mankind’.¹⁴⁸ As we have already discussed when comparing Paine to Burke, Paine’s denunciation of biblical Judaism was part of his general scorn for organised religious institutions:

All national institutions, of churches whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human intervention, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.¹⁴⁹

Levi was well aware that Paine followed a long line of Enlightenment philosophers, but he was anxious to rebut Paine. Paine’s arguments were not original, but he suggested that the bible had been written much later given that there were references to towns which did not exist and events which had not happened until after it had supposedly been written; challenged the concept of Moses as its author since he and the authors of other books described their deaths and subsequent events; and argued that parts of the *Old Testament* with their emphasis on paying tithes were designed to benefit Jewish priests. Further, he repeatedly called Moses an ‘impostor’ and accused Moses of being one of the world’s ‘most detestable villains’ who had ‘committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation’.¹⁵⁰ He was particularly incensed by Moses instructing

¹⁴⁶ David Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament Vols. 1-III* (London: David Levi, 1793-1800), Introduction to Volume 1, p. xxxviii. Levi, *A Defence of the Old Testament in a Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁷ David Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament Containing all such Prophecies as are Applicable to the coming of the Messiah, the Restoration of the Jews and the Resurrection of the Dead Whether so Applied by Jews or Christians, revised and introduced by John King*, Vol. II (London: J Bysh, 1817), pp.234-5.

¹⁴⁸ p. 34. Thomas Paine, Moncure Conway (ed.), *The Age of Reason Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (New York: Dover, 2004), Part 1, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵⁰ Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Part 2, p. 102.

the Jews that killing adult male Midianites was insufficient and that they also needed to slaughter all the adult women and male children, only allowing virgin girls to survive.¹⁵¹ In response, Levi invoked the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jewish survival but he was also anxious to counter Paine's arguments of the barbarity of Judaism and to stress the benevolence of Moses. Levi argued that the justice of ancient Judaism had been demonstrated by the impartial division of land amongst Israelites entering the Holy Land, the concept of the Jubilee returning all land to its original owners every fifty years, and the forgiveness of debts every seventh year, the Sabbatical year.¹⁵²

Levi's religious writings attracted substantial attention and his views were widely read both in England and internationally. It was a period of passionate theological debate, but Levi was unique as a religious Jew expressing himself publicly in English. For instance, he was congratulated by the reviewer in *The Critical Review* for his mauling of Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*.¹⁵³ *The Analytical Review* contained a more measured but also generally positive review.¹⁵⁴ His support of the view that Jewish survival demonstrated divine prophecy was quoted with approval by Christian writers internationally such as Abbé Grégoire in France, and Hannah Adams and Elias Boudinot in America.¹⁵⁵ More generally, there was widespread appreciation of Levi's learning even by those who disputed his views. As Thomas Pennant, the travel writer and antiquarian, put it, 'but to this general imputation of extreme ignorance [of the Jews], the late Mr David Levi was a striking exception'.¹⁵⁶

Levi quite consciously understood that living in the late eighteenth century he was able to occupy public space for self-expression that did not previously exist. He noted 'we live in an enlightened age in which the investigation of theological points is accounted laudable; and so they are, if not carried to licentious heights'.¹⁵⁷ But for a small minority, Levi's comments were blasphemous. Anselm Bayly, the vicar of Tottenham, writing under the pseudonym of 'Anti-Socinus' argued that both Levi and Priestley were abusing British

¹⁵¹ *Numbers* xxxi 13.

¹⁵² Levi, *A Defence of the Old Testament*, p. 98.

¹⁵³ *The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature*, Volume 21, September 1797, pp. 39-41.

¹⁵⁴ *Analytical Review, History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign*, Vol. 25, January to June 1797, pp. 415-419.

¹⁵⁵ Popkin, 'David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian', p. 98.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Pennant and John Wallis, *London: being a complete guide to the British capital; containing, and accurate and succinct account of its origin, rise and progress interspersed with original anecdotes, eccentric biography/ faithfully abridged from Pennant's London* (London, 1810), p. 340.

¹⁵⁷ Levi, *Letters to Mr. Priestley*, p. 6.

tolerance.¹⁵⁸ He described Priestley as a blasphemer and dangerous radical who ‘ought immediately to be hanged’.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, for all his opposition to Priestley, he was even more incensed by what he saw as the attack on Christianity in Levi’s criticisms of Priestley, and argued that Levi had exceeded level of what was acceptable.¹⁶⁰ Bayly immediately employed Jewish stereotypes when faced with a forthright Jew casting doubt on Christian belief. He compared Levi to Shylock, claiming that Levi lacked ‘humanity and charity’.¹⁶¹ Bayly continued:

but if you offer again to touch his NAME WORD and CHARACTER with profane lips and profane hands I will tear you to pieces you and your Sacra Lingua.¹⁶²

Levi was sufficiently confident in his position that rather than being cowed, he quoted Bayly verbatim and made fun of his threat. The reaction in the *Monthly Review* may have confirmed his optimism about the extent of English tolerance since it chastised Bayly for his comments and noted that he had:

very rudely treated and abused Mr David Levi because he is a Jew and has chosen to give his reasons for not being a Christian. Of Mr Levi's character we have heard a good report.¹⁶³

Levi’s ability to engage in debate may have reflected the enlightened era but such disagreements also drove tolerance forward by making it easier to accept subsequent debates. Despite the highly politicised nature of the 1790s and the consternation that the French Revolution’s attack on religion produced in England, Levi still felt able to argue his perspective and continue the debates of the 1780s into a post-Revolutionary era. David Ruderman points out that Levi effectively challenged the rules of interreligious debate and challenged ideas about acceptable Jewish behaviour in Christian Britain.¹⁶⁴ Inevitably, the reaction to him depended on the religious beliefs of the reader and could be hostile. Yet, the backlash against him was relatively limited. It is easy to play down the impact of the

¹⁵⁸ Anti-Socinus [psued. Anselm Bayly], *Remarks on David Levi's Letters to Dr Priestley An Answer to Those he addressed to the Jews* (London: J Walter, 1787), p.21.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.20.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁶² Quoted in David Levi, A Letter to Anti-Socinus published with *Letters to Dr. Priestley, in answer to his Letters to the Jews, Part II*, p. 155. Sacra Lingua was a Hebrew dictionary and grammar which Levi had produced.

¹⁶³ *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, Vol. 78, Jan-June 1788, p. 170.

¹⁶⁴ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 179.

Enlightenment but there was no repeat of the furore around the Jew Bill of 1753. The vast majority England's political and intellectual elite, even when they uncomfortable with Levi's religious convictions and language, were still prepared to accept his right to express unpopular opinions as a symbol of what they perceived to be English tolerance.

David Levi was unique in the sense of having the courage to publicly challenge Christian detractors of Judaism, but it may be a mistake to consider that the views he expressed were exceptional. D'Israeli strongly disagreed with Levi's religious perspective, commenting in his essay on the Talmud that 'such is the account of the honest David Levi; it is the creed of every rabbin. David believed in everything but in Jesus'.¹⁶⁵ Yet, as far apart as they were on religious questions, they also shared certain views. For instance, both disputed the idea that prophecy demonstrated the truth of the *New Testament*.¹⁶⁶ D'Israeli, like Levi, was not afraid of criticising Christianity and argued that the 'idiocy and cruelty of transubstantiation' derived from the bread and wine of Kiddush.¹⁶⁷ Just as Levi ridiculed the failure of Christianity to produce peace, D'Israeli compared the benevolence of the *New Testament* with the reality that Christianity produced the crusades.¹⁶⁸

Obviously, for the vast majority of Jews struggling to earn sufficient income to survive, Levi's debates were of no interest. Yet, his enduring memory in Anglo-Jewry does perhaps suggest that contemporaneously or subsequently his arguments were appreciated. In his novel *The King of Schnorrers*, published in 1894 but set in the eighteenth century, Israel Zangwill proudly referred to Levi's debates.¹⁶⁹ We should not rule out the possibility that for the educated elite of the Jewish community who were afraid to speak out in public, Levi to some extent reflected and reinforced their own private views on Christianity.

John King

If David Levi, a respectable shoemaker and printer, was religiously and politically conservative, then John King—a radical and a criminal—was the polar opposite. Despite there being substantial primary material about John King, he was largely ignored in the early historiography of Anglo-Jewry as demonstrated by Picciotto's account, which failed to

¹⁶⁵ D'Israeli, *Vaurien*. Vol. II, p. 247.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 223.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁶⁹ Israel Zangwill, *The King of Schnorrers* (reprinted Emmaus: Kessinger Publishing, 1954 [orig. 1894]), p. 55.

refer either to King's criminality.¹⁷⁰ This neglect of King ended with Todd Endelman's work to which has been added Ian McCalman's investigation of the radical underworld and the linkages between political radicalism and blackmail.¹⁷¹

One of the factors which may have influenced King's radicalism was his alienation as a Jew from English society but also for periods of his life from the Jewish community as well. In his childhood, he was certainly part of the Jewish community. He was born the son of a Sephardi pedlar, Moses, probably from North Africa or Gibraltar, although the satirical magazine *The Scourge* described his father as a Turkish Jew who had squandered any resources he had through speculation and extravagant expenditure.¹⁷² King was sent to the Sephardi charity school, which taught secular subjects as well as providing a limited traditional Jewish education.¹⁷³ The wardens paid five pounds for him to become an apprenticed clerk and he subsequently worked in an attorney's office. Originally called Jacob Rey, he anglicised his name to John King in a transparent attempt to fit in with English society. However, since he was widely known as 'Jew' King, he would always be seen by the outside world as Jewish. In 1775, he donated one hundred pounds to the Sephardi charity school he had attended. In 1776, he married Sara Nunes Lara, daughter of Benjamin Lara and sister of Moses, prominent figures in the Sephardi Jewish community.¹⁷⁴ Subsequently, King's commitment to Judaism certainly wavered. It would seem that he hardly attended synagogue, and in 1784 he divorced his wife. In the case of *Rex v Lolly* which covered the quite separate matter of whether it was possible to obtain a divorce of an English marriage in Scotland and then remarry in England, Mr Brougham representing Mr Lolly made the parallel to John King who had obtained a divorce in Italy. His first wife had later testified in court and confirmed that the divorce had been recognised by her synagogue in London. Mr Justice Gibbs observed that 'divorce in that case was founded on an objection by the relations of the wife, that the husband was not sufficiently strict in his observance of Jewish ceremonies. He was not Jew enough'.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ James Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, (London: Socino Press, 1956 [orig.1875]), pp. 294-295.

¹⁷¹ Todd Endelman, 'The Chequered Career of "Jew" King: a Study in Anglo-Jewish Social History', *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Portland: Littman Library, 2011), pp. 171-201. Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁷² *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly*, Vol 1 1811, pp. 1-26, p. 1.

¹⁷³ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 172. Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 294.

¹⁷⁴ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 175.

¹⁷⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 November 1812.

King's divorce signalled a move away from the Jewish community, a move which would be followed by many leading Jewish radicals over the next century.

Like many wealthy Sephardi Jews of the period, King did not simply lose his commitment to Judaism but became highly acculturated. For instance, he developed a strong social relationship with the leading radical, William Godwin. The Godwin diary project has provided invaluable information on the social relationships between reformers in the 1790s and Patricia Clemit has commented on the relationship between Godwin and King.¹⁷⁶ Godwin's diaries show that he met King 130 times between 1795 and 1807 and often accepted King's hospitality.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Godwin's diaries generally record who was present but not what was discussed. Significantly, the diaries do not show any Jewish guests on the many occasions Godwin dined at his house. The possibility that King invited Jews on separate occasions cannot be ruled out, but there is no evidence of King having Jewish friends in this period.

Even before his divorce, King had started a relationship with the Countess of Lanesborough, daughter of the Earl of Belvedere and widow of the Earl of Lanesborough. It should be noted in view of King's reputation for financial ambition that although marrying Lady Lanesborough brought King status, she did not receive any wealth until the death of her brother in 1814. Indeed, at the time of their marriage in 1790, Lanesborough was destitute, and King was accused of taking advantage of her impoverishment. It would seem, moreover, to have been a close marriage with Lady Lanesborough actively assisting him in his dubious activities. She accompanied him both in 1784 and 1802 when he left England to avoid imprisonment and in 1817 when he retired to Italy. For their marriage to have taken place in St Chad's Church in Shrewsbury, King must have denied being Jewish.¹⁷⁸ It is possible that he claimed to be a Christian whenever it was advantageous, but it may also be that during this period his religious identity really was genuinely uncertain. His fluctuating religious attachment certainly caused bemusement to his non-Jewish contemporaries.¹⁷⁹ In 1795, he swore an oath on the *New Testament* before giving evidence as a witness in *Rex vs Gilham*. On being questioned, King claimed to consider himself to be a

¹⁷⁶ Pamela Clemit and Jenny McAuley, 'Sociability in Godwin's Diary: The Case of John King', *Bodleian Library Record*, Vol.1, April 2011, pp. 51-6.

¹⁷⁷ Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁸ On a doubt over whether the marriage was formalised, see Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 183. For clarification, see Todd Endelman's revised entry for John King in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁷⁹ *The European Magazine and London Review*, Vol. 3, January-June 1783, p. 293.

member of the Church of England, but that he had never been baptised or formally renounced Judaism.¹⁸⁰ By the late 1790s, he seems to have reconsidered. In 1798, in *Mr King's Apology*, he indicated he was a deist and challenged Christianity, noting that many other gospels had existed at the time of its creation and that its beliefs had repeatedly changed, for instance at the councils of Nicea and Trent. In comparison, he noted that the Jews had survived, outlasting many empires. He defended Judaism and remarked on the 'uncharitable temper of the Protestants, and the intolerant spirit of the Catholics'.¹⁸¹ In 1802, in a bankruptcy petition brought against him, King took the oath on the *Old Testament*.¹⁸² During the Southcott court hearing in 1807 into possible fraudulent activity by King, he took the same oath. He acknowledged under cross examination that he had many years previously taken an oath upon a Christian bible but asserted that he was now clear that he was a Jew, although he did not 'observe all the ceremonies of the modern Israelite'.¹⁸³

As King aged, he seems to have returned to his Jewish roots to some extent. By 1812, King demonstrated a real interest in communal affairs, writing to the Mahamad to criticise the lack of decorum in the services and offering to contribute funds to improve education.¹⁸⁴ In 1817, he wrote the introduction to a new edition of David Levi's *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament*, which had been issued in response to the proselytising efforts of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. As David Ruderman points out, it is hard to imagine the orthodox David Levi being happy with the introduction to his book being written by John King, who in his earlier life was very possibly one of the deists Levi was referring to when he emphasized the miraculous way in which even Jewish deists maintained an ethnic identification.¹⁸⁵ His introduction to Levi's *Dissertations* was certainly not intellectually original, but it quoted from a wide range of Jewish history and some Christian sources and stressed the importance to both Judaism and Christianity of Moses's divine revelation in front of six hundred thousand witnesses.

¹⁸⁰ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 193.

¹⁸¹ John King, *Mr King's Apology: or A Reply to his Calumniators; The Subjects Treated, and Facts Stated will be Found Materially to Concern Every Person who resides in a Great Metropolis* (London: Thomas Wilkins, 1798), pp. 40-41.

¹⁸² *Evening Mail*, 22 November 1802.

¹⁸³ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 195. Joanna Southcott, *An Account of the Trials on Bills of Exchange wherein the Deceit of Mr John King and his Confederates under the Pretence of Lending Money is Exposed and their Arts Brought to Light* (London: S Rousseau, 1807), p. 32.

¹⁸⁴ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 181.

¹⁸⁵ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 90.

King strongly defended Judaism and specifically defended the Talmud.¹⁸⁶ On his death, King left twenty pounds to Bevis Marks synagogue partially in settlement of a debt and partially for an annual memorial.

Regardless of his variable religious beliefs, there can be little doubt that King's Jewishness left him alienated from society just as it would for many future Jewish radicals. In his 1817 introduction to David Levi's *Dissertations*, King attacks the injustices suffered by Jews:

They have no protection but in their caution, they traffic with timidity and wariness, their fears rouse their acuteness, and their acuteness and suspicion augment the hatred; they are enjoined by their law to love their neighbour, but they have every neighbour's enmity to encounter, which neither mildness can mollify, not subtilty [sic] elude;¹⁸⁷

Being Jewish left King as an outsider to much of Anglican society but so did his criminality. Information about his early career is dependent on an article in the muck-raking magazine *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture*, which even by the standards of the period is not a reliable source. It noted his fraudulent activities but it also noted his ability to use many different disguises in the same day and make use of fraudulent fortune tellers and suggested that his favourite deception was to obtain funds by working with a female accomplice posing as a woman of good reputation in distress who would plead for assistance from wealthy Englishmen.¹⁸⁸ He must also be evaluated in the light of the appallingly low standards of morality of late Georgian England. Gambling left many members of the English upper class desperate for funding. The urgency of their requirement combined with their contempt for understanding financial affairs, considered an unsuitable subject for a gentleman, made them vulnerable to commercial fraud. King provided loans for such individuals, but he also acted frequently as a money broker sourcing both the loan and finance and merely taking a commission. In theory the legal maximum rate of interest chargeable on loans was five per cent, although in practice, according to Jeremy Bentham, no one lent at this rate and rates of eight to ten per cent were common.¹⁸⁹ Cheating at

¹⁸⁶ David Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament Restoration of the Jews, and the Resurrection of the Dead Whether so applied by Jews or Christians* revised and amended with a Dedication and Introduction by J King Esq (London: J Bysh, 1817), p. lxiv.

¹⁸⁷ John King's Introduction to David Levi's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, p. xxiii.

¹⁸⁸ *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly Vol. 1* (London: M Jones, 1811), pp. 1-26.

¹⁸⁹ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p.177, ft. 20.

cards and in respect of debts was widespread. Many borrowers took out loans that they had no intention of paying. King complained particularly about young men who had been to Eton in this respect.¹⁹⁰ D'Israeli's commented in *Vaurien* about the profligacy of English aristocrats but King went even further in denouncing the dishonesty of aristocratic debtors such as Charles James Fox. It was not, however, only aristocrats who could be dishonest borrowers. In 1807, King was accused of fraudulently demanding payment for bills for more than had been advanced to them from supporters of the millenarian Joanna Southcott. In King's defence, he produced evidence showing that the borrowers had never intended to repay him since they believed that Southcott's millenarian prophecy would arrive before the bills fell due.¹⁹¹

Much of King's business was probably legitimate since for many years, despite his reputation, he continued to attract clients. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he was also engaged in criminal activities. For instance, King was frequently accused of obtaining bills of exchange by deception. The accusations varied, but most commonly a desperate gambler would be tricked by King into signing bills for a far greater amount than King actually advanced. At the bill's maturity, the borrower would then face demands from King for the full-face value of the bill. His methods varied, however, according to circumstance. In *Hanson v Roberdeau*, it was claimed that Roberdeau, acting on behalf of John King but without disclosing King's role, made dishonest claims about a bond's surety.¹⁹² Whilst noting the general lack of commercial ethics in London in the 1790s, King's criminality should not be romanticised. In *Rex v Lord Falkland and Others*, Viscount Falkland, a Scottish peer, Henry Speed, a banker and the MP for Huntingdon, and Delves Broughton, son of Reverend Thomas Broughton, were together with John King indicted on several charges relating to defrauding Stephen Phillips, a coal merchant. King was acquitted on one charge and prosecution on other charges deferred, whilst a Mr Champion of the Bank of England was asked to arbitrate. Champion was awarded five thousand pounds against King and, after a legal struggle, the order was confirmed in court with Lord Kenyon, the Lord Chief Justice, presiding.¹⁹³ King subsequently violently resisted a sheriff's attempt to enforce the debt and fled to Bath where he was arrested despite Lady Lanesborough setting her dog on a constable.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁹² *Lloyds Evening Post*, 30 May 1792-1 June 1792. *Evening Mail*, 1 June to 4 June 1792. A surety effectively acts as a guarantor for a bond.

¹⁹³ *Morning Chronicle*, 8 February 1796.

¹⁹⁴ *True Briton*, 13 June 1796.

King's other major criminal activity was blackmail. Again, it is important to understand that blackmail was remarkably widespread in late Georgian England. For instance, King's first victim would appear to have been Mary Robinson, who had sent King compromising letters that he eventually published. Blackmail played a role in his decision to publish, but King was also motivated by sexual jealousy over Fox's relationship with Robinson.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, King's behaviour needs to be set in the context of Robinson's own blackmail of her former lover the Prince of Wales. Similarly, in 1809, Mary Anne Clarke, the Duke of York's mistress, received large payments for her silence about the Duke's selling of army commissions.¹⁹⁶ In the first decade of the nineteenth century, King became involved in an underground group of radicals and United Irishmen opposed to England's role in Ireland. When one of its members, Davenport Sedley, was convicted in 1812 for conspiracy to steal bills of exchange, his confiscated papers showed what was described by the Treasury Solicitor's office as repeated blackmail attempts against 'persons of the first distinction'.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, King admitted his blackmail activities in his *Fourth Letter to Thomas Paine* but claimed he funded poor radicals by obtaining funds using blackmail from the wealthy.¹⁹⁸

Francis Place, the radical reformer, noted that when he had criticised King for his behaviour, King had defended himself on the grounds that he done far more good than generally recognised, and that he was like a reformed prostitute whose previous behaviour should not be held against her.¹⁹⁹ King's defence of his criminality is true insofar as he did entertain radicals widely and contribute to their cause. As well as Godwin, his frequent guests included Thomas Holcroft, the dramatist and political activist indicted for high treason in 1794 but subsequently released, and Dr John Wolcot, the satirist and opposition journalist who wrote under the name Peter Pindar. Francis Place accused King of only providing hospitality to people to encourage his own business. On the other hand, John Taylor, the drama critic and newspaper publisher who knew King for forty years, felt that King enjoyed interesting company and that he had seen no evidence that King invited individuals for 'pecuniary purposes'.²⁰⁰ King asked Godwin to be a character witness for

¹⁹⁵ Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁶ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, pp. 41–42.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹⁸ John King, *Fourth Letter from Mr King to Mr Thomas Paine*, published in the *Morning Post*, 13 March 1795.

¹⁹⁹ Mary Thale (ed.), *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771–1854)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), Appendix iii, p. 237. The appendix was written in 1824.

²⁰⁰ John Taylor, *Records of my Life Vol. 2* (London: Edward Bull, 1832), p. 344.

him in *Rex v Lord Falkland and others*, but Godwin indignantly refused, making it clear that just because he accepted King's hospitality did not mean that he approved of King's financial transactions. King responded with good grace, immediately resumed their friendship and continued to frequently invite Godwin as his guest.²⁰¹

Remarkably, King combined his criminal career with radical political activity. From an early age King held radical views. Thomas Paine wrote to him:

When I first knew you in Ailiffe-street, an obscure part of the City, a child, without fortune or friends, I noticed you; first because I thought I saw [in] you, young as you was, a bluntness of temper, a boldness of opinion, and an originality of thought, that portended some future good.

I was pleased to discuss, with you, under our friend Oliver's lime-tree, those political notions, which I have since given the world in my "Rights of Man".²⁰²

Unfortunately, it is not known what motivated King's radicalism, although his childhood poverty and alienation from mainstream society as a Jew may have played a role. Later Jewish radicals, even when they were entirely disassociated from or indeed hostile to Judaism, still seem to have been influenced by elements of social justice in Judaism and Jewish communal practice and this may have applied to King.²⁰³ Paine was sixteen years older than King and discussed politics with him when King was a child, so it may also be that Paine directly influenced King. In 1783, King was expressing some of his radical opinions in *Thoughts on the Difficulties and Distresses*. The book was addressed to Charles James Fox, which seems in part to have been an excuse to use the preface to chastise Fox over his borrowing and loan defaults, but the politics of the book do reflect the attitudes of Fox and Burke. We do not know the print run of each edition, but the book rapidly went to five editions and was later read by William Godwin.²⁰⁴ A review of the book in *The European Magazine and London Review* noted that his writings were 'splendid' and did him 'infinite

²⁰¹ Pamela Clemit and Jenny McAuley, 'Sociability in Godwin's Diary: The Case of John King', *Bodleian Library Record* April 2011, Vol. 1, pp. 51-6.

²⁰² *Mr King's Speech at Egham with Tom Paine's Letter to Him on It and Mr King's Reply as They All Appeared in the Morning Herald: The Egham Speech on Dec. 12 1792, and Paine's Letter with the Answer, Jan. 22, 1793. The Eleventh Edition. With the Addition of Mr King's Second Letter, Taken from The Herald, Feb. 22, 1793* (Dublin: P. Byrne, 1793), which includes Mr Paine's letter of 3 January 1793 in response to King's speech, p. 8.

²⁰³ Adam Sutcliffe, 'Religion and the Birth of Jewish Radical Politics', *AJS Perspectives*, Fall 2011, pp. 34-35. Robert Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (London: Harrap, 1976), Introduction pp. 1-23.

²⁰⁴ William Godwin's *Diary*, 16 and 17 February 1795, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/index2.html> accessed January 2016.

honour'.²⁰⁵ King praised the government of the newly independent America which 'abounds with thoughtful and moderate men, inured to attentive industry, and to temperance'.²⁰⁶ He attacked British government ministers for corruption and personally gaining from the war:

In the meantime, the property of the nation was gradually changing hands; ministers' secretaries, general Commissioners, admirals and a whole list of needy vermin, that had long been grovelling about the earth, and waiting for the distress of their country, to raise their own fortunes, were accumulating immense sums.²⁰⁷

Like Burke, King was particularly distressed by English behaviour in India where 'my fancy sees....oppressed and famished natives....myriads of pale spectres, starved by artificial famine.....and the once peaceful plains, hallowed by a venerable religion and learning, seem strewn with unhappy victims'.²⁰⁸ He condemned the activities of Englishmen who exploited India and then acquired a seat in the House of Commons through the electoral system of 'corrupted Boroughs'. King went even further, arguing that the 'half butchered and famished nation (India)' would have its revenge against the English for 'their rapine, their ingratitude and their barbarity'.²⁰⁹ Unfortunately, this is the only source for King's views on the empire. Desiring Indian revolt was an extreme perspective for any Englishman to take.

In December 1792, for reasons that are not completely clear, King drew back from his earlier radicalism. One possibility raised by Todd Endelman is that King's role in the *Argus* newspaper meant that he became the victim of government pressure, which helps explain his change in perspective. King's problems coincided with those of Sampson Perry, the editor of the *Argus*. Founded in 1789 by Perry, the *Argus* started as a Whig-supporting newspaper but became the supporter of highly radical ideas such as universal suffrage.²¹⁰ It increasingly represented Paine's opinions and was critical of Pitt. In December 1790, King,

²⁰⁵ *The European Magazine and London Review*, vol. 3, Jan-June 1783, p. 293.

²⁰⁶ John King, *Thoughts on the Difficulties and Distresses in which the Peace of 1783 has Involved the People of England on the Present Disposition of the English, Scots and Irish to Emigrate to America and On the Hazard they run (without certain Precautions) of rendering their Condition more deplorable* Fifth Edition (London: T Davies, J Southern and W Deane 1783), p 31.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

²¹⁰ Rachel Rogers, Censorship and Creativity: The Case of Sampson Perry, Radical Editor in 1790s Paris and London, *Revue LISA (Littérature, Histoire des Idées, Images, Sociétés du Monde Anglophone)*, Vol. XI:1, 2013, accessed <https://lisa.revues.org/5205> on 16/2/2016, para. 10.

then a sub-editor of the *Argus*, had filed suit against John Walter of *The Times* for trying to extort money from him. According to King, Walter had been paid three guineas to print a story that King had defrauded a goldsmith, Mr Rice, and was demanding from King five guineas to print a retraction.²¹¹ Such practices were widespread in journalism in the 1790s, with frequent payments to newspapers for publishing or agreeing not to publish particular stories.²¹² Walter was in fact already in prison at the time for having libelled the Prince of Wales. On the same day that the jury found Walter guilty of libel against King, Perry was found guilty of libel for claiming ministers had personally benefitted from speculation based on information they held on the resolution of a trade disagreement with Spain regarding Nootka Sound in Canada. In March 1791, the Treasury paid Walter's fines for libelling the Prince of Wales and he was released, but only on licence, so he could be immediately returned to prison at any time. Walter rapidly ensured that *The Times* supported Pitt. Walter and the government filed a further series of libel suits against Perry, who was fined and sentenced to six months in jail for the accusation that Walter had been bribed to publish articles in *The Times*. Perry was sentenced for a further six months for the libel of suggesting that Lady Fitzgibbon, the wife of Pitt's friend the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, was having an affair.²¹³

The legal actions against King and Perry were part of a government campaign to close the radical press by harassing its promoters. *The Cabinet*, the *London Society's Corresponding Society's Moral and Political Campaign*, *Hog Wash* and *Politics for the People* all ceased publishing by the mid-1790s. The more moderate *Analytical Review* would be forced out of business in 1799 following the arrest of its editor, Joseph Johnson, who was the publisher of numerous radical authors including Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Priestley.²¹⁴ It is not hard to understand the extremes to which the government eventually went to in order to close the *Argus*, considering that the *Argus* was starting to be openly revolutionary. King's precise role at the *Argus* is unclear, perhaps reflecting government pressure on newspaper's editors and King's own criminal experience, which may have persuaded him of the importance of not being too obvious about his own part in any activity. It may be that his role included

²¹¹ *British Chronicle*, February 23-25, 1791. John King, *Mr King's Apology*, pp. 22-24.

²¹² Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 189.

²¹³ Lucyle Werkmeister, *London Daily Press 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), pp. 337-340. For a chronology of the libel actions, Lorraine Millard, 'Sampson Perry: A Forgotten Radical and his House of Commons Libel Case', M. Phil Thesis, The University of Queensland, 2015, p. 122.

²¹⁴ Dickinson, 'Lesser British Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin Writers during the French Revolution', pp. 5-6.

actually financing its creation.²¹⁵ Lucyle Werkmeister and Rachel Rogers both suggest that he was the deputy editor of the *Argus* but became the editor whilst Perry was in jail.²¹⁶ This may have been the case, although it has also been suggested that Perry continued to effectively control the paper even whilst in Newgate.²¹⁷ Perry was released on the 9 July 1792, but had to return to court on 19 July accused of publishing a libel on the House of Commons in the *Argus* of 8 May, which had appeared whilst he was still in prison. The article stated that Parliament was not composed of ‘Real Representatives of Great Britain’ and therefore implied that people were not bound to submit to the law. A letter in the *Argus* of 11 July 1792 retained in the Treasury Solicitor’s files in respect of Perry’s prosecution may also have contributed to the government’s determination to destroy the newspaper. The ‘letter’ written by ‘Titus’ to the ‘British Nation’ clearly encouraged revolution and the army to mutiny:

How long will you continue in lethargy, and tamely brook the iniquities and insults which are repeatedly heaping on you? There was once a time when Englishmen jealous of their liberty would severely punish the least attempt to encroach upon it.Your representatives are so corrupt that they even dare to vote an Address of Thanks for a Proclamation which would formerly have aroused the indignation of the whole country...But fear not, Britons. The military, on whom so great a dependence is placed, for proclaiming arbitrary power, have, no doubt, a love of liberty implanted in their breasts. Besides, there are ties that attach them to the rest of their Fellow Citizens; I mean the ties of blood... But I am persuaded that they are not so insensible to every tender feeling as is imagined, and learn ye enemies of the Rights of Man, that when the English Nation shall think proper to punish your atrocious crimes, you will be deserted by those on whom you place so firm a reliance, and fall victims deserving their just revenge.²¹⁸

Since letters to eighteenth-century newspapers were often anonymous, it is usually impossible to tell if they were real or, as was probably the case here, simply manufactured

²¹⁵ Jon Mee, *Print, Publicity, And Popular Radicalism in the 1790s The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 215, ft. 30.

²¹⁶ Rachel Rogers, ‘Censorship and Creativity’, para. 12. Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-1793* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 33.

²¹⁷ Michael Davis, Iain McCalman and Christina Parolin (eds), *Newgate in Revolution: An Anthology of Radical Prison Literature in the Age of Revolution* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), editors’ introductory note to Sampson Perry, p. 118.

²¹⁸ *Argus*, 11 July 1792 held in National Archives *TS11/41*. Proclamation referred to is almost certainly the Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings and Publications, May 1792.

by a newspaper to express its own views.²¹⁹ In any case, whilst this was extreme, the *Argus* had published a vast selection of radical articles ensuring the government's determination to find a way of closing it down. The government campaign to silence the *Argus* was finally successful with Perry's flight to Paris in December 1792 and the *Argus*—to the pleasure of *The Times*—finally being put out of business by the Stamp Office.²²⁰

It may be purely circumstantial but, as Todd Endelman suggests, it may be part of the government's campaign against the *Argus* that at the same time as Perry came under further pressure with the accusation of libelling the House of Commons so did King.²²¹ In July 1792, two prostitutes, Anne Taylor and Maria Towers of St Martin in the Fields, filed a case accusing King of whipping them with 'more than customary severity' during a sexual encounter. It is possible that the government or Walter of *The Times* had paid the prostitutes to make the accusation or that King paid them off, but the next day the prostitutes swore an oath withdrawing their statement and claiming that the idea had been suggested to them by a police constable.²²² Despite this, King was found guilty and fined three thousand pounds which was eventually increased on appeal to the enormous sum for the time of fifteen thousand pounds.²²³ The story of King's prosecution triggered an exchange of pamphlets.²²⁴ Unfortunately, the pamphlets express vitriolic emotion rather than any attempts to explain the position and are as Lucyle Werkmeister has pointed out 'at times so garbled as to be incoherent'.²²⁵

It may be that whole incident was a government tactic to pressure King to express pro-government political opinion and perhaps even spy on fellow radicals. Government pressure, including the use of threats and blackmail, was common in the period and effectively stifled the opposition press in the 1790s and drove the opposition underground. Penal servitude in Australia for Thomas Muir, the arrest of members of the London Corresponding Society and the execution of the revolutionary Robert Watt acted as

²¹⁹ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in late Eighteenth Century England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998), p. 38.

²²⁰ Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-93*, p. 143. Rogers, 'Censorship and Creativity', para.15.

²²¹ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 189.

²²² John King, *Mr. King's Apology*, p.6.

²²³ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career', p. 189.

²²⁴ John King, *Mr King's Apology: or A Reply to his Calumniators; The Subjects Treated, and Facts Stated will be Found Materially to Concern Every Person who resides in a Great Metropolis* (London: Thomas Wilkins, 1798). Anon, *The Real Calumniator Detected Being Candid Remarks on Mr King's Apology; or Reply to his Calumniators* (London: J Downes, 1798).

²²⁵ Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-93*, p. 114.

intimidation. The ‘Treason Trials’ of Thomas Hardy, John Thelwall and John Tooke collapsed thanks to the independence of the jury, which refused to accept the Crown’s argument that, whilst no single act of the defendants had been treasonable, cumulatively they were guilty as their acts amounted to ‘constructive treason’. The government intensified the pressure on radicals with The Treasonable Practices Act, which widened the definition of treason, whilst the Seditious Meetings Act prohibited any meeting of more than fifty people without the permission of a magistrate.²²⁶ Reformers such as Dr Beddoes in Oxford and William Frend at Cambridge were forced out of their jobs. Tradesmen and artisans lost clients and Thomas Walker saw his cotton business effectively destroyed.²²⁷ William Reid was forced to become an anti-Jacobin journalist after he was caught in a radical debating club at the Angel tavern in 1798 and threatened with prosecution.²²⁸

It is quite possible that under government pressure, King acted for a short period of time as a government spy. As the government gradually stifled the radical movement in the 1790s, suspicion was understandably rife, particularly as many radicals did act as government spies in the period rather than face prosecution. The London Corresponding Society was riddled with spies reporting to the government.²²⁹ In *Mr King’s Apology*, he denied any suggestion that he was a government agent who wrote regularly directly to Pitt and the Duke of York.²³⁰ According to Lord George Gordon’s biographer, Robert Watson, a man called King visited Gordon in jail and declared that since he was dying, he felt he should confess to Gordon that years earlier he had spied upon him by monitoring visitors to his house. Moreover, he commented that London was full of Jesuits spying on behalf of the government.²³¹ It is very unclear what to make of this reference. John King was not given to ‘confession’. It is just possible that this was King and that his confession and reference to Jesuits, which will have appealed to Gordon’s prejudices, was simply a way of obtaining information from Gordon. Yet, Watson was writing in 1795 and if it was John King it is likely he would have mentioned it given how well King was known at the time.

²²⁶ Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution: Britain in the 1790s* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), pp. 21-22.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²²⁸ Iain McCalman, ‘The Infidel as Prophet: William Reid and Blakean Radicalism’, *Historicising Blake*, in S Clark and D Worrall (eds), *Historicising Blake* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), pp. 24-33.

²²⁹ Clive Emsley, ‘The Home Office and Its Sources of Information and Investigation 1791-1801’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol 94:932, July 1979, pp. 532-561, pp. 535-544.

²³⁰ John King, *Mr King’s Apology*, p. 37.

²³¹ Robert Watson, *The life of Lord George Gordon: with a philosophical review of his political conduct* (London: H Symonds and D Eaton, 1795), p. 110. Watson does not specify in which years the spying took place.

Francis Place also raised the suggestion that King had acted as a government spy or provocateur writing that ‘I disliked him much and always suspected that he contemplated some iniquity. Some thought he meant honesty, some though(t) he was a Spy’.²³² When Place went to King’s for dinner in 1796 or 1797, he was suspicious and concerned that King was publicly arguing that people should arm themselves to assist the country’s defence but that his private views were that invasion and revolution were probable and would produce ‘great advantages’.²³³ In his cynicism about King, Place felt that King, even if he turned out not to be a spy, must have some ulterior motive which would enable him to ‘enrich himself’. In fact, King’s private view that radicals should arm themselves under the cover of creating a loyal militia was the opinion that the more radical wing of the reform movement had supported since 1794. The Loyal Lambeth Association shared a number of members with the London Corresponding Society who covertly trained at night.²³⁴ On 5 April 1798, Thomas Evans, a violent revolutionary and millenarian, repeated this argument to the London Corresponding Society and suggested the formation of an armed Corresponding Society militia as the first covert step towards revolution.²³⁵ It is hard to know how much reliance to place on Place’s hostility to King. By the time he wrote the appendix to his autobiography in 1824, Place believed that King had sought to destroy his reputation. Place had been the chairman of the jury in 1810 that recorded a verdict of suicide in the case of the Duke of Cumberland’s valet Joseph Sellis. There were rumours of homosexual intrigue and Place was accused in the press of being a government spy in the 1790s and of accepting Treasury funds to quash a murder case against Cumberland.²³⁶ Place established that these rumours had been spread by the extremist radical group that included John King, and the radical Irish Catholics Davenport Sedley and Patrick Duffin, which sought to blackmail a wide range of members of the British establishment as part of their campaign of blackmail designed both for financial gain and to undermine the status of the British elite.²³⁷

Alternatively, it may simply be that King, like many reformers, was forced to rethink his position by the violent turn of the French Revolution. As the French Revolution

²³² Mary Thale (ed.), *The Autobiography of Francis Place*, p. 236.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

²³⁴ Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794-1814* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 145-147.

²³⁵ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 13.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

became more extreme, ever larger numbers of English radicals renounced their previous support. William Godwin drew away from both the London Corresponding Society and the radical John Thelwall.²³⁸ On the basis of his comments, it would appear that King might well have been disturbed by the direction of the French Revolution. His first expression of a new attitude opposing the Revolution was his speech at Egham in December 1792 in which he stated that the English constitution was the 'envy of the whole world and should not be in an instant forsaken for the new fantastic doctrine of a few designing men'.²³⁹ This was followed by an exchange of correspondence with Paine. In his second letter to Thomas Paine, King argued the upsurge of revolutionary violence had led him to change his views:

If when the people who waded through a sea of blood to gain freedom, deny it to everyone else, and begin a second carnage on those who differ with them in opinion; —when a ruthless mob is let loose to vent its mighty rage upon a feeble unhappy woman, I see then that the overthrow of one tyranny has given birth to a million of others.²⁴⁰

King's previous radicalism had moderated to praise for George III and a desire for gradual change. In April 1793, in his *Third Letter from Mr King to Mr Thomas Paine*, King specifically referred to the deliberate violence in Paris of the September 1792 Massacres.²⁴¹ King moved on to address Paine directly:

The energy of a revolution which you have pleaded to me as an excuse for the murder of Lamballe and the Priests, is still in exertion; the revolutionary distemper will yet have many a paroxysm, and some of its spasms may be fatal, even to you. Such are the consequences of employing the arm of a mob, rather than the reason of legislators; and I have to rejoice for that part I have borne to prevent your involving this Country in similar misery.²⁴²

John King's role in the politics of the 1790s should not be underestimated. Publication of his new moderate views in his Egham speech and of the correspondence between King and Paine, demonstrating the latter's distress at King's new attitude, is indicative of King's being considered both by Paine and the government as an individual of significance in the reform movement. King's speech at Egham and first two letters to Paine were exploited by

²³⁸ Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature*, p. 96

²³⁹ *Mr King's Speech at Egham*, pp. 5-7.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

²⁴¹ Simon Schama, *Citizens A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Viking, 1989), pp. 629-639.

²⁴² John King, *Third Letter*, p. 9.

the government. They were printed in full in the pro-government *Morning Herald*, reprinted in part in other newspapers and later reissued as a pamphlet to influence the reception of Fox's motion in the House of Commons against war in February 1793.²⁴³ On 9 April, to coincide with the first reading of the Traitorous Correspondence Bill, the *Morning Herald* published the *Third Letter from John King to Thomas Paine*. According to the publisher's imprint, the pamphlet of the second letter was now in its thirteenth edition.²⁴⁴

Regardless of his motivation, King's abandonment of radicalism was short lived. By his *Fourth Letter from Mr King to Mr Thomas Paine* in March 1795, King had resumed his radicalism although he demonstrated a more thoughtful perspective in balancing the arguments. King noted that events in France which 'tended to anarchy and cruelty' had driven him to seek security by supporting the English government, but that the repressive measures taken in England 'tended to despotism and oppression'.²⁴⁵ King continued with a denunciation of the Pitt administration:

For the superintendence of the Magistrates they have substituted Spies and Informers – they have suspended the Habeas Corpus Act on the pretended apprehension of the most contemptible dangers—they oppress the Public with Loans and Taxes, which will carry conviction into the meanest cottage, the Government must be reformed or the country ruined.²⁴⁶

Moreover, King returned to providing financial as well as verbal support for radicalism. He was the largest contributor to legal fees in August 1797 when John Binns of the London Corresponding Society was put on trial for the use of seditious words.²⁴⁷ By 1802, King was writing *Letters from France*, published after his return, which showed a subtly balanced perspective of the Revolution. He recognised the heroism and virtue of some of the revolutionaries, but he was still distressed by Revolutionary violence and attacks on religion in Revolutionary France and felt that Napoleon had destroyed the hopes of liberty generated by the French Republic. He supported the Revolution's focus on 'equality' applied to 'rights and privileges, and to an equal and impartial administration of the laws'. On the other hand, he felt that the concept of 'equality' had been misused during the

²⁴³ Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-93*, p.146.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 260-261.

²⁴⁵ John King, *Fourth Letter from Mr King to Mr Thomas Paine*, published in the *Morning Post* of 13 March 1795.

²⁴⁶ John King, *Fourth Letter from Mr King to Mr Thomas Paine*, published in the *Morning Post*, 13 March 1795.

²⁴⁷ Mary Thale (ed.), *Papers of the London Corresponding Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1983), p. 405.

Revolution to justify the confiscation of property from the wealthy, an act that had not prevented inequality or poverty.²⁴⁸ King was, however, prepared to apologise handsomely to Paine whose ‘political principles seem as sound as ever’. King called Paine’s political career ‘consistent and honourable’ and stated:

...he might have sold his apostacy at any price; but worried by persecutions, the government and all of its phalanx aroused, could not daunt him. An ambiguous word or two of his Letters made me once construe them unworthy; I am ashamed of my error; and owe it to him whenever, he is mentioned to avow my recantation.²⁴⁹

Todd Endelman has claimed that criticism of King was driven by his criminality rather than his religion and that his ‘Jewishness or his Judaism was the source of his roguery was not a central claim of his detractors’.²⁵⁰ In *Oppression deemed No Injustice* complaining about his treatment in a bankruptcy hearing, King does not suggest that the unfair treatment resulted from being Jewish.²⁵¹ *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly* in their article in 1811 accusing him of wide-ranging criminality does not refer to his Jewishness.²⁵² On the other hand, whilst King’s Jewishness was not frequently referred to as the cause of his criminality no one was in any doubt about his Jewishness. A satirical article in *The Times* as early as 1790 records that he was ‘a Jew, and a Christian’, and the ‘he never assumed the name of John King to hide that of Jacob de Moses Rey’.²⁵³ Moreover, *Authentic Memoirs*, an attack against King written in the form of a diary of his supposedly found in a hackney cab, did frequently refer to his Jewishness and would certainly have worried the wider Jewish community. The *Memoirs* purports that after his supposed escape from prison during the Gordon riots, King prayed that ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob prosper the

²⁴⁸ John King, *Letters from France written by J King in August, September, October and November 1802 in which Some Occurrences are Related Which Were Not Generally Known, and Many Conjectures May be found that seemed to have anticipated Recent Events, The Second Edition Revised and Corrected, with Several Additional Letters* (London: William Burton, 1802), p. 9.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p 178.

²⁵⁰ Endelman, ‘The Chequered Career’, p. 181.

²⁵¹ John King, *Oppression deemed No Injustice Towards Some Individuals, Illustrated in the Late Treatment of John King, Under a Commission of Bankruptcy* (London: W Burton, no date given-1804?).

²⁵² *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly Vol. 1* (London: M Jones, 1811), pp. 1-26. An article on his son, Charles King, in *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly Vol. 1* (London: M Jones, 1811) pp. 457-463 does refer to ‘the collective tribe of money-lenders and extortioners’.

²⁵³ *The Times*, 25 December 1790.

righteous purposes of the mob'.²⁵⁴ In *Mr King's Apology*, a diatribe defending his actions, he challenged Christianity and defended Judaism noting that 'I had often heard my faith called into question'.²⁵⁵ Again, he did not specifically refer to a link between the attacks on him and being Jewish although the comment's inclusion in *Mr King's Apology* only makes sense in this context. It may also be that King's Jewishness was so obvious and so frequently referred to by the use of his sobriquet that further comment was unnecessary in an environment in which the connection between Jews and criminality was widely assumed.

Being Jewish did not, however, mean that King hesitated to bring commercial law cases and he seems to have been fairly treated despite his reputation. A barrister noted in *King v Brown* that John King 'had for many years given a great deal of employment to all his Majesty's Courts at Westminster as well as the Assizes'.²⁵⁶ Decisions were often made on narrow technical grounds and could be in his favour. For example, the Court of Chancery declared that it had been wrong to arrest him at the Guildhall when he had been summoned there for a bankruptcy hearing.²⁵⁷ In a separate case, King was acquitted for perjury on the grounds that he had acted on legal advice.²⁵⁸ It may be that social status played an important role here. John King—regardless of his criminality—was a Sephardi Jew, who enjoyed substantial albeit fluctuating wealth, and was married to Lady Lanesborough, who still mixed in society circles. He was an individual, therefore, of social standing and would not be treated as a common Ashkenazi street pedlar although, as we have seen, the degree of prejudice even against Ashkenazi street pedlars in criminal courts may have been real but limited.

Todd Endelman states that King's career 'marks one of the earliest occasions that a Jew anywhere in Europe sought to participate in national political life in pursuit of goals unrelated to Jewish communal needs'.²⁵⁹ King was a highly committed political radical with strong Jewish roots and he was well known in late Georgian England. He may have been alienated in some senses from British society but as a wealthy individual married to Lady Lanesborough, it was sometimes unclear to British society how he should be treated. In the tolerant atmosphere of England in the 1780s and early 1790s, radical perspectives could be expressed and remarkably this applied even to a criminal radical like John King.

²⁵⁴ Anon, *Authentic Memoirs, Memorandums and Confessions Taken from the Journal of His Predatorial Majesty, the King of Swindlers* (London: W Hatton, undated), p. 1.

²⁵⁵ John King, *Mr King's Apology*, p. 38.

²⁵⁶ *Evening Mail*, 13 April 1796.

²⁵⁷ *London Star*, 18 July 1802. *Northampton Mercury*, 24 August 1811.

²⁵⁸ *The Times*, 20 March 1797.

²⁵⁹ Endelman, 'The Chequered Career of "Jew" King', p. 187. Questions around whether Spinoza can be considered a political radical are outside the scope of this thesis.

What is even more surprising is that King, after his short-term volte face in 1792, resumed his radical activities and his critical attitudes of the government even if his views after that date were more nuanced. Unlike Levi and D'Israeli, who may have defended Jews and Judaism but were conservative individuals, King was a radical with an enduring commitment to social change and his Jewish background did not prevent him from expressing his opinions.

Lord George Gordon

John King was not, however, the best-known Jewish radical of the period. Lord George Gordon was the Jew who attracted by far the greatest level of public interest. Gordon may have been an unusual character both in his conversion to Judaism and his particular political opinions. Nevertheless, the experience of converts to and from Judaism is part of the Jewish experience and should not be omitted particularly since Burke's antagonism to Gordon is part of the explanation of his hostility to the Jewish community. Moreover, attitudes to Gordon demonstrated the ambivalent attitudes towards Jews in late eighteenth-century society. Whilst he retained his radical perspective and support for the French Revolution, his conversion attracted amazement and ridicule. Rather than the frightening Gordon of the Gordon riots he became a figure of fun.

Thanks to the biography written shortly after his death in 1795 by his secretary, Robert Watson, we are well informed of the outlines of Gordon's life.²⁶⁰ Watson's biography however, must be treated with caution. Watson appears in the novel by Charles Dickens about the Gordon riots, *Barnaby Rudge*, as the sinister Gashford cynically manipulating Gordon. Regardless of the veracity of Dickens's perspective, Watson was certainly a radical and absolutely committed to Gordon, dismissing all criticism of his actions. Unfortunately, Percy Colson's 1937 biography is the only full-length biography of Gordon. It draws very largely on Watson but takes a far more critical perspective even if anachronistically calling Gordon a 'socialist'.²⁶¹ Yirmeyahu Bindman's biography is a work of 'faction'. Thankfully, articles by Dominic Green, Marsha Keith Schuchard and Iain

²⁶⁰ Robert Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon: with a philosophical review of his political conduct* (London: H Symonds and D Laton, 1795).

²⁶¹ Percy Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon* (London: Robert Hale and Company, 1937).

McCalman have led to more balanced assessment of Gordon, although he remains an enigmatic figure.²⁶²

Gordon's involvement in the Gordon riots may have attracted Burke's fury but it did not prevent him from continuing to be a public figure. The extent of Gordon's personal blame for the riots can be debated. He was tried for treason but was ferociously defended by his cousin, the barrister Thomas Erskine. Gordon was acquitted, at least in part because the announcement in the *Public Advertiser* summoning the Protestant Association to St George's Fields in Lambeth had called for demonstrations to be held in a 'prudent and respectful manner' and requested the attendance of City magistrates to keep order.²⁶³ Moreover, after the first day of riots, Gordon conspicuously, if unsuccessfully, pleaded with the rioters to cease.

His acquittal did not, however, reduce Gordon's appetite for conflict. Regardless of his direct responsibility for the riots, he was, in government eyes, a potentially dangerous individual. Gordon remained violently anti-Catholic and viewed events through that prism. In November 1784, to the consternation of Pitt, Gordon, acting on his own initiative, started recruiting British sailors to defend Protestant Holland against the possibility of a Catholic Habsburg attack.²⁶⁴ In 1792, he wrote to the Baron de Alvensleben, Hannover's ambassador to the Court of St James, to express his opposition to the Catholic Relief Act of 1791. Even his support for radicalism and the French Revolution was limited by this intolerance. In particular, he expressed concern that the alliance in England between Dissenters, Catholics and radicals to push for a bill of rights might lead to Catholic emancipation and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.²⁶⁵

Precisely why Gordon converted to Judaism remains unclear. As we have seen, Burke believed that the Ba'al Shem, Samuel Falk, had played a role, but even Gordon's companion Watson could provide no clear explanation. Watson sympathised with Jews,

²⁶² Yirmeyahu Bindman, *Lord George Gordon* (Lakewood, C.I.S Publishers, 1992). Dominic Green, 'George Gordon: a biographical reassessment', in Ian Haywood and John Seed (eds), *The Gordon Riots Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 245-264. Ian McCalman, 'Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte: Riot and Sexuality in the Genesis of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 35:3, July 1996, pp. 343-367.

²⁶³ Marsha Keith Schuchard, 'Lord George Gordon and Cabalistic Freemasonry: Beating Jacobite Swords into Jacobin Ploughshares', in *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, Martin Mulso and Richard Popkin (eds), (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 183-233, p. 200.

²⁶⁴ Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon*, pp. 44-49.

²⁶⁵ Lord George Gordon, *A Letter from Lord George Gordon in Newgate to Baron von Alvensleben, Minister from Hanover* (London, 1792).

noting that there is 'not a Christian nation who has not sported with their blood'.²⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Watson was still mystified by Gordon's conversion, suggesting it may have been driven by a number of different motives including Gordon's desire to be associated with the persecuted, the fame it brought him, a self-image that he might be the one to lead the Jews back to the Holy Land, and the possibility that he might have preferred to be considered to be the leader of the Jews rather than a relatively insignificant Christian.²⁶⁷ Watson was at university in Aberdeen for much of 1783-87, limiting his knowledge of Gordon's motivation during this critical period. Nevertheless, as Marsha Keith Schuchard has pointed out, as early as 1774, Gordon expressed interest in the prophecy that the liberator of the Jews would come from the North.²⁶⁸ Gordon's exalted view of his own importance might have helped to convince him that this was his role.

Even before he had converted, Gordon had expressed a close interest in Jews. In August 1783, he wrote to Elias Lindo of the Portuguese Jewish community and Nathan Solomon of the German Jewish community urging them to support the Protestant cause against the Catholics and warning them of dire consequences if they failed to do so:

The tribes of Israel will soon be driven out of this pleasant land like chaff before the wind, if they set themselves against God, and His People to service Idolaters.²⁶⁹

In 1785, he wrote to Emperor Joseph reminding him that he had already denounced his March 1782 ordinance against the Jews.²⁷⁰

Communal concern about causing offence to English society is neatly demonstrated by the reluctance to convert Gordon to Judaism. The late Chief Rabbi Adler read correspondence, which is unfortunately now lost, from his uncle Rabbi Schiff at the Great Synagogue stating that he had refused to convert Gordon as he was concerned about the political consequences.²⁷¹ This reflects the traditional views of the community that conversion of non-Jews would give offence and it was explicitly banned in the Bevis Marks *Ascamot*.²⁷² Precisely when and where he was converted is uncertain but it may have been

²⁶⁶ Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon*, p.77.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

²⁶⁸ Keith Schuchard, 'Lord George Gordon and Cabalistic Freemasonry', pp. 183-233, p. 190.

²⁶⁹ Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon*, p. 154.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁷² *Ascamot or Laws and Regulations of the Congregation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, London* (London: Wertheim, Goodman and Fields, 5591-1831), rule XXII, p. 109.

²⁷² Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 197.

in the Hambro synagogue in 1787.²⁷³ What is clear is that subsequently, Gordon maintained an absolute and rigorous commitment to orthodox Judaism. Certainly, amongst poorer Jews his conversion was seen as momentous. Having fled from his trial for libel to the Netherlands and then been returned by the Dutch to England, he had lived secretly as a Jew in Birmingham until his arrest. According to the *Hereford Journal* of 13 December 1787, when arrested 'he was surrounded by a number of Jews, who affirmed that his Lordship was Moses risen from the DEAD to instruct them, and enlighten the whole world'.²⁷⁴ Gordon spent the final years of his life in prison on charges of a libel against Marie Antoinette, which had appeared in the *Public Advertiser* on 24 August 1786, and a charge of libel against the courts in a pamphlet he drafted on behalf of other prisoners protesting against deportation to Australia.²⁷⁵

From Newgate he underlined his support for the French Revolution, hoping in vain that the French might bring pressure for his release, and set out his support for the Jewish community in France. In his letter of 4 July 1791 to Monsieur Gregoire of the National Assembly, he noted the continued hostility of the 'pretended holiness of Rome' towards Jews asking:

Is the rage of the presumptuous spiritual tyrant roused also against this long-oppressed people because the Assembly shewed them favour? The Jews in France were indeed soon penetrated with admiration and respect on beholding the multiplied acts of justice which proceeded from your Assembly, and they deposited in the midst of you their solemn oath to sacrifice in every instance, their lives and fortunes for the public good.²⁷⁶

In 1792, he wrote to TW Smith MP, the chairman of the Committee to support Poland, arguing that the Poles in their 1791 Constitution had failed to treat their Jews with the same justice as the French revolution. Polish Jews had received no benefit from the reforms whilst, in comparison, French Jews were committed to the Revolution in France thanks to their political emancipation. The Poles could not expect financial assistance from Jews elsewhere in Europe when they failed to treat their own Jewish population properly.²⁷⁷

Gordon's life in Newgate was a complex mixture. On the one hand, he held dinner parties attended by numerous leading lights of society including the sons of George III.

²⁷³ Israel Solomons, 'Lord George Gordon's Conversion to Judaism', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 7, 1911, pp. 222-271, pp. 238-239.

²⁷⁴ *Hereford Journal*, 13 December 1787

²⁷⁵ Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon*, p. 164.

²⁷⁶ Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon*, p. 117.

²⁷⁷ Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon*, pp.257-259. *Caledonia Mercury*, 9 August 1792.

Gordon also continued to attract visitors from poorer Jews when he was in Newgate. On at least one occasion he refused to allow entry to a more acculturated beardless Jew. As Watson commented:

Ever since his confinement in Newgate, he had been visited by Britons of every description, and by foreigners from every quarter of the globe; the Jews looked upon him as a second Moses, and fondly hoped he was designed by Providence to lead them back to their fathers' land.²⁷⁸

By his conversion, however, Gordon opened himself to the traditional anti-Jewish tropes of the period. The ballad the 'Christian turns Jew' mocked his new status:

To a Jew he turn'd. with a beard long as a goat,
The Mosaical law he has now got by rote.
What a glorious defender of Protestant laws!
With pork or fat bacon I'd well rub his jaws

The final verse of the ballad runs:

So we may wish them much joy of this new convert Jew,
Tho' my tale it is odd, yet I'm sure it is true
So farewell my Lord, since to Newgate you're taken,
You may find it a hard case to save your own bacon.²⁷⁹

It was also rumoured that Gordon had two Jewish handmaids in Newgate whose sexual pleasures he enjoyed. According to Watson, there was no truth to this rumour.²⁸⁰ It may be that the story merely represents the widespread assumption of Jewish lasciviousness and lack of sexual morality, although the normal trope was of Jews seducing innocent Christian women. On the other hand, it was clear that Gordon was no sexual innocent. As Lady Montague had previously observed: 'If Lord George Gordon has called the Archbishop of Canterbury the W—of Babylon, it is very uncivil, as it is the only W—his Lordship dislikes'.²⁸¹

Gordon's conversion to Judaism effectively turned him from a political leader whose views frightened the government into an eccentric figure of ridicule without political influence. Watson observed on his conversion to Judaism that nothing else could have

²⁷⁸ Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon*, p.89.

²⁷⁹ 'The Christian turned Jew. Being the most Remarkable Life and Adventures of Lord G.G.', quoted in Percy Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon*, pp. 224-225.

²⁸⁰ Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon*, pp. 1-8.

²⁸¹ Quoted in Green, 'George Gordon: a biographical reassessment', pp. 247-248.

‘tended more to estrange the affection of the people’.²⁸² Regardless of the extent of acceptance of Jews, the assumption in late eighteenth-century England, and not just amongst millenarians, was that Jews would eventually convert to Christianity. The concept of an English aristocrat converting to Judaism led to doubts over his sanity. As Watson was to observe, nothing was so ‘fatal to his [political] design’.²⁸³

Conclusion

It is unknown whether there were other Jewish radicals who held similar opinions to Gordon and King. However, as Endelman and Ruderman agree, their numbers are likely to have been tiny particularly given the limited number of Jewish tradesmen and artisans who comprised the majority of members of such radical organisations as the London Constitutional Society. When it comes to D’Israeli and Levi, however, the situation may be very different. Whilst D’Israeli wrote fundamentally about politics and Levi about religion, they shared a number of beliefs particularly about Christianity. For the wealthy of Anglo-Jewry their views would have been well known. D’Israeli and Levi were not ‘outsiders’ to the community. The mainstream Jewish elite may have genuinely felt lucky and grateful that they lived in Britain rather than on the Continent. Yet, the views that Jesus was not the Messiah, or that Christian England continued to treat Jews poorly and continued to discriminate against them unfairly, were surely sentiments held many Jews. It would seem likely that these arguments advanced by D’Israeli and Levi were probably tacitly supported by a number of Jews.

David Ruderman has raised the fascinating question of whether, despite the existence of very few Jewish radicals, it felt like that to Christian Englishmen.²⁸⁴ Ruderman does not explicitly answer his own question, but with Jews having been previously quiescent, the presence of even a small number of highly opinionated Jews may have had an impact on perceptions of their pervasiveness. The four ‘dissidents’ discussed in this chapter were all remarkable individuals. They took advantage of the relative openness of debate in England to express themselves in ways that European Jews were not able to do so. They received in some cases sharp criticism from non-Jews, but this criticism was largely specific to them and their views. What is not perceptible is a move from a robust disagreement with a particular Jewish individual to an accusation against the community. The debates

²⁸² Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon: with a philosophical review of his political conduct*, p. 77.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 136.

generated by the ‘dissidents’ did not produce hostile generalisations about the community. In that sense, their actions demonstrated that fears about the impact of Jews expressing political opinions were largely unwarranted.

That does not mean that British society was comfortable with Jews expressing such views. Toleration for an Anglican like Anselm Bayly meant humility that would then allow the Jews to continue ‘the peaceful and quiet practice of your religion’.²⁸⁵ Even Richard Cumberland, the author of *The Jew: or Benevolent Hebrew*, was uncomfortable with Levi’s comments about Priestley. He criticised ‘the bold assertion of David Levi, the Jew (whose hostile opinion we tolerate)’ and continued ‘Is this a man to confute the Holy Scriptures? Weak Champion of an unworthy cause!’²⁸⁶

Generally, it was widely expected that Jews accept their position in Anglican Britain gratefully.²⁸⁷ Society accepted but was still uncomfortable with confident Jews pushing the boundaries. John King observed that people had been far more upset by his marriage to Lady Lanesborough than by his financial transactions.²⁸⁸ The position is perhaps most clearly expressed by the Anglican priest, John Hadley Swain in his response to David Levi:

And let the Jew know, that it is owing to the benevolent spirit of that religion, whose author he treats with contempt, that he not only enjoys his liberty, and has his property well secured, but can sit down, write and publish with impunity whatever his pen has produced against that very religion.

Upon, one thing I congratulate him, that he lives in a country, and at a time, that he may write against the religion that protects him, and grossly abuse the author it, without endangering his liberty, his ears, or his pocket. For I cannot promise him, that his character will be equally secure. For if a man will do silly things, perhaps it cannot be avoided, but that contempt will be his portion.²⁸⁹

Jewish legal rights existed in England thanks largely to a legal vacuum putting them into an equivalent position to any non-Anglican. Their right to religious tolerance was not in doubt and they largely lived free of legal restrictions. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the ‘dissidents’ had demonstrated that individual Jews could even express controversial attitudes without generating a backlash against the community. Yet, Jews remained an anomaly within British society and the concept of Jews expressing such views still remained

²⁸⁵ Anti-Socinus, *Remarks on David Levi’s Letters*, p. 43.

²⁸⁶ Richard Cumberland, *The Observer being a Collection of Moral, Literature and Familial essays* vol. III (London: C Dilly, 1798, 5th edition), no. 66, p. 74.

²⁸⁷ Ruderman, *Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 183.

²⁸⁸ John King, *Mr King’s Apology*, pp. 40/41.

²⁸⁹ John Hadley Swain, *The Objections of Mr. David Levi to the Mission, Conduct and Doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ Examined* (London, 1787), pp. 36 and 76, quoted Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, p. 180.

for some Christians highly questionable. Many Christians continued to hold Jews in 'contempt'. Full acceptance of the rights of Jews to play an equal role in English society still remained very distant.

Conclusion

With the exception of Isaac D'Israeli, Anglo-Jewry did not react either to Burke's hostile statements concerning Jews and the French Revolution or to the political emancipation of Jewry in France. Indeed, the Jewish community in England did not campaign in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century for improvements in its legal status. The repression of the 1790s and fear of being associated with radicalism only served to underline Anglo-Jewry's existing attitude that members of the community should avoid political controversy. Yet, as Todd Endelman has argued, Anglo-Jewry's long-term failure to push for political reform critically arose from the legal status enjoyed by Jews. Jews did not suffer from the severity of the restrictions on their daily lives that much of European Jewry experienced.¹ Moreover, psychologically it was much easier for Jews to accept discrimination when their status was shared with other non-Anglicans, in contrast to the position of Jews in much of Europe where specific legislation targeted Jews and set out the discriminatory legal rules under which they lived.

Jews in England may have avoided expressing political opinions, but the creation of the nation state, with its requirement to define citizenship, posed immediate questions for Jewish communities. In France, the question was clearly defined and debated. It was resolved by the majority of Jews who, having made clear their gratitude for being treated as equal citizens before the law, emphasized that their primary loyalty was to the French state. In England, the question of loyalty arose in a different manner. Given the political emancipation of the Jews in France, the Revolution's embrace of equality before the law, Napoleon's destruction of the ghettos, his invasion of the Middle East with his reference to the Jews returning to the Holy Land and his calling of the Sanhedrin, it is hardly surprising that other European countries were concerned about the loyalty of their Jewish populations. In response, the leaders of Anglo-Jewry repeatedly emphasized the community's loyalty. Statements stressing how grateful Jews were to live in England should not, however, simply be seen as obsequious behaviour to maintain their status. They genuinely reflected an attitude held by many within Anglo-Jewry. Depending upon the country, eighteenth-century European Jewry suffered from a range of legal disadvantages ranging from ghettos to restrictions on their occupations to discriminatory taxation. The

¹ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 2nd ed.), p. 277.

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view of Anglo-Jewry that they were fortunate to live in England was not changed by the French Revolution or Napoleon. Indeed, the answers given to Napoleon by the Sanhedrin and the Décret Infâme only served to reinforce this perspective.

Todd Endelman has also argued that the Anglo-Jewish elite at the end of the eighteenth century did not feel that ‘they constituted a separate community, living in exile in a foreign country’ who experienced ‘a sense of alienation’.² This is a far more debatable proposition. A traditional Jewish diasporic fear of upsetting the temporal authority in their country of residence remained a powerful force. As we have seen, even in 1829, when Bevis Marks was considering the introduction of sermons in English, it was concerned that the sermons might offend the Church of England. Anglo-Jewry’s desire to avoid giving offence is hardly surprising given the images of Jews that appeared in literature, prints, theatre and songs. A few more positive representations of Jews were staring to appear but popular stereotypes of Jews as either poor criminals or avaricious wealthy financiers were widespread, and traditional Christian anti-Jewish tropes, while declining, were still present. Jews were facing an increasingly ambiguous environment which allowed some Jews to feel more confident about their identities, but still left many feeling far from fully accepted. The conversion of wealthy Jews, particularly from the Sephardi community, arose not because Christianity was attractive to them but because they feared that as Jews they would never be fully accepted and were looked upon by some with contempt or distrust.

It is possible to dismiss Anglo-Jewry’s fears as overstated, but the concerns were genuinely felt and reflected the reality that non-Anglicans in the late eighteenth century, despite Britain’s self-image as a defender of liberty in contrast to Catholic Europe, only enjoyed conditional acceptance. For Jews who had lived through the Jew Bill furore of 1753, the Gordon riots of 1780 and the Birmingham anti-Dissenter riots of 1791, a degree of uncertainty about their position was only rational. Wealthy Jews may have been acculturated and have mixed socially with Anglicans, but the majority continued to marry within the Jewish community and were well aware of their history of persecution. Historians are inevitably influenced by their own environment and thus the disagreement here with Todd Endelman on this issue may be influenced by our different backgrounds. Yet, having been brought up in England as the child of immigrants in post Holocaust Europe, it seems to me perfectly possible that many second or third generation English Jews simultaneously considered England to be their home to which they were completely

² Ibid.

committed, both for themselves and future generations, whilst at the same time feeling part of a separate community, which was not fully accepted by English society.

As Anglo-Jewry experienced during this period, the existence of a separate ethnic community within a nation state may open it to the accusation of having a dual loyalty. The fact that such accusations are frequently used by politicians seeking to exploit racism does not mean that they can simply be dismissed. They remain a challenge for many immigrant communities in the contemporary world. The responses of Tom Paine and other radicals of the period who explored the concept of an individual as a citizen of the world with potentially conflicting loyalties may have started the intellectual process of developing a coherent response. Yet, in Georgian England, the suggestion an individual might have divided loyalties would not have been accepted nor would it be accepted in many countries today. Anglo-Jewry managed to successfully avoid the risk of divided loyalty leading to political opprobrium, but the rise of nation states still created an internal dilemma of how to define what being Jewish meant. If commitment to the nation state in which one lived meant that Jews would no longer be praying for their physical return to the Holy Land, then this was troubling for many religious Jews and, indeed, for many religious Christians. If a Jew's primary commitment was to the nation state, then what was his relationship with Jews in other countries or a concept of the Jews as a separate people? Rabbi Luria's sermon was remarkable in openly recognising this dilemma. He emphasized that whilst Anglo-Jewry was completely loyal to England, the Jews were still 'a nation split into innumerable divisions, interspersed in all countries over the face of the globe', who were 'brethren in a common state of affection'.³

It is obviously difficult to generalise about a community internally divided by religion, politics and economic status. Yet, many members of Anglo-Jewry in the 1790s were only first or second-generation immigrants. They were connected to other Jews by a shared history including the history of persecution, a common religious heritage, even if for many members of the community their commitment to and knowledge of Judaism was limited, and in some cases linked by family and trade connections. Many Jews in England, therefore, had a strong if poorly defined sense of identification with Jews in other European countries.

Whilst struggling with the difficult environment they faced, the approach of the communal elite was effectively the only route open to it and it was, from its perspective,

³ Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800-2001* (Oxford and Portland Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2008), p. 85.

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successful. There may have been some who sneered at them, but wealthy Jews continued to mix socially at the highest levels of English society. Despite Burke, Cobbett and the widespread prejudices held against Jews, the focus of wartime hostility remained almost exclusively directed against France and the fear of revolution in England. Most importantly, Anglo-Jewry seems to have suffered from relatively limited prejudice when actually dealing with the state. The attitude of a country's government and local officials can often be as important for an immigrant-origin community as its legislative framework. Detailed examination of the Alien Act suggests it was implemented in a highly legalistic fashion without any direct reflection of anti-Jewish prejudices. Indeed, the Home Office decision to allow Jews to register in their own synagogues indicates the success of the elite's policy. Anglo-Jewry did not suffer from any major outbreak of anti-Jewish hostility even during periods of military failure when a domestic scapegoat might have been useful. A courageous Jewish community fighting against the odds for political rights is perhaps more attractive from a twenty-first-century perspective. Yet, it would have risked a severe backlash from Christian Britain. The repeated declarations of loyalty ensured that the Jews did not become a political issue. The communal elite were able to continue to integrate into English society and to take advantage of commercial opportunities free from the risk of legal restrictions.

There were, however, a small number of Jews who were prepared to express strong views. D'Israeli, Levi, King and Gordon wrote in English and used language that was at times directly confrontational to express themselves in a way in which Jews on the Continent would still have been too frightened to articulate. That they felt able to do so says much about English society. In a society in which the Church was no longer dominant, and indeed the attitude of many in the Anglican church was more 'liberal', Jews were in a position to express themselves without fear of retribution. Moreover, whilst lacking the hard evidence, it may be that the Jewish 'dissidents' discussed in this thesis were not the only members of Anglo-Jewry to hold strong beliefs, but that they were simply the only ones with the courage to express their opinions in writing. David Levi was an intrinsic part of religious Jewry, writing liturgy for both Ashkenazi and Sephardi synagogues and was supported by Benjamin Goldsmid. He may have spoken for many Jews when he poured scorn on the concept of Christ as the Messiah. Isaac D'Israeli was not an 'outsider' to the community, as Todd Endelman describes him, but integrated by marriage and social life. His biting satire in *Vaurien* about Jews being burnt by Christians and his anger at the failure of Parliament to confirm the legal position of Anglo-Jewry may well have been felt by many others. Isaac D'Israeli's uncertainty over Jewish property rights may have been a

bitter issue for any member of the Jewish elite living in a period when property ownership was still critical to an individual's status in society. As late as the 1830s, whilst very few Jews were concerned about political emancipation, the question of property rights had still not been clarified by legislation.⁴ This thesis suggests that *Vaurien*'s focus on property rights and anger about the poorly defined status of Jews may have been influenced by the status of Isaac's father, who remained an alien until 1801, and that this has been neglected by historians. The thesis also suggests that Isaac D'Israeli's retention of a letter in response to *Vaurien* that attacked him and referred pejoratively to his Jewishness demonstrates that it caused him concern, perhaps reinforcing an awareness that even he, a wealthy and assimilated Jew, was not fully accepted by some in England. Even if Anglo-Jewry was successful in the period in navigating the prejudice against Jews, it is, nevertheless, wrong to view them as fully integrated into English society. Anglo-Jewry still faced the struggle for political emancipation and full equality before the law. These would only be achieved much later in the nineteenth century in the face of intense opposition which, even if it no longer emphasized the primacy of the Anglican church, continued to conceive of Britain as a Christian nation.

This dissertation has been the first cohesive study of the Jewish community aimed exclusively at the period 1789-1815 and has aimed to provide a deeper understanding of both Jewish and English history. It has aimed to explain how the Jewish communal elite benefitted from its focus on loyalty, but that a few Jews were prepared to express criticisms of English society in a way that would not have been possible elsewhere in Europe. Moreover, by examining Burke's anti-Semitism, the administration of the Alien Act, the extent of tolerance in English society and the nature of accusations over dual loyalty, the thesis has also sought to enhance our understanding of issues in English history which continue to have contemporary relevance.

⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 278-279.

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