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Cecil Roth and the Imagination of the Jewish Past, Present and Future in Britain, 1925-1964

by

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ABSTRACT

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FUTURE IN BRITAIN, 1925-1964

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This thesis addresses the neglect in recent historiography of the foremost historian of
the Jewish experience in Britain over the period 1925 to 1964, Cecil Roth. It is an
intellectual history of Roth as a British-Jewish historian and emphasises the difficulties
in pigeonholing this complex scholar. His complexity, this thesis argues, reflected the
multiplicity of modern Jewish identity and experience as well as the divisions within
British Jewry and Britain throughout the middle of the twentieth century. The first
chapter argues that Roth can be included alongside scholars such as Salo W. Baron and
Simon Dubnow in his reaction to traditional German-Jewish historiography. It also
explores Roth's unique position as an Oxford-trained historian and his connected so-
called 'normalisation' of Jewish history. Roth attempted to replace transcendental
explanations with earthly cause and effect, but simultaneously used religious paradigms
to popularise the pursuit of the Jewish past and boost Jewish esteem. It looks
specifically at Roth's ambivalent approach to the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish
history', which saw the Jewish past as a story of singular suffering and persecution. The
Jewish experience in Britain, he believed, could be seen as typical both of a European
persecutory past and an American liberal, 'non-lachrymose' experience. The chapter
concludes with an examination of Roth's assertion of a British-Jewish historical and
historiographical significance in the face of perceived German-Jewish dominance.

The second chapter looks at the rise of fascism in Britain and abroad and Roth's
involvement in the defence of the community. It argues that, in contrast to recent
assessments, Roth cannot be so easily dismissed as an apologist. Jewish survival was,
he believed challenged by assimilation as much as by antisemitism. He feared that at
times communal defence focused on external antisemitism came at the expense of
Jewish self-respect and internal strength. This chapter examines Roth's relationship
with the Board of Deputies of British Jews and his construction of an 'Anglo-Jewish
race' as an answer to racial antisemitism and a form of ethnic-cheerleading. The final
chapter begins with a discussion of Roth's role in European-Jewish cultural
reconstruction. It examines Roth's efforts to contrive a link with the American-Jewish
experience in order to maintain British-Jewish significance in a changed global scene,
through especially, his concept of the 'English-speaking era'. The duality of post-war
globalisation and localism is then explored in relation to Roth's focus on regional
British-Jewish pasts and his international travel-writing. The thesis concludes with a
discussion of Roth's ambivalent Zionism and his ultimate immigration to Israel in
1964.

Cecil Roth and the Imagination of the Jewish Past, Present and Future in Britain, 1925-1964

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	Anglo-Jewish Association
AJA, Cincinnati	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the America Jewish Archives, Cincinnati
AJHS	American Jewish Historical Society
BoD	London Board of Deputies of British Jews
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CJR	Conference on Jewish Relations
CMH	*Cambridge Medieval History*
CRP	Cecil Roth Papers
CUP	Cambridge University Press
EHR	*English Historical Review*
JCR	Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction
JHSE	Jewish Historical Society of England
JHSE Committee	Committee on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Archives and Libraries
JIR	Jewish Institute of Religion
JPSA	Jewish Publication Society of America
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRSO	Jewish Restitution Successor Organisation
JTC	Jewish Trust Corporation
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary
LBI	Leo Baeck Institute
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
OUA	Oxford University Archives
OUP	Oxford University Press
SUA	Southampton University Archives
Sub-Committee C	Board of Deputies' Sub-committee C of the Reparations and Compensation Committee
TJHSE	Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*

Introduction

Scope and Themes

Cecil Roth was one of the most productive and important historians of the Jewish experience in the twentieth century. This thesis is a case study of Roth's various and conflicting uses of the past and expressions of identity over the course of one of the most fraught and turbulent generations in history. It may be characterised as a form of intellectual biography.[1] Like biography the thesis will be concerned with questions of identity; Roth's own and his ideas and ideals for that of British Jewry and of Jews more widely. It encounters Roth's intellectual positions as both representative of and distinct from the communities and time to which he belonged. It does not aim for completeness or the recreation of a life in its totality. To a degree, Roth was 'speaking for others' in his historical project.[2] Jewish intellectuals, such as Roth, did not view their communities in these times 'from a high vantage point' where they would 'wring their hands or shake their heads'. They were not estranged from British Jewry and 'frequently face[d] the same predicaments and labour[ed] under the same recollections as the Jewish community generally'.[3]

This thesis explores Roth's interpretative frameworks as the 'pivotal figure in Anglo-Jewish historical studies from the 1930s to 1960s'.[4] In this way Roth is used as a lens through which to review and assess the significance of the past and of particular versions of that past for British Jewish, general Jewish and British identity formation in the twentieth century. By looking at Roth both a British-Jewish perspective and, moreover, the divisions within it will be revealed. Roth's many and contradictory approaches to the past were emblematic of an increasingly fractured community. But also they revealed the tensions inherent within the many varied British understandings of the meaning of Jewish diaspora identity. British-Jewish viewpoints, however, can be mapped onto the profile of positions within British society as a whole with varying success. The scope of this project, therefore, includes

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[1] Robert Everett, *Christianity Without Antisemitism: James Parkes and the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, (Oxford: Pergaman Press, 1993), p. ix.
[2] Susan Crane, 'Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory', *The American Historical Review*, vol. CII, no. 5, (December 1997), pp. 1372-1385, here p. 1382.
[3] Israel Finestein, 'Estrangement of Anglo-Jewish Intellectuals', idem., *Scenes and Personalities in Anglo-Jewry, 1800-2000*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), pp. 96-111, here p. 104.
[4] David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages?: Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry', Tony Kushner (ed.), *Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 29-41, here p. 36.

wider questions concerning themes beyond Roth's own life and project, apropos of British non-Jewish and non-British Jewish historiography, representations of the past and understandings of identity.

Cecil Roth belonged to a new wave of British-Jewish figures. He was part of a 'broad immigrant petit bourgeoisie which occupied the social and physical space between the immigrant slums and the Anglo-Jewish suburbs'.[5] He was born in 1899 in London. He was the son of Joseph Roth, who came to Britain from Poland in the 1880s, and Henrietta Roth nee Jacobs, a second and third generation descendent of Polish immigrants. The family has been described as seeing itself as 'thoroughly English as well as thoroughly Jewish'. They lived in prosperous Kingsland, a suburb of Middlesex, an 'area of aspiring Jewish gentility', which had become an increasingly fashionable destination for upwardly mobile Jews moving out of the East End. They later moved to Finsbury Park. Cecil's early Jewish education was entrusted to the Russian scholar, Moshe Vilenski. Later he was schooled unremarkably as a day-pupil at the non-Jewish, fee-paying City of London School, which was popular with aspiring Jewish families, from 1911 to 1917.[6]

Roth was not distanced from his non-Jewish contemporaries and experienced many of the same formative experiences including an Oxford education and service in the Great War. In 1917, along with many of his generation, Roth was conscripted into the army. Roth remained a private during his military career and acted as his unit's official interpreter and 'company orderly'. Unlike so many of his peers, Roth returned from war, but surely, in common with most ex-combatants, in some ways a transformed young man.[7] His wife, Irene, later recalled that her husband did not often

[5] Bill Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger and Manchester Jewry: Religion, City and Community*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1999), p. 14.

[6] See Jacob Rubin, *The Roth Chronicle*, 3 volumes, (Palo Alto, USA: [n.pub.], 1994), pp. 129-146; Geoffrey Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth, 1899-1924', *TJHSE*, vol. XXXIV, (1994-1996), pp. 1-16, here pp. 1-5.

[7] According to Alderman, Roth was conscripted into the Territorial Rifle Brigade then transferred to 8th Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry. He was sent to Flanders at the end of 1917, and in spring 1918 took part in the Battle of the Somme and then in the Battle of the Sambre (the last battle of the Great War) in November 1918. His battalion was disbanded in early 1919. Alderman places Roth in the 8th Battalion due to Irene Roth's recollection of Cecil's account to her of his military action. The recorded action of the 8th matches this account. However on a biographical record that Roth sent Henry Hurwitz in c. 1927 Roth claims he was in military service in England and France (no mention of Belgium) and was in the 15th Royal Sussex Regiment and then the 11th Somerset Light Infantry. Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', pp. 5-7; Biographical Record, c. 1927, Henry Hurwitz and Menorah Association Memorial Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, American Jewish Archives at the Jacob Rader Marcus Centre, Cincinnati; Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), pp. 6-8.

speak of his time at war, but it is not unreasonable to imagine that his experiences would affect his outlook throughout his life, as has been argued for many other combatant and non-combatant intellectuals of Roth's generation.[8] Roth's later oscillations between traditional and modernistic modes of historical interpretation support Jay Winter's problematisation of the dichotomy between the modern and the traditional in rhetoric and literature, as expounded by Paul Fussell, Modris Eksteins and Samuel Hynes.[9]

As the question of Roth's wartime experiences shows, in the confrontation of identity and in the search for cultural and intellectual motivations, this work faces similar challenges to those confronted by the practitioners of life history. The biographer can be accused of 'establishing cause-effect and other relationships, and … determining what was most formative and important for someone else, someone they do not know'.[10] Biography can impose coherence on an individual's life and can avoid contradiction and conflict.[11] It is tempting to ignore or explain away inconsistencies for the benefit of a coherent narrative; 'to manipulate the pieces of [the] jigsaw puzzle into one finished portrait'.[12] Roth's intellectual position as demonstrated by his history writing and journalism and some of his life decisions, across the forty years dealt with here, was rarely wholly articulate. The internal discordance of Roth's thought and its manifestation in both writing and action are not disguised here but welcomed and explored as indicators of the complexities of the perceptions and identity of individuals in general, of members of diaspora communities in particular and precisely of the inconsonance of the British-Jewish community of the mid-twentieth century.[13]

[8] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 8. For example, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. See Erik Svarny, *'The Men of 1914': T. S. Eliot and Early Modernism*, (Milton Keynes and Bristol, USA: Open University Press, 1988); John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War*, (London: Harper Collins, 2004), esp. pp. 287-313.
[9] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 2-3; David Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939*, (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998), p. 2; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (London and New York: OUP, 1975); Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (London: Bantam, 1989); Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, (London: Bodley Head, 1990).
[10] Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography*, (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 119.
[11] Alan Shelston, *Biography*, (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 13-14.
[12] James L. Clifford, *From Puzzles to Portraits: Problems of a Literary Biographer*, (Chapel Hill, USA and London: The University of North Carolina Press and OUP, 1970), p. vii.
[13] See David Cesarani, 'The Transformation of Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940', in idem. (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, (Oxford and Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990),

At the outset it is important to clarify the use of the terms 'Anglo-Jewish' and 'British Jewish' and their variants throughout this thesis. Roth himself was more prone to use the term 'Anglo-Jewish', although he did very occasionally use 'British Jewish'. For Roth, the category 'Anglo-Jewry' did not have a static meaning and he employed it in different ways. Sometimes he used it interchangeably with British, reflecting a not untypical Anglo-centric view. In his explorations into provincial Jewish history, for example, he would refer to Anglo-Jewry and yet covered non-English, British-Jewish communities in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.[14] At other times, 'Anglo-Jewry' was used to denote a linguistic community of English-speaking Jews. It then included Jews in England, in the rest of Britain and also in America, South Africa, Australia and so on. This, as shall be further discussed in Chapter Three, was useful for Roth as it challenged the notion of Anglo-Jewish parochialism. Furthermore, it reflected his view, that was shared in many quarters, that English-speaking communities, no matter how remote their connection to the 'mother country', still belonged to a common English heritage.[15] They could, therefore, be included as a branch of English and Anglo-Jewish history. At yet other moments, Roth used the term 'Anglo-Jewish' to designate very specifically the Jews of England. Sometimes this was connected to the realities of the period with which he was dealing. Often, however, it reflected his Anglo-centric preference. This can be seen for example in his construction of an 'Anglo-Jewish race', which is discussed in Chapter Two.

In the context of this terminological minefield, consistent use of Anglo-Jewish or British Jewish in a discussion of Roth is highly problematic. The use of a single name would obscure some of the sense of Roth's work. Therefore, where possible the choice of term remains true to Roth's probable original meaning if not to his own nomenclature. An example is the discussion of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in England of 1956 in Chapter Three. The historical circumstances of this event occasioned the emphasis on England. Nonetheless, in the post-war climate, just after the Festival of Britain, and in his comparison and contrast with the American example, Roth had in mind his contemporaneous British-Jewish community. His

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pp. 115-140; Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), esp. 'The End of Consensus', pp. 209-264.
[14] Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, (London: The Jewish Monthly, 1950).
[15] Cecil Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty: The New World and the Mother Country*, (London: Anglo-Jewish Association, 1954), (reprinted from *Commentary*, vol. XVII, (February 1954), pp. 109-117); Cecil Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era', *Jewish Life*, (November-December 1952).

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understanding of even this British Jewishness was, however, undeniably, Anglo-centric.[16]

This thesis is organised chronologically and thematically into three chapters. Each chapter looks backward and forward from its particular timeframe to help contextualise its content but also to demonstrate the continuity and change in the themes under discussion. Similarly, due to the complexity of interpretations of the past and issues of identity, the themes covered in each chapter can be traced throughout the thesis.

The first chapter deals with Roth's early work, from the completion of his doctorate in 1925 to the beginning of the Nazi era in Germany and the intensification of the fascist threat in Britain in 1933. It concentrates on Roth's early and often radical approaches to Jewish historiography. Roth's first excursions into the historical method led him directly to confront a number of integral questions involved in the pursuit of, especially, a British-Jewish past. These issues included the so-called normalisation of the Jewish historical experience and its removal from a transcendental plane. As will be seen, this was in part a process of secularisation. Roth, however, simultaneously applied spiritual and religious meaning and explanation to Jewish historical episodes.

Roth's unusual position as an Oxford-trained historian writing Jewish history also influenced his approach to normalisation. This is clear in his contribution to the longstanding debate surrounding Jewish historical periodisation. Chapter One will explore how and why Roth 'normalised' the periods of Jewish history to bring them into line with European paradigms. Roth also removed Jewish history from mystical understandings by his self-proclaimed focus on the ordinary individual. Roth's intermittent shift to a form of social history and its significance will be assessed in Chapter One. Another vital ingredient to Roth's project to demystify the Jewish experience was his partial rejection of what has been termed 'the lachrymose conception of Jewish history'; the interpretative paradigm that characterises the course of Jewish history as that of persecution and despair. Much of Roth's treatment of these key issues in Jewish history was bound up with his struggle against the domination of the field by German scholars. Chapter One will end with an

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[16] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty.*

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exploration of the significance of Roth's anti-German bias and his assertion of a particular British-Jewish model of Jewish history.[17]

The second chapter confronts the difficult period of the increased fear of antisemitism from 1933 to the turning point towards the promise of Allied victory in 1943.[18] In the troubled 1930s Roth worked alongside the London Board of Deputies of British Jews in the defence of the community against the antisemitic calumnies of fascism at home and abroad. This period of Roth's work, as shall be seen further below, has often led to Roth's dismissal as an apologist and defence worker. Chapter Two will not deny these suggestions but will demonstrate the tensions between Roth's historical and communal sensibilities and the unfavourable circumstances of the time. Roth believed in the necessity of moving beyond the mainly external focus of defence, which was concerned with how Jews were perceived by those outside the community. He argued for the taking up of arms against what he perceived as the greater threat of assimilation and indifference. Chapter Two, therefore, looks at Roth's emphasis on Jewish education and spirituality as the main weapons in the fight for Jewish survival. In underscoring Jewish identity, and especially British-Jewish identity, Roth hoped to shore up Jewish resolve from within. One part of this process, which also reveals his interplay with contemporary rhetoric, was his use of racial discourse as a foundation for a Jewish identity which could not be breached. Chapter Two looks at his reaction to 1930s racial discourses, and explores his novel construction of an Anglo-Jewish race.

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[17] See Cecil Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 5, (May 1928), pp. 419-434; Cecil Roth, 'European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XVI, no. 4, (April 1929), pp. 293-306; Cecil Roth, 'Paradoxes of Jewish History', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 1, (October 1930), pp. 15-26; Cecil Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?: The Causes of Jewish Migrations', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 4, (June 1931), pp. 337-348; Cecil Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XX, no. 2, (July-September 1932), pp. 136-147.

[18] 1942 saw a turn in the tide of war in favour of the Allies, although this was not immediately apparent at the time. Nonetheless, by 1943, the Home Front in Britain began to increasingly look towards the future and to imagine what post-war Britain might look like. Threat of invasion had passed and the 'Dunkirk spirit' was already being spoken of with nostalgia. Though there was according to a Mass Observation report, 'no one mood', the low morale caused by immersion in what was accurately predicted to be a lengthy wait for victory inspired popular pressure for post-war reform, such as the Beveridge Report. See Spencer C. Tucker, *The Second World War*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 150; Martin Gilbert, *Second World War*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 381; Jose Harris, 'War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War', in Gordon Martel (ed.), *The World War Two Reader*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 317-335, here pp. 323 and 330-331; Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War Two*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), pp. 171 and 178.

The final chapter deals with the period beginning in 1943, when Britain felt confident enough to look forward to after the war. It ends in 1964, when both the post-war period has been argued to have come to an end with the election of the second Labour administration and Roth left Britain for Israel upon his retirement.[19] In 1943, Roth and others in the British-Jewish community began to consider the post-war cultural reconstruction of decimated European-Jewish communities. Through his priorities of redistribution of heirless Jewish property, Roth revealed his changing understanding of the post-war global scene and the place of British Jewry within it. Increasing globalism led Roth simultaneously to turn to the local and regional through his significant role in the production of British-Jewish provincial and regional history and his travel writing. David Weinberg has argued that the traditional idea that 'European Jewish life ended in the catastrophe of World War Two' needs to be revised. Post-war European Jewry was, he argues, asserting a distinctive identity as a 'third way' between, after 1948, the State of Israel and American Jewry. British-Jewish voices are seen by Weinberg as both working for and against this self-assertion; at times seeing themselves as part of a European-Jewish revival and at others perceiving themselves as entirely separate from the continent and far more linked to the American experience. Roth's reaction to the changing global scene will add to Weinberg's analysis. Chapter Three explores Roth's ambivalent positioning of British Jewry on the 'American side of Europe', especially through the failings of the British-Jewish contribution to the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the celebrations held on the occasion of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of Jews in England in 1956. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of Roth's motivations for leaving Britain and British Jewry and his increasing disillusionment with the ability and inclination of British Jews to live up to what he saw as their intellectual responsibilities in Europe and in the world.

As Roth was an extremely prolific writer, publishing over 600 items in total through to his death in Jerusalem in 1970, inclusion of his texts for treatment in this thesis has had to be decided by criteria reliant upon the chronology and themes at issue.[20] The main focus of this thesis is Britain and British Jewry. Therefore books

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[19] Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters, 'Introduction', in idem. (eds.), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964*, (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), pp. 1-21; Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 207.
[20] Oskar K. Rabinowicz, 'A Bibliography of the Writings of Cecil Roth', in John M. Shaftesley (ed.), *Remember the Days: Essays in Honour of Cecil Roth*, (London: JHSE, 1966), pp.351-387; Robert

such as *A History of the Jews in England, Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, Anglo-Jewish Letters* and texts dealing with British-Jewish heroes, such as Menasseh ben Israel and, more controversially, Benjamin Disraeli, are naturally featured.[21] Texts did not need to have dealt solely with British-Jewish history to have been included. Roth's work on general Jewish topics such as his *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation, A Short History of the Jewish People* and *Personalities and Events in Jewish History* are covered here in so far as they point to Roth's British-Jewish view of Jewish history.[22] This thesis is concerned with how British Jews saw themselves and how they were seen in the global perspective. Roth's own definition of 'Anglo-Jewish' – whether it was born out of an Empirical sense of superiority or merely an acknowledgement of linguistic commonality – also commonly included other English-speaking communities such as America and South Africa.[23] Therefore, in addition, texts such as *A History of the Marranos* and *The Sassoon Dynasty* have been included as they place British Jewry and British Jews into an international context.[24]

Many of the texts under discussion are not monographs but articles and essays from scholarly journals. Roth was frequently rather more candid in this genre and revealed many of his own justifications for his approach to the past in this form. The popularisation of Jewish history was central to Roth's approach and is integral to this thesis' discussion of his role in Jewish education. A large proportion of the texts covered are, therefore, those intended for a wide distribution and to be read by a non-academic audience, including several articles and essays that appeared in popular journals and newspapers. In addition, Roth's input into the planning of exhibitions and celebrations and his contribution to exhibition catalogues comes within the

Singerman, 'Cecil Roth Bibliography: Supplement', JHSE Miscellanies, part 10, *TJHSE*, vol. 25, (1973-1975), pp. 243-251.
[21] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, (Oxford: OUP, 1941); Cecil Roth, *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1962); Cecil Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters (1158-1917)*, (London: Soncino Press, 1938); Cecil Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi, Printer and Diplomat*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1934); Cecil Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952).
[22] Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, (London: MacMillan, 1938); Cecil Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, (London: MacMillan, 1936); Cecil Roth, *Personalities and Events in Jewish History*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1953).
[23] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'.
[24] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1932); Cecil Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*, (London: Robert Hale, 1941).

purview of this thesis as part of his project of dissemination of Jewish history.[25] The bibliography compiled by Oscar Rabinowicz in 1964 and its supplement published in the Miscellanies of the *TJHSE* in 1975 are excellent sources for Roth's extensive body of less well known works.[26] Collections of a number of Roth's minor publications can also be found amongst the Roth Collection at the University of Southampton and in the American Jewish Archives at the Jacob Rader Marcus Centre in Cincinnati.[27] Roth was also an enthusiastic and candid correspondent. His letters and exchanges have been utilised for this project as they often illuminate previously obscured motivations and interpretations of the past and present. His communications with British-Jewish communal activists, Neville Laski and Sidney Salomon, the American-Jewish historian, Jacob Rader Marcus, his friend and fellow contributor to the *Menorah Journal*, Herbert Solow, the editor of the *Menorah Journal*, Henry Hurwitz and editor of the *Jewish Monthly*, Sefton Temkin, proved especially revealing.[28] Further, unpublished manuscripts and lectures and the jottings within Roth's own copies of his texts have proved invaluable in uncovering aspects of his approach to the writing of the Jewish experience.[29]

Previous scholarship on Roth has been piecemeal. His wife, Irene, wrote a memoir of their life together but this included no real discussion of his work and did not attempt to contextualise his history and action in any way.[30] Geoffrey Alderman has produced the first chapter of a biography, covering the first twenty-five years of Roth's life, the follow-up to which has yet to appear. Chaim Raphael penned a short

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[25] *Festival of Britain 1951: A Survey of Some of the Aspects of Anglo-Jewish life illustrated in the Anglo-Jewish Exhibition at University College, London. July 9th to August 3rd*, (London: n.p., 1951); *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History in Commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles*, (London: East and West Library for the Tercentenary Council, 1956).
[26] Rabinowicz, 'A Bibliography of the Writings of Cecil Roth'; Singerman, 'Cecil Roth Bibliography: Supplement'.
[27] Cecil Roth Papers, MS156, Additional Papers, Southampton University Archive; Cecil Roth, Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[28] See correspondence with Neville Laski, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2, SUA; correspondence with Sidney Salomon, Board of Deputies Papers, ACC3121, London Metropolitan Archives; correspondence with Jacob Rader Marcus, Records of the American Jewish Archives, MS col. 687, AJA, Cincinnati; correspondence with Herbert Solow and Henry Hurwitz, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, AJA, Cincinnati; correspondence with Sefton Temkin, Records of the Anglo-Jewish Association, MS137, AJ95/ADD/JM/5, SUA.
[29] For example Cecil Roth, 'The Last Survivor', unpublished manuscript, CRP, MS156, AJ151/6/15, SUA; Annotated, working copy of Cecil Roth, *A Birds Eye View of Jewish History*, (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1935), CRP, MS156, AJ147, SUA.
[30] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*.

observational piece on Roth's life and work upon his death.[31] In 1975 Lloyd Gartner published a more analytical piece, which explored some of Roth's writings but to a limited extent.[32] In 1998, David Ruderman wrote a defence of Roth's work on Italian Jewish history in response to an attack by Israeli historian, Robert Bonfil.[33] Recently, Fred Krome has usefully added to the subject with an examination of Roth's early historiographical writing in the context of his links to America and the *Menorah Journal* in particular.[34]

The relative disinterest in Roth is particularly stark in contrast to that shown to other, what can be termed, post-*Wissenschaft* scholars of the broad sweep of Jewish history including Simon Dubnow, Salo Baron and Gershom Scholem.[35] The new approaches of these early twentieth-century historians were in opposition, to varying degrees, to the nineteenth-century, German school of Jewish history the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or the Science of Judaism. The *Verien für Cultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Society for Culture and Science of the Jews) was founded in 1819 by Leopold Zunz, who advocated a modern, secular and scientific approach to the study of Jewish literature. The exact legacy of the society in nineteenth-century German-Jewish historiography is debatable; however, the approach to the Jewish past which it championed evolved after its demise in 1824 and took on a life of its own. It was an approach intertwined with a process of internal Jewish religious reform in Germany and was also part of the path of emancipation for German Jews. *Wissenschaft* scholarship was a 'contested and fragmented' body and was practised in different

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[31] Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', pp. 1-16; Chaim Raphael, 'In Search of Cecil Roth', *Commentary*, vol. L, (1970), pp. 75-81.

[32] Lloyd Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', in Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami (eds.), *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 69-86.

[33] Ruderman, David B., 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment', in David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (eds.), *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 128-142; Robert Bonfil, 'The Historian's Perception of the Italian Renaissance: Towards a Reappraisal', *Revue des études juives*, no. 143, (1984), pp. 59-82.

[34] Fred Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs': The Evolution of Cecil Roth's Historical Vision, 1925-1935', *Modern Judaism*, vol. 21, (2001), pp. 216-237.

[35] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (Seattle, USA and London: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 87; see for example Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History*, trans. by Judith Vowles and ed. by Jeffrey Shandler, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, USA: Indiana University Press, 1991); Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995); David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter History*, (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

guises by intellectuals such as Immanuel Wolf, later Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz and later still Gustav Karpeles and Marcus Brann.[36]

Wissenschaft des Judentums, it has been argued, initiated the modern turn from 'text to context' when historians looked for the 'Jewish essence' in the historical experience of the Jews rather than in the religious scripture of Judaism. Nonetheless, as the nineteenth century progressed and as the school became increasingly institutionalised within rabbinical seminaries, traditional theology crept back into Wissenschaft interpretations. This return to religious reference points came both in the form of a providential view of the course of Jewish history and in the prevalence of Leidensgeschichte (history of suffering).[37] Yosef Yerushalmi coined the phrase 'post-Wissenschaft' to describe historians like Dubnow, Baron and Scholem who had offered 'entirely new perspectives and avenues' in Jewish history.[38] For Yerushalmi, the post-Wissenschaft scholars reacted against Wissenschaft scholarship and values. For example the Eastern European scholar, Dubnow, extolled the virtues of Ashkenazi Jewry rejecting the myth of Sephardic supremacy propagated by many in the movement.[39] The American historian, Baron, countered the German model of Leidensgeschichte and questioned the gains of emancipation.[40] The Israeli scholar, Scholem, along with Dubnow, reasserted the significance of Jewish mysticism in the face of particularly Graetzian disdain.[41] All these historians were, however, Wissenschaft-trained in rabbinical seminaries, unlike Roth who read history at

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[36] For discussions of Wissenschaft see Ismar Schorsch, From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism, (New England, USA: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994); Nils Roemer, Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith, (forthcoming), (Wisconsin, USA: Wisconsin University Press, 2005); Nils Roemer, 'Paradoxes of Historical Consciousness – German-Jewish Transformations from Wissenschaft to Faith', Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook, III, (2004), pp. 31-47; Nils Roemer, Comment on Perrine Simon-Nahum, 'Wissenschaft des Judentums in Germany and the Science of Judaism in France in the Nineteenth Century: Tradition and Modernity in Jewish Scholarship', in Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron and Uri R. Kaufmann (eds.), Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered: The French and German Models, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2003), pp. 49-53.
[37] Roemer, Between History and Faith; Roemer, 'Paradoxes of Historical Consciousness'. For Wissenschaft and Leidensgeschichte see Nils Roemer, 'Turning Defeat into Victory: Wissenschaft des Judentums and the Martyrs of 1096', Jewish History, vol. 13, no. 2, (Autumn 1999), pp. 65-80.
[38] Yerushalmi, Zakhor, p. 87.
[39] Jonathan Frankel, 'S. M. Dubnov: Historian and Ideologist', in Dubnov-Erlich, The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov, pp. 1-33, here p. 16; Ismar Schorsch, 'The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy', in idem., From Text to Context, pp. 71-92.
[40] See Salo W. Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall we Revise the Traditional View?', Menorah Journal, vol. 14, no. 6, (June 1928), pp. 515-526; Liberles, Salo Wittmayer Baron, pp. 39-51.
[41] Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, (New York: Schocken Books, 1961); Gershom Scholem, 'The Science of Judaism – Then and Now', in idem., The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 304-313, esp. p. 309; Biale, Gershom Scholem, esp. pp. 1-51; Frankel, 'Historian and Ideologist', pp. 15-16

Oxford. Roth's anti-German approach to Jewish historiography and his complicated reactions to *Wissenschaft* values, coupled with his outsider status make him potentially a prime example of post-*Wissenschaft* scholarship. His invisibility in recent historiography is therefore particularly unfortunate.

The lack of attention paid to Roth may in part be due to a dearth of disciples. Roth did not formally supervise doctoral students in the fashion of, for example, Baron. Also his work is routinely dismissed as apologetic and as falling short of historical standards.[42] David Katz, for example, maintains that Roth, contrary to modern historical sensibilities, was prepared to fly in the face of the principle of objectivity and was 'willing to distort a text and substantially alter its meaning'.[43] The similarities, however, between Roth and Dubnow, Baron and, to a lesser extent, Scholem are manifold. They adopted similar approaches in terms of periodisation, the lachrymose conception of Jewish history and the emphasis on a social history of sorts, as will be demonstrated in chapter one. There are differences between their positions, but these alone could not account for Roth's comparative neglect.[44] Roth's British origins may, however, lie at the bottom of his invisibility. Roth spent much of his career battling against and attempting to correct the belittling and perceived insignificance of British Jewry and of British-Jewish history. The persistence of this view may now sadly be the obstacle to Roth's work being taken seriously by modern scholars of Jewish history.

Roth's British context, and his unique position as a non-*Wissenschaft*, Oxford-trained Jewish historian, does not render him insignificant or parochial; quite the opposite. It may, however, explain why he has been neglected both in Jewish and general British historiography. In straddling the gap between Jewish history and the mainstream, Roth to an extent missed both boats. According to Roth, with uncharacteristic modesty, he had had 'a pretty satisfactory Oxford career'. More typically, he cited as evidence of his excellence his

> Exhibition at Merton, at first time of asking, in spite of adverse circumstances ... culminating in what was called at the time the most

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[42] See especially David S. Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage in British History*, pp. 60-77, here p. 61; Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', pp. 37-38;
[43] Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', p. 61.
[44] See, for example, Simon Dubnow, 'A Sociological Conception of Jewish History', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, (March 1928), pp. 257-267; Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation, pp. 515-526.

brilliant 'first' of recent years in the Final Honours School of Modern History.[45]

Roth matriculated at Merton College, Oxford to read for the Final Honour School of Modern History in 1919. He was to remain with the college for five and a half years. He gained first class honours for his BA in 1922, received his BLitt degree in 1923 and finally gained his D.Phil., specialising in the Italian Renaissance, in 1924.[46] The resultant book, *The Last Florentine Republic*, according to Roth, 'found a publisher at the first time of asking, [and] was unanimously well reviewed'. For Roth, writing in 1928, '[his] pathway in 1925 seemed pretty well mapped out – a Donship, culminating probably in a Professorship, in Mediaeval and Modern History'.[47]

Roth's high opinion of his own ability was, it seems, matched by Oxford staff. A. H. Johnson, tutor to Merton college, wrote in a 1922 reference that he would 'be astonished if Mr. Roth did not in the future make a mark in the historical world'.[48] His doctoral supervisor, Dante expert Edward Armstrong, gushed

> He has the real instinct for research, a keen curiosity, and unlimited patience, he has embodied in his work not only new materials but fresh views. He unites an easy, vigorous style ... For him certainly history is full of life.[49]

In 1923, Armstrong recommended Roth to J. R. Tanner, co-editor of the *Cambridge Medieval History*, to produce the chapter on the *Medici* instead of himself. In this recommendation, however, there was a possible clue to Roth's subsequent marginalisation from mainstream academia. Armstrong described him in stereotyped terms as a 'very clever young Jew'.[50]

Despite such promising beginnings, Roth's first permanent university position did not come until 1939, when a private benefaction allowed him to join Oxford's Faculty of History as Reader in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies.[51] Why, then, did Roth's

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[45] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[46] Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', pp. 7-11; Cecil Roth, 'Biographical Record', Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[47] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[48] Reference for Cecil Roth by A. H. Johnson, 18 October 1922, Joseph Roth Private Collection.
[49] Reference for Cecil Roth by Edward Armstrong, 29 May 1924, Joseph Roth Private Collection.
[50] Letter Edward Armstrong to J. R. Tanner, 29 July 1923, *CMH* Papers, St. John's College Archive, Cambridge; Gilman, Sander, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence*, (Lincoln, USA and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).
[51] Roth's post was initially for a period of seven years and was funded by the 'Marks and Spencer family'. Harry Sacher led the original benefaction and when the endowment was made permanent in

potentially glittering career not get off the ground, at least in the shape of a university job, for so long? The answer to this question lies in understanding both the status of Jewish scholarship and indeed Jewish scholars in inter-war Britain, although Roth's personal circumstances also played a part. Roth's interests were considered too parochial by British mainstream universities. For the Jewish seminaries, according to Roth, he lacked the Talmudic training and rabbinic background they valued. And it was thus that in 1925 Roth found that he had fallen between two stools. He wrote with frustration:

> [t]he Goyim say: 'This man is not an historian: he is a Jewish antiquarian'. And the Jews say: 'This man is not a Jewish scholar: he is merely a historian.'[52]

He believed that the 'ridiculously theologised' state of Jewish scholarship meant his lack of Talmudic training rendered him under-qualified for practising Jewish history in the eyes of his potential employers. Conversely, he believed his 'historical equipment' was deemed as being 'over-adequate'.[53] Nonetheless, in January 1927 Roth claimed in a letter to his friend and fellow-contributor to the *Menorah Journal*, Herbert Solow, that he had 'had the rather unusual pleasure of turning down jobs in three continents within a space of rather less than one year'.[54] It is not entirely clear what all these positions were and if indeed they all actually existed. One of them, however, was that of librarian and assistant professor at Stephen Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. Anglo-Jewish scholar, Israel Abrahams, and German-Jewish historian, Ismar Elbogen, had recommended the young Roth to Wise in 1925. Abrahams described him as 'the most promising of our young men', citing the quality of his Jewish and general scholarship, his youth, Englishness and 'keen Jewish interest' as all points in his favour. Although he added a caveat concerning Roth's personality, suggesting he was 'possibly hard to get on with. No, not possibly, assuredly'.[55]

1945, Sir Simon Marks, Mrs. Blond and Miss M. Marks were listed alongside him as contributors. Information provided from Oxford University Records by the Secretary of Faculties and Academic Registrar; Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, pp. 95 and 133.

[52] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[53] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[54] Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 10 January 1927, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[55] Wise expressed gratitude to Elbogen for his and Abrahams's recommendation, having met and liked Roth and secured him for one term's teaching beginning September 1925. Roth was to offer three

Both Roth and Salo Baron filled a semester's teaching each at the institute during the 1925-1926 academic year. The following year, a permanent position came vacant. Fred Krome has described how, in contrast to Robert Liberles' suggestion, Roth, not Salo Baron, was first offered the job at the JIR for the academic year 1926-27, but Roth turned it down.[56] There is a telegram dated 25 March 1927 offering Roth a job as librarian and assistant professor and a reply from Roth turning it down.[57] By this time, however, according to Liberles, Baron had already offered the first of his lecture courses.[58] Whatever the circumstances, the otherwise unexplained bitterness that Roth appeared to hold towards Wise and his institution may suggest that Liberles' version, in which Baron is offered the position over Roth due to his supposed superior breadth of subjects, contains at least some truth. Regardless of the fact that he was eventually offered a position, being considered alongside Baron – a product of a rabbinical seminary and exemplar of the route to Jewish history that Roth resented – was perhaps too much for him to bear. There may have been some hesitation or reservations expressed regarding Roth's qualifications for the position, or, as Krome suggests, some misunderstanding which led to the hostility. Roth demonstrated the endurance of his grudge when he made a reference to his negative opinion of Stephen Wise in 1930.[59]

Geoffrey Alderman suggests that Roth's reluctance to join a Jewish scholarly institution during this period was due to the fact that Roth was still set on securing himself an appointment in Italian studies. Abrahams made reference to a similar point in his early recommendation of Roth to Wise. Letters Roth sent to one of his D.Phil. examiners, Cesare Foligno, suggested he hankered after such a position into the mid-

courses for the JIR, on the 'Settlement of the Jews in Europe', the 'History of the Jews in Italy' or the 'Sephardic Dispersion' and the 'Treatment of Jewish Historical Materials'. Letter Israel Abrahams to Stephen Wise, 18 July 1925, Stephen Wise Collection, MS col. 49, 1/3, AJA, Cincinnati; Letter Stephen Wise to Ismar Elbogen, 22 September 1925, Elbogen Collection, MF 515, LBI, New York; Letter Stephen Wise to Israel Abrahams, 28 August 1925, JIR Records, MS col. 19, 32/1, AJA, Cincinnati; Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs'', p. 219.
[56] Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs'', p. 219; Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, pp. 32-33.
[57] Telegram Julian Mack to Cecil Roth, 25 March 1927 and Telegram Cecil Roth to Julian Mack, 28 March 1927, JIR Records, MS col. 19, 32/1, AJA, Cincinnati.
[58] Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, p. 32.
[59] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 19 May 1930, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/4, AJA, Cincinnati; Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs'', p. 221 and footnotes 26 and 27; Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, pp. 32-33.

1930s.[60] Alderman does not consider, however, that as Cesare Foligno was himself based in Italian studies Roth might seek to give him that impression and Foligno would be incline to assume it. According to Alderman, '[i]t was only after repeated failures to obtain an academic position as an Italianist that he determined to seek a professional future within the Jewish field'.[61]

This supposition is a half-truth. It does appear that Roth initially shied away from a career in Jewish history, as his apparent refusal to take up academic positions in this capacity revealed; however, the majority of his publishing and teaching interests lay in this direction. In addition, as Alderman himself pointed out, there is no evidence of Roth applying for an Oxford, or Cambridge, fellowship.[62] Also throughout his career Roth demonstrated not only a passion for researching and writing Jewish history but also a commitment to its dissemination amongst the Jewish community, especially in England. Despite his protestations, it is hard to imagine Roth being satisfied, even with an academic job, working completely outside the field of Jewish history. Leaving these reflections on his personality aside, this thesis argues that it was not Jewish history qua Jewish history that Roth rejected but his perception of the nature of the field that initially repelled him. Therefore Roth's first academic movements and his early historiographical writings on the subject bring into relief the state of Jewish history as it was when Roth began his academic career.[63]

In 1921, Jacob Mann warned Ismar Elbogen that '[in] England there is unfortunately very little scope for Jewish scholarship'.[64] Ten years earlier Lewis Namier had been turned down for a Fellowship at All Souls, Oxford, 'on account of his Jewish origins'.[65] There was little scope then, it seems, for Jewish scholars as well as Jewish scholarship. When Roth completed his D.Phil., Jewish history took place in the seminaries not in universities, and Jewish historians were found in rabbinical institutions not History faculties. Roth believed that having specialist interests in Jewish history prejudiced his academic career in the general scholastic world. He

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[60] Letter Israel Abrahams to Stephen Wise, 18 July 1925, Stephen Wise Collection, MS col. 49, 1/3, AJA, Cincinnati; Letter Cesare Foligno to Cecil Roth, 30 January 1933 and 19 March 1936, CRP, MS 156, AJ151/1/A/2; Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', p. 13.
[61] Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', p. 13.
[62] Although this may be explained by Israel Abrahams's comment that Roth was 'disliked by his Oxford college authorities'. Letter Israel Abrahams to Stephen Wise, 18 July 1925, Stephen Wise Collection, MS col. 49, 1/3, AJA, Cincinnati; Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', p. 13.
[63] See Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs'', pp. 216-237.
[64] Letter Jacob Mann to Ismar Elbogen, 20 October 1921, Elbogen Collection, LBI, New York.
[65] Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', p. 13.

scoffed that '[u]ntil a man's academic position is assured, he cannot dare to let it be known that he is seriously interested in questions relating to Jewish scholarship'.[66]

Roth explained in a 1928 letter that in 1925 'mortality was low and vacancies were few'. He claimed that, whilst waiting for a position to arise, he 'committed the great blunder of [his] life' and published several pieces of a Jewish interest. Rather than improving his chances of being awarded a post, as they might have done had his interest been in a different direction, these articles instead 'branded [Roth] as an antiquarian, a sectarian'. Instead of flaunting his list of publications Roth claimed he was forced to suppress it for fear that 'it would tell against [him] instead of for [him].[67] He lamented that in the universities 'Jewry still wears the intellectual equivalent of the badge of shame'.[68] Roth returned to the idea of 'intellectual anti-Semitism' in his article on medieval learning published in 1930.[69] He postulated that

> [t]he term 'medieval university' is advisedly used in this essay in place of 'the university of the middle ages', for the medieval regime, in university life, lasted generally till well on in the eighteenth century, and in some places (which tact forbears to mention) lingers till even today.[70]

It would not be outrageous to suggest that this was a not-so-veiled attack on Oxford scholars and their lack of encouragement of his career. For Roth if it was not his Jewish origins then it was his Jewish interests which 'ruined [his] career' at Oxford.[71]

This assessment may have been a little unfair. There was an admittedly limited but still existent need in general historical circles for Jewish historians at this time. For example, the *CMH* planned a Jewish chapter for one of its volumes, which had originally fallen to Israel Abrahams. He was, however, too ill to write it and suggested somebody complete it in his stead. This was not Roth but London School of Economics scholar M. Epstein. Epstein, unable to accept the task, recommended German-Jewish historian, Ismar Elbogen, demonstrating the belief that for this sort of work one needed to look outside the country. Tanner, it seemed was not happy with this suggestion and asked for another. Only then did the young Roth's name come up,

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[66] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 433.

[67] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[68] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 433.

[69] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[70] Cecil Roth, 'The Medieval University and the Jew', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 2, (November-December 1930), pp. 128-141, here p. 128.

[71] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

along with the qualifier that pointed to the 'distinct shortage of Jewish historians'. It is notable that the 26 year old Roth filled a niche in the mainstream arena as, despite being so young, he was asked to contribute to a prestigious volume due to 'the dearth of experienced scholars in this country in the field of Jewish history'.[72]

It may have been the perception of the field of Jewish history as amateur and only practised in association with religious studies that prejudiced mainstream historians against such activity. Roth, as an Oxford graduate would not have faced this problem. Maybe it was not the subject of Roth's early work that stifled his career, but their popular nature. Although Roth allegorised the contemporary position of Jewish scholarship within the general intellectual environment with the status of the Jew in medieval Europe, he himself implicitly concurred with the mainstream attitude towards the nature of Jewish scholarship. Roth criticised non-Jewish scholars for dismissing Jewish history as 'drifting between the Faculty of Oriental Languages and that of Theology'; at the same time he was similarly attacking the theological nature of Jewish history-writing and its concentration within rabbinical seminaries.[73] Nevertheless Roth was caught in a vicious circle. Jewish history was not considered 'proper' as it was not practised within history departments and was not practised in history departments as it was not considered proper.

Due to the marginalisation of Jewish history in mainstream universities the Jewish Historical Society of England was vital for the survival of the field and for fostering Roth's talents from the very beginning of his career. The JHSE was formed in 1893 in the period of heightened Jewish historical consciousness in the wake of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887. It was part of a global trend towards the establishment of local Jewish historical societies, which sprung up at around the same time in America and Germany.[74] These societies provided an outlet for research and documentation of the Jewish experience within their national contexts. Roth enjoyed a life-long strong association with the JHSE, first becoming a member in 1918. He

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[72] Letter Freda Abrahams to C. W. Previté-Orton, 30 September 1925, Letter C. W. Previté-Orton to J. R. Tanner, 5 October 1925, Letter M. Epstein to J.R. Tanner, 5 November 1925, Letter M. Epstein to J. R. Tanner, 23 November 1925, Letter C. W. Previté-Orton to J. R. Tanner, 22 February 1926, Letter Leon Roth (on behalf of Cecil Roth) to J. R. Tanner, 26 February 1926, Letter Cecil Roth to J. R. Tanner, 12 March 1926, Letter C. W. Previté-Orton to J. R. Tanner, 23 March 1926, *CMH* Papers, 1/1 and 26, 2/75, 3/6-7, St. John's College Archives, Cambridge.

[73] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 426-428; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[74] See Robert Liberles, 'Postemancipation Historiography and the Jewish Historical Societies of America and England', in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and Historians*, (Oxford/New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 45-65.

served on the Council from 1921 to 1935, when he became president for the first of nine terms. The first seven occurred during one of the most difficult times for the society between 1936 and 1945. He supported the JHSE in a vice-presidency role until his death in 1970, and was twice called upon to serve 'special' presidencies; once in 1955 to 1956 for the Tercentenary celebrations and again in 1968 to 1969, for what turned out to have been a timely gesture to honour Roth's significant role in the history of the society, as he was to pass away the following year.[75] During this intense connection, Roth was at the centre of the circle of mainly amateur historians associated with the Society.

Recent scholars have tended to associate the Jewish Historical Society of England with the roots of an apologetic Jewish historiography. The JHSE, like its counterparts abroad, was established in the context of rising anti-alienism and fears over the non-Jewish response to mass immigration from Eastern Europe. An important part of its purpose was, therefore, to facilitate research that might defend Jews in England against the charge of being an alien element in the country.[76] Cecil Roth's close association with the Society and indeed his domination of it during the mid-twentieth century has proved an obstacle to Roth's work being taken seriously in recent treatments. Todd Endelman, for example, notes that 'despite his [Roth's] Oxford credentials he wrote in the same apologetic vein as the amateurs of the Jewish Historical Society of England'.[77]

In discussions of British-Jewish historiography, David Cesarani, Bill Williams, Endelman and Katz have all referred to Roth as an apologist. Endelman dismissed Roth's contribution to the field entirely. He asserts, borrowing from the work of Kushner and Cesarani, that '[b]efore the 1970s, the only academic historian to take up English Jewish history was the American-born and –trained Lloyd Gartner'.[78] Richard Bolchover's study of British Jewry in the Nazi era groups together Roth's *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation, A Short History of the*

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[75] *TJHSE*, vol. IX-XXIII, (1918-1970).
[76] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*, (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 4; Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', pp. 33-34.
[77] Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 5 and 272, n. 8.
[78] Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', p. 36; Bill Williams, 'Heritage and Community: Manchester's Jewish Past', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, pp. 128-146, here pp. 138-139; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 5 and 272, n. 8; Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', p. 61; David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. viii; Tony Kushner, 'Heritage and Ethnicity: An Introduction', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, pp. 19-20.

Jewish People and *A History of the Jews in England,* and labels them as 'all very much in the vain [sic] of apology'.[79] If the three books Bolchover cites do all reveal an apologetic drive, they do so in different ways and for different purposes, which are obscured by the blanket attribution of the apologetic label. Cesarani cautions that 'reducing Anglo-Jewish historiography before 1960 merely to apologetics would be quite wrong and would misrepresent the complexity of the undertaking'.[80] Nonetheless, no attempt has been made to tease out this complexity. On one level, for example, scholars have failed to separate Roth's work by purpose. His efforts under the banner of communal defence are bracketed alongside that those works written for a purely 'academic' purpose. His critics do not, however, merely rest their accusations upon his defensive work, by which is meant that which explicitly sought to refute a specific calumny or attack against the Jews from outside of the community. All of his history is considered structurally apologetic; a concept that is normally centred round his supposed Whiggish leanings and his neglect of the experience of the Jews of the East End.[81]

The 'Whiggish' epithet was coined in the 1930s in a critique by Herbert Butterfield which condemned the mode of historical enquiry that best characterised English history writing in the nineteenth century. Historians such as William Stubbs, Edward Freeman, John Richard Green, Samuel Rawson Gardiner and Charles Harding Firth were accused indirectly of perpetrating a congratulatory Anglo-centric approach to history. This view focused on political and constitutional history at the expense of social, cultural and intellectual perspectives and weaving seamless narratives into unconnected chronological sequence.[82] To Butterfield, Whiggish historians 'stud[ied] the past for the sake of the present' and in doing so produced so-called bad history that, among other failures, 'simplif[ied] the study of history by providing an excuse for leaving things out'.[83] British-Jewish historiography in the early twentieth century, though reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Whigs, was also

[79] Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust,* Second Edition, (Oxford and Portland, USA: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), pp. 44-45.
[80] Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', p. 37.
[81] Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', p. 61; Kushner, Tony, 'The End of the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show': Representations of the Jewish East End, 1887-1987', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage,* pp. 78-105.
[82] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History,* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1963); Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 62-70.
[83] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History,* p. 15 and 24; Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850,* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1990), pp. 146-148.

in part conceived as a reaction against them. Historians such as Goldwin Smith used antisemitic rhetoric in contemporary affairs, notably over Disraeli's handling of the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s. Others, for example, Edward Freeman, peppered especially their accounts of the medieval period with attacks against the Jews as stereotyped moneylenders and ritual murderers.[84]

Whig historiography was heavily reliant on the notion of progress in history and tended towards an ends-oriented approach to the past. In the 'Judaized version of Whig History', which Roth is said to exemplify, the 'ends' tended to be emancipation. The history of the Jews before this time was characterised by the progression towards this state reflecting the understanding of the 'course of history' as an evolutionary process from barbarity to the perfection of mankind.[85] For Katz, this optimistic view of the world was clear in the *History of the Jews in England*. Here, Katz claims, Roth 'tend[ed] to put the Jews in the best possible light and emphasiz[e] anti-Semitism and persecution giving way to toleration and eventual emancipation'.[86] Similarly, Endelman underlines the, perhaps blind, optimism of the JHSE amateurs, including Roth, charging them of stressing the harmonious progression of the integration of the Jews into the fabric of English society.[87] It was not until the 1980s and 1990s, he argues, that Roth's 'uncritical' belief that 'antisemitism was inconsequential and Anglo-Jewish history an uninterrupted success story' was challenged.[88]

Despite this almost relentless criticism, Roth's work is not abandoned in up-to-date treatments of the British-Jewish past. Endelman, for example, includes thirteen of Roth's books and articles in his bibliography to his recent survey of the Jews in Britain and regularly references points of detail from Roth's research.[89] In terms of argument also, Endelman demonstrates the influence of Roth's conclusions on contemporary historiography. Endelman's rendering of the story of Menasseh ben Israel and the resettlement of the Jews in England, for example, follows some of

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[84] David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', p.31.
[85] See Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, pp. 9-13; Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, pp. vii-viii.
[86] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, pp. vii-viii.
[87] Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 5.
[88] Endelman identifies himself, Colin Holmes, Tony Kushner, Kenneth Lunn, David Cesarani and David Feldman as those presenting the challenge to the old view that Roth represented. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 8.
[89] Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 332-333 and 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 36, 38, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 60, 63, 65, 71, 98, 112, 156 and 240.

Roth's key contentions.[90] In contrast, Katz's account of the resettlement in his *The Jews in the History of England* consciously and deliberately moves away from Roth's view.[91] Nonetheless, Katz still used as many as thirty-nine pieces of Roth's bibliography and acknowledges him frequently throughout the book.[92]

The medievalist Suzanne Bartlet defends Roth against Katz's criticisms by pointing out that 'there is plenty of factual reporting in Roth's books that is dependable' and reminds the reader that current knowledge has limits in the same way as it did in the middle of the last century.[93] Indeed, in terms of the history of the Jews in medieval England, Roth's usefulness and status has been perpetuated to a greater extent than in the early modern and modern periods, which are the focuses for Katz and Endelman. A current anthology on the subject demonstrates this continued importance as all but two of the contributors acknowledge Roth's work.[94] Barrie Dobson underlines Roth's significance in this area when he celebrates the recent reinvigoration of the field so that 'the long period of comparative inactivity in medieval Jewish studies that followed the late Cecil Roth's death in 1970 seems at last over'.[95] Similarly and connected to this phenomenon Roth's influence and the longevity of his work is marked in the field of provincial British-Jewish history. The majority of the above acknowledgements of Roth are from his *The Jews of Medieval*

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[90] For example Endelman writes '[t]hat the resettlement occurred in the informal way it did had important consequences for the later development of Jewish status ... At a later date, when Jews sought recognition of their right to participate as full citizens in state and society, there was no restrictive ancien régime code to be debated and repealed'. This corresponds to Roth's description of the 'unobtrusive and informal manner in which the resettlement was effected' and the correlating absence of any kind of 'special Jewish charter'. Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel*, pp. 281-284; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 27.

[91] Katz emphasizes the role of the revival of Hebrew studies and the importance of millenarianism, the belief in the imminent Second Coming and hence the urgency of the conversion of the Jews in the English initiation of a public debate on the issue. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, pp. 107-144.

[92] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, pp. 427-428 and x, 5, 24, 52, 117, 122, 143, 150, 156, 160, 180-183, 203, 205, 206, 208-211, 213, 214, 221, 232, 233, 242, 244, 258, 274-276, 281, 289, 296, 298, 305, 322, 334, 336, 354, 356, 357, 371, 373, 374 and 377.

[93] Suzanne Bartlet, 'Women in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community', in Patricia Skinner (ed.), *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 113-127, here p. 114.

[94] Patricia Skinner, 'Introduction: Jews in Medieval Britain and Europe', pp. 1-11, here pp. 1, 3, 4, 6 and 11; Joe Hillaby, 'Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century', pp. 15-40, here p. 20; Robert C. Stacey, 'The English Jews under Henry III', pp. 41-54, here pp. 47-48 and p. 53; Robin R. Mundill, 'Edward I and the Final Phase of Anglo-Jewry', pp. 55-70, here pp. 55, 60, 61 and 63; David A. Hinton, 'Medieval Anglo-Jewry: the Archaeological Evidence', pp. 98-111, here pp. 101, 103-104, 109 and 111; Bartlet, 'Women in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community', pp. 114-116; Anthony Bale, 'Fictions of Judaism in England before 1290', pp. 129-144, here p. 135; Barrie Dobson, 'The Medieval York Jewry Reconsidered', pp. 145-156, here pp. 147, 151 and 153-154, all in Skinner, *Jews in Medieval Britain*.

[95] Dobson, 'The Medieval York Jewry Reconsidered', p. 146.

Oxford and *History of the Great Synagogue*. Katz describes the latter as 'still valuable' and Endelman as still 'the best source for the early history of the Ashkenazi community'.[96] In addition a recent collection of essays on the Jews of Cornwall has reprinted Roth's account of the Penzance community as a 'classic text' amongst other more recent attempts, which Tony Kushner has described as failing to supersede Roth's version on anything but a superficial level.[97]

Much of the contemporary analysis of the period dominated by Roth in British-Jewish history writing has, in its criticism of apologetic and Whiggish tendencies, been based on assumptions of its inferiority in relation to both contemporaneous non-Jewish history and current Jewish historiography. Cesarani points to Jewish historiography lagging behind its more advanced non-Jewish counterpart.[98] Roth's position as doyen of a conservative reactionary form of British-Jewish historiography has become paradigmatic for those now working on the many subjects and periods he covered. Far from supporting this paradigm and the notion of an historiographical lag, this thesis will show moments when Roth anticipated what was considered cutting edge in the 1970s and 1980s. His incidents of radicalism and progressive history have been ignored or missed by those who paint a one-dimensional picture of Roth the Whig, the apologist and the communal defender. As chapter one shows, Roth, at the same time as singling out Jewish heroes and influential families, focuses on ordinary characters from history that he had come across and become fascinated by.[99] And through, especially his provincial history, he encouraged the study of a social history: a call that was answered by modern historians such as Tony Kushner, Bill Williams and David Cesarani.[100] For example,

[96] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England,* p. x; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain,* p. 51.

[97] Keith Pearce and Helen Fry (eds.), *The Lost Jews of Cornwall: From the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century,* (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2000), pp. 69-85; Tony Kushner, 'Jewish Local Studies and Memory Work: A Case Study of Cornwall', Review Article, *Journal of Jewish Studies,* vol. LV, no. 1, (Spring 2004), pp. 157-162, here pp. 158-159 and 161.

[98] Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', p. 37.

[99] See for example, Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*; Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel*; Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*; Cecil Roth, *The Magnificent Rothschilds,* (London: Robert Hale, 1939); Cecil Roth, 'Romance at Urbino', in idem., *Personalities and Events,* pp. 275-282 (first publ. as 'A Love Drama of the Italian Ghetto', *Jewish Chronicle Supplement,* (15 May 1925)); Cecil Roth, 'The Amazing Abraham Colorni', in idem. , *Personalities and Events,* pp. 296-304 (first publ. in *American Hebrew,* (4 May 1934)); Cecil Roth, 'A Day in the Life of a Medieval English Jew', in idem., *Essays and Portraits,* pp. 26-45 (first publ. in greater length as 'The European Age' in Leo W. Schwarz (ed.), *Great Ages and Ideals of the Jewish People,* (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 264-311); Cecil Roth, 'The First Jew in Hampstead', in idem., *Essays and Portraits,* pp. 242-249 (first publ. in *Jewish Chronicle,* (28 October 1932)).

[100] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 22 January 1932, 19 March 1933 and 24 September 1935, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati; Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own

Cesarani argued in a 2000 article that, like the organised, official Jewish history of the JHSE, East End Jewry created myths of origin around, specifically, the extent of the persecutory motivation for migration as opposed to economic factors.[101] Sixty-nine years previously Roth had written 'Persecution or Economics?: The Causes of Jewish Migrations', which de-emphasised Jewish passivity by asserting that Jews left Eastern Europe and came to Britain to actively seek a better life for themselves. This was despite the fact that these migrations, in the JHSE narrative, had always featured as desperate escapes from unthinkable terror in order to stress and congratulate British benevolence and consolidate British tolerance.[102] In addition, in the post-war period, Roth's inclusion of Holocaust 'tourist' sites in his travel literature, as shall be discussed in Chapter Three, came decades before 'Holocaust tourism' became popular.[103]

Roth's conservative, Whiggish and apologetic tendencies should not be ignored. Nevertheless, recognising his legacy and the trajectory that reaches from Roth to historians of British Jewry today usefully encourages a multifaceted understanding of mid-twentieth-century historiography in Jewish, British and British-Jewish contexts. In addition it reveals the coexistence of discordant strategies of understanding the past within the community and within individuals. This thesis revisits Roth in this light – as an apologist and reactionary historian but also as a radical progressive and trailblazer – and explores two main themes, which represent the two central concerns for mid-twentieth-century British Jewry. The first is Jewish survival or, more accurately, the British-Jewish view of and role in Jewish survival and the question of British-Jewish survival in particular. The second is the coexistence of global and local discourses and the peculiarity and centrality of British Jewry and Britain within the international scene.

Needs', p. 428; Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 295. Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, p. vii; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 15 June 1927 and 8 August 1930, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3 and 4, AJA, Cincinnati; see Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*; Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).

[101] David Cesarani, 'Social Memory, History, and British Jewish Identity', in Glenda Abramson (ed.), *Modern Jewish Mythologies*, (Cincinnati, USA: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 15-36.

[102] Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?', pp. 337-348.

[103] Cecil Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe', *Jewish Heritage*, (Spring 1959); Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, USA and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 135 and 149.

The issue of Jewish survival can be, and was, approached by Roth and others from two angles: the recognition and reaction to external threats and to internal threats. Jewish survival was compromised by antisemites and fascists, certainly. According to Roth, however, by far the most significant threat emanated from Jews themselves in the shape of 'indifferentism' and cultural and spiritual shallowness.[104] Historians critical of Roth normally focus upon the first of these aspects – Roth's role in communal defence. It is in fact Roth's constant struggle against Jewish apathy that defined his approach to the past, the present and future throughout his career. Roth believed that it was 'only from an appreciation of his past that he [the Jew] can be imbued with self-respect and hope for his future'.[105] In addition the learned pursuit of that past was in itself an essential factor in British-Jewish survival as, to Roth, without 'knowledge and learning ... a Jewish community is doomed to perish'.[106]

Roth inherited the desire to extend the audience for Jewish history in England from his antecedents. The first nationally significant historical act that took place within the British-Jewish community was the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall in 1887. It heralded in the age of scientific historical research within the field of Jewish studies in England.[107] As described above, it was the direct forerunner to the formation of the JHSE in 1893, and set the tone and subject matter for the work of the society as well for any following expositions of the Jews.[108] The aims of the 1887 exhibition reflected both the desire to collect materials together in order to 'facilitate the compilation of a history of the Jews in England' but also to 'promote a knowledge of Anglo-Jewish history' and a 'deeper interest in its records and relics'.[109] The importance of encouraging communal interest was carried through to the JHSE. Lucien Wolf, in his inaugural address at the first meeting promised: '[o]ur work will not be limited to dry-as-dust research, but will comprehend every

[104] Cecil Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXX, no. 1, (January-March, 1942), pp. 1-12, here pp. 11-12; Cecil Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (February 1957), Cecil Roth, Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[105] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 419.
[106] Quoted in a report of Roth's after-dinner speech at the first annual dinner of the B'nai B'rith Selig Brodetsky (Ealing and District) Lodge, 'What Happened to the Intellectuals?', *Jewish Chronicle*, (19 May 1961).
[107] Israel Abrahams, 'The Science of Jewish History', Presidential Address, 23 November 1904, *TJHSE*, vol. V, (1902-1905), pp. 193-201, here p. 195-197.
[108] Lucien Wolf, 'Origin of the Jewish Historical Society of England', Presidential Address January 15 1912, *TJHSE*, vol. VII, (1911-1914), pp. 206-221, here pp. 206-221; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, (Berkeley, USA and London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 85.
[109] *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, 1887*, (London: [n.publ.], 1887), p. vii.

means that our resources will afford of promoting a knowledge of and interest in the general past of our people'.[110]

The intimate connection between historicism and the construction of group cohesion was carried through into Roth's generation of historical research and heritage production. Roth was a pioneer in the popularisation of British-Jewish history and in the formulation of British-Jewish heritage. His work represented efforts to construct and reflect a conception of a unique British-Jewish identity. Throughout his working life, Roth was active in both traditional modes of historical enquiry and in forms of the celebration of the past. He has often been praised for his ability to simplify historical enquiry and to present it in a colourful and 'popular' tone. For example, Chaim Raphael wrote in reference to Roth's approach to writing history:

> It was both their strength and weaknesses as popularisations that they were clearly a compression of vast detailed knowledge instead of being an imaginative blow-up of secondhand information, hand-tailored for an audience that would respond most readily to a good splurge of emotion.[111]

The work of Roth was then an amalgam of the erudition of the serious scholar and the techniques of the popular writer. The combination was a conscious effort for Roth. He lamented the strict division between the realms of the 'readable' and the 'scholarly' in English-speaking countries and believed there to be 'more to culture than the written and printed word'.[112] This thesis, therefore, examines more than just Roth's academic outcomes. It also explores his journalistic and fictional writing as well as his involvement with public history, such as exhibitions and lectures.

Roth's urge to popularise Jewish history was borne out of his understanding of how to ensure Jewish survival. Yerushalmi has since warned of the dangers of 'the divorce of history from literature'. He asserted that this had been 'as calamitous for Jewish as for general historical writing'.[113] For Roth this calamity was felt by the community as a whole, who lived in ignorance of the glory of Jewish heritage and culture as a result. This ignorance in turn led to apathy for Jewishness and Judaism which caused marrying out, conversion and, worst of all, for Roth, 'indifferentism'.[114] Fears over the perceived accelerated assimilation of British Jewry in this period were

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[110] Lucien Wolf, 'A Plea for Anglo-Jewish History', Inaugural Address to the first meeting of the JHSE, 11 February 1893, *TJHSE*, vol. I, (1893-1894), pp. 1-7, here p. 7.
[111] Raphael, 'In Search of Cecil Roth', p. 75.
[112] Cecil Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age: A Scholar Discusses the Creative Out-look', *Commentary*, IV, (October 1947), pp. 329-333, here p. 333.
[113] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 100.
[114] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?'.

symbolised by the conference on intermarriage that was held by the B'nai B'rith in 1931.[115] The crisis in Jewish and British-Jewish identity, as Roth understood it, could be remedied only if Jews were told of their history and understood the triumphs and deliverances of the past. Such knowledge would equip them to live as Jews in the present and boost their morale in order to ensure they continued as Jews in the future.[116] Education was then Roth's most important weapon in the struggle for Jewish survival, even more so than apologetics or defence work.

The theme of the emphasis on Jewish survival is first picked up in Chapter One. Here there is a discussion of Roth's simultaneous normalisation and contradictory mystification of Jewish history. Roth stressed Jewish continuity and, therefore, strength, through comparative history of Jews in different ages and realms.[117] This interpretation emphasised the cycles of Jewish civilisations and centres of culture. Like many other Jewish historians, Roth believed tales of Jewish decline followed by inevitable renewal contributed to morale. At the same time, Roth removed Jewish history from transcendental causation, where Jews are the mere recipients of divinely ordained events, and normalised Jewish experience so that Jews again became actors in their own past.[118] Significantly this underlined how Jewish civilisations in the past have ensured their own survival by their own actions. It constituted a spiritual call to arms for the present. Also by bringing patterns of Jewish history in line with European periodisation, Roth attacked the traditional lachrymose conception of Jewish history, in which the Jewish past was purely one of suffering and persecution.[119] In his account, the Jews did not remain in the 'Dark Ages' until the French Revolution, but emerged into modernity with the Renaissance.[120] The resultant de-emphasis of the period of emancipation and its contract of assimilation were useful in the fight for the maintenance of a distinct Jewish existence. At the same time, Roth's occasional use of the lachrymose conception can also be understood through the lens of Jewish survival. Recalling tragedy and terror provided the opportunity for remembering triumphs and tenacity.[121]

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[115] Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, pp. 307-309.
[116] Cecil Roth, 'A Communication', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXVII, no. 2, (April-June 1939), pp. 245-247.
[117] See, for example, Cecil Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days,* (London: Edward Goldston, 1931).
[118] Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?', pp. 337-348.
[119] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', pp. 136-147; Ismar Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History', in idem., *From Text to Context*, pp. 376-388.
[120] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 302.
[121] Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, pp. 103, 117-119.

Roth's attention on the periodisation of Jewish history and his emphasis on
Jewish survival demonstrated a partial concurrence with Simon Dubnow. He echoed
Dubnow's view of the passage of Jewish experience as that of 'shifting centres';
where one nucleus of radiating Jewish cultural energy was seen to fade as another
brightened.[122] The particular understanding of the international context of Jewish
history which this demonstrated was to remain important to Roth, even, and perhaps
especially so, when he was confronting the British-Jewish past. Chapter One,
therefore, also addresses the second of the two themes that is inexorably associated
with the first. The defining characteristic of Roth's sense of place in his writing was
his complicated relationship with the contested notion of Europe representing Jewish
past and the New World of America and the even newer world of Israel symbolising
the Jewish future. Much of Roth's exploration of the past involved his renegotiation
of the place of Britain and her Jewish community in this schema. In looking at Roth's
periodisation, Chapter One shows how Roth dated the beginning of modernity for the
Jews at the time of the Renaissance.[123] The death of the old world sparked the birth of
the new, which was symbolised by the coincidentally simultaneous acts of the
Spanish Expulsion and the voyage that discovered America.[124] He then posits Britain
as representative both of the old world as a typical European community complete
with the first prototype expulsion, and of the new as a ghetto-free, non-lachrymose
past. At the same time Roth liked to establish British-Jewish distinctiveness, which is
discussed in Chapter One in the context of his struggle against German-Jewish
historiographical dominance.[125]

Roth's anti-Germanness was a recurring trope in his work. He rejected the
German-Jewish model of scholarship, of history and of assimilation and showed
favouritism towards Sephardic communities.[126] During the 1930s, the worsening
situation for German 'Jews' led Roth to no doubt believe his criticisms had been
vindicated. Chapter Two focuses on this troubled period in Jewish history. The

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[122] Frankel, 'Historian and Ideologist', p. 26.
[123] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 302.
[124] See Cecil Roth, 'Who *Was* Columbus?: In the Light of New Discoveries', *Menorah Journal*, vol.
XXVIII, no. 3, (October-December 1940), pp. 279-295, here p. 279; Israel Abrahams, (Cecil Roth,
ed.), *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, new edition, enlarged and revised on the basis of the author's
material, (London: Edward Goldston, 1932), p. 3; John Docker, *1492: The Poetics of Diaspora*,
(London and New York: Continuum, 2001), esp. p. vii.
[125] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 420-422.
[126] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 420-422; Cecil Roth, 'Clean and Unclean
Assimilation', *Menorah Journal*, XLVI, nos. 1 and 2, (Autumn-Winter 1958), pp. 84-90; Schorsch,
'The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy', pp. 71-92.

current historiographic paradigm is that Roth's apologetic and defensive urge was at its height during the 1930s and early 1940s. In these years he published a series of works which support this view, including *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation, The Jewish Problem* and even elements of *A History of the Jews of England*.[127] He colluded with the Board of Deputies' Co-ordinating and Defence Committee in rallying to the defence of the community in the shadow of fascism and antisemitism at home and abroad. Roth's relationship with the Board was not, however, an unambiguously harmonious one. Roth criticised Board publications for advertising themselves as apologia and for compromising the historical method. Moreover, he suspected that apologetics could actually undermine their own key purpose: Jewish survival. Although defensive arguments and strategies could topple the logic of antisemitic calumnies and, it was believed, discourage provocative Jewish behaviour, they could in the process damage Jewish morale and encourage distancing from Judaism. They could, therefore, be a threat to the survival of Jews as Jews.[128] In Chapter Two, therefore, the role of Roth as an educator and 'ethnic cheerleader' is explored as well as the increased intensity of this aspect of his work during the troubled 1930s.

In terms of his world wide perspective, Chapter Two shows how Roth further entrenched his picture of the transference of Jewish culture and the significance of British Jewry in this. He established the Germanness of antisemitic fascism and pointed to its foreignness to British and even Italian sensibilities despite the activities of Oswald Mosley and the murderous complicity of Mussolini.[129] This ensured that antisemitism was connected to Europe as a leftover relic of the past. Also, in Roth's mind, it secured Britain and Italy, shown to be inherently free of such a canker other than by German infection, a place in the new world. British Jews in particular were charged with a great responsibility in this capacity as the largest remaining free community in Europe and as standard bearers of a new world. Roth believed it was up to British Jews to uphold Jewish culture in the continent for the sake of Europe,

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[127] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*; [Louis Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938); Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*.
[128] Cecil Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', Address given at the Hampstead Synagogue, 10 April 1943, *Hampstead Synagogue Bulletin*, (October 1943).
[129] Roth, 'Italian and German Fascism: A Contrast', *Opinion*, (May 1933); [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 148-149 and 151; Cecil Roth, 'The Tragic Lot of Italian Jewry', *South African Jewish Times*, (23 November 1945), Joseph Roth Private Collection; Cecil Roth, 'Italy's Jews', headed Jewish Hospitality Committee for British and Allied Forces, CRP, MS156/ADD3/3, SUA.

Britain and her colonies.[130] At the same time, Roth's work, written at a time of international tensions and ultimately conflict, demonstrated an inevitable local focus. This is primarily illustrated through his use of the concept of an Anglo-Jewish race partly to underline Jewish belonging in the country, but also to bolster morale.

It is in Chapter Three that Roth's two themes most inexorably combine. As Britain and the Allies began to look forward to victory and the post-war period, British Jews started to confront their future also. The issues surrounding the cultural reconstruction of European Jewry raised both the question of Jewish survival and its best location. There was no doubt for Roth that a Jewish future could only be assured by the salvage of Jewish heritage as represented by confiscated cultural material, as Europe had been mercilessly plundered. He suggested that the property be sent to *Eretz Israel* to be held in safe custody until European-Jewish communities might again be in a position to do it justice.[131] The role of British Jewry in cultural reconstruction illustrated Britain's and British Jewry's altered status in the new world order. No longer ideally situated for negotiations regarding the British Palestine Mandate, the contraction of the British Empire affected British Jews in a twofold way.[132] This episode revealed and epitomised the wider phenomenon, seen in the 1951 Festival of Britain of the country both looking nostalgically backward at a splendid past, whilst looking enthusiastically forward to a brave new world. Similarly, Roth regarded British Jewry as both a rescuing 'new-world' country and a damaged relic of the old world.[133]

Roth did not want to turn his back on the old association of Jewry with Europe and this was revealed through his encouragement of Jewish travel to the continent with a view to cultural exchange and strengthening.[134] It was clear to him, nonetheless, that the Jewish future now resided in the hands of the American and

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[130] Cecil Roth, 'The End of a Century: A Year of Terror and Trial: Anglo-Jewry's Tremendous Responsibility', *Jewish Chronicle*, (27 September 1940).
[131] Cecil Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives', opening address at the Conference on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives, 11 April 1943, *Contemporary Jewish Record*, vol. 7, (1944), pp. 253-257.
[132] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?'.
[133] Becky E. Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 44.
[134] Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe'; Cecil Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening: Jewish tourists overseas should visit synagogues; some helpful advice: what to see, how to act in England, France, Italy, Holland and Israel', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (June 1960); Cecil Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest in Europe for this Year's Tourist', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (January 1961); see James Clifford, 'Traveling Cultures', in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, P. A. Treicher with L. Baugham and J. Macgregor (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-116.

Israeli communities. Roth reasserted a British-Jewish significance within this modern global context by using the notion of the legacy of English-speaking Jewry. During the American Jewish Tercentenary in 1954, Roth compared the course of American- and British-Jewish history. He constructed a strong connection between the countries and their treatment of their Jews whilst arguing that the basis of these 'Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty' came out of Britain and was inherited by America. The notion of the 'English-Speaking Era' reiterated a model of shifting centres whilst simultaneously placing British Jewry at the apex of the new cultural nucleus. British Jewry was then essential to Jewish survival in general.[135]

Roth's confidence in his own community was not as strong as his pseudo-imperial rhetoric might appear to indicate. Alongside their arrogant but insecure gaze outwards, Roth and British Jewry focused anew upon local and regional concerns, as was illustrated by both the Anglo-Jewish exhibition on the occasion of the Festival of Britain, the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in England and the growth in provincial history.[136] Localism allowed the emphasis of Anglo-Jewish belonging and was related to Roth's earlier construction of the Anglo-Jewish race. It served an apologetic function, but it also brought the story of a rich and ancient Jewish past in the country to the doorsteps of British Jews, thus promoting Jewish heritage and boosting morale. Roth's descriptions of historical British Jewry in travel literature for the benefit of American-Jewish readers also demonstrated how useful the past was in providing the community with legitimacy in the changed global scene.[137]

Roth's travel writing posited British Jewry as the gateway between Europe and America on 'the American side of Europe', situated between the past and the future.[138] It had a history that pre-empted European patterns and it had determined the future through its linguistic and cultural legacy as an 'Anglo-Saxon' Jewish community and through Britain's role in the formation of the State of Israel. To Roth Jewish survival was, with the creation of a Jewish State, assured, but not only for Jews in Israel. A Jewish National Home and the cultural output that should pour forth

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[135] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*; Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era', pp. 15-18.
[136] *Festival of Britain 1951: A Survey*; *Catalogue of an Exhibition*; Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*; Cecil Roth, *Jews in Oxford After 1290*, (reprinted from *Oxoniensia*, vol. XV, 1950); Cecil Roth, *Jews of Medieval Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society, New Series vol. IX, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).
[137] Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe'; Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', pp. 22-25; Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest', pp. 24-27; Cecil Roth, 'A London Jewish Pilgrimage', enclosed in a Letter Cecil Roth to Sefton Temkin, received 24 November 1950, Records of AJA, MS137, AJ95/ADD/JM/5, SUA.
[138] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?'.

from it could only enrich the Jewish experience in the diaspora.[139] As it turned out, Roth may have been disappointed here, and also disillusioned by British Jewry's unwillingness to rise to the challenges that he laid down.[140]

Roth spent much of his career reminding those outside and inside the British-Jewish community of their existence and significance. To this end he struggled to justify British-Jewish history and, in turn, British Jewry itself in the face of changing but ever present external centres of Jewish learning and life. Through his history Roth strove to create and communicate a unique British-Jewish identity based on the construction of shared pasts with both the American- and European-Jewish experience. At a conference in Israel in 1957 Roth lamented that the papers had 'tended, most unfortunately, to divide Jewry into two parts – Israel and America, with the ghost of Russia looming as a terrible warning in the background'. His own contribution was intended to rectify the imbalance he had observed and he punctuated the point by declaring; '[i]t is time for you to be reminded of the existence of English Jewry'.[141] Not long after this, however, in 1964, Roth left England for Israel.[142] Although the move was by no means an unambiguous Zionist act, he did not return for any significant length of time to his country of birth.[143] Had 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry' driven even the self-confessedly optimistic Roth to doubt the value of Jewish life in the diaspora?[144] Probably not, but this thesis will explore how Roth's concurrent emphases on Jewish survival and the global scene were or were not ultimately resolved by his at least physical abandonment of British Jewry.

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[139] Cecil Roth, 'New Light From Zion?', *Jewish Gazette*, (29 October 1954).
[140] Roth, 'New Light From Zion?'; Cecil Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry', (1960), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA.
[141] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', pp. 84-90.
[142] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 207.
[143] For the last years of Cecil Roth's life see Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, pp. 223-250.
[144] Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry'.

Chapter 1

Cecil Roth and the Search for a British Approach to the Jewish Past, 1925-1933

This chapter asks the central question - where can Roth be located as an historian? In response, it will be argued that Roth can be broadly situated within what has been termed a post-*Wissenschaft* tradition in Jewish historiography, alongside figures such as Simon Dubnow, Gershom Scholem and Salo Baron in Roth's own time.[1] As we have seen in the introduction, these scholars, unlike Roth, were trained in the *Wissenschaft* tradition. Nonetheless, they reacted against some of the school's key assumptions and ideals, such as the lachrymose conception of Jewish history and the rational approach to Jewish spirituality. Roth belongs to this camp but not exclusively. His significance as an historian lies predominantly in his unusual position as a Jewish historian trained in the British historical tradition.[2] At this unique juncture, this chapter hopes to trace also the genesis and evolution of a distinct British-Jewish historiography. At the beginning of the twentieth century, British-Jewish intellectuals such as the diplomat and journalist, Lucien Wolf, the folklorist and statistician, Joseph Jacobs, and the Hebrew scholar, Israel Abrahams, turned their attention to the history of the Jews in England. All defined the point of departure for the work of Roth.[3] If he did not begin the search for the British-Jewish past, during his long career Roth made it his own, and, for better or worse, he shaped it for much of the twentieth century.

Ominously for this project, Cecil Roth has been described as 'an historian lacking grand themes or a philosophical self-awareness of the implications of his

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[1] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (Seattle, USA and London: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 87.

[2] See Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1990).

[3] For Joseph Jacobs, Lucien Wolf and Israel Abrahams and their contributions to British-Jewish history see Joseph Jacobs (ed. and trans.), *The Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records from Latin and Hebrew Sources*, (London: Nutt, 1893); Joseph Jacobs and Lucien Wolf (eds.), *Bibliotheca Anglo-Judaica: A Bibliographical Guide to Anglo-Jewish History*, (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1888); Lucien Wolf (ed.), *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell being a reprint of the pamphlets published by Menasseh ben Israel to promote the re-admission of the Jews to England, 1649-1656*, (London: Macmillan, 1901); Israel Finestein, *Lucien Wolf 1857-1930: A Study in Ambivalence*, Offprint from *Jewish Historical Studies*, vol. XXXV, (1996-98), pp. 239-254, (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1996); Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, (London: MacMillan, 1896); Herbert Loewe, *Israel Abrahams: A Biographical Sketch*, (London: Arthur Davis Memorial Trust, 1944).

intellectual project'.[4] It has been said that he 'never formulated a philosophy of history as a whole, similar to those produced by luminaries as Graetz, Dubnow, Baron, Baer, Dinur, and Kaufmann'.[5] This thesis will demonstrate, however, that Roth's history writing and his other conversations with the past contrarily reveal a self-conscious critical interaction with a variety of approaches to Jewish history. He implicitly adopted a variety of sometimes contradictory positions which were often illustrative of the perceived status of Britain and condition of British Jewry throughout the period.

This introductory chapter will deal with some of the traditional historiographical paradigms and challenges that faced Roth and other Jewish and general historians during particularly the interwar years in Britain. It will begin by discussing Roth's attempt at the normalisation of Jewish history in a British historical context. Roth can be seen to have rejected the notion of divine providence in Jewish history and encouraged viewing the course of Jewish history as vulnerable to ordinary and terrestrial forces.[6] At other times, however, Roth exploited the idea of a divinely predestined path for Jewry as the chosen people.[7] His ambivalence, it will be shown, was reflective of inherent tensions within particularly Jewish history, but also of the impact of secularisation on the general pursuit of the past. Further illustrative of Roth's approach to normalisation was his view on what Dubnow termed the sociological conception of Jewish history.[8] Roth's oscillating focus on one hand on the 'ordinary Jew' and on the other hand on the Jewish hero will be examined in a Jewish and British context.[9] The integral element of Roth's project of normalisation was his view on periodisation. By attempting to bring the epochs of Jewish history into line with the paradigmatic periods of the European past, Roth hoped to increase

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[4] David B. Ruderman, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment', David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (eds.), *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians,* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 128-142, here p. 140.
[5] Gartner referred here, alongside Heinrich Graetz, Salo Baron and Simon Dubnow, to the Israeli historians, Yitzhak Baer and Ben Zion Dinur, and the Austrian scholar, David Kaufmann. Lloyd Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', in Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami, (eds.), *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews,* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), (pp. 69-86), p. 81.
[6] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. 89.
[7] See for example Cecil Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days,* (London: Edward Goldston, 1931). It originally appeared in the *Jewish Guardian,* from January to December 1928, see Number 81, Oskar K. Rabinowicz, 'A Bibliography of the Writings of Cecil Roth', in John M. Shaftesley (ed.), *Remember the Days: Essays in Honour of Cecil Roth,* (London: JHSE, 1966), (pp. 351-387), p. 357.
[8] Simon Dubnow, 'A Sociological Conception of Jewish History', *Menorah Journal,* vol. XIV, no. 3, (March 1928), pp. 257-267.
[9] Cecil Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', *Menorah Journal,* vol. XIV, no. 5, (May 1928), pp. 419-434, here p. 429

the accessibility and relevance of the Jewish past for a Jewish and non-Jewish audience.[10]

Following on from these issues, the second part of the chapter will deal with Roth's reaction to the lachrymose conception of Jewish history or the portrayal of the Jewish past as merely a sorrowful tale of woe. Like Baron, Roth criticised the tendency to view the Jewish experience through the lens of persecution and suffering. Roth's corrective was, in contrast to Baron's, selective and ambivalent. At times Roth can be seen to practise *Leidensgeschichte*, as well as exploiting it for the apologetic and morale-boosting purposes it could serve.[11] The final section will narrow more specifically to Roth's pursuit of the British-Jewish past in the face of marginalisation within general Jewish historiography, covering the conflict between the local and the universal in relation to British-Jewish history and the British-Jewish perception of a dominant German scholarship. Roth worked to assert the significance of the British-Jewish past and British-Jewish historiography as an antidote to the German model and the *Wissenschaft* school.[12]

i. 'Thank God for Not Being a Theologian!': Cecil Roth and the Normalisation of Jewish History[13]

Cecil Roth has been contextualised by Fred Krome as belonging within the modern historical consciousness that 'no longer ascribes a providential design to Jewish survival, or even Jewish continuity'.[14] Lloyd Gartner partially agreed with this assessment, suggesting that Roth 'did not seek to place the meaning of Jewish history on a transcendental level'. Gartner, however, also asserted that '[i]n a broad way Roth believed in the Divine element which transcended all events in the history of the Jewish people'.[15] In fact, both of these positions have validity in the interwar period

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[10] Cecil Roth, 'European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XVI, no. 4, (April 1929), pp. 293-306.

[11] Cecil Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XX, no. 2, (July-September 1932), pp. 136-147; Salo W. Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall we Revise the Traditional View?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 6, (June 1928), pp. 515-526; Ismar Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History', in idem., *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, (New England: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), pp. 376-388.

[12] See Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs'.

[13] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 22 January 1932, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.

[14] Fred Krome, 'Creating 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs': The Evolution of Cecil Roth's Historical Vision, 1925-1935', *Modern Judaism*, vol. XXI, (2001), pp. 216-237, here p. 218.

[15] Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', p. 82.

and beyond. Although Roth was unwilling to wholly reject special pattern or purpose in Jewish history, he was committed to the 'methodological empiricism of the realists' and to normalising the Jewish past.[16] This normalisation required the relocation of Jewish history into the earthly processes of cause and effect and the re-sculpting of Jewish historians into professional, Oxford-esque scholars. The divine presence was often replaced in his work by the idea of the Jewish people as a social group. This was similar to the way that secular notions of England, Britain and Empire were used by general British historians as replacements for Christian understandings of the past. Further, the course of Jewish history was transposed onto the conventional periodisation of non-Jewish history into the ancient, medieval and modern eras.[17]

According to Yerushalmi, the development of nineteenth-century historical consciousness required modern Jewish historiography

> [t]o stand in sharp opposition to its own subject matter ... concerning the vital core: the belief that divine providence is not only an ultimate but an active causal factor in Jewish history, and the related belief in the uniqueness of Jewish history itself.[18]

The 'older treatment of Jewish history' followed the religious interpretation of Jewish history. The events of history, in this understanding, were governed by the unique relationship between the Jewish people and God. The resultant implication of this view is that all Jewish history can be understood via the theological model of exile and return.[19] As modern historiography developed, however, alternative explanatory models replaced interpretations that relied upon the primacy of God and the relationship between God and the chosen people. These models were actually not worlds apart from the early providential view of Jewish history. One alternative was the metaphysical search for the 'essence of Judaism', which characterised the early endeavours of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.[20] It is notable that *Wissenschaft* became increasingly theological as the nineteenth century progressed. The approach

[16] Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, pp. 129-130.
[17] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History'.
[18] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 89.
[19] Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, (Berkeley, USA and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), p. 10.
[20] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 92.

of, for example, Heinrich Graetz at the end of the century was far from the secular and scientific approach that Leopold Zunz had envisaged.[21]

The divine and metaphysical understanding of Jewish history demanded the notion of 'chosenness' and uniqueness of the Jewish people.[22] Post-*Wissenschaft* historians, in the shape of Dubnow, Baron and, it will be argued here, Cecil Roth, taking their lead from the beginnings of the secularisation of Jewish history in the nineteenth century, attempted to normalise Jewish history: to understand it as subject to ordinary terrestrial causal factors rather than celestial interventions.[23] As Baron explained

> [t]here is a growing feeling that the historical explanations of the Jewish past must not fundamentally deviate from the general patterns of history which we accept for mankind at large or for any other particular national group.[24]

Contextualising Jewish history and establishing its relative significance within general accounts of history was central to Roth's approach throughout his career. In a summary of the aims and objectives of his lecture course of the Menorah Summer School he explained that 'Jewish history will not be treated of as an isolated phenomenon, but the attempt will be made to put it in its proper general setting.'[25] In practice Roth used general histories extensively in his research throughout his career. The footnotes in his *A History of the Jews in England* reveal his use of F. M. Powicke's *Henry III and Lord Edward*, Macaulay's *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, W. E. H. Lecky's *History of England During the Eighteenth Century* and William Stubbs' *Select Charters*, as well as referring to H. W. C. Davis, F. W. Maitland and J. H. Round. These general texts were supplemented by more specific British primary and secondary sources, such as Matthew Paris's *Historia Anglorum*, the Home Office Papers, various series of rolls and local histories.[26]

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[21] See Nils Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith*, (forthcoming), (Wisconsin, USA: Wisconsin University Press, 2005); Schorsch, *From Text to Context*.

[22] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 95.

[23] See ibid., pp. 89-91.

[24] Salo W. Baron, 'Emphases in Jewish History', in *Jewish History and Historians: Essays and Addresses by Salo W. Baron*, ed. by Arthur Hertzberg and Leon A. Feldman, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1964), pp. 65-89, here pp. 77-78.

[25] Cecil Roth, 'Menorah Summer School Lecture Course', enclosure in Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 26 March 1930, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/4, AJA, Cincinnati.

[26] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), see esp. list of abbreviations, p. xii.

Roth's approach to the biblical period reveals his attempts to normalise even the most sacred elements of the Jewish story whilst never actually deviating from the conventional and theological view to any great degree. Roth claimed he was not afraid to apply modern methods of research to scriptural history. He believed that his non-theological approach to the Biblical period allowed him to explore neglected points and offer fresh ideas.[27] In *A Short History of the Jewish People*, Roth confronted the issue of writing a critical history of the biblical period. In the first chapter he offered two accounts of 'The Birth of the Hebrew People'. The first was based on the traditional genealogical account as found in the *Pentateuch*, whilst 'neglecting the miraculous element and using a vocabulary such as one would in dealing with any other sequence of events'.[28] The second included, because 'it is proper', an account of the same events from the point of view of moderate modern Biblical criticism. This version discussed the questionable historicity of Abraham, the possible 'semi-symbolic' nature of Isaac and Jacob, and the less formative quality of the prolonged sojourn in Sinai under Moses, who also may or may not have existed.[29] In this way, Roth was able to present the traditional account whilst avoiding seeming out of step with modern, secular research methods and interpretations. For Roth, it was of little consequence whether the story was one of 'the cataclysmic revelation of the Deity to man, ... [or one] of the gradual discovery by humanity of the Divine'. Both paths reached the same destination.[30]

Roth was, however, not always successful in countering the providential view of the past and bringing Jewish history into the realm of normal causation. At times he actively expounded it. This is particularly evident in Roth's *A Jewish Book of Days* (1931).[31] This compilation is organised in a calendarial fashion; for each date in the secular year an event of Jewish historical significance, which purportedly occurred on that day in any year, is recorded. Despite the use of the Gregorian rather than the Jewish calendar, the scriptural parallel of the timeless applicability it assumed is obvious. The format of the text, which was aimed at encouraging the reading of daily instalments, was also reminiscent of the arrangement of scripture into chapters and

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[27] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 22 January 1932, 19 March 1933, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.
[28] Cecil Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, (London: MacMillan, 1936), pp. 4-7 and 11.
[29] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[30] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[31] Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days*.

verse.[32] This style, rather than presenting history as a causally effected process of change, encouraged the conception of the past as a non-chronological continuum. It listed together events and personalities completely separated by time and space. Jewish historical episodes were thereby completely removed from the normal flow of time and by implication from the passage of non-Jewish history.

The comparative history, which this format encouraged, was used as a device to demonstrate Jewish continuity and survival and the special relationship with God that this revealed. Roth was no stranger to comparative history. He also paralleled diverse historical events in his cautionary tale, 'Paradoxes of Jewish History' (1930). In this essay Roth removed Jewish history from its local and temporal context by comparing the state of modern American Jewry to that of the Jews of medieval Venice, to the Jews of Cordova in the age of the Caliphs and to Hellenistic Jewry.[33] Like even Leopold Zunz before him, Roth can here be accused of spinning 'chronological sequence into theological solace'.[34] The purpose of Roth's lecture was to warn that history shows that great Jewish civilisations are not immune from 'simply melt[ing] into nothingness', like those before them. At the same time, however, history also can instil the faith that there will always be another Jewish centre to take its place.[35]

The vital core, however, of this prescriptive model was not necessarily divine intervention. In the hands of early *Wissenschaft des Judentums* practitioners, the principle of divine chosenness was usurped with the related notion of the 'essence of Judaism'.[36] Theological approaches had crept back into the work of later *Wissenschaft* scholars, but elements of secular Jewish essence idea were still present in the work of the post-*Wissenschaft* scholars.[37] Returning to Roth's treatment of the biblical period, although for him the moderate critical narrative lacked the 'naïve charm' of the traditional version, essentially '[i]t is a theory which does credit to the

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[32] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.
[33] As shall be discussed in more detail below, Cecil Roth, 'Paradoxes of Jewish History', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 1, (October 1930), pp. 15-26.
[34] Ismar Schorsch accused Leopold Zunz, who advocated a secular approach to Jewish scholarship, of doing this in his *Die Monatstage des Kalenderjahres*, which recorded the names and events relating mainly to persecutions of Jewish history in an annually non-chronological, calendrical format. Ismar Schorsch, 'History as Consolation', in idem., *From Text to Context*, pp. 334-344, here p. 334.
[35] Roth, 'Paradoxes of Jewish History', p. 21.
[36] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 92.
[37] See Roemer, *Between History and Faith*; Schorsch, *From Text to Context*.

national genius no less than the traditional story'.[38] For Roth, then, it appears that what was important was isolating and presenting the 'national genius' or the essence of Judaism. It was the belief in the divine, not necessarily the divine itself, that influenced the course of history. He explained: '[t]he mere fact that they [legendary incidents] were believed to have taken place may itself exercise a profound influence upon the subsequent course of events'.[39]

Recognising religion as a valid and earthly causal factor in the unfolding of human events was a way of normalising even the history of the biblical period. In addition, this approach shifted the focus of Jewish continuity away from God and towards the people. For post-*Wissenschaft* scholars, it was the Jewish people, not the Jewish religion or Jewish literature, that constituted the spirit of Judaism. The best way to reach this was through an emphasis on social history. Baron's multi-volume *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* illustrated this trend, as did the work of Dubnow, which consistently stressed the 'sociological conception of Jewish history'.[40]

Dubnow was the main proponent of the model of alternating hegemony and shifting centres from which Roth had borrowed heavily.[41] At the heart of this pattern of the Jewish past was the acknowledgement of the importance of the Jewish people as opposed to the state, politics or even merely religion. Dubnow argued for a sociological rather than literary emphasis for modern Jewish historians. In this scheme, it was the Jewish people, not necessarily their relationship to God, that gave cogency to the Jewish historical experience. Dubnow explained that the sociological approach

> provides the only possible basis for an objective and scientific history; it enables the historian to shake off theology and metaphysics and to place his research on a firm biosociological foundation.[42]

Dubnow, like Roth, criticised earlier historians, including Graetz, for failing to treat the subject of their research, the Jewish people, as a distinct nation shaping their own social history. He argued that '[t]he task of history should be to study the people, its

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[38] Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, p. 8.
[39] Ibid., p. 12.
[40] Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 3 volumes, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); Dubnow, 'A Sociological Conception'.
[41] Jonathan Frankel, 'S. M. Dubnov: Historian and Ideologist', in Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History*, trans. by Judith Vowles and ed. by Jeffrey Shandler, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 1-33, here p. 1.
[42] Dubnow, 'A Sociological Conception', p. 261.

origin, its growth, and its struggle for existence'.[43] Roth similarly argued that the

emphasis on theological and literary history at the expense of social and economic

factors resulted in 'a history of Jews but hardly of all Jews, and certainly not of the

Jewish people'.[44]

Roth complimented Dubnow on making 'a salutary innovation in attempting

to leave literature on one side and to write the history of the Jewish People'.[45] He

was, however, also a critic of Dubnow's work. He labelled Dubnow's attempt to deal

with social history in the *Menorah Journal* article as 'far from adequate'.[46] Roth

claimed to be unimpressed with Dubnow's *Weltgeschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*,

complaining that '[i]n spite of his good intentions, ... social and economic history

play[ed] a very minor role'.[47] Roth's *A Short History of the Jewish People* (1936),

which was conceived in 1932, was an attempt to right this wrong. Illustrating the

centrality of the sociological conception, the American edition of Roth's *Short

History* was originally to be entitled *Israel: A Social History of the Jewish People,

BCE 1600 – CE 1933*.[48] He harboured some reservations as to how much original

research he could include and to what degree he could dispel the conventional views

with which he took issue. However, he believed when penning the monograph in

1933 that he had

> managed to give a completely new perspective. Social history has been
> brought forward: literary history has been relegated to the background,
> and shewn in its proper relations.[49]

[43] Ibid., pp. 257-258.
[44] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 428.
[45] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 295.
[46] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 428.
[47] Letter Cecil Roth to Ismar Elbogen, 11 February 1930, Elbogen Collection, MF 515, 4/11 LBI, New York.
[48] Its American version, named in the end, much to Roth's disgust, *A Bird's Eye View of Jewish History*, was commissioned as a textbook for the adult education wing of the joint committees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Roth claimed the British version was 'rather fuller and more literary' after a restrictive word limit was imposed on the US edition, forcing him to exclude 'a very considerable part of the 'unconventional' matters and quite ¾ of the 'solid' history'. Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 4 January 1932, 19 March 1933, 9 August 1933 and 24 September 1935, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.
[49] Roth was, however, not entirely pleased with the end product, even the British, more comprehensive version. Early on he lamented that the book would not be 'epoch-making' and that he was unable to incorporate as much original research as he would like. He added that it was also unavoidable for him to 'perpetuate certain conventional views of which [he did] not entirely approve'. He mused, 'It may not quite live up to my ideal, but at least it breaks away from the old tradition.' Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 22 January 1932, 19 March 1933 and 24 September 1935, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.

Indeed, he proudly proclaimed the book to be a social history, 'differ[ing] fundamentally from most of the works of the sort which ha[d] preceded it'. It was, he asserted, successful in providing 'a clear picture of the development of the individual Jew, his vicissitudes and his life'.[50]

Although Roth believed his work to be revolutionary in its approach, he had clearly drawn much from the work of Dubnow and Baron. He also took his lead from British-Jewish scholars writing on general Jewish themes, such as Israel Abrahams and Joseph Jacobs. Roth, in fact, at the time of writing *A Short History*, had recently edited a new version of Abrahams's *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, in which Abrahams hoped to show that there was Jewish life in the Ghetto, 'life with ideals and aspirations; with passions, and even human nature'.[51] In the same way, Roth aimed to 'shew what sort-of-men [sic] these ancestors of ours were – creatures of flesh and blood, actuated by ordinary healthy human impulses'.[52]

Roth also modelled his approach on the British historical tradition. For example, he citied Macaulay's great-nephew, G. M. Trevelyan, as an exemplar of social history, and borrowed the title formula from J. R. Green's *A Short History of the English People*.[53] Roth's borrowing from Green may not have been restricted to his title. Green's *Short History* was published by MacMillan and Co. in 1874 primarily as a textbook.[54] MacMillan also published Roth's monograph in Britain, sixty-two years later.[55] Like Roth's *Short History*, Green shifted the emphasis of historical writing to the social aspects of the past. The author claimed that his was not a 'drum and trumpet' history, and, anticipating Roth's intentions, Parker neatly explains that the book attempted to show that

[50] Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, p. vii; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 24 September 1935, Henry Hurwitz, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.

[51] Israel Abrahams, (ed. by Cecil Roth), *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, New Edition, Enlarged and Revised on the Basis of the Author's Material, (London: Edward Goldston, 1932); Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, p. xxii.

[52] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 8 August 1930, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/4, AJA, Cincinnati.

[53] Cecil Roth, Review of Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, MS 156, AJ151/8/16, SUA; See Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 9; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 15 June 1927, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[54] Anthony Brundage, *The People's Historian: John Richard Green and the Writing of History in Victorian England*, (London and Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 1.

[55] Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*.

history is the record of peoples; that peoples consist of men and women; and that, as in life, so in history, men and women are really men and women – human beings of like passions with ourselves.[56]

Similarly, Roth attempted to reconstruct the life of 'Every Jew' and to trace the daily circumstances of 'ordinary men and women'. For Roth, the challenge of history was 'to say to dry bones 'Live again and be men, as you were".[57] In the interwar period, however, this approach was going out of fashion in some circles. The Cambridge 1933 annual report on history, for example, featured R. E. Balfour claiming that

[a]ttempts to achieve the illusion of life ... are ultimately doomed to failure; the power of breathing life into dry bones is one given to few men and one to be highly prized by those rare historians who are its fortunate possessors.[58]

Whether or not he was out of step, Roth was influenced by the British historical tradition of which in many ways he was a part. It is therefore unsurprising that Roth condemned the isolation of the writing of Jewish history from the general practice of history. Roth was candid in his disapproval of the failure of Jewish historiography to separate from the field of theology and to be removed from religious seminaries. In 1928, partly due no doubt to his sensitivity at not having attended one, Roth decried the fact that Jewish scholarship was monopolised by theological institutions.[59] Graetz, attached to the famous Breslau Seminary, was without doubt one of the main targets of Roth's attack, but Roth also singled out the American-Jewish historians, Alexander Marx and Max Margolis, as contemporary exemplars of Graetz's theological approach. He postured from the safety of personal correspondence with Herbert Solow:

[t]he whole essay ['Jewish History For Our Own Needs'] is a critique of M and M's [Marx and Margolis's] school and of their method. If they want to take that personally, I'll be delighted to take up their challenge.[60]

Marx and Margolis were the *Wissenschaft*-schooled authors of *A History of the Jewish People*.[61] German-born Marx was the librarian at the Jewish Theological

[56] J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People*, (London: MacMillan, 1875), p. v; Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 136.
[57] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 429; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 8 August 1930, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/4, AJA, Cincinnati; Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 18 January 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[58] R. E. Balfour, 'History', in Harold Wright (ed.), *University Studies, Cambridge, 1933*, (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1933), pp. 185-228, here p. 198.
[59] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 428-429.
[60] Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 11 November 1927 and 29 May 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

Seminary in New York and Margolis, born in Russia, was a biblical scholar. Roth at times half-heartedly acknowledged Marx's qualities: he described him to an American colleague as 'the nearest thing to a Jewish historian you have in the country'. However, Roth's intention was to introduce a 'discordant note into the Mutual Admiration Society'. He did so by claiming that Jewish history should be practised by professional, or certainly, professionally trained, historians not as a tag on for those engaged in religious scholarship.[62] He charged:

> Rabbinical pundits ... should be able to realize that sporadic attendance at a few courses of pseudo-historical lectures by some product of the Breslau Seminary or the Volozhyn Yeshiva does not qualify them to set up as the supreme, much less the sole, tribunal in a subject which requires as long specialist training as in any other science.[63]

In convenient contrast, as we saw in the introduction, Roth himself had received the 'long specialist training' during his protracted stint at Oxford University.[64]

Roth was inescapably an Oxford man and it is vital to place him within this context. He proudly described himself as 'intellectually something of what is called the Oxford type'.[65] During Roth's postgraduate days at Oxford, Charles Harding Firth occupied the Regius Chair of Modern History; indeed, it was Firth who approved Roth's application for the D.Phil. Firth was very active in the metamorphosis of history from 'nothing more than part of a general, liberal education', to a science practised for its own sake. Firth influenced greatly the B.Litt. degree that Roth read for and inculcated the importance of training students in specific historical research techniques. His lobbying and influence moved the university towards the introduction of the B.Litt. (1895) and the D.Phil. (1917). Also, Roth's B.Litt. and D.Phil. supervisor, Renaissance scholar Edward Armstrong, agreed with Firth and advocated professionalisation.[66]

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[61] Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of the Jewish People*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1927).
[62] Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 10 January 1927, 11 November 1927 and 30 January 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[63] His reference to science in this quotation referred to the pursuit of objectivity and technical and methodological thoroughness in history rather than any Positivist claims. Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 426.
[64] Geoffrey Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth, 1899-1924', *TJHSE*, vol. XXXIV, (1994-1996), pp. 1-16, here pp. 7-11; Cecil Roth, 'Biographical Record', Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[65] Cecil Roth, 'Divided Loyalties: Do They Enrich the Jew?', *South African Jewish Times*, (26 July 1946).
[66] Alderman, 'The Young Cecil Roth', pp. 9-10.

In the generation before Roth went to Oxford, partly due to men like Firth, a steady development of the professional institutions and apparatus of history had been taking place. A journal was established (the *English Historical Review*, 1886), societies were formed (the Royal Historical Society, 1868 and the Historical Association, 1906), research institutes were set up (the British Academy, 1902 and the Institute of Historical Research, 1921) and university training was organised and formalised.[67] In this time, history in Britain changed from being the preserve of the 'gentleman amateur' to that of the 'research-oriented professoriate'.[68]

The same could not be said of Jewish history in England: a fact of which Roth was acutely aware. The Jewish Historical Society of England (JHSE) had been established in 1893. This was accompanied by a forum for publication in the form of the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, a title which echoed that of the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* that had first appeared in 1876.[69] The *Jewish Quarterly Review* (*JQR*) had also been set up in 1888 to allow scholars to publish work of a Jewish interest in a serious and academic format.[70] Few of the early contributors to these journals, however, were professional Jewish historians. Although there were some mainstream professional scholars, such as Joseph Jacobs and Israel Abrahams working in the field, there were no university positions in specifically Jewish history in England. This did not change until Roth took up his Oxford post in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies in 1939.

It is not difficult to connect Roth's academic background at Oxford with his criticism of the Breslau approach to Jewish history. He shared the same elitist arrogance and sense of superiority and the same approach to history that contributed to the dismissal of Jewish history by non-Jewish scholars. Some of Roth's frustration and hostility towards inter-war Jewish history-writing was, then, based on the element of truth he saw in the criticisms of mainstream academia. Jewish history needed for its own sake to be practised by persons who have 'mastered … the historian's craft'. Further, Roth perhaps felt that if Jewish history had already been professionalised then a research interest in it would not have 'ruined [his] career'.[71]

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[67] Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 88; Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 3.
[68] Brundage, *The People's Historian*, p. 8.
[69] Jordanova, *History in Practice*, p. 14.
[70] *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. I, (1888).
[71] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 426; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

For Roth, the isolation of 'rabbinical pundits' from the mainstream of historical research made them unqualified to practise history of any kind. His criticism was more than methodological. Ideologically, this distance was undesirable for Roth as it imbued Jewish history with a sense of operating outside normal historical existence. This led to the Jewish past being taught and researched in the seminaries in isolation from its context, in a meaningless vacuum.[72] He explained:

> If episodes of history are to illuminate rather than obscure the record of the past, they must be placed in their true positions relative to general movements.[73]

Therefore, both the Jewish institutions and the English universities failed in their writing of history due to their exclusivity. Roth claimed that the rabbinical seminaries neither included nor had acquired any general knowledge of historical method and had no knowledge of general context.[74] Conversely, but similarly, the type of history practised by the 'flies in amber' dons at Oxford and Cambridge was partial as it 'denie[d] to the Jew his place in the historical past of humanity'.[75]

For Roth, a more professional and holistic approach to both pursuits could be achieved if Jewish history was made more compatible with general history. As a start in redressing these imbalances, Roth contributed a chapter on Jewish history for the seventh volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History (CMH)* in 1932. As he was writing for a general history, Roth felt the need to confront the question of 'how far does the term 'Middle Ages' mean anything in Jewish history?' The result, or as Roth preferred, the 'intellectual bye-product', of this was his second historiographical essay for the *Menorah Journal*, 'European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?' (1929). Here, he set down his thoughts on the notion of Jewish historical eras.[76]

Roth wanted to normalise the periodisation of Jewish history and bring it into line with European history. Therefore, he argued that Jewish movements coincided with the traditional historical periods of the European past. Although the European

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[72] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 427.
[73] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 293.
[74] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 427.
[75] Professor Eileen Power at LSE described Oxford historians as being 'just like flies in amber' in the early 1930s, see Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 112; Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 1 June 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[76] Letter, Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 26 January 1927 and 29 May 1928, Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 11 November 1927, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati; Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 293-306.

divisions of ancient, medieval and modern history were not ideal, they were all pervasive. For Roth, such a 'normalisation' of Jewish history would increase accessibility for Jews and non-Jews and would give the Jewish past 'its proper place in the general cultural background of the ordinary modern man'. Roth believed that not only were Jews 'essentially European', but that modern Jewish history had been European and the attitudes towards Jews that had guided the destinies of mankind were also European. [77]

Roth problematised Graetz's method of periodisation that divided Jewish history into literary epochs and labelled Graetz's use of the destruction of the First Temple and the capture of Jerusalem by Titus for the dividing events between the three periods as 'sentimental'. The events of 70CE, for example, were to Roth more important symbolically than substantially. The Destruction of the Temple did not constitute an actual crisis as the effect was gradual and unevenly distributed.[78] As a whole, Roth, like Dubnow, disapproved of Graetz's sole emphasis on literary history as it made no allowance for political and social change.

Unlike Graetz, Dubnow, recognised the importance of 'historical surroundings' in influencing the qualities of each period. Roth was therefore more convinced with Dubnow's notion of 'Hegelian cycles of rise and decay' as seen above.[79] Roth, however, criticised Dubnow's model for what he perceived as the confused overlapping of European-Jewish settlement with the existence of the great Asiatic centres.[80] Roth was keen to stress the importance of Europe to the Jews and of the Jews to Europe. Towards this end he asserted the antiquity of European-Jewish settlement, partly undermining the notion of a forced and passive exile in favour of a

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[77] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 293 and 297-298.

[78] Ibid., pp. 294.

[79] Dubnow split Jewish history into two great epochs, the Oriental Period and the Western/European Period. The first was then divided into three stages: the first ran from 1200 BCE to 332 BCE and was characterised by being 'purely Oriental civilisation'; the second stage, the Greco/Roman period was a mixture of Oriental and Western civilisation, which ran until 73 CE; the third stage was the Talmudic period, or that of the two centres of Palestine and Babylonia, during which power shifted between them or was shared by them at different points until the eleventh century. The Oriental period corresponds to the rise of Christianity and the colonisation of the Diaspora. The second epoch, the Western or European Period, was divided into two eras. The first of these was that of the shifting European centres, when power moved from France to Germany in the thirteenth century and ultimately from Spain also after the Spanish Expulsion. The second stage was the Modern period and ran from the sixteenth century until the time Dubnow was writing. For Dubnow this period was characterised by the sharing of power of the German and Polish centres until the Enlightenment when they began to compete. He noted that the most recent change was the shift out of Europe altogether, towards the US and Palestine. Dubnow, 'A Sociological Conception', pp. 264-265; Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 295.

[80] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 295.

deliberate colonisation. This drew the focus of periodisation away from Asia, where it lay for Graetz and to a lesser extent for Dubnow, and towards Europe.

Roth proposed that Jewish history could be divided into three main periods; the ancient period, the 'Middle Ages' and the modern phase. The first denoted the period of Jewish and Graeco-Roman civilisation, which ended in 312 CE with the Christianisation of the Roman Empire ushered in by the Edict of Milan.[81] In the adoption of this event as the beginning of the middle ages Roth followed the *CMH*, for which he was writing at the time.[82] For Roth, as he understood Jewish history within its general context, the Christianisation of the Empire was not only vitally important for Europe in a general sense but also for the Jews settled there. The middle ages were characterised by Roth as a long period of transition for all during which 'the two courses [European and Jewish] march[ed] together'.[83]

There was similarly, according to Roth, 'both a chronological and an integral relation' between the opening of the modern epoch in Jewish and general European history.[84] According to Roth, the modern age began around the 1490s. The Franco-German rivalry was initiated at this time; the ideas of the Renaissance and the Reformation were swiftly spreading through Europe; printing and gunpowder were coming into their own as the technologies that were to dominate the modern age; America was discovered; and national monarchies were consolidated in England, France and Spain. He wrote:

> Such a revolution in ideas has never taken place within so brief a period at any time before or since.
> And, in 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain.[85]

Roth and others attached symbolism to the historical coincidence of the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the discovery of America. As the Jews were driven out of their great centre Columbus and his crew began the search for what would become the refuge and new centre of the Jewish people throughout the modern world.[86] For Roth, the Expulsion marked 'the culmination of an epoch in the history

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[81] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 298 and 300-301.
[82] Cecil Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', in J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previté-Orton and Z. N. Brooke (eds.), *The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. VII: The Decline of Empire and Papacy*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1932), pp. 632-663; Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 298.
[83] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 301.
[84] Ibid., pp. 298-301.
[85] Ibid., p. 302.
[86] See Cecil Roth, 'Who *Was* Columbus?: In the Light of New Discoveries', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXVIII, no. 3, (October-December 1940), pp. 279-295, here p. 279; Abrahams, (Roth, ed.), *Jewish*

of the Jewish people'. He appeared to follow Dubnow by noting that it signalled 'the backward swing of the pendulum' with the westward movement of Jewish population being replaced by an eastward drift.[87] However, Roth then challenged Dubnow's emphasis upon the centrality of the Ashkenazic centres in Germany and Eastern Europe and went against the orthodoxy in Jewish periodisation. He argued against the notion, notably put forward by Graetz, of the long Jewish 'Middle Ages'. In this understanding the Renaissance was thought to usher in the Jewish 'Dark Ages', which was believed only to end with the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the thinking of Mendelssohn in the eighteenth century. Instead he proposed that the Jewish communities that settled in the ports of the North Atlantic seaboard, in for example, Holland, England and America, experienced and facilitated the modernisation of the Jews. Therefore, although German and Polish refugees are those who may be described as 'properly ... the first modern Jews', the 'real origin' of modern Jewry 'lies in the enforced assimilation of the crypto-Jews of Spain and Portugal to European standards of thought and culture'.[88]

Such an early date for the onset of the modern era was maverick at the time and remains a questionable notion that reflected Roth's own historical motivations. The Expulsion after all in terms of Roth's own criteria could hardly have been any more medieval and America did not play a role in the course of Jewish history until the seventeenth century. A certain amount of consensus in the debate surrounding the beginning of modern times has been generated around the date 1650. Lloyd Gartner's recent history settles on that date due to the coincidence of a variety of characteristics believed typical of the modern era. These included a secular view of the Jews, the rise of capitalism, increasing freedom and the beginnings of the shift of Jewish life from the east to the west. Gartner points to the work of, especially, Baron and S. Ettinger in support of his view.[89]

For Roth, his work on the periodisation of Jewish history was an opportunity to establish the Jew as 'essentially European'. He criticised Graetz's model as it

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Life in the Middle Ages, p. 3; John Docker, *1492: The Poetics of Diaspora*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), esp. p. vii.
[87] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 302.
[88] For discussions of the significance of Port Jews as opposed to the conventional idea of the centrality of court Jews in the heralding in of modernity see the essays in David Cesarani (ed.), *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002); Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 306.
[89] Lloyd Gartner, *History of the Jews in Modern Times*, (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 23-25.

placed too much emphasis on pre-exilic Jewish experience. He challenged Dubnow's division of Jewish history into a Western and an Eastern phase by arguing that Jewish settlement in Europe occurred before the decline of the ancient Asiatic centres. Instead he argued that the Jew

> was settled in Europe long before the birth of the majority of modern European nationalities, and ... in outlook and achievement he embodies the height of Aryan culture.[90]

Certainly, he argued, even if the Jew was not essentially European, then his most recent and most significant history was; the largest proportion of the world's Jewish population were settled in Europe and it was through European channels that Jewish ideas most readily reached the world.[91]

The emphasis on the 'Europeanness' of the Jews in this context was, for Roth, not only an apologetic, nor was it merely an assertion of Jewish significance, influence and right. It was an historiographical position which reflected his desire to normalise Jewish history and historiography. He believed that the failure of Jewish history to conform to the same assumptions of periodisation as general history and the lack of consensus within this non-conformity threatened the digestibility of Jewish history to both a Jewish and non-Jewish audience. An external orientation of Jewish history to the epochs of general European history, he explained would render it

> more intelligible to the man of today – not only to the Gentile who, where not a European, is becoming more and more saturated with Europeanism, but also to the Jew permeated with the European outlook. Only thus can Jewish history be truly grasped and given its proper place in the general cultural background of the ordinary modern man.[92]

As a result of this standpoint, he criticised Dubnow's arrangement of Jewish historical periods into complicated sections, as it would work against comprehension.[93] Roth, therefore adopted elements of Dubnow's principle of shifting centres and added the notion that 'the history of the Jewish people marches with that of Europe as a whole, epoch for epoch'.[94]

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[90] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 296.
[91] Ibid., p. 296.
[92] Ibid., pp. 297-298.
[93] Ibid., p. 295.
[94] Ibid., p. 306.

Restoring a normal sense of agency to the Jewish protagonists of history was central to Roth's intended new approach. He was eager to demonstrate that Jews were not merely the subject of historical forces, whether divine or scientific, but the active agents of their own destinies in the same way as any other European people. An integral element of this mission was his attempted, though not always comprehensive, debunking of the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history'. When suffering was given centre stage in the narration of Jewish history persecution was attributed as the main propulsion of Jewish activity. It is to Roth's relationship with lachrymose history that this chapter now turns.

ii. 'Historian Without Tears'?: Cecil Roth and the Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History[95]

Roth's, often ambiguous, response to what was known as the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history' was an important aspect of his approach. Baron published his famous article on the same subject three years previously. Nonetheless, Roth insisted he had *initiated* the 'wider reaction against what has been termed the "lachrymose" interpretation of Jewish history'.[96] The interpretation of Jewish history as a continual record of tragedy was intimately related to the religious and isolationist approach, as discussed above. Roth's corrective of it was yet another aspect of his normalisation of Jewish history and this contributed to its specific nature, which was distinct from that of Baron.

The nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft* scholars, Heinrich Graetz and Leopold Zunz, are widely held to exemplify the ubiquitous view of Jewish history as a unique tale of massacre and martyrdom.[97] David Myers asserts that '[if] Zunz laid a solid foundation for the lachrymose motif in Jewish historical writing, Heinrich Graetz constructed an entire edifice'.[98] The introduction to Zunz's *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* was merely entitled '*Leiden*' or 'Suffering' and Graetz was famed for

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[95] Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982).

[96] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', pp. 515-526; Cecil Roth, *Personalities and Events in Jewish History*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1953), pp. vi-vii.

[97] Nils Roemer, 'Turning Defeat into Victory: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Martyrs of 1096', *Jewish History*, vol. XIII, no. 2, (Autumn 1999), pp. 65-80, here p. 67; David N. Myers, "*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*': Crusade Memories and Modern Jewish Martyrologies', *Jewish History*, vol. XIII, no. 2, (Autumn 1999), pp. 49-64, here p. 52.

[98] Myers, "*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*", p. 52.

his characterisation of the Jewish past as suffering and learning.[99] Indeed Baron, some might say unfairly, explicitly described the lachrymose conception of Jewish history as the Graetzian conception.[100]

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the subscription of *Wissenschaft* historians such as Zunz, Graetz and Abraham Geiger to *Leidensgeschichte* went far in consolidating its centrality within newly emerging Jewish historiography.[101] The understanding and representation of Jewish history as a chronicle of persecutions and suffering, however, has a long tradition in Jewish thought. It forms the central thread of most modern scholarship as well as medieval and rabbinic thinking. David Myers noted that despite the efforts of Baron and others, the ubiquity of the history of suffering has moulded much of the 'historical imagination of modern European Jewry'.[102]

The omnipresence and perpetuation of the tragic motif, as Baron observed, was partly due to its appeal to a variety of groups, with very different aims and beliefs, in satisfying a number of contemporary needs.[103] Members of the Reform movement, the Zionist movement and, importantly, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* have all been responsible for utilising the history of suffering for their own ends.[104] Roth's revision drew attention to the non-critical, presentism of the lachrymose historians. He contended that 'the whole question deserves to be put afresh to a careful, objective examination'.[105] Similarly, Baron believed 'a more critical examination' was required to balance the hitherto distorted presentation of Jewish medieval history.[106]

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[99] Ibid., p. 52; Roemer, 'Turning Defeat into Victory', p. 67; For the English translation of Zunz's introduction see Leopold Zunz, (trans. by A. Löwy and ed. by George Alexander Kohut), *The Sufferings of the Jews During the Middle Ages*, (New York, USA: Bloch Publishing, 1907); For the English translation of Graetz's introduction to the fourth volume of his *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, (1853) see Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Ismar Schorsch, (New York, USA: JTS, 1975), pp. 125-132.

[100] Robert Liberles suggested that this criticism of Graetz was unfair. Although Graetz undeniably stressed the aspect of suffering in his portrayal of the history of the Jews he was, to Liberles, not the most appropriate example of the lachrymose view. Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 115-118.

[101] Nils Roemer argues that the second half of the nineteenth century saw a new meaning attached to *Leidensgeschichte*, after the *Wissenschaft* historians' belief in progress was shaken after 1848 and Judaism was increasingly felt to be in crisis. Roemer, 'Turning Defeat into Victory', pp. 66-67.

[102] Myers, "*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*", p. 52.

[103] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', pp. 524-525.

[104] Ibid., pp. 524-525; Myers, "*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*", p. 50.

[105] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 136.

[106] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', p. 516.

Roth's treatment of the First and Second Crusades in his contribution to the

CMH is particularly revealing in this context. As Myers has shown, the ritualised

recollection of these events forms a classic lachrymose trope in Jewish history.[107]

Roth used phrases like 'the age of martyrdom' and describing the events as 'horrors'

and 'outrages'. Nevertheless, the language used was in the main to the point and

restrained. It avoided the characteristic 'rhetorical flourishes' that often accompany

accounts of this period. Possible causes for the violence were explored and after each

brief description of persecution or massacre Roth gave an example of protection

proffered by State or Church authorities.[108] His approach revealed his eagerness,

particularly in an account that was to appear in a general history of the age, to embed

medieval Jewish/Christian relations within the vocabulary of normal human relations

and cause and effect.

Therefore, Roth's corrective of the tendency to view the course of Jewish

history through a lens of suffering and persecution was closely connected to his

attempt at the normalisation of Jewish history. He explained that he wished to explore

the presentation of Jewish history

> as a succession of persecutions afflicting the Jewish people alone and qua
> Jews: my thesis being that they shared in this, albeit to a greater degree,
> the common heritage of mediaeval mankind. (Roth's emphases).[109]

Roth challenged the automatic reduction of past hostility or violence towards the

Jewish people as explicable in terms of antisemitic persecution. He suggested instead

that there were occasions when 'the Jewish historian is constrained to describe as a

bloody persecution of his people what, under ordinary circumstances, might be

described as an interracial riot'.[110] Thus he attributed to the Jewish people an active

role in their history, and, in turn, in the general history of Europe. To Roth, 'Jewish

history was not entirely, as would appear from our history books, a record of

passivity'.[111]

In a 1931 article, Roth aired his thoughts on the matter of Jewish historical

agency in no uncertain terms. For Roth, sensationalising hysteria had induced a

'persecutory complex', which robbed the Jewish people of an active role in their own

[107] Myers, "*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*", p. 50.
[108] Ibid., p. 56; Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', pp. 640-642;.
[109] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 8 January 1932, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.
[110] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 138.
[111] Ibid., p. 137.

history.[112] For example, every migration was explained in terms of flight from oppression and '[n]ever, so it seems, did the Jew make a movement in response to his own needs'. Roth asserted that such a presentation was not to his taste and that the evidence from history did not support it anyway. For Roth, then, the revision of the lachrymose conception contributed to the normalisation of Jewish history through the insights of socio-economic history. His version of Jewish history cast its protagonists not as

> mere helpless straws, blown like deadwood before the gale, but rather
> individuals with some independence, moving at least partly by their own
> will and to seek their own advantage.[113]

Therefore, in his *CMH* piece, Roth explained that the movement of Jews into Muslim Spain was precipitated by 'the same economic causes which made the Arabs leave their peninsula'.[114] And, elsewhere, Roth anticipated David Cesarani's critical approach to myth and memory of Jews in London's East End. He suggested the persecutory motivation given for late nineteenth-century, East European immigration to America was an example of how historical legend can be created very quickly amongst a community.[115] Although thousands of refugees fled persecution and prejudice, Roth argued that in many cases the driving factor had been 'a healthy sense of their own profit'. At least as many immigrants had reasonably been attracted by reports of easy employment and business success as had been repelled by threats to their physical well being.[116]

As well as imbuing Jewish history with its rightful quota of individual agency in order to restore it to the realm of earthly cause and effect, Roth attempted to normalise the experience of suffering itself. He noted that '[t]here are ... many instances of Jewish martyrdom which are simply episodes in the general record'. He cited, as an example, the atrocities committed in seventeenth-century Poland in the name of Cossack Hetman Chmielnicki against Jews and Papists alike.[117] Roth did not remove the lachrymose conception from Jewish history but applied it to the history of other groups, such as Gypsies, so-called witches and at differing times both Catholics

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[112] Cecil Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?: The Causes of Jewish Migrations', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 4, (June 1931), pp. 337-348, here p. 342.
[113] Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?', pp. 337-338.
[114] Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', p. 636.
[115] David Cesarani, 'Social Memory, History, and British Jewish Identity', in Glenda Abramson (ed.), *Modern Jewish Mythologies*, (Cincinnati, USA: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), pp. 15-36.
[116] Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?', p. 348.
[117] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', pp. 138-139.

and Protestants. He extended his argument even to the Armenian genocide and the experience of Black Americans, anticipating later trends. He quoted Israel Zangwill, who wrote 'I bow before this higher majesty of sorrow. I take the crown of thorns from Israel's head and I place it upon Armenia's.'[118] And, he described the experience of Black Americans as 'surpass[ing] that of the Jews for stark tragedy'.[119] He therefore normalised Jewish history by embracing other group histories into the previously uniquely Jewish sorrowful interpretation of the past.

With reference specifically to the medieval period, Roth managed to not obscure 'the scarlet of Jewish persecution' in medieval European history. He sought instead to show that it did not 'stand out on a ground of virginal white, as an exception to the general rule of tranquillity and well-being'.[120] He, therefore, avoided the failure of particularly Baron's anti-lachrymose efforts to 'gloss over the fact that the Jews in Christendom suffered greatly'.[121] Robert Moore's work on the nature of persecution during the period has drawn attention to the striking similarities in the development, rhetoric and execution of persecution toward a variety of victim groups from the eleventh century onwards, such as Jews, heretics, lepers and homosexuals.[122] Roth similarly reminded his reader that the Jews were not the only non-conforming minority during the middle ages and therefore not the only group to suffer at the hands of the majority. He specifically looked to the experiences of the Albigenses, the Hussites and the Gypsies for parallels to a therefore less than unique Jewish historical tale of suffering.[123]

Roth attacked the uniqueness of Jewish persecution, but not its existence, by noting that the majority itself did not enjoy a secure status during this troubled age.[124] In his *Short History*, Roth qualified the chapter entitled, the unmistakably lachrymose, 'The Shadow of the Cross' with

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[118] Ibid., p. 145.
[119] Ibid., p. 145.
[120] Ibid., p. 138.
[121] Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 163.
[122] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 66, 88 and 123.
[123] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', pp. 141-142 and 144-145; Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, pp. 189-190.
[124] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', p. 517; Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 140.

> [i]t is only proper ... to bear in mind the fact that in the Middle Ages life
> was cheaper than it is to-day ... Even in times of profound peace, no
> man's tenure of life and property was certain.[125]

Here, Roth fell into the trap, identified by Moore, of understanding violence and persecution to be the same thing. Random violence, vandalism and theft does not require a particular target nor is it attached to any specific purpose other than individual indulgence or profit. On the other hand, persecution implies a systematic process of sustained victimisation and purposeful attack by virtue, predominantly but not necessarily exclusively, of the identity of the unfortunate recipient. These concepts may overlap. For example, it may be the case that acts of violence and burglary committed against a vulnerable but monied adversary are more likely to be successful and profitable. It may also be, as Roth suggested, that some medieval Jews would have been the most vulnerable and monied of the society. They would, therefore, be targeted but not directly by virtue of being Jewish.[126] And yet the cause of their increased vulnerability was surely the fact that they were a persecuted minority. Roth's attempt to normalise this aspect of the Jewish experience was then not entirely successful. Further Moore even argues against the suggestion that violence and persecution were the 'norm' of medieval society.[127]

Roth's argument was also limited by his description of the position of the Jewish community as having a 'special status' in medieval Europe. Roth claimed their recognised function as *servi camerae* or servants of the chamber, although still serfs vulnerable to every royal whim, afforded them a special relationship with the crown and attendant 'unmistakable privileges'.[128] In addition, he argued, like Baron, that the Jewish communities, amongst the many other corporations of the middle ages, were the most cohesive. They enjoyed, he argued, 'a considerable degree of judicial and fiscal autonomy'.[129] Roth stopped short of Baron's assertion that the kingly ownership of medieval Jews afforded them a distinctly more advantaged

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[125] Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, pp. 189-190.

[126] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 139.

[127] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, pp. 4-5.

[128] Mark Cohen, in his discussion of Jewish/Christian relations in the period, highlights the debate concerning the term *servi camerae regis*; he suggests that, although the anti-lachrymose challenge has garnered the term with a more nuanced interpretation than as unremittingly degrading serfdom, this ought not to be taken too far. He concurs with Cecil Roth's interpretation of the status as affording privileges whilst denying freedoms. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 45-46; Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, pp. 205-207; Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', pp. 646-648; Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, p. 102.

[129] Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', p. 647.

position than the privately subjugated peasants.[130] He still, however, did not recognise that such a status came 'at the price of exposing them, when the current ran that way, to special obloquy as well as special privilege'.[131]

Roth's attempts to lift the Jewish experience of the middle ages out of the depths of despair attributed to it by martyrologists also involved his shortening of the period. His re-examination of the lachrymose conception as part of his project of the normalisation of Jewish history, therefore, also extended into his views on periodisation. As he revealed in 'Epochs', Roth wished to propose that the modern period had begun in Jewish history, as it had in the general scene, in the fifteenth century, specifically in 1492 with the discovery of the New World and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. This view was very much at odds with that generally held. This postulated that the Jewish Middle Ages continued for long after Europe had entered the modern era. It also was at odds with recent scholarship that tends to date the beginning of the Jewish modern period to around the seventeenth century.[132] Roth asserted that, although medieval conditions had prevailed for some Jews up until even the twentieth century, others lived essentially modern lives before the arrival of Moses Mendelssohn or the Declaration of the Rights of Man.[133]

Rather than the period of emancipation, Roth focused upon the Renaissance as the starting point of the modern Jewish epoch.[134] An emphasis on the emancipation was problematised by an anti-lachrymose approach to the middle ages. The title of Baron's influential essay, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', revealed his real aim in his re-evaluation of the medieval period. Baron wished to revisit the era of the emancipation and its traditional juxtaposition with the ghetto period.[135] By complicating the polarisation of the terrible medieval period and the blessings of the post-Revolutionary period, Roth and Baron challenged the panegyrical portrayal of the emancipation.[136]

Roth's position regarding emancipation was ambivalent. He was a champion of the Renaissance and shared some of the revived nostalgia for the ghetto that Baron

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[130] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', pp. 516-519.
[131] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, p. 27.
[132] Gartner, *History of the Jews in Modern Times*, pp. 23-25.
[133] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 303-304.
[134] Ibid., p. 302; see also Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1932) and Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1959).
[135] Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', pp. 515-516.
[136] Ibid., pp. 524-525.

echoed in his essay. However his approach to history is often interpreted as ends-oriented, the ends being emancipation.[137] Indeed, his *A History of the Jews in England* ends with the political fulfilment of that period in England, as if it were the culmination of Jewish experience and the 'End of Anglo-Jewish History'.[138] It is not, however, difficult to trace from where his ambivalence stemmed. Emancipation, for Roth and Baron, heralded the new danger of assimilation, which, it was feared, might lead to the disintegration of the Jewish community. Roth, like Baron, questioned the supposed gains of the emancipation and suggested that equality had meant a sacrifice of communal identity.[139] Very aware of the price paid for liberty, Roth oscillated between cheering the gains made and lamenting the strengths lost.

His mixed feelings were revealed in a piece of historical fiction first published in 1933, entitled 'The Last Day of the Ghetto'. Here Roth told the story of the coming of the French Revolution to the Ghetto of Venice.[140] He described the ghetto as being 'something in the nature of a prison', and labelled the ghetto gates as 'the symbols of centuries of degradation'. In contrast, he painted the euphoric scene of the erection of a Tree of Liberty with Jews and non-Jews dancing and laughing together.[141] Throughout the prose, however, he alludes to the loss of Jewish identity that the end of the ghetto brought.

The central character, the tellingly named Marco-Mordecai Aboaf, a boy of twelve, was portrayed omitting, with all the excitement of the revolution, the recital of the prescribed grace before eating. An old rabbi, described as still wearing his badge of shame, the red hat, has it forcefully removed and replaced by an alternative head covering complete with tricolor cockade. Performed in the name of equality, this act could also be interpreted as being to the detriment of his distinctly Jewish identity. Finally, Marco-Mordecai was surprised to discover that there was no evening service at the synagogue. Instead the synagogue was filled with Jews and non-Jews waiting to hear a 'patriotic harangue' by the Society for Public Instruction to celebrate the 'dawn

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[137] David Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', in Tony Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 60-77, here p. 60.
[138] Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, pp. 239-263; Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', p. 60.
[139] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 304; Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation', pp. 518 and 526.
[140] Cecil Roth, 'The Last Day of the Ghetto', *Personalities and Events*, (first publ. in *Jewish Chronicle Supplement* (January 1933)), pp. 314-323.
[141] Ibid., pp. 320, 321 and 319.

of equality between Jew and Gentile' and the arrival of the principles of republican doctrine. It was no accident that, in Roth's story, this last event occurred directly at the expense of Jewish religious observance and collective Jewish identity.[142]

The place of the lachrymose conception, and the martyrologies the approach used and encouraged, in Jewish communal memory and therefore identity held some fascination for Roth. It was a theme to which he frequently returned. Despite threatening the uniqueness of the Jewish experience by normalising Jewish persecution, Roth did admit there was a distinctive quality to Jewish suffering. This mainly centred on the peculiarly Jewish ability and inclination to record and remember past martyrs. Due to the comprehensive and unidirectional nature of Jewish maltreatment, Roth argued, 'in the end the Jews came to regard persecution almost as an honorable distinction, dignifying them and them alone'. He declared that therefore, although other persecuted minority groups hold dear their victim status, 'as a martyrologist, [the Jew] has been supreme'. The Jews, he continued, had the advantage of a 'superior publicity service' and 'no historian, even a Gentile, could fail to be impressed by this insistent, pathetic, unique record'.[143] To Roth, then, it was the record of suffering and not necessarily the suffering itself that was uniquely Jewish.

Another of Roth's short historical stories, 'The Martyr: An Historical Satire', illustrates his interest in the use of the lachrymose conception in Jewish memory.[144] Drawing on a keystone martyrology in the shape of the records of the *Memorbücher* (lists of the names of martyred individuals kept in German synagogues), Roth parodied the practice whilst perpetuating the trope. Set in Meggersheim, Germany, in the fourteenth century – between the devastation of the community in the *Rindfleisch* massacres of 1298 and their later decimation on charges of polluting wells during the Black Death – 'The Martyr' tells the story of Judith, daughter of Rabbi Moses ben Abraham, who was burned alive after having been made pregnant by a local aristocrat and Christian, Conrad von Rittenhofen. Thrown out by the community and disowned

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[142] Ibid., pp. 319, 321 and 322-323.
[143] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 146.
[144] Cecil Roth, 'The Martyr', in Joseph Leftwich (ed.), *Yisröel: The First Jewish Omnibus*, (London: John Heritage, 1933), (first publ. as 'The Martyr: An Historical Satire', *Opinion*, I, (1932)), pp. 181-191.

by her father, Judith was as much a victim of her own family and neighbours as she was of the fanatical priest who ordered her execution.[145]

Roth satirised the German-Jewish community's readiness to memorialise the unfortunate Judith, who was excommunicated by her contemporaries. In the nineteenth century, a new Rabbi, who, according to Roth, hoped to 'immortalise the memory of the long forgotten martyr and to infuse his community with a proper pride in their history', entered the promiscuous Judith into the *Memorbuch* as a martyr of the faith.[146] In this way, Roth, undermined the lachrymose conception in his telling of a very lachrymose martyrology. The message of his satire seemed to be that in these martyrologies it was not the history that was important but the memory of the past.

In 'The Martyr', Roth made clear the idea that a lachrymose collective memory of the Jewish past could have a beneficial effect on the strength of the current community. The chronicling of the suffering of the Jews allows the recollection of an inspirational story of the Jewish will or spirit of survival in the face of terrible adversity.[147] In this light Liberles has defended Graetz's sorrowful chronicles against Baron's accusations of idealism. Graetz may have emphasised suffering but in so doing he also highlighted Jewish tenacity, in fact the more terrible the persecution the more incredible that survival appeared.[148] Roth followed Graetz by arguing that

> a fuller realisation of the continual nightmare in which our ancestors lived
> ...[would] necessarily impress upon one's mind all the more forcibly the
> miracle of survival which is assuredly the most striking fact of Jewish
> history.[149]

In Roth's *A Jewish Book of Days*, for example – in which the word 'massacre' alone is used in the titles 33 times – the tale upon tale of Jewish suffering is punctuated by records of deliverances. Notably the book chronologically ends with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, pointing to the ultimate redemption and survival of the Jewish people, reflecting the scriptural theme of exile and return with which the idealist lachrymose approach abounds.[150]

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[145] Ibid., pp. 181-191.
[146] Ibid., p. 191.
[147] Baron, 'Emphases in Jewish History', pp. 77-78.
[148] Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, pp. 115-118.
[149] Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days*, p. xv.
[150] Ibid., esp. pp. 265, 313-321.

For Roth, the distinctive quality of the Jewish inclination and ability to remember suffering was heightened by the fact that despite everything '[t]he Jews ... always managed to survive'. The tribulations of the ancient Britons, the Iberians and the Gauls deserved to be remembered as much as those of the Jews; however they were not because '[t]he races for which they fought are long since dead'. For Roth, 'the eternity of suffering ha[d] its compensations ... The Jews are still alive'. Therefore, according to Roth the long and persistent memory of martyrdom, so distinctive in the Jewish case, was as much 'a tribute to their immemorial antiquity' as it was to the extent of their sufferings.[151] And their sufferings, or at least the memory of them, actually contributed to the longevity of the Jewish people.

Roth exploited the utility of the memory of persecutions and further bolstered Jewish confidence by detailing how various unpleasant events in Jewish history had caused wonderful ones. For example, Roth characterised the Destruction of the Temple as having long-term benefits when he suggested that '[p]erhaps, in the long run, the nation gained in powers of expansion and of resistance through the loss of a territorial centre'.[152] He again evoked the notion of exile and return in a later article where he named the Dreyfuss Affair as the main stimulus for Herzl's Zionist movement.[153] Similarly, during the Second World War, Roth continued the self-preserving trend of British interwar historians to believe that '[n]o calamity, however disastrous in its own generation, has proved finally irretrievable'.[154] In 1943, he claimed that

> the skies [were] beginning to flush with the warm rays of the sun of deliverance. For it had become manifest at last through German savagery, that the cause of the Jews was the cause of humanity. If there is a God in heaven, the Nazi power cannot prevail.[155]

After the war, in the reworking of a redemptive religious trope, he claimed that the Nazi terror upon the Jews had facilitated the formation of the State of Israel.[156]

Though it borrowed much from patterns of Jewish history and memory and theological models of causation, the use of a lachrymose narrative or that of recurring

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[151] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', pp. 142 and 147.
[152] Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', p. 632.
[153] Cecil Roth, 'A Century of Progress?', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (November 1943); Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, p. 408.
[154] Balfour, 'History', p. 210.
[155] Roth, 'A Century of Progress?'.
[156] Cecil Roth, 'The State and World Jewry', *Hadassah Newsletter*, (April 1958), Cecil Roth Nearprint File, AJA, Cincinnati; Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, Illustrated Edition, (London: East and West Library, 1948).

tragedy alternating with deliverance was not an exclusively Jewish historical trope in the interwar period particularly. The generation of young men, including Roth himself, returning from the trenches of the Great War to embark on history careers could not fail to be profoundly affected by their experiences. R. E. Balfour reflected the mood of the interwar period when he explained that, and it is worth quoting at length:

> [i]n an age when ... there hovers above us the never distant possibility of another catastrophe in which not merely we ourselves must perish but everything that constitutes civilisation as we know it — in such a day man does not require inspiration but reassurance. And history replies by telling him not of the greatness of man in the past and of his achievements but of his littleness and of his mistakes. If man has survived so much already, perhaps he may even yet survive today. Only by a frank recollection of the worst from the past can we find courage with which to face the future; only from a knowledge of despair dare we believe that there is hope.[157]

The echoes of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history are glaringly apparent. And so Roth's influences in this area may indeed have been from a broader base than Graetz and Baron, and his attempt to normalise Jewish history by removing lachrymose undertones to bring it into line with general British history was in a sense misguided.

The influence from the non-Jewish, British context was not the only distinctive quality of the peculiarly British-Jewish response to the lachrymose conception of Jewish history that Roth represented. This particularity can be illustrated by a comparison between the positions of Roth and Baron. In their *Menorah Journal* articles the two scholars appear to share a common ground in their critique of the prevailing lachrymose paradigm. The older approach of chronicling suffering was one associated with European-Jewish history, and both Baron and Roth's positions toward it were affected by their different relationships with Europe and America.

Ismar Schorsch has suggested, however, that Roth, unlike Baron, merely flirted with the revisionist stance and eventually reverted to the traditional view.[158]

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[157] Balfour, 'History', pp. 227-228.
[158] Schorsch names the following essays as indicative of Roth's change of heart, Cecil Roth, 'European Jewry in the Dark Ages: A Revised Picture', *The Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, (1950-1951), pp. 151-169; Cecil Roth, 'The European Age in Jewish History (to 1648)', and 'The Jews of Western Europe (from 1648)', in Louis Finkelstein (ed.), *The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion*, Vol. I, (London: Peter Owen, 1961), pp. 216-249 and 250-286; Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception', pp. 377-388.

Indeed the fate of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis did affect the work of Roth and, as Ruderman put it, 'punctur[e] the naïve optimism with which he wrote about Jewish life'.[159] In 1953, concerning his 'The Most Persecuted People?' and other similar efforts, Roth qualified:

> I still think I was right at the time when I wrote. But I could not republish these articles now, after massacres a hundred times greater in magnitude than any recorded in the past have been perpetrated before our eyes, the balance of the Jewish population in the world has been catastrophically changed in consequence, and the numerically greatest as well as the most cultured of all Jewish communities have been wiped out by that human brutality which I had deliberately previously discounted.[160]

In reference to the story he had written about the last day of the ghetto he added:

> I could not have imagined, when I wrote my somewhat nostalgic picture of the burning of the ghetto gates ... that I would myself see the renewal of the ghetto – not as a mere social institution, but as an antechamber to the extermination camps.[161]

Throughout his academic career, however, Roth demonstrated an ambiguous relationship with Baron's scholarly signature. At the same time as adopting the revisionist stance, Roth continued in other places, even in the early 1930s, to write a history of suffering, sometimes more ambivalently applying a lachrymose and anti-lachrymose interpretation to the Jewish past within the same piece of work. Roth's ambivalence revealed more than merely a lack of commitment to the rejection of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history, as Schorsch claims.[162] Roth's flirtation with Baron's leitmotif must be contextualised within both the wider historical understanding of both historians and also the wider circumstances of changing centres of Jewish historiography.

The non-conformity of American-Jewish history to the lachrymose model left it open to *Wissenschaft*-based accusations of not constituting true Jewish history and thus not being worthy of serious study.[163] Baron's rejection of the limited European model opened up the American experience as a legitimate area of research. This

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[159] Ruderman, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry', p. 129.
[160] Roth, *Personalities and Events*, p. vii.
[161] Ibid., p. vii.
[162] Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception', pp. 381-382.
[163] Salo W. Baron, 'American Jewish History: Problems and Methods', Address delivered at the 47th annual meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, 19 February 1949, in *Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1971), pp. 26-73, see p. 32.

facilitated and justified his own pioneering efforts in that direction. Indeed, Schorsch playfully suggests that perhaps Baron actually immigrated to America in order to enjoy a Jewish existence consistent with his historical paradigm.[164] Roth understood himself and British Jewry as globally sandwiched between the point of departure, the Old World of Europe, and that of arrival, the New World of the USA. Historiographically, Roth was therefore wedged between the related lachrymose and non-lachrymose interpretations of the past. In addition, Roth's propensity to see emancipation as the end point of Jewish history in the diaspora, for better or for worse, led to the idea of a redeemed and fulfilled British Jewry. To Roth the British-Jewish experience was essentially, like American-Jewish history, non-lachrymose, despite the tribulations that had led ultimately to expulsion.[165]

Roth's belief in the utility of the lachrymose conception in the provision of collective memory and identity also contributes to an explanation for his intermittent denial and embracing of the conception. British Jews were living, as they had done for many centuries, in a non-lachrymose environment. Roth believed, nonetheless, that the memory of suffering was useful in providing them with a sense of the spirit of Judaism. For an emancipated and increasingly assimilated community a shared past that inspired solidarity and a siege mentality was all the more important. In the preface to *A Jewish Book of Days*, Roth explained that he believed the modern English-speaking Jewish community had an inadequate appreciation of past Jewish suffering due to 'our own happier condition'.[166] Elsewhere he marvelled at the identity forming powers of lachrymose memory:

> It is eight centuries and more, in all probability, since persecution in England last claimed any Jewish victim. However, the English Jew regards himself, in his pleasant pastures in Hampstead and Golder's Green, as a member of the classic people of persecution.[167]

Roth's double-edged persona as lachrymose and anti-lachrymose scholar mirrored a schizophrenic British-Jewish community, simultaneously confident and insecure with their position in the general British and Jewish milieu. However, there was a second layer to Roth's ambivalence. The historiography of suffering, re-examined by Roth, arose out of German-Jewish historical endeavour and experience.

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[164] Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception', p. 380.
[165] Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, pp. 239-263.
[166] Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days*, p. xiv.
[167] Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', p. 147.

The challenge to Germanocentric Jewish scholarship, represented particularly by Graetz, was a central aspect of his rejection of *Leidensgeschichte*. The next section will deal with the wider issues that this reflected: the relationship between German and British-Jewish historiography and the battle between universalism and localism in Jewish history.

iii. 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?': Localism and Universalism and the Perception of German Intellectual Superiority[168]

The above section has shown how Cecil Roth's response to the lachrymose conception of Jewish history was deeply affected by his status as a British-Jewish historian. It has introduced the notion that this was also influenced by his reaction to a perceived German-Jewish historiographical dominance. Roth's approach to Jewish history was inescapably suffused with his ambivalent attitude towards German-Jewish scholarship. Roth, like his antecedents a generation before, whilst embracing some of the various methods and ideals of particularly the lauded *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, simultaneously rejected a perceived German-Jewish intellectual dominance.[169] The related debate on the emphasis on the local or the global in Jewish history, and its influence on Roth, will be discussed in this section. It will conclude with how this controversy was resolved in Roth's work through the claim to a special and typical nature of the British past. [170]

British-Jewish historians, including and especially Roth, attempted to define and create a role for their community's past. They fought for relevance in the face of perceived German-Jewish and general British historical superiority. In 1968 Cecil Roth asked 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?' and famously answered 'Because it is fun.'[171] However, Roth's revealingly flippant remark masked the true and, for Roth, unfunny fact that British-Jewish history needed still, as his career and life drew to a close, to be defended as a legitimate area of study. In the same address, Roth outlined the dismissive attitude towards British-Jewish history, which he and the JHSE had had to challenge over the years. He explained

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[168] Cecil Roth, 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?', Presidential Address, delivered 17 September 1968, *TJHSE*, vol. XXII, (1968-1969), pp. 21-29.
[169] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 420-422.
[170] In addition the rejection of the German model emphasised a commonality with the increasingly significant American-Jewish experience; an issue which will be further explored in Chapter Three.
[171] Roth, 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?', p. 29.

almost from the beginning of our activities, we have had critics who have criticised our self-limitations, who have told us that Anglo-Jewish history is in itself petty and unimportant.[172]

As already suggested British-Jewish historiography did not begin with Roth. Arguably, the modern interest in the British-Jewish past was first formalised in 1887 with the holding of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition at the Albert Hall. Lucien Wolf and Joseph Jacobs, who had been involved with the organisation of the exhibition six years before, then founded the JHSE in 1893 amidst the stirring of a new historical consciousness.[173] The JHSE dealt mainly with subjects of British-Jewish interest. Even before Roth began to add substantially to the list, a number of monographs and documentary histories on the Jews in Britain had already appeared.[174] Roth himself believed the Edwardian and late Victoria eras to have been intellectually halcyon days for the Jews of England, naming Israel Abrahams, Joseph Jacobs and Lucien Wolf, as well as theologian Claude Montefiore and writer Israel Zangwill as his worthy predecessors.[175]

Only the small nucleus of scholars engaged in British-Jewish history at the turn of the century and frankly also for much of the twentieth century, acknowledged it as valuable field of research. It was generally considered to be a relatively unimportant local and minority history in relation to the general, often German or central and eastern European, Jewish model. An illustrative episode of the relationship of British-Jewish history and German historiography is the ambivalent role of Graetz in the initiation of the JHSE. Popular mythology within the Society persistently credited Graetz with having instigated the creation of a Jewish historical society in England.[176] However, this was a claim that was not only mythical but also

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[172] Ibid., p. 22.
[173] Lucien Wolf, 'Origin of the Jewish Historical Society of England', Presidential Address 15 January 1912, *TJHSE*, vol. VII, (1911-1914), pp. 206-221; David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages?: Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, pp. 29-41, here pp. 32-34.
[174] For example Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*; Albert M. Hyamson, *A History of Jews in England*, (London: Chatto & Windus for the Jewish Historical Society of England, 1908); H.P. Stokes, *A Short History of the Jews in England*, (London: Central Board of Missions, 1921).
[175] Cecil Roth, 'The Anglo-Jewish Association and Anglo-Jewish Intellectual Life', *The Jewish Monthly*, CRP, MS156, Additional Papers 3/3, SUA; for Claude Montefiore and Israel Zangwill see Daniel R. Langton, *Claude Montefiore: His Life and Thought*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002); Joseph Leftwich, *Israel Zangwill*, (London: James Clarke, 1957) and Maurice Wohlgelernter, *Israel Zangwill: A Study*, (New York, USA and London: Columbia University Press, 1964).
[176] For example Wolf, 'Origin of the JHSE', pp. 206-221; Robert Liberles, 'Postemancipation Historiography and the Jewish Historical Societies of America and England', in Jonathan Frankel (ed.),

concealed the JHSE's general hostility towards the German-Jewish historian and the German dominance he represented. Graetz delivered the opening speech at the 1887 Exhibition and in it called upon British Jewry to take up scholarship and learning in the fields of Jewish exegesis, philosophy and history, hence initiating the establishment of some kind of Jewish academy in England.[177] The purpose of the JHSE, however, was to facilitate the pursuit of the history of the Jews in Britain, or more accurately of the British-Jewish past. This was a rather narrower remit than Graetz had intended. So, as Nils Roemer argues, despite the German involvement in its inception, the JHSE was an assertion of local pride and specificity and a partial rejection of German-Jewish historical superiority.[178]

Although early JHSE members used German-Jewish patronage to legitimise their field, they more often sought to undermine the perceived central European dominance of Jewish history.[179] The introduction to the first edition of the then British-based *JQR*, by the editors, Israel Abrahams and Claude Montefiore, demonstrated a reaction to the trivialisation of the British-Jewish historical and cultural experience by their central European counterparts. They pointed to the lack of precedent in the country for such a publication and emphasised that nonetheless they did not intend to conform to any continental model. The Jewish scholarship to be encouraged through their journal was to be uniquely British in nature. To underline this intention, two of the contributions to the discussion and scholarship in the first edition were on British Jews and Judaism specifically.[180]

The *JQR*, the JHSE and the turn to local history that they represented, was part of an attempted renegotiation of the relationship between Jewishness and Britishness, during a period of growing nationalisms.[181] The formation of the JHSE entailed a reaction against an especially German-orientated historical universalism. It

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Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and Historians, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 45-65, here p. 48.

[177] Heinrich Graetz, 'Historical Parallels in Jewish History', in Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History*, pp. 273-274; Nils Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History: National Literary Canons in Nineteenth-Century Germany and England', in Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman (eds.), *The Image of the Jew in Europe, 1789-1914*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), pp. 27-45, here pp. 35-36; Liberles, 'Postemancipation Historiography', pp. 47-49.

[178] Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History', p. 36.

[179] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[180] Israel Abrahams and Claude Montefiore, 'Introductory', *JQR*, vol. I, (1888), pp. 1-3; Joseph Jacobs, 'Jews in England: When did the Jews first settle in England?', *JQR*, vol. I, (1888), p. 286; Israel Zangwill, 'English Judaism', *JQR*, vol. I, (1888), pp. 376-407.

[181] See the essays in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, esp. Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages', pp. 29-41; Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History', pp. 35-36.

also intended to facilitate the circumvention of the non-existent or even hostile treatment of Jewish history within the British canon. In addition, however, it reflected the move towards particularism within British historiography. In 1886, Oxford historian, Edward Freeman demanded

> the right to keep our independence, and to believe that on many matters of historical learning an Englishman ... is better fitted to judge than a German.[182]

Similarly, for Lord Acton, Leopold von Ranke's work on the seventeenth-century English Revolution was fundamentally flawed mainly because Ranke's 'German-ness' caused him to misunderstand the workings of the English body politic and the English social mind.[183] Like the early British-Jewish scholars, British and especially English historians were defending their endeavours against the trespasses of their better-equipped German colleagues by talking in terms of the special nature of the British and English past. There was an 'Englishness' to the English past that rendered its secrets unknowable to a German scholar by virtue of not being English. At once and with Jewish echoes, the English past became both unique and uniquely tied to the idea of 'Englishness'.

This had many implications, not least the suppression of a British-Jewish contribution to building a picture of the British past. However, such national mentalities were also at work in the British-Jewish mind. S. Levy, who was a leading figure in the JHSE in the early twentieth century, emphasised the centrality of ideas of 'Englishness' within the Society's approach when he proudly billed the new research as by historians 'on English soil to whom England is their home'.[184] Roth's later article comparing British-Jewish and American-Jewish history implied American inability to comprehend the British political mind. Elsewhere, he questioned German ability to understand a non-lachrymose Jewish experience like that of British Jewry.[185] The legacy of the belief in the exclusivity and peculiarity of the British-Jewish example can also be seen in the work of Roth's disciple, Vivian

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[182] Edward Freeman, *The Methods of Historical Study*, (London: Macmillan, 1886), pp. 288-292; Peter Wende, 'Views and Reviews: Mutual Perceptions of British and German Historians in the Late Nineteenth Century', in Benedikt Stuchtey and Peter Wende (eds.), *British and German Historiography, 1750-1950*, (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 173-189, here p. 185.
[183] Wende, 'Views and Reviews', p. 175.
[184] S. Levy, 'Anglo-Jewish Historiography', *TJHSE*, vol. VI, (1908-1910), pp. 1-20; Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History', p. 36.
[185] Cecil Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty: The New World and the Mother Country*, (London: AJA, 1954), (reprinted from *Commentary*, vol. XVII, (February 1954), pp. 109-117), p. 4; Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 424.

Lipman. Lipman obliquely criticised Dubnow's failure to give much consideration to the case of Anglo-Jewry in the formulation of his general thesis of autonomism. He wrote

> Anglo-Jewish history could not by its very nature provide much useful material for the more general thesis which Dubnow wished to put forward. ... A Jewish national minority does not fit into the pattern of British society as it might be conceived within the pattern of nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century Eastern Europe.[186]

This was in direct opposition to the early work of Heinrich Graetz and many of his *Wissenschaft* forerunners who, according to Roemer, spurned their local context and fostered a trans-national understanding of Jewish history.[187] Admittedly, in Germany, too, there was a brief turn toward the local with the establishment of the short-lived German Jewish Historical Commission in 1885. As Liberles asserts, however, the JHSE challenged the historical approach exemplified by Graetz by both moving away from his intellectual emphasis, which shall be further discussed below, and by 'a narrowing of the geographic parameters'.[188]

Internal debates over the practice of a local or global conception of Jewish history raged within both the JHSE and the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), when the societies were in their youth. Advocates of the global conception were, in the US, Cyrus Adler and in Britain, Lucien Wolf. They believed, according to Liberles, that 'Jewish history in any given country could not be understood if parallel developments within the Jewish world as a whole were ignored'.[189]

In contrast, however, Israel Abrahams rejected the universal view when he confessed that

> when [he] undertook to write of Jewish life in the Middle Ages, [he] did so under the impression that Jewish life was everywhere similar, and that it would be possible to present a generic image of it.[190]

He added unequivocally that '[d]eeper research has completely dispelled this belief'. To Abrahams there was no central principle of Jewishness. The idea that there was came only from a misunderstanding of religious homogeneity and the apparition of a

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[186] V. D. Lipman, 'Dubnow on Anglo-Jewish History', in Aaron Steinberg (ed.), *Simon Dubnow, The Man and His Work: A Memorial Volume on the Occasion of the Centenary of his Birth (1860-1960)*, (Paris: World Jewish Congress, 1963), pp. 193-203, here p. 202.
[187] Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History', pp. 28-29.
[188] Liberles, 'Postemancipation Historiography', p. 50.
[189] Ibid., p. 61.
[190] Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, p. xxiv.

national entity.[191] As well as serving an anti-Zionist purpose, the rejection of the universalisation of Jewish history and the turn to local studies was intended to counter antisemitic accusations of Jewish internationalism.[192]

Liberles claims the British-Jewish approach on this score was less 'assertive' than that in the US. This, he believes, suggests less self-confidence on the behalf of the British contingent. He argues that British Jews could not or would not presume for themselves what Adler did for American Jewry – that they would eventually become the centre of the 'writing of universal Jewish history'.[193] Within the JHSE, however, the notion of universalism was continually expressed through the model of British-Jewish history as exemplary of the pattern of Jewish history as a whole. In particular, Joseph Jacobs attempted to create a special significance of the English experience in Jewish history by establishing the 'typical character of Anglo-Jewish History'. He considered the processes of Jewish diaspora history to be 'watchable' through the lens of Anglo-Jewish history: the pattern of expulsion, readmission, and emancipation occurring first and with greater documentation than in countries on the continent. Jacobs universalised the local past of the Jews of England. He claimed that 'the study of Anglo-Jewish history may be regarded as the key to the study of Jewish history in general'.[194] This reflected the general trend, identified by Peter Wende, of England providing a prophetic guide to the future fortunes or misfortune of Germany for nineteenth-century German historians. England in German eyes had been perceived as being 'in the vanguard of historical progress'. In the same way British-Jewish historians promoted the pursuit of the history of the Jews in Britain as revealing of a universal model of Jewish experience in the diaspora from which others could learn.[195]

Although the reaction against German scholarship was rampant at the turn of the century, Roth was not at all convinced that it had gone far enough. He praised his British-Jewish predecessors for challenging the German monopoly of Jewish scholarship, but deeply regretted what he perceived as the 'Teutonization' of Jewish historiography in terms of its content and form. He condemned its 'slavish following

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[191] Ibid., p. xxiv.
[192] Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History', p. 33.
[193] Liberles, 'Postemancipation Historiography', p. 61.
[194] Joseph Jacobs, 'The Typical Character of Anglo-Jewish History', Inaugural Address, 14 November 1807, *TJHSE*, vol. III, (1896-1898), pp. 129-133.
[195] Wende, 'Views and Reviews', p.179.

of the German tradition'.[196] Roth bemoaned how any community or movement that failed to fit into the German mould was neglected. By claiming that '[g]eneralisation is even more difficult in Jewish than general history', he expressed anti-universalist sentiments.[197] But Roth condemned the localism of Graetz. He believed his hallowed position in Jewish historiography, which epitomised German-Jewish historical dominance, infected even non-German histories with a German bias.[198] For Roth, perhaps unwittingly echoing the anti-Zionist attitude of Abrahams as shown above, the ordinary man's history

> should be localized for his own group, not some foreign nucleus which, however vaster, however more important, has after all a point of view entirely different from his own.[199]

For Roth, then, German universalism did not mean a trans-national, universal Jewish history led by Germany. It meant local German models and experience applied to non-German Jewish contexts, which equated to a German historiographical imperialism. It was an incursion that needed to be resisted.

Although he was hostile to German-Jewish localist claims to globalism, he followed Joseph Jacobs by constructing the typical nature of British-Jewish history. In so doing he merely supplanted the German-Jewish model with the British-Jewish archetype as the universal indicator of national Jewish histories. In his early *Menorah Journal* article, Roth claimed that local history (national Jewish histories) 'ha[d] a 'typical' value disproportionate to its absolute importance, through which [the ordinary individual] may [have been] able to grasp the wider problems'.[200] Roth took this view further in his contribution to the *CMH* on the Jews in the middle ages. The British-Jewish experience was endowed with the notions of both a typical and, at the same time, a peculiar and especially significant nature. He described how, although he was reluctant to generalise, this could be done far more successfully in the English example than for France and Germany, as there was in place the nearest thing to 'the

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[196] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 420-421, 423 and 430-431; See Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', p. 83; Roth, 'The AJA and Anglo-Jewish Intellectual Life'. Any hostility towards Graetz on Roth's part can be primarily seen within this context. Roth was indeed reticent to single Graetz out for particular comment, asking Henry Hurwitz, the editor of the *Menorah Journal*, not to make his 'Needs' piece 'too much of an attack on Graetz', as his intention was to criticise the whole historical school that Graetz represented. Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 30 January 1928, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[197] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 424; Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', p. 648.
[198] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 422 and 424.
[199] Ibid., p. 425.
[200] Ibid., p. 425.

typical medieval Jewish organisation'. He clarified his point later on in the piece repeating that '[t]he history of the Jews in medieval England is indeed so compact, so fully documented, and so well defined, that it has a 'typical' value disproportionate to its real importance'.[201] Later, in his *A History of the Jews in England* he expanded on this view.

> Every characteristic facet of medieval Jewish history...finds its reflection in England during the two centuries in which the Jews were settled in the country – encouragement degenerating into persecution, which finally culminated in expulsion ... It is because of this typical character that medieval Anglo-Jewish history has its individual quality and interest.[202]

At the same time, however, Britain was important due to its special place in the Jewish past. For example, he described Britain as the last important Western European territory to be settled by the Jews, marking symbolically and actually 'the culmination of the westward sweep of the Jewish masses' in the middle ages.[203] So, British-Jewish history's exceptional quality as well as its contrary typical nature worked together in Roth's early work to validate its practice through the demonstration of its relevance to the wider picture of the Jewish past.

Cecil Roth, following Joseph Jacobs, managed to marry regionalism and universalism through the idea of the typical nature of the British-Jewish historical experience. As the patterns discernible in British-Jewish history were applicable, even prophetical, to those in other countries, its practice became essential to the study of world Jewish history. As only British Jews could understand the rules and circumstances of their history, British-Jewish historians became essential. The establishment of the special place of Britain in the Jewish past made them even more indispensable. In 1968, Roth happily asserted, though it is notable that he felt the need,

> even the most minute aspects of our research forms an integral part of the wide picture – of Jewish history, of British history, even in some measure of the history of humanity.[204]

In conclusion, Roth's early career was characterised by his attempts to validate Jewish history and British-Jewish history in the face of an inferiority complex in comparison to general, particularly German, Jewish and non-Jewish

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[201] Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', pp. 648, 653-654.
[202] Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, p. 131.
[203] Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', p. 640.
[204] Roth, 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?', p. 29.

British scholarship. He explicitly condemned the monopoly of the field by rabbinical seminaries, and its concentration in Germany and on German themes, and also called for a 'rewriting of Jewish history on a new basis, with a living appeal, a modern technique, and real catholicity'. Roth called for Jewish history to be secularised and professionalised in order to

> not only re-establish decent Jewish pride and inspire the world at last with true respect, but [to] be a significant and absorbing contribution to universal history, and intellectual achievement of vast importance.[205]

Working towards this aim, Roth tackled Jewish periodisation, bringing it into line with the main currents of the general European understanding of the past. He attempted to remove the determinist element of Jewish history by overturning the glorification of passivity amongst the Jewish people. He replaced the hand of God in history with normal, earthly notions of human agency and the idea of the Jewish people as a social group.[206] Therefore, despite conclusions to the contrary from other commentators, Cecil Roth was not a scholar without a philosophy of history, but was an historian with many, sometimes conflicting, self-conscious theories through which he attempted to interpret the past.[207] Indeed, at one time he had contemplated publishing his early essays published in the *Menorah Journal*, from 1928 to 1932, together as an historiographic treatise on Jewish studies.[208]

It was not only his Oxford training that rendered his approach distinct from that of many of his colleagues in America and on the Continent. His British-Jewish identity was a key factor in his understanding of the Jewish past. As seen above, this phenomenon was best illustrated by Roth's ambivalent tempering of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history. He fused lachrymose and non-lachrymose accounts of the past as a reflection of the relationships between British Jewry and their American and European coreligionists, partly in order to legitimise the pursuit of a specific British-Jewish past.

A question that remains unanswered in this chapter is that of the apologetic nature of much of Roth's work. For example, his attempts to establish the essential

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[205] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', pp. 420, 424, 426-428 and 434.
[206] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', pp. 293-306; Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?', pp. 337-348; Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', pp. 136-147; Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, p. vii.
[207] Ruderman, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry', p. 140; Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', p. 81.
[208] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 29 January 1932, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/5, AJA, Cincinnati.

'Europeanness' of the Jewish people worked to an apologetic agenda in that it underlined the right of Jews to reside unhampered in European countries.[209] The next chapter will look into but problematise Roth's perceived role as apologist in the mid- to late 1930s and the early 1940s. In doing this it will pick up on the theme of Jewish survival and Jewish morale. It will explore whether Roth's historiographically progressive beginnings were maintained throughout the uniquely turbulent 1930s and the Second World War.

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[209] Roth, 'European History and Jewish History', p. 296; Roth, 'The Jews in the Middle Ages', pp. 632-633.

Chapter 2

Cecil Roth, Self-Defence and Self-Respect
British Jewry Under the Dual Threats of Antisemitism and Assimilation, 1933-1943

> History was, according to Cecil Roth, for the Jew
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> not merely a record: it [was] at once an inspiration and an apologia. ... Only from his history [could] he understand the facts of his present being.[1]

Within his British context, and with his belief in the 'alembic of English tolerance', the main threat to Jewish survival, for Roth, was assimilation. This could only be countered by inspiring British-Jewish pride through the telling of the greatness of Jewish history and the continuity of Jewish existence.[2] At the same time, however, fear of antisemitic accusations meant Jews required an apologia to counter actual attacks both from poisoning the minds of non-Jews and from polluting the hearts of British Jews. In some ways inspiration and apologia were closely intertwined purposes – both sought to bolster Jewish confidence and morale and undermine anti-Jewish sentiment. At the same time they stemmed from different threats and could be directly contradictory. Roth himself, for example, noted the negative effects of the rhetoric of apologetics on Jewish self-respect. For many recent commentators, both goals involved the subversion and neglect of the historical method.[3] For Roth, in contrast, these two strands of Jewish history were at times happily married precisely because they both were best fulfilled through the revelation of historical truth, which testified both to Jewish history being inspirational and antisemitism being wrong.

The result of his dual approach to Jewish history was an, at times, unresolved tension in Roth's thought and work. On one hand was the importance of his anti-assimilationist 'ethnic cheerleading', which required encouraging a degree of separatism and the emphasis of Jewish superiority. And on the other hand was the

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[1] Cecil Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 5, (May 1928), pp. 419-434, here p. 419.

[2] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 267; Roth's view of assimilation was complicated by his particularly post-war belief that there were two types of assimilation, clean and unclean, that mapped onto the English and German models respectively. Only the latter, he argued had been proven a failure by the Holocaust. This will be dealt with further in the next chapter. See Cecil Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', *Menorah Journal*, XLVI, nos. 1 and 2, (Autumn-Winter 1958), pp. 84-90.

[3] See David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*, (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Tony Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London: Frank Cass, 1992).

need for apologetic countering of a latent antisemitic menace, which called for, among other things, decreased Jewish visibility and the de-emphasis of Jewish difference and the denial of Jewish inferiority. This tension came to the fore during the 1930s and 1940s with the rise of fascism and the Nazi occupation of Continental Europe.

The first section of this chapter explores the role of popularisation in Roth's approach to history. It will examine his position as educator of British Jewry and beyond in the struggle for Jewish pride and understanding. The second section looks specifically at Roth's response to fascism at home and abroad in the 1930s and 1940s. Dealing with Roth's relationship with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, it will discuss the changing dynamics of the tension within the struggle for Jewish survival when Roth was put on the spot. It will also ask whether Roth maintained his integrity during these difficult years. The chapter will conclude by exploring the implications of Roth's ambivalent use of racial criteria in formulations of Jewish identity particularly in works detailing Jewish achievements and contributions.

i. 'The Challenge to Jewish History': Cecil Roth and the Struggle for Jewish Survival, 1933-1943[4]

As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, treatments of Roth have invariably underplayed or ignored the significance of his role as an educator, often in the emphasis of his part played in communal defence. Roth was sensitive to the need to counter antisemitism as a threat to Jewish physical survival. He perceived, however, the greatest threat to the spiritual continuation of the Jews, particularly with his British perspective, to be assimilation. His response to this menace was to teach British Jews about their heritage and about the miraculous nature of their continued existence. This allowed him to demonstrate both the wrong-headedness of abandoning Jewishness as well as the significance on a bimillennial scale of such an apparently individual act. A consequence of his drive to educate British Jewry and beyond was his emphasis on popular, accessible history. The democratisation of the discipline that this implied, and that Roth sometimes advocated, directly caused a tension with Roth's occasionally elitist, Oxford viewpoint. This valued professionalism and the objective historical method above all else. As the threat of

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[4] Cecil Roth, 'The Challenge to Jewish History', Presidential Addresses, 20 October 1936 and 11 January 1938, *TJHSE*, vol. XIV, (1935-1939), pp. 1-38.

antisemitism grew in the period in question, Roth's emphasis on education became even more urgent. For Roth and others, the consequences of assimilation were beginning to be revealed. It was increasingly seen to do more than benignly dilute Jewishness; it acted as a malignant growth, weakening Jewry and Judaism from within. British Jews needed Roth's inspirational education more than ever as spiritual and cultural fortification against physical threat.

As we saw in the last chapter, both Green and Trevelyan were particularly important influences on Roth's approach to history.[5] Roth, in 1927, lamented that '[t]he Jewish Green, or Trevelyan, to which we have been looking forward seems as far off as ever'.[6] He then set about trying to rectify the situation himself, modelling his approach on theirs. Whereas Green produced *A Short History of the English People* and Trevelyan authored *History of England*, Roth wrote *A Short History of the Jewish People* and *History of the Jews in England*. Green, in particular, was, like Roth, coincidentally interested in the history of Oxford and convinced of the superiority of Italian culture. Above all, however, Roth admired Green and Trevelyan's skills as popularisers.[7] David Katz argues that Roth saw himself as a 'Jewish Trevelyan', 'writing popular literary narrative history for an audience of educated readers who wanted to be proud of their past'.[8] Arguably, it was more a case of Roth wanting them to be proud of their past than the readers themselves. And it was with this aim in mind, the Jewish education and inspiration of the Jewish reader ultimately for the purposes of Jewish survival, that much of his history was written.

Green and Trevelyan hoped to inspire widespread pride in the English past. Similarly both Roth and the early masters considered it an important part of their historical task to promote interest in and to popularise the field of British-Jewish history within British Jewry itself. This desire was strongly linked to the perceived importance of popularisation in the promotion of a consciousness of Jewish history to maintain a healthy Jewish identity in the diaspora and specifically in the British-

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[5] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, p. viii; Lloyd Gartner, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Anglo-Jewry', in Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami (eds.), *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 69-86, here p. 69.

[6] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 15 June 1927, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.

[7] Anthony Brundage, *The People's Historian: John Richard Green and the Writing of History in Victorian England*, (London and Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 75, 79 and 165.

[8] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, p. viii.

Jewish community. The *JQR* introductory, for example, vehemently condemned Jews

in England for their 'feeble interest in scholarly investigations of its history and

literature' and described this as 'discreditable and dangerous'. It suggested in no

uncertain terms that to keep silent about this lacuna would lead to 'ignorance, and

ignorance must ultimately bring dissolution in its train'.[9] Despite the efforts of the

JQR, the British-Jewish historian, Israel Finestein described the historical project of

the generation before as 'an affair of individuals in a community which essentially

was not interested'.[10] The situation had changed little in Roth's time as he sadly

noted.[11]

Roth's eagerness to remedy the intellectual maladies of the wider community

meant that in his work he hoped to combine the erudition of the serious scholar and

the techniques of the popular writer. Roth strove for impartiality and prided himself

on bringing a critical and objective perspective to previously polemical debates.

Following British-Jewish predecessors such as Israel Abrahams and Rev. S. Levy, he

placed great importance upon the modern scientific method in history. By this he

meant the application of objective historical technique to the study of the past rather

than any Positivist notion.[12] For example, he complained that works on the history of

the Jews in England, such as Joseph Jacobs's *The Jews of Angevin England*, even

though they were produced in 'a more scientific age … , ha[d] tended to be based

upon their remote forerunners [such as D'Blossiers Tovey's *Anglia Judaica*] with a

fidelity which [wa]s often noteworthy and sometimes regrettable'.[13] Elsewhere he

lamented that 'integrity of mind' was undervalued in Jewish history and culture in

favour of 'partisan cause[s]'.[14] At the same time, Roth was often praised for his

ability to simplify historical enquiry and present it in a readable and 'popular' tone.[15]

The combination of the scholarly and the literary was a conscious effort for

Roth. He made a distinction between his 'purely 'scientific'' history and his popular

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[9] Israel Abrahams and Claude Montefiore, 'Introductory', *JQR*, vol. I, (1888), pp. 1-3, here p. 1.

[10] Israel Finestein, *A Short History of Anglo-Jewry*, (London: Lincolns-Prager, 1957), pp. 151-153.

[11] Cecil Roth, 'The Anglo-Jewish Association and Anglo-Jewish Intellectual Life', *The Jewish Monthly*, vol. I, no. 1, (1947), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Cecil Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age: A Scholar Discusses the Creative Out-look', *Commentary*, IV, (October 1947), pp. 329-333.

[12] See Israel Abrahams, 'The Science of Jewish History', Presidential Address, 23 November 1904, *TJHSE*, vol. V, (1902-1905), pp. 193-201; S. Levy, 'Anglo-Jewish Historiography', *TJHSE*, vol. VI, (1908-1910), pp. 1-20.

[13] Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, p. v; D'Blossiers Tovey, *Anglia Judaica*, (Oxford: Fletcher, 1738); Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, (London: David Nutt, 1893).

[14] Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age', p. 330.

[15] Chaim Raphael, 'In Search of Cecil Roth', *Commentary*, vol. L, (1970), pp. 75-81, here p. 75.

or literary works. He described the former as his 'first priority ... which justifies my existence'. The latter, he claimed in 1951, was 'to supplement the academic salary'. Roth did not, however, view this differential as clear-cut.[16] He expressed the hope 'that [his] most serious contributions [had] not been entirely arid, and [his] most lighthearted not entirely deficient in serious grounding'.[17] Indeed, he believed that 'all historical work worthy of the name must be accessible to the public' and any that 'repels the ordinary reader (not to speak of the professional) has failed of what ought to be its primary object'.[18]

The combination of approaches was not only an ideological decision. Roth's long period without a university position compelled him to make a living from his books, essays and lectures and so popular appeal was invaluable to his career. His Oxford background, however, and, after 1939, his Oxford readership, meant that scholarly professionalism was also a priority. Arguably Roth did not manage to strike the balance between the popular and scholarly for which he strove. His work was often not taken seriously in academia, partly due to his popular style and casual use of footnotes. Conversely, his attention to scholarly detail limited its popular appeal. For example, *A Short History of the Jews* was described by *The Literary Review* as a 'rather dull recital of events'. The *English Historical Review* criticised its 'numerous questionable statements, minor errors of fact, and dates which it is impossible to check in the unavoidable absence of references', which 'undermine the confidence of the reader'.[19] Similarly, *The Sassoon Dynasty* was criticised in one quarter for its 'pointless pedantry' and in another for its lack of detail and for being 'little more than amusing anecdotage'.[20]

There is an irony in the criticism Roth, as an Oxford don, levelled at *Wissenschaft* scholarship. The problem with *Wissenschaft*, he argued, was that 'it never became democratic ... There was no general enthusiasm for it; it lacked popular appeal ... It remained, in fact, the preserve of a handful of professionals, barely

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[16] Letter Cecil Roth to Louis Finkelstein, 15 November 1951, Records of the JTS, Series G, IG. 99-63, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.
[17] Cecil Roth, *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1962), p.v.
[18] Letter Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, 26 January 1927, Henry Hurwitz Collection, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati; Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 431.
[19] René Elvin, 'Review of Cecil Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*', *The Literary Review*, (April 1936), Roth (pers) 2, Roth Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds; A. W., A Short Notice on Cecil Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, in *EHR*, vol. LII, no. CCVL, (April 1937), p. 382.
[20] Leonard Stein, 'The Sassoons from Baghdad', *Spectator*, (25 April 1941), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/2, SUA; 'Mercantile Adventure: Story of the House of Sassoon', *TLS*, (26 April 1941), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/2, SUA.

touching the people'.[21] It is undeniable, nonetheless, that Roth attempted to write accessible history and his prime motivation was to reach as many members of, especially, British Jewry, as possible. Roth contrasted cloistered *Wissenschaft* to the study of the Talmud. The latter was, he described, in Eastern Europe at least, an enduring and ubiquitous activity and remained so during and after the *Wissenschaft* era.[22] Roth's work intended for popular consumption was often inspired by the hold of Talmudic scholarship. It exploited the authority, familiarity and popular appeal of religious texts. In this he undermined his arguments for the removal of Jewish history from religious interpretations and institutions. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the design of Roth's *A Jewish Book of Days*, for example, paralleled the arrangement of scripture into chapters and verse to facilitate selective readings.[23] Its format corresponds to the process of 'visual articulation of the page' of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, where the addition of space and indentions for breathing enabled a work to be read aloud. Indeed, it was aimed at encouraging the reading of daily instalments to family and community members making *A Jewish Book of Days* 'a useful bar mitzvah present'.[24] This format operated as a deliberate device to equate the importance of a consciousness of post-biblical Jewish history to that of religious knowledge in questions of Jewish identity and Jewish survival, whilst increasing accessibility.

As well as ensuring Jewish history reached members of the community, borrowings from religious interpretations of history allowed for Roth to emphasise the uniqueness and miracle of Jewish survival. *A Jewish Book of Days* was arranged so that normal chronology was subverted and Jewish history was removed from the earthly flow of time and the rules of cause and effect. By placing the Expulsion of the Jews from England of 1290 on 1 November next to the Balfour Declaration, which was made on the 2 November 1917, Roth underlined Jewish continuity.[25] Similarly, the American version of his more conventional *Short History of the Jewish People, A Bird's Eye View of Jewish History,* which was adapted and published especially to

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[21] Cecil Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXX, no. 1, (January-March, 1942), pp. 1-12, here p. 8.
[22] Ibid., p. 8.
[23] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries,* trans. by Lydia Cochrane, (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), pp. 11-12.
[24] Ibid., p. 11; Review of Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Book of Days,* in *Jerusalem Post*, (17 May 1968), CRP, MS156, AJ151/15/2, SUA.
[25] Cecil Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days*, (London: Edward Goldston, 1931), pp. 264-265.

accompany an adult education programme, included appended essay questions, which called for the student to make comparisons across the centuries emphasising Jewish continuity and strength. Roth asked the student to '[d]escribe the peregrinations and vicissitudes through which your own ancestors may have come, from Palestine in the first century to where you are today', to '[c]ompare the legal Ghetto of the past with the metaphorical Ghetto of today [1935]'. Roth later added a further essay which asked for a comparison of 'the distribution of the Jews throughout the world a) in 948 and 1948; b) in 1848 and 1948'.[26]

The importance of Jewish education for Jewish survival was felt even more as the situation in Germany worsened and fears of domestic fascism and antisemitism increased as the 1930s progressed. Roth's choice of documents reprinted in his collection of *Anglo-Jewish Letters* published in 1938 demonstrated his priorities. For the twentieth century, Roth only identified two letters as worthy of inclusion. One was Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild of November 1917, declaring his 'sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations'. The other was a long piece by Solomon Schechter to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, written when Schechter was preparing to leave England for America in 1901. Schechter's 'Epistle to the Jews of England' bemoaned a lack of Jewish culture and learning in the country, which Roth seemingly thought to be just as much an issue almost a generation later. Clearly an influence on Roth, the letter addresses both the question of antisemitism and the importance of Jewish consciousness. Schechter foretells that the dark days of persecution upon world Jewry at the turn of the century would herald a 'great revival or renaissance'. When the time comes, 'the Jew will ... have to rediscover himself ... with a view to strengthening the Jewish consciousness'. This rediscovery, he argued, could only be made through a revival of Jewish literature, 'which retains all that is immortal in the nation'.[27] For Roth, history was repeating itself. Schechter's call had gone unheeded at its first airing. For it to be left unanswered a second time, in the new 'dark days' would be perilous and foolish.

Schechter's letter continued to hold importance in the late 1930s as British Jews, Roth believed, were on the brink of a period of 'disintegration'. Despite the experience of baptised German 'Jews', the rate of conversion was on the increase.

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[26] Annotated, working copy of Cecil Roth, *A Bird's Eye View of Jewish History*, (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1935), pp. 391, 393 and 396, CRP, MS156, AJ147, SUA.

[27] Cecil Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters*, (London: Soncino Press, 1938), pp. 325-332.

Even worse, Roth noted, this upturn was received with apathy. He was especially aware that, as associated communities relied on British Jewry as a cultural centre, her problems were of wider importance than her own fate. In South Africa, for example, the insecurity of the period caused the community to look to British Jewry and, more specifically, to Roth to provide cultural and educational guidance. In 1939 a comment in a South African Jewish newspaper argued, apparently resurrecting an earlier suggestion, for Roth to lecture in the country. It reasoned '[a]t this period of crisis, it is well for us to seek courage from knowledge of the treasures of Jewish learning'.[28] It was not until 1946 that the visit was arranged through the Jewish Education Council. Roth then travelled to South Africa in order to lead the campaign for Jewish education in the country and to 'arouse a keen interest in things Jewish and a better appreciation of our cultural heritage and spiritual values' as well as to raise funds for the South African Jewish Education Fund Drive.[29] Roth's plenary critique of the country's Jewish community stressed the dangers for its survival risked by neglecting Jewish education, culture and learning.[30]

For Roth, the experience of Nazi Germany bore many lessons and rendered Jewish education essential to the continuation of the Jewish people. The 1930s, for Roth, saw the sudden invalidation of the 'optimistic conception' of the assimilationists, 'whose greatest ambition was to fling themselves into the nearest melting pot' and 'commit national suicide'. It turns out, he argued, that the melting pot requires cooperation from the 'assimilative body'. The German example had shown him that such support was not unconditional or unchanging and could be withdrawn at any moment.[31] The failure of assimilation after the German model coupled with the weakening hold of religion in society in general left British-Jewish 'youth of today' high and dry. They were, Roth lamented, 'groping at wraiths in the

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[28] "Hamabit", 'Current Communal Comment', *The Zionist Record*, (3 February 1939), Joseph Roth Private Collection.

[29] Letter Rabbi J. L. Zlotnik, director of the South African Board of Jewish Education to Cecil Roth, 4 April 1946, Joseph Roth Private Collection; Telegrams J. Milne, Chairman of the South African Jewish Education Fund Drive, to Cecil and Irene Roth, 24 July 1946, L. Rabinowitz, Honorary President of the South African Jewish Education Fund Drive, to Cecil and Irene Roth, 25 July 1946, Baruch Boachem Leshalom and Rabbi J. L. Zlotnik, director of the South African Board of Jewish Education to Cecil and Irene Roth, 25 July 1946 and Rubik, President of the South African Hebrew Teachers, to Cecil Roth, 30 July 1946, Joseph Roth Private Collection.

[30] Cecil Roth, 'Critique of South Africa', *South African Jewish Times*, (27 December 1946), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[31] Roth, 'A Communication', *Menorah Journal*, XXVII, no. 2, (April-June 1939), pp. 245-247, here p. 246; Cecil Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', Address given at the Hampstead Synagogue, 10 April 1943, *Hampstead Synagogue Bulletin*, (October 1943).

dark, throwing themselves into the latest isms ... from sheer despair'.[32] The solution could be found through education, by teaching Jewish children and young adults about 'their own background, their own heritage, their own history, their own rich past'. As long as Jewish youth were taught the value of Jewish culture as equal to and even superior to Anglo-Saxon culture they would have the strength to withstand external attack and even if defeat came upon them all would not be lost. Further, young British Jews must be taught their heritage in order to produce a new generation of Jewish leaders who could continue the fight against antisemitism in the future. Roth underlined the importance of a 'Jewishly educated public'. To emphasise his point, he quoted Disraeli, 'we must educate our new masters'.[33] Only via education could it be ensured that Jewish youth

> will not become a flock of terrified invertebrates, huddled together bewilderedly in the storm, and thinking as they await death that, after all, the world might be better off without them, even as their enemies assert. They will at least bear their sufferings with comprehension and with dignity. They may lose their position in the world; they will at least retain their self-respect.[34]

The most saddening and terrible fate of the victims of Nazism, Roth believed, was suffered by those designated as Jewish by the regime but not by themselves. These individuals experienced the double insult of being rejected by the Germans whilst 'not realizing the glory of being Jews'.[35] The priority for Roth, therefore, was to safeguard against such a fate for the youth of British Jewry.

The main weapon in the educative armoury against the loss of Jewish dignity, according to Roth, was the study of history. By necessity, this was no longer a 'scholastic backwater'. In defence of his popular approach to history, he explained that the time of the 'cloistered student' had waned.

> It is precisely ... in the universities, the schools and the academies that the present struggle between freedom and obscurantism, liberty and authority, more especially centres. History is in the forefront of the struggle: and Jewish history above all.[36]

Jewish education was, to Roth, at the heart of his historical endeavours and at the centre of the struggle for Jewish survival, through boosting Jewish morale, bolstering

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[32] Roth, 'A Communication', p. 246.
[33] Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age', p. 333.
[34] Roth, 'A Communication', p. 246.
[35] Ibid., p. 246.
[36] Cecil Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', being part i) of 'The Challenge to Jewish History', pp. 1-21, here p. 1.

the hold of Jewish culture and distinctiveness and through the formation of the Jewish leaders of the future. Roth argued in favour of 'an informed Judaism' as the only way to guarantee its successful continuation.[37] It is partly this belief that caused Roth to formulate his distinct approach to communal defence.

ii. 'The Gentile Problem': Cecil Roth and the Board of Deputies in the Defence of the Community[38]

British Jews were not only weakened culturally in the 1930s, but were also suffering from intense communal fractures. Ironically, far from uniting the community against a common enemy, the trying decade brought these differences into stark relief and deepened the divisions further.[39] Much of the disagreement was played out within and in opposition to the London Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA).[40] The AJA, founded in 1871, was a non-synagogal organisation with a relatively small membership. Its influence was based on the prestige of the distinguished and wealthy 'cousinhood' status of its few members. It was a non-Zionist organisation, which aimed to provide philanthropic assistance to besieged Jews abroad.[41] The Board of Deputies, established in 1760 to allow the community to 'express its loyalty to its King and Country', was based in the main on synagogue membership and claimed, not without occasional controversy, representative status for the Jews of Britain.[42] The issue of defence and the combating of antisemitism was an element of the Board's work that became particularly prominent in the inter-war years and caused especial tension and division.[43]

Traditional communal authority was undermined during and after the First World War and its diminution of power accelerated during the troubled 1930s. The

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[37] Cecil Roth, 'Paradoxes of Jewish History', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 1, (October 1930), pp. 15-26, here pp. 21-22 and 26.

[38] [Louis Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938), p. 11.

[39] Elaine R. Smith, 'But What Did They Do?: Contemporary Jewish Responses to Cable Street', and Neil Barrett, 'The Threat of the British Union Fascists in Manchester', both in Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman, (eds.), *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), pp. 48-55 and pp. 56-73.

[40] Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, Second Edition, (Oxford and Portland, USA: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), pp. 25-26.

[41] Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 96-98, 245 and 313.

[42] Sidney Salomon, *'The Deputies': A Brief Survey of its History, 1760-1937*, (London: Woburn Press, 1937), p. 1; Aubrey Newman, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews: 1760-1985*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1985), p. 1; Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 25.

[43] Nevill Laski, *Retirement Speech from the Presidency of the Board of Deputies, 1939*, (London: Woburn Press, 1939), p. 6; Newman, *The Board of Deputies*, p. 24.

reasons for these changes were manifold. David Cesarani suggests that the rise of Zionism in the community was only one of these, with the growing significance of the Jewish left and social and economic changes, such as the decline in the wealth of the old elites and the growing prosperity of immigrant families, being equally contributory. Elaine Smith has observed 'sharp social, economic and ideological divisions between working-class Jews in the East End and middle-class Jews in the West End and the suburbs'; however the understanding of the presence of a simplistic East/West, working-class/middle-class split is problematic. Cesarani argues that the transference of communal leadership involved more of a shift from one section of the middle-classes (the upper middle-class pre-1914 elites) to another (the socially mobile lower middle-class, associated with second-generation immigrants).[44] Bill Williams concurs with Cesarani and challenges the 'notion of a clash between two socially homogenous communities, each bound by a distinctive pattern of culture'. Using the example of Manchester, he emphasises the significance of the negotiation and mediation of the immigrant *nouveaux riches*, or the 'alrightniks', in problematising the traditional one dimensional split.[45] By the end of the period in question the notion of an East/West split in London was geographically even less useful because of mass movement out of the area due to social mobility and evacuation.[46] Further many of the communal conflicts lacked any real ideological dimension, but involved the 'jockeying for position' of competing egos.[47]

Cecil Roth commented upon the disunity in the community more than once. In an open letter in the *Jewish Chronicle* he called upon the members of the Board and the AJA to set aside their differences for the sake of persecuted Jews abroad. He warned 'Jewish history will not lightly pardon the leaders of the community on either side if they persist in their present course' and marked the rifts as 'an act of treachery to the suffering, dumb Jewish communities of all Europe'.[48] Bolchover points out, however, that Roth was himself 'as bellicose as anyone in the community' with 'very harsh' views on the management of the British-Jewish response to the Nazi atrocities

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[44] Smith, 'But What Did They Do', p. 54; David Cesarani, 'The Transformation of Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, (Oxford and Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 115-140, here pp. 117-121 and 126-129.
[45] Bill Williams, "East and West': Class and Community in Manchester Jewry, 1850-1914', in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, pp. 15-33, here pp. 15-16 and 32-33.
[46] Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 2.
[47] Ibid, p. 40.
[48] Cecil Roth, 'The Communal Split: A Suggested Remedy', *Jewish Chronicle*, (10 September 1943).

in particular.[49] In matters of defence strategy Roth often found himself at loggerheads with those at the head of communal structures. Roth's tumultuous relationship with the Board of Deputies of British Jews reflected the extent of the discord within the community and the difficult and precarious position of the Board and its representative status. Roth felt the organisation was becoming increasingly elitist and closed off, he argued

> [i]t's all wrong – the Board is the historic instrument and mouth piece of Anglo-Jewry ... but it is frittering away its good-will, and seems to be doing its best to alienate persons in my unattached position (unless they are titled.)[50]

Despite his feelings of marginalisation, Roth continued to work with the Board throughout the period, with varying degrees of success and enthusiasm. The ups and downs of their relationship revealed the differences in their understanding of the nature of the fascist and antisemitic threat and the best way to counter it. In addition, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter, unlike the Board Roth prioritised cultural and historical education to ensure Jewish survival and strengthen Jewish morale in the face of both the friendly and hostile varieties of the 'Gentile Problem'.[51]

In 1919 the Press Committee of the Board was formed in response to the growth of antisemitic expressions appearing in some elements of the press and in publications in Britain.[52] For some time the efforts of the Press Committee ran parallel to those of the Information Sub-Committee of the Joint Foreign Committee. This was the vehicle that combined the AJA and the Board of Deputies for international political purposes. In 1933, however, the perceived increasing connectivity of domestic antisemitism and foreign affairs prompted what the Press Committee described as a 'closer collaboration' with the Information Sub-Committee. After a long and bitter merger, the Press and Information Committee was created as an amalgam of the two. This was not without much resentment existing between the two key, and arguably difficult, personalities, Philip Guedalla, the historian and biographer and former president of the English Zionist Federation, and Leonard Stein,

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[49] Ibid., p. 5; Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, pp. xliii and 62.
[50] Letter Cecil Roth to Gordon Liverman, 27 January 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.
[51] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, p. 11.
[52] Salomon, *'The Deputies'*, p. 14.

barrister and former Political Secretary of the World Zionist Organisation.[53] This constant reorganisation revealed the struggles, controversies and divisions within the Board and the community as a whole. Moreover it demonstrated the growing need for and changing nature of defence work due to fluctuating domestic and foreign concerns during the period.

Domestic and foreign defence needed to be dealt with in tandem because the importation of fascist and antisemitic ideas from abroad was considered the main impetus for an upturn in anti-Jewish agitation in the country. Roth, for one, was sure that intolerance was not the natural condition of the English. He believed that attacks against the Jews as seen in Nazi Germany could not happen in England as 'the German has a primitive and almost mystic compulsion to side *against* the weak and outnumbered, as the English to side *with* them'.[54] One of the responses to English fascism and antisemitism was, therefore, for the Board and especially for Roth, to deny its Englishness and identify it as a foreign incursion. The continental connections and borrowings of the British Union of Fascists, under the leadership of Oswald Mosley, which were already present in the public mind, were frequently emphasised and ridiculed.[55] By outing fascism and antisemitism as 'unEnglish' it was hoped that the nationalist foundation to the movements would be undermined. As popular suspicion towards the Nazis grew and then certainly during the war, it became even more useful to emphasis the not entirely unfounded belief that the

> world-wide anti-Semitic campaign created and conducted by the gangster
> rulers of the Reich, ... unhappily has not left even this country unscathed
> by its vileness.[56]

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[53] Press Committee Report 12 June 1933, Press Committee Reports 1932-January 1934, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/026-027, LMA; Salomon. *'The Deputies'*, p. 15; see also the correspondence regarding the merger and the relations between the various protagonists which continued well into 1935 at least, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E3/97/1, LMA.

[54] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 154-155. Although the British Jewish writer, Louis Golding, is ostensibly the author of this text, Roth claimed authorship for himself. Further the Anglican theologian and historian, James Parkes, almost certainly contributed to the writing of some sections. Where an argument is expressed in *The Jewish Problem* has been communicated elsewhere by Roth, it is understood to be part of Roth's contribution. See p. 94, note 86 of this thesis for a discussion of the authorship of this text.

[55] Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 103; The Board of Deputies, *Do You Know These Facts about Mosley and his Fascists?'*, (London: Wobourn Press, 1937).

[56] Laski, *Retirement Speech*, p. 2; for other example, of which there are many see The Board of Deputies, *The Co-Ordinating Committee: A Brief Survey of its Work*, (London: Wobourn Press, c.1938); No. 29 'The Menace of Nazi Propaganda', in The Board of Deputies, *Speakers' Notes*, (London: Wobourn Press, 1938).

The anti-defamation pamphlet, *Do You Know These Facts about Mosley and his Fascists?*, published by the Board in 1937, reminded the reader of Mosley's previous political inconsistency and that his turn to fascism had come only after a visit to Mussolini. It added, 'what can be more absurd – and at the same time more sinister – than a super-British Party getting its money from non-British sources.'[57] Roth similarly cleverly turned on its head the charge of Jewish internationalism, naming the 'anti-Semitic 'International'' as 'more serious for it exists'. Elsewhere he pointed to the contradictions of the fascistic ideology asking 'why ... is International Fascism good, whereas everything else international is bad?'[58] Similarly, borrowing a connected anti-Jewish calumny, he characterised the spread of Nazi ideas as a 'German anti-Semitic 'conspiracy''.[59]

Whereas Board publications tended to stress the influence of Mussolini and Italian fascism, Roth emphasised the German origins of domestic fascism and antisemitism and described such organisations as having 'slavishly taken over Hitler's persecutory conceptions down to the last detail'.[60] Roth referred to Mosley's 'pilgrimage to Munich' to meet with Nazi leaders in January 1932 rather than his earlier visit with Mussolini in Rome. It was, he claimed, from the Germans and not the Italian fascists that Mosley acquired his 'new potion' of antisemitism. He argued

> [i]t has been said more than once (but is none the less true for that) that anti-Semitism is un-English. Today, it is possible to go farther, and to state unequivocally that it is Made in Germany.[61]

His belief in the compatibility of Italian and Jewish culture and the long and ancient history of their good relations in the country and his connection of the Italian Renaissance with civilised modernity rendered him reluctant to acknowledge Italian antisemitism. Therefore, according to Roth, Nazism and its obsession with the 'Jewish problem' was merely an ill thought out, feminised corruption of Mussolini's logical, coherent, constructive and relatively tolerant brand of fascism.[62] Italy was, in Roth's estimations admitted into the New World along with British Jewry. He was later to reassess Italy's record, resigning his membership of the *Accademia*

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[57] The Board of Deputies, *Do You Know These Facts*.
[58] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, p. 149.
[59] Ibid, p. 150.
[60] Roth, 'Italian and German Fascism: A Contrast', *Opinion*, (May 1933).
[61] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 148-149 and 151.
[62] Roth's use of gendered language is of interest here, but this issue cannot be dealt with in this thesis. Roth, 'Italian and German Fascism', pp. 14-15.

Colombaria of Florence and the *R. Deputazione Di Storia Patri* of Venice in October
1938 in protest against the country's maltreatment of the Jews. Still, however, he
considered Italian atrocities to be German initiatives. In the immediate post-war
period he deemphasised Italian involvement, claiming that the 'devastation would
have been greater by far but for ... the general friendliness and sympathy of the
Italian people at large'.[63]

When war broke out the threat of antisemitism was quite rightly understood,
certainly by Roth, more keenly in a physical sense. Although often left unspoken, the
possibility of German occupation and the terrible consequences for the British-Jewish
community formed an ominous backdrop to defence work during the early years of
the war. Even as the threat of invasion passed, however, Roth wrote in a letter to the
Board's Press Officer the tireless Sidney Salomon,

> while one doesn't want to be pessimistic, we ought to get everything
> possible in circulation *now*, for fear lest it may become difficult later on (I
> don't want to elaborate the point).[64]

Elsewhere, he similarly stated, 'it is wise to get anything that you want published
while the paper-supply, and the moral atmosphere still permit it'.[65] Roth's comments
revealed an uncharacteristic lack of confidence in the English character, which he
usually believed was essentially tolerant. He was, it seems, not always so certain that
it 'could not happen here'.

His moments of insecurity were also revealed by his repeated efforts to stem
the reappearance of the ritual murder libel. In 1934 he raised the idea of republishing
the refuting report by Cardinal Ganganelli (later Pope Clement XIV) to the Board.
Guedalla's response was supportive but reticent, prompting Roth to argue:

> Your experts think that we are quite safe from an outburst of this sort in
> England. Personally, I am not quite 100% certain ... Quite apart from this,
> what of the potentialities on the Continent? When Nazism spreads to
> Roman Catholic Poland, is it not almost certain that there will be a Blood
> Accusation on a large scale?[66]

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[63] Letter Cecil Roth to the *Accademia Colombaria* of Florence and the *R. Deputazione Di Storia Patri*
of Venice, 7 October 1938, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/1/2, SUA; Cecil Roth, 'The Tragic Lot of Italian
Jewry', *South African Jewish Times*, (23 November 1945), Joseph Roth Private Collection; Cecil Roth,
'Italy's Jews', headed Jewish Hospitality Committee for British and Allied Forces, CRP,
MS156/ADD3/3, SUA.
[64] Letter, Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, 22 April 1941, BoD Papers, ACC 3121/E01/78, LMA.
[65] Letter Cecil Roth to Selig Brodetsky, 17 August 1941, BoD Papers, ACC 3121/E01/78, LMA.
[66] Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 30 January 1934, Letter Neville Laski to Cecil Roth, 20 February
1934 including comments about the Ganganelli preface, Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 21
February 1934, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/164, 166 and 167, SUA.

Roth won his case, and in March 1935 represented British Jewry in a 'special' audience with the Pope Pius XI in Rome where he presented him with a copy of the completed publication.[67] The *American Hebrew* recognised the potential significance of this meeting and overenthusiastically declared, '[h]is [the Pope's] gracious acceptance of this work is tantamount to a confirmation of its contents and a condemnation of the wild anti-Semitic propaganda carried on by Julius Streicher'.[68] Pius XI issued his famous encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (With Deep Anxiety) condemning Nazi racism in 1937. A later encyclical which probably would have dealt more directly with Nazi antisemitism was unfortunately never published due to alleged Vatican reticence and then Pius XI's death in 1939. He was succeeded by Pope Pius XII whose inaction and silence during the Second World War has since become the subject of much debate.[69]

Significantly, copies of Roth's Ganganelli text were also strategically presented closer to home. The Archbishop of Canterbury, for example, received one. In return, although not personally, the Archbishop provided the hoped for declaration of his approval that such a book 'exposing the fallacy of the monstrous accusation against the Jewish people' should have been published.[70] In 1934, Roth's crusade against the ritual murder allegation had also looked to the domestic setting and had taken him on a JHSE visit to Lincoln. Here the delegation examined the refutation that accompanied the shrine to Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, the supposed child victim of Jewish ritual murder in 1255.[71] Roth pointed to the continued presence of antisemitic myth in the lecture he gave on the occasion. Of the well in 'Jews' Court' that was held to be that in which the body of Hugh of Lincoln was discarded he explained,

> [i]n fact, the well dates back for less than a generation, having been provided by a former owner with the express intention of satisfying the

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[67] Letter Cecil Roth to his mother, 29 March 1935, Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski 29 March 1935, Joseph Roth Private Collection; Joseph Roth, *From My Uncle's Treasure Trove*, (London: Cecil Roth Trust, 2001).

[68] Letter Cecil Roth to Lord Bearsted, 14 March 1935, CRP, MS156/ADD/1/2, SUA; 'Dr. Cecil Roth, Noted Historian and *American Hebrew* correspondent, Received by Pope', *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, (April 1935), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[69] Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930 to 1965*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 2-6 and 41-66.

[70] Letter Alan C. Don, Chaplain, on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury to [Roth], 23 January 1935, Joseph Roth Private Collection.

[71] 'Lincoln and Pre-Expulsion Jewry, Jewish Historical Society Visit, The Blood Libel Officially Denounced', *Jewish Chronicle*, (29 June 1934), p. 25.

curiosity of visitors, who insisted on being shown the spot associated with the tragedy. It is thus that folklore is made![72]

Roth's focus on the refutation of medieval ritual murder allegations revealed his understanding of the Nazi and fascist antisemitic threat as 'an anachronistic relic of medieval barbarism'.[73] Roth described Nazism as 'a relapse into medievalism' and claimed that the medieval record of the continent proved that even after a 'century and a half of Emancipation' old habits die hard.[74] In 1935, he directly compared Nazi atrocities to medieval practices. He observed

> [t]he Italian Ghetto is nothing more than a memory; but, by an amazing retrogression, a new ghetto is now coming into being, before our eyes in Germany.

Although, he continued, it was 'at present only intellectual and social', he believed that the resurrection of the grizzly institution of the middle ages was 'more than possible: it is probable'.[75]

Patricia Skinner has identified the tendency in Jewish scholarship and more widely to understand modern examples of antisemitism, including modern examples of the blood libel, nineteenth-century Russian pogroms and Nazi atrocities, as inspired by medieval practices.[76] This 'uncritical use of 'medieval' as a description of modern events', she argues, not only interferes with the perception of the events themselves but also with the understanding of the medieval period.[77] Behind the equation of 'medieval' with barbarism lies a polar understanding of the modern, as that which abhors the cruel excesses of the earlier period. Nazi atrocities and other violent outbreaks against the Jews are therefore understood, by definition, as aberrations and throwbacks to another era. The 1934 trip to Lincoln underlined this distinction. The public condemnation of the libel from all quarters acknowledged, as one commentator put it,

> the birth of a saner and happier age. It is [the Lincoln gesture] a warning to Continental dabblers in medieval mire that, whatever they do,

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[72] Cecil Roth, 'Medieval Lincoln Jewry and its Synagogue', in Roth, *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, (first read as a paper at Lincoln in 1934 and published as a brochure by the JHSE in 1934), pp. 52-62, here p. 60; Tony Kushner, 'Heritage and Ethnicity: An Introduction', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, pp. 1-28, here pp. 15-16.
[73] Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 89.
[74] Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', pp. 1-12.
[75] Cecil Roth, 'The New Ghetto', *Fortnightly Review*, (November 1935), pp. 221-228.
[76] Patricia Skinner, 'Confronting the 'Medieval' in Medieval History: The Jewish Example', *Past and Present*, no. 181, (November 2003), pp. 219-247, here pp. 231-232.
[77] Ibid., p. 246.

Englishmen, at any rate, have broken with the Middle Ages, and do not intend to undo 700 years of moral and intellectual progress.[78]

Roth's challenge to the lachrymose conception of Jewish history, as we saw in the previous chapter, did not deny this polarisation. Jewish suffering was simply not special as all were victims of barbarism in these dark times.[79] For Roth, however, the device of 'medievalising' modern antisemitism served specific purposes. For Kushner, Roth clearly wrote out of 'the constant fear of anti-Semitism'. Roth, however, feared even more for the state of Jewish morale.[80] Medievalising the modern threat sought to rally the Jewish spirit through the reiteration of Jewish continuity and survival despite persecution. For Roth, fascism was a modern religion and as a religion it was 'only to be expected that numerous crimes are committed in its name'. It was merely a modern take on the familiar and eventually unsuccessful persecutory ideologies, theologies and mythologies of the past, of which the tale of Little St. Hugh was an example. History could show, therefore, that fascism, like the idolatrous religions of antiquity and the excesses of the medieval church, was something that could be successfully fought.[81] The second purpose was to challenge the nature of Jewish internal progression into modernity. The emancipation caused previously shackled Jews to concentrate single-mindedly upon making contributions to the outside world. Roth believed this effort had resulted in the neglect of Jewish collective spiritual and cultural strength.[82] Modern anti-Jewish measures, therefore, no matter how supposedly similar to medieval precedents, outweighed in severity any sufferings of the middle ages by virtue of the corresponding modern, and therefore weakened, state of Jewry. It is difficult to escape the fact, however, that Roth himself was one of the most avid proponents of the notion of outward-looking Jewish contributions as evidence of the Jewish movement into modernity, as we shall see in the next section. His normalising approach to Jewish history, as seen in the first chapter, also arguably neglected internal chronologies and developments.[83]

Roth's view of the nature of the modern antisemitic threat and the position of Jews in the modern world had a great bearing on how he believed the current

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[78] Kushner, 'Heritage and Ethnicity', p. 16; 'Lincoln and Pre-Expulsion Jewry', p. 25.
[79] Cecil Roth, 'The Most Persecuted People?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XX, no. 2, (July-September 1932), pp. 136-147.
[80] Kushner, 'Heritage and Ethnicity', p. 16.
[81] Roth, 'Italian and German Fascism', p. 14; Roth, 'A Communication', p. 246.
[82] Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', pp. 1-12.
[83] Skinner, 'Confronting the 'Medieval' in Medieval History', p. 231.

situation facing the Jews should be solved. Richard Bolchover identifies two different yet contrarily coexistent strategies of British-Jewish response to the Holocaust: the optimistic 'politics of hope' and the pessimistic 'politics of fear'. These, he argues, were based on different understandings of the nature of British-Jewish emancipation. The first saw emancipation as evidence of the progress of mankind and the waning of antisemitism in modern society. Antisemitism could therefore be understood as caused by a lack of education or morals. In response the publication of educative material for non-Jews was advocated to cure them of their ignorance. The second understood the civic equality of Jews in Britain to be based upon an 'emancipation contract' in which the Jewish side of the bargain was the sacrifice of any claim to national autonomy.[84] Those married to this understanding tended to blame the Jews themselves for antisemitism and therefore hoped to solve the 'Jewish Problem' by altering Jewish behaviour. Both of these strategies were often present simultaneously and often within the same individual as can be seen in the example of Roth but also in that of publicist Victor Gollancz, the Board of Deputies' Neville Laski and historian Lewis Namier. Bolchover classified all these individuals as 'independent non-conformists' in their response to German anti-Jewish policy.[85]

The presence of different voices within Jewish defence strategy was made very obvious in *The Jewish Problem*. In 1938, *The Jewish Problem*, apparently by Louis Golding, was published as a Penguin special edition. Evidence suggests, however, that this piece of anti-defamatory writing was actually penned by Cecil Roth. It is even more likely that it was a collaborative effort with the progressive Anglican theologian and historian, James Parkes. Golding, acknowledged by Roth for adding the 'finishing touches' was apparently credited with authorship in order to increase the potential readership of the book.[86] The result is a diverse text which

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[84] Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, pp. 82-83.
[85] Ibid., pp. 42-44 and 149-150.
[86] In Cecil Roth's own copy of the book there is an inscription in his hand that reads: '[t]his was in fact written for the most part by me, L. G. [Louis Golding] adding only the finishing touches. It was published at a period when a book of this sort was tragically necessary, and his name obviously had a greater popular appeal than mine. But the actual authorship remained a secret.' Irene Roth's biography confirms this, although her source of information was her husband. Correspondence exists between Cecil Roth and Neville Laski that concerns a proposed anti-defamatory text, Laski writes: 'You will I am sure be the first to appreciate that if a book of this kind *whether with your name or another's* is to be published, it is essential for the good of the Jewish community that it should be of the highest possible quality', (my emphasis). Oskar Rabinowicz includes *The Jewish Problem*, in his bibliography of Roth, in square brackets. He wrote; '[w]hile thanks are expressed to C.R. [Cecil Roth] (and to Dr. James Parkes) in the book for their assistance, basically the volume was prepared by CR [Cecil Roth] and published under the name of Louis Golding in order to constitute more effective propaganda'. The

includes echoes of many voices from the world of Jewish defence. For example, the first chapter of *The Jewish Problem* discussed the causes of antisemitism very specifically. It confidently asserted (with hints of Parkes) that

> [t]he Jewish Problem is in essence a Gentile Problem ... and will remain so till the Gentiles themselves have solved it. There is no contribution the Jews themselves can make towards a solution which is not sooner or later pronounced an aggravation.

The point was illustrated by the tale of Paddy the dog and his distaste for Scotch terriers. Nobody would place the blame for Paddy's hatred at the feet of the Scotch terriers even if the terriers Paddy met were not all equally innocuous – there would be no 'Scotch Terrier Problem'. The problem is Paddy's alone.[87] Later in the book, however, the authors called for British Jews to decrease their visibility.

> [The Jews] are an estimable section of society; they know it; they can hardly help knowing it; but there is no reason why some of them should so loudly insist upon it. ... If the 350,000 Jews in this country gave the appearance of being 175,000 instead of 3,000,000, no one could be the worse.[88]

Further, British Jews were encouraged to lead the way in an economic redistribution to address the resented 'crowding' of Jews in certain professions. It was suggested, not without a hint of Volkish romanticism, that 'English Jews might well lead the whole country in a return to the soil'.[89]

The Board of Deputies controversially concentrated on attempting to alter the behaviour of the Jews to decrease visibility. They were also reluctant to get involved in 'party politics' fearing that would only fuel the antisemitic fire.[90] In opposition, the more radical groups such as The Jewish Labour Council, the Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism and the particularly controversial Jewish People's Council Against Fascism favoured a more active response to domestic fascism and antisemitism. They believed the Board of Deputies to be

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inclusion of Parkes's name alongside Roth's in the acknowledgements and points of argument and style in places throughout the book, suggest Parkes also wrote some of the sections. Roth's copy of [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, Joseph Roth's Private Collection; Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), p. 8; Letter Neville Laski to Cecil Roth, 5 February 1934, CRP, MS156, AJ 151/1/A/2/165, SUA; Oskar K. Rabinowicz, 'A Bibliography of the Writings of Cecil Roth', in John M. Shaftesley (ed.), *Remember the Days: Essays in Honour of Cecil Roth*, (London: JHSE, 1966), pp.351-387, here p. 367, number 233.
[87] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 11-12.
[88] Ibid., p. 204.
[89] Ibid., p. 205.
[90] Smith, 'But What Did They Do?', p. 53; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, p. 108; Newman, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews*, p. 25.

'obsolete' and unrepresentative.[91] In the response to Nazi anti-Jewishness, the "immigrant' outlook' found its home in The Jewish Representative Council for the Boycott of German Goods and Services. Its members spent much of the period locked in battle with the conservative elements of the British-Jewish elite.[92]

By 1936 there was growing anxiety in the Board over increased domestic fascist activity. Fears over the perception of intensifying anti-fascist violence and the direct action, encouraged by more radical groups, added to the discomfiture. In response to this vexation and concern the Board again reorganised the Press and Information Committee along with the Law and Parliamentary Committee into the Co-ordinating Committee, consisting of the Honorary Officers and six members.[93] In an attempt to regain some control over the situation, its functions were enlarged to cover the coordination of

> all activities in every field against anti-Semitic propaganda both of native and foreign manufacture, with special sub-committees to look after Publications and Meetings.[94]

The Board cooperated with Special Branch and carried out investigations into the 1930s antisemitic groups the Nordic League, the Right Club and the Pro-British Association.[95] The Board's key adversary of the 1930s was, however, Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF). The open-air campaign, overseen by the Meetings Sub-Committee, involved holding organised, non-violent counter-events alongside fascist rallies where volunteer speakers refuted antisemitic charges. The Sub-Committee claimed to have held 230 such open-air meetings in only three months,

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[91] Smith, 'But What Did They Do?', pp. 48 and 51-53.

[92] Sharon Gerwirtz, 'Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany 1933-39: The Anti-nazi Boycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. XXIV, no. 2, (April 1991), pp. 255-276, here pp. 257-258.

[93] The Co-ordinating Committee described its work as being divided into 'the defensive and the constructive.' The defensive involved the refutation of anti-Jewish allegations through publications, letters to editors and the production of *Speakers' Notes* and classes in oratory for use in the open-air campaign. The constructive was described as consisting of 'the building up of good relations with representative non-Jewish bodies and of co-operation with them'. The Committee's work was wide and varied and also included intelligence gathering and the monitoring of fascist organisations. The Co-ordinating Committee was later to become the Jewish Defence Committee with another enlargement of work in November 1938. Press and Information Committee and then Co-ordinating Committee Reports, Board of Deputies Minutes 1936, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A1/028, LMA; Jewish Defence Committee Report, Board of Deputies Minutes 1938, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/030, LMA; Salomon, 'The Deputies', p. 15; The Board of Deputies, *The Co-Ordinating Committee*; Neil Barrett, 'The Threat of the BUF in Manchester', in Kushner and Valman *Remembering Cable Street*, pp. 56-73, here pp. 57 and 61.

[94] Salomon, 'The Deputies', p. 15.

[95] Barrett, 'The Threat of the BUF', pp. 57 and 61.

from 1 January to 1 March 1938.[96] In addition the Central Lecture Committee

organised 82 talks on Jewish subjects at various, indoor venues around the country,

including Roth's one contribution at Lewisham Rotary Club in February 1935.[97]

Roth was far more involved with the publications side of the Board's work.

The Publications Sub-Committee, of which Roth was an apparently often reluctant

and always critical member from the late 1930s, oversaw the production and

distribution of printed anti-defamation material.[98] In 1941, perhaps revealing wider

discontent in the Sub-committee, Roth wrote an angry letter to Laski on the

understanding that it would not be wasted if it 'helps you to realise why the average

attendance at the meetings of the Publications Committee is so ludicrously small'.[99]

In 1943, he described the Publications Sub-Committee as 'singularly ineffective' and

a 'mere façade', and commented that the committee had been reduced to mere

editorial functions by the policy of the Board.[100] He regarded committee meetings a

waste of time, as 'such work could be done far more conveniently in [his] own study',

and on several occasions, attempted to resign.[101] Surprisingly, one reaction to Roth's

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[96] The Board of Deputies, *The Co-Ordinating Committee*.

[97] Central Jewish Lecture Committee Fixture List, Board of Deputies Minutes, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/028, LMA; The Board of Deputies, *The Co-Ordinating Committee*.

[98] Between December 1936 and March 1940, through this sub-committee the Defence Committee had distributed 2 million leaflets and pamphlets, ranging from those chronicling Jewish and British-Jewish contributions, those directly refuting antisemitic claims, those describing the situation of German Jews and others exposing various scandals of the BUF. The Publications Sub-Committee also oversaw the production of Press Officer Sidney Salomon's *The Jews of Britain*, and produced a selection of *Speakers' Notes*, throughout 1937 and 1938, covering tips and facts for the refutation of various current calumnies against the community as well as some contribution fact sheets for use in open-air debate. It seems that powers for the Sub-Committee to 'co-opt members from outside the Board, men chosen for their knowledge of the situation, for their ability to cope with it', were only requested in November 1938. It might be assumed that it was then that Roth took up membership. He was listed in the minutes as a permanent member in December 1942, and had certainly been so in the previous couple of years at least. The Publications Sub-Committee was wound down in October 1943, the main affair being disbanded and replaced with a caucus committee of three members, including the president Victor Gollancz. The Board of Deputies, *The Co-Ordinating Committee*; Sidney Salomon, *The Jews of Britain*, (London: Woburn Press, 1938); The Board of Deputies, *Speakers' Notes*; Letter Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, c.12 September 1941 and Letter Sidney Salomon to Cecil Roth, 15 September 1941, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA; Report of the Defence Committee, November 1938, Board Minutes 1938, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/30; Report of the Defence Committee, December 1942, Board Minutes 1942-1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/032, LMA; Report of the Defence Committee, October 1943, Board of Deputies Minutes 1942-1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/A/032, LMA; see correspondence between Cecil Roth and Sidney Salomon, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.

[99] Letter Cecil Roth to Selig Brodetsky, 17 August 1941, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.

[100] Letter Cecil Roth to Gordon Liverman, 13 January 1943, 31 January 1943, and Letter Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, 30 May 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.

[101] Letter Sidney Salomon to Cecil Roth 15 September 1941 and Letter Cecil Roth to Gordon Liverman 31 January 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.

relentless criticism of both the Board and the Publications Committee was to suggest him as Chairman, but this never came to fruition.[102]

Despite his reluctance, Roth's role in the Committee, probably self-cast, was mainly advisory. As far as can be ascertained few of the Sub-Committees' publications came from the hand of Roth. He persisted, however, to make suggestions for possible publications and their nature and authors, as well as passing judgement on those prepared.[103] A revealing exchange between Roth and Philip Guedalla held in 1933 was suggestive of the fractious relationship Roth enjoyed with the Committee. In reply to Guedalla's letter rejecting Roth's proposal for a 'disquition on the blessings of immigration', Roth disclosed that the idea had not been his but was Leonard Stein's 'who seems to have thought it a most convenient way of keeping me out of mischief when I offered my services'.[104]

At the root of Roth's disaffection with the Publication Sub-Committee was a disagreement over how best to approach defensive propaganda. Roth's criticism rested on two points: the desirability of not undoing the good work of defensive pieces by marking them out as such and the central importance of maintaining historical and factual integrity. Roth expressed both these concerns to Gordon Liverman. He wrote

> I would suggest this as a criterion of propaganda. Does it look like propaganda? And does it leave a good taste in the mouth? Your publications sometimes fail by the second standard, but they almost invariably do by the first.[105]

According to Roth the committee's publications failed on the first point as they 'proclaimed to the world that they were Jewish propaganda'.[106] Roth, in contrast, was particularly keen to obscure the Jewish interest and provenance of defensive literature.

For example, Roth criticised Salomon's 'Anglo-Jewry in Battle and Blitz'. He felt it had a 'vulgar title', which made it look as though there was 'something to gloss

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[102] Gordon Liverman argued that '[Roth's] standing generally is such that I feel that any observations or criticisms from him are worthy of attention'. Letter Gordon Liverman to Sidney Salomon, nd. (January 1943), BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.

[103] See especially the correspondence between Cecil Roth and Sidney Salomon, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/E01/78, LMA.

[104] Letter Cecil Roth to Leonard Stein, 19 September 1933, Letter Guedalla to Roth, 26 September 1933 and Letter Cecil Roth to Philip Guedalla, 27 September 1933, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/91 and 92, SUA.

[105] Letter Cecil Roth to Gordon Liverman, 13 January 1943, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.

[106] Letter Cecil Roth to Gordon Liverman, 31 January 1943, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.

over and excuse', and was concerned that unless it 'only incidentally reach[ed] Gentile eyes' it would be too obvious as propaganda and therefore have the opposite effect.[107] Similarly, perhaps demonstrating awareness of the widespread universalist understanding of Nazi persecution, Roth advised Laski that the Nazi forced movement of peoples in Eastern Europe 'should be combated hard, in books and pamphlets and articles – preferably not by Jews, and without mentioning the word *Jew*'.[108] Further, when he was asked to comment on a pamphlet entitled 'Anti-Semitism and Treachery' by Israel Cohen, Roth suggested that

> [i]f the author's name [could] be omitted, it [would] greatly add to the effectiveness ... a name quite so committal would stampt (sic) the thing at once as propaganda – which of course it is.[109]

He suggested pseudonymity, adding that a name should be put to the piece but 'if possible not a Jewy one, and certainly not an official one'. Roth wanted to use Louis Golding's name, which adds credence to the suggestion that *The Jewish Problem* was accredited to Golding for propagandistic motivations.[110]

For Roth the Board's publications also failed to measure up to historical standards and therefore did leave a 'bad taste' in the mouth. In his early historiographical expositions, Roth laid out a positively anti-apologetic stance in Jewish history through an appeal to objectivity, which he constantly contradicted, even where he stressed its value. He condemned the practice of making 'all Jews saintly' and argued that '[t]o lay [Jewish imperfections] bare will do no harm to the Jew today'. He explicitly claimed that historians should not worry about the non-Jewish reaction as there was nothing to be ashamed of. A realistic approach to Jewish history would, he believed, hearten the Jewish reader even more as he could now identify with the humanity of the protagonists and marvel at the greatness of their ancestors all the more. The truth, he argued, was the best antidote to antisemitism. The suppression of the past 'play[s] into the hands of the anti-Semite, who may one day make capital out of the innocent humanity we have chosen to ignore'. In any case, to Roth, the historian had no right to suppress what he found, as 'by repression we are faithless to the most sacred charge of history, which is the pursuit of truth'.[111]

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[107] Group of correspondence between Cecil Roth, Sidney Salomon, Gordon Liverman and Neville Laski, 16 May 1943 to 15 July 1943, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.
[108] Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 3 November 1939, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/6/7, LMA.
[109] Letter Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, nd. (September 1941), BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.
[110] Letter Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, nd. (November 1941), BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.
[111] Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', p. 423.

With the eye of the historian, he believed 'there should be some reason for its [a defensive pamphlet's] publication, other than the apologetic one'.[112] At the heart of many of the disagreements between Roth and the Publications Committee and Roth's often bitter and venomous part in them was his resentment of criticism by non-historical or less historically minded individuals. For example, when one pamphlet Roth did prepare for the Board came in for some heavy criticism, Roth smugly defended it. He claimed he had 'deliberately attempted the greatest degree of simplification, which [was], perhaps, a little alien to [his] style'.[113] He sarcastically criticised 'the joint contribution of the great minds of the official Anglo-Jewish community' and cuttingly suggested he was only interested in the advice of 'those who are qualified to give it'.[114] Roth, it seemed, became increasingly irritated with what he perceived as the lack of deference his work and advice received by the Board, perhaps explaining why he produced so few articles for them.[115]

Despite recent opinion and, it must be said, much evidence from Roth's work to the contrary, the combination of anti-defamation and historical research was not one with which Roth was entirely comfortable. Writing in the immediate post-war period he commented on the 'unhealthy' trend that saw the success of the 'defensive' or 'anti-defamation' genus of Jewish literature. He made a clear distinction between his own defensive work and his 'purely historical works'.[116] Nonetheless, Roth refused to abandon the historical technique even in the former. In early 1941, the Board was processing Roth's pamphlet on Jewish soldiers, which was later published as *The Jews in Defence of Britain*. Roth's professional pride, felt all the more now that he was a reader at Oxford, was revealed when he opined that the changes he was being asked to make to the transcript reflected on his 'historical competence'.[117]

As well as causing Roth tension by compromising his sense of professionalism, defensive work was also often incompatible with his emphasis of

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[112] Group of correspondence between Cecil Roth, Sidney Salomon, Gordon Liverman and Neville Laski, 16 May 1943 to 15 July 1943, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.
[113] Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 30 January 1934, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/1/164, SUA.
[114] Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 21 February 1934, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/167, SUA.
[115] A less vehement but nonetheless frosty exchange with Neville Laski in 1939 revealed Roth asking whether a decision had been reached on his latest suggestion to the Board, but making clear his independence and influence elsewhere, asked to hear even if the answer was negative as he had 'certain opportunities which do not run through the medium of Woburn House'. Letter Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 3 November 1939, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/6/7, LMA.
[116] Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age'.
[117] Group of Letters between Cecil Roth, Sidney Salomon and Selig Brodetsky, between 18 July and the 2 September 1941, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA.

Jewish self-respect and education. According to Roth, nineteenth-century apologetics rested on the idea that Judaism was equally as good as other religions. For the sake of the younger generation, however, the community should, he argued, 'proclaim Judaism's superiority, not its lack of inferiority'.[118] For Roth, the defensive claim, that he himself so often put forward, that Jews had contributed so much to the formation of western civilisation that Judaism was now the common heritage of mankind, compromised the Jewish 'Will to Survive'.[119]

The encouragement of Jewish learning and culture was, for Roth, compatible with Jewish self-defence as the truth could combat antisemitic calumny. Therefore, Roth could, for example, suggest the establishment of a Jewish communal library in South Africa both to 'bring up an educated generation' as well as to fuel anti-defamation work. He argued 'information, after all, is the best form of communal defence'.[120] At the same time, however, defensive work could directly undermine Jewish education. Roth tackled the sensitive issue of Jewish crime, for example, defensively on occasion by writing out 'Jews who attracted attention for the wrong reasons', such as the poor and criminal classes, from the British-Jewish historical record.[121] The authors of *The Jewish Problem* repeated a common apologia reminding the reader that Jews 'being as human as the Maori's and the Bolivans, must be permitted their share of criminals, as they have their share of diabetics and asthmatics'.[122] Elsewhere, however, Roth argued that such an approach was damaging to the Jewish spirit.

> We are trying to persuade others, and in the process have persuaded ourselves, that we have the right to the same proportion of malefactors in any branch of crime as our neighbours. In the process of argument, we overlook the fact that we are a religious community, heirs to the world's noblest religious tradition, and that if Judaism had its proper validity the degree of criminality among us would be nothing at all.[123]

Therefore, the priority was not to argue against Jewish inferiority or even to assert Jewish equality or notably normality, but was to establish Jewish superiority and ensure it through education.

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[118] Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', p. 4.
[119] Ibid., p. 6.
[120] Roth, 'Critique of South Africa', p. 4.
[121] Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 5.
[122] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, p. 80.
[123] Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', p. 3.

As seen above, Roth combined two educative strategies in the battle against antisemitism. These corresponded to the dual understanding of Jewish emancipation in Britain, identified by Bolchover, as being due to the progression of mankind or as a two-way 'contract' of behaviour. The first scheme was the education of non-Jews to remove their ignorance and therefore eradicate their antisemitism. The second strategy was to teach Jews to behave in a manner that would not encourage antisemitism. Roth singled himself out even further by his preoccupation with the education of Jews to be proud of being Jews and to understand their heritage and culture. This was important to Roth as a means not to maintain the rewards of emancipation, but to slow down and reverse the wave of assimilation which came in its wake. He hoped this would ensure British-Jewish survival if the age of emancipation were to come to an end. Communal defence, for Roth, was replacing Jewish spirituality and identity as the first priority of a Jewish education. Fathers would not 'rob [their sons] of the power of self-defence'. They were, however, according to Roth, moronically 'depriv[ing] him deliberately of the potentiality of self-respect, at the moment when he may need it most'.[124] Roth argued that instead Jewish education needed to be imbued with the Jewish ideals of justice and truth, mercy and righteousness in order to engage the younger generation and ensure Jewish survival. Their continuation would not be merely to the Jewish advantage, but would be for the good of mankind.[125]

The Jewish Problem concluded by confronting Jewish continued survival. The authors warned that this is a matter for the Jews themselves to decide rather than the violent antisemites of the world, as they can choose who to marry and how to bring up their children. They turned then to what Roth described as the more important question, the answer to which, they believed, summed up the original intention of the whole book – '*should* Jewry survive?' This author, probably Roth, answered 'yes' and reminded his Jewish readers of their Jewish heritage and what it has and can still offer to the world, of their importance in preventing the increasing monotony and monochromic nature of the globe and their duty to spite those who wished they would not. In a rousing crescendo, he identified the existence of a Jewish core. This core, he explained,

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[124] Roth, 'A Communication', p. 246.
[125] Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', p. 6.

is irrefrangible, like diamond. Nothing can break it ... It is a radioactive core, which gives off countless particles of energy yet remains unexhausted and inexhaustible.

The last lines of the book simply state '[t]he world needs us. We cannot fail each other. We will go on'.[126]

According to Roth, fighting fascism was not the only item on the agenda in the 1930s and 1940s. Roth felt that 'kindness' towards the Jews, as was experienced in Germany in the age of emancipation and was the norm in the Anglo-Saxon countries, fed an assimilationist drive that was potentially even more critical to the Jewish condition than any inhumanity.[127] It was, he believed because of the inroads of assimilation in the nineteenth century that Jews were so weakened in the twentieth and vulnerable to attack.

> [T]he outside world, having failed to break the spirit of the Jew by the frontal attack ... adopted Fifth Column methods. ... Many of the most able spirits in Jewry were won from their allegiance and went over to the enemy; and when the frontal attack was resumed, Jewry was an amorphous, demoralized mass and an easy prey.[128]

He warned, in 1939, that the Jews of Britain and America must learn from the tragic example of German Jewry, and 'take precautions' against repeating their mistakes. He argued 'we cannot insure ourselves against defeat, but we can against an utter spiritual debacle'.[129]

Roth's solution to the Gentile problem in the 1930s and early 1940s was multi-faceted. It combined the education of non-Jews, the education of Jews to behave in a 'less antagonistic' manner, but moreover required the education of Jews to remember and have faith in their Jewish identity in order to prepare them spiritually for possible onslaught and therefore safeguard collective Jewish survival. It is for this reason that his apologia and his defence writings are so infused with efforts at the construction and modification of Jewish, British-Jewish and British identity. This positive and creative element to Jewish defence is what gives Roth's work in this area its distinctive character. A revealing case study in the tension between Roth's search for self-defence and self-respect is his approach to the modern

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[126] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 206-213.
[127] Ibid., p. 203.
[128] Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', pp. 11-12.
[129] Roth, 'A Communication', p. 246.

significance of the term 'race' in both the defence of the community and the insulating of ethnicity. The next section will explore this issue.

iii. 'Scientific Monstrosity' or 'Occasionally Convenient': Cecil Roth and the Utility of the Category of Race[130]

Nowhere was Jewish communal defence more entwined with identity discourses than in its intellectual response to racial antisemitism. For Roth the toxic influence of Nazi ideology had ensured that a biological rather than theological basis of antisemitism was being emphasised by enemies of the Jews.[131] Roth professed to have no interest in participating in 'any of the current controversies on 'race' and 'blood', nationality and religion'.[132] Nevertheless his work reveals his heavy engagement with these debates. In refuting 'present day racialism' racial identities were not necessarily abandoned and were often instead reinforced. Seemingly Roth and other egalitarians were unable to escape the intoxication of the ever-present racial discourses rampant in non-Jewish and Jewish, scientific and lay communities at home and abroad during this period. In the process, however, new positive ideas of race and ethnicity were conjured. At the same time the racial identities of so-called 'host' nations were undermined and reconstructed by 'reversing the European gaze' that rested upon notions of racial purity and continuity. In this way Roth, like Jewish race scientists, was able 'to mount a sustained campaign of self-defense, self-assertion, and ethnic identity building'.[133]

Roth earned his apologetic reputation mainly through his heavy utilisation of the 'contributions' genre. Here so-called Jewish notables, inventions and discoveries were listed, for example in his *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation, The Sassoon Dynasty,* chapters of *The Jewish Problem,* and 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life'.[134] These pieces, like much Jewish apologia worked through a dual flattery in terms of stressing both the tolerant nature of the host society and the achievements of

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[130] Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation,* (Oxford: MacMillan Press, 1938), p. viii.
[131] Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', p. 1; Letter Cecil Roth to Philip Guedalla, 1 November 1933, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/95, SUA; see also Letter Philip Guedalla to Cecil Roth, 3 November 1933 and Letter Cecil Roth to Philip Guedalla, 8 November 1933, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/97 and 98, SUA.
[132] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation,* p. viii.
[133] John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-De-Siècle Europe,* (New Haven, USA and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 3.
[134] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation;* Cecil Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty,* (London: Robert Hale, 1941); [Golding], *The Jewish Problem;* Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', pp. 1-21.

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the Jewish people. They allowed Roth and other Jewish intellectuals before and after him to 'present the case for Judaism'.[135]

Roth explicitly positions *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation* as a direct refutation of Nazi racial propaganda, calling it his reply to Hitler, and sarcastically dedicated *The Sassoon Dynasty* to Hitler himself.[136] In the latter, Roth took the opportunity to state in an open letter to the *Fuhrer* his 'profound execration and abhorrence, not merely as a Jew and an Englishman but as a human being, of you, your ideals, your ideas, your methods and all that you stand for'.[137] He wrote in strong enough terms for one reviewer to comment, with apparent incredulity, that 'Dr. Roth has a strong dislike of the Nazi tribe'.[138]

The 'contributions' format allowed Roth to counter the Nazi image of the Jewish parasite by setting out how Jews have acted as a positive, generous and integrating force within their adoptive nations throughout history. Roth hoped to demonstrate the utility and the good citizenship of the Jews. But he also wanted to answer the 'Nordic myth' of the unsurpassed originality and genius of the 'Aryan' peoples and the associated denial of Jewish creativity and aesthetic validity.[139] The Nazi calumny of Jewish cultural contamination, and Roth's counter-assertion of Jewish contribution, could be understood to rely upon the same assumption. This was that hereditary determinants exist and influence or dictate the abilities and qualities of individuals. Roth did not expose 'race' as an unreal construction. Instead he utilised the same vocabulary and to some extent methodology in his assessment of the Jewish genius. Repeatedly, he selectively claimed notable persons who had converted to Christianity or even whose parents were baptised as evidence of Jewish contribution and achievement.[140] Similarly, his 1934 article, 'If England had an Aryan Test' - a well-meaning piece that intended to lambaste the Nazi notion of a pure and master

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[135] Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, p. viii.
[136] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. viii; Cecil Roth, 'A Wrong Approach to Jewish Writers?: Cecil Roth Replies to Joseph Leftwich', *South African Jewish Times*, (8 February 1950), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*.
[137] Dedication in Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*.
[138] Review of Cecil Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*, *Cape Argus*, (2 August 1941), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/2, SUA.
[139] Julian S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon, *We Europeans: A Survey of 'Racial' Problems*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 94; Sander Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence*, (Lincoln, USA and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 43-45.
[140] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*.

race - reaffirmed the basis of the racial principle and the original reality of race by speaking of the 'admixture of alien blood' within the English nobility.[141]

In a 1941 review of *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, Oscar Janowsky argued

> If Luis de Santangel's contribution is Jewish, why not Torquemada's? If we are to glory in the achievements of Benjamin Disraeli, we must likewise pride ourselves or accept blame for, the work of Karl Marx.[142]

Joseph Leftwich, in the intensified post-Holocaust rejection of racial criteria in defining 'Jewishness', also challenged Roth's approach to an apparent racial Jewish identity. He asked of the converts and the secular that were included in Roth's *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, 'must we drag [them] in against [their] will? Hitler would have treated [them] as ... Jew[s]. But must we?'[143] Roth, however, responded that he believed the anti-Jewish assault would be most effectively challenged within its own racial paradigm.[144] For Roth, the works of any 'persons of traceable Jewish ancestry, whatever their religious affiliation or sympathies', came within his purview. If fascist propagandists could claim the infamous and unpleasant of the converts, the secularised and those of mixed heritage as evidence of the Jewish scourge, he could claim the great amongst their numbers as proof of the Jewish genius.[145] Therefore Roth claimed figures such as Baruch Spinoza, Heinrich Heine, Benjamin Disraeli and even Karl Marx, though in a qualified way, as examples of Jewish creativity and influence.[146] In doing this Roth was engaging in a debate about the Jewishness of such notables that continues to this day, though the differences in his approach to the various figures were indicative of the complexities of his position on race and Jewish identity, as shall be seen below.[147]

Roth was not the first or by any means the last to claim the achievements of such typical Jewish notables. Roth followed the British-Jewish social scientist and 'the first of the Jewish race scientists', Joseph Jacobs, in his claiming of 'non-

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[141] Cecil Roth, 'If England had an Aryan Test', *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, (7 September 1934), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati; see also Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. viii.

[142] Oscar I. Janowsky, 'Apologetics for Our Time', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXIX, no. 2, (April-June 1941), pp. 224-228, here pp. 224-225.

[143] Roth, 'A Wrong Approach to Jewish Writers', p. 4; Tony Kushner, 'One of Us? Contesting Disrali's Jewishness and Englishness in the Twentieth Century', in Todd Endelman and Tony Kushner (eds.), *Disraeli's Jewishness* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), pp. 201-261.

[144] Roth, 'A Wrong Approach to Jewish Writers?'.

[145] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. x.

[146] Ibid, pp. 102, 110-111, 114, 121, 163-165, 272 and 278-281.

[147] For the claiming of Heinrich Heine as the exemplar of the Jewish genius see Gilman, *Smart Jews*, pp. 46-7.

professing Jews' as evidence of Jewish contributions, though he did not entirely concur with Jacobs's traditionalist view of race. Jacobs sought to move control of anthropological inquiry into Jews away from non-Jewish hands. John Efron describes him as having 'created Jewish racial science'. His *Jewish Contributions to Civilization*, published posthumously in 1919 and based on pre-1914 work, almost certainly acted as an inspiration for Roth's 1938 volume of an almost identical title, particularly as the second and unfilled instalment of Jacobs's incomplete trilogy, of which the 1919 volume was the first, was to deal with individual Jewish contributions. Jacobs also included figures such as Disraeli and Heine in the higher echelons of his 'ranks of genius', which formed part of his attempt to chronicle 'hereditary genius' and specifically the superior intelligence of the Jews due to the artificial natural selection of persecution.[148]

Roth tended to position his work during much of the 1930s and early 1940s as an answer to Nazism. He understood the racist, antisemitic threat to have come out of Germany and not to be a natural product of British society and politics. Britain was, however, not free of its own racialised discourse regarding the Jews and Roth stood within the established British-Jewish egalitarian response to this debate. The British-Jewish establishment had, as a rule, attempted to emphasise the purely religious difference of the community, relying on the notion of 'traditional English religious tolerance'.[149] Despite this, British racial discourse had exerted an influence upon Roth's, and British-Jewish scientists', understanding of racialism. Jacobs's model of 'hereditary genius', with which he set out to prove Jewish intelligence, was taken from the work of Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin and the founder of English eugenics.[150] Jacobs did not undermine the eugenic foundations of Galton's position but followed his principles in order to prove the existence of the 'Jewish genius'.[151]

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[148] Joseph Jacobs, *Jewish Contributions to Civilisation: An Estimate*, (Philadelphia, USA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1919), pp. 4-5, and 54-55; Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 57; Gilman, *Smart Jews*, pp. 69-70; Joseph Jacobs, 'The Comparative Distribution of Jewish Ability', Appendix B in *Studies in Jewish Statistics, Social, Vital and Anthropometric*, (London: D. Nutt, 1891), (a paper read before the Anthropological Institute, 10 November 1886), pp. xliii-lxix, here pp. xlv-xlvi; Jacobs, *Jewish Contributions to Civilisation*, pp. 45-46 and 301-309.

[149] In 1937, Sidney Salomon still pressed the concept of 'British citizens of the Jewish persuasion', stating that the community 'asks for no rights or privileges which its Christian fellow citizens do not possess, and the only claim it ever puts forward is that no member of the Anglo-Jewish Community shall suffer disability by reason of his religion.' Salomon, *'The Deputies'*, p. 3.

[150] Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences*, (London: MacMillan, 1869).

[151] Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, pp. 74-75.

Therefore, British-Jewish racialist thinking was informed and often driven by a thriving British tradition of race science.

Throughout Europe, the ideas of race and ethnicity grew in significance during the late-nineteenth century supported by the phenomena of 'intense nationalism, imperialism, and xenophobia.' During the interwar period, however, there was a move away from race science. This was due to its pseudo-scientific appearance in the face of the development of what was considered the more sophisticated field of population genetics and to anxieties initiated by the rise of the Nazi party.[152] The traditional, intellectual home of discussion about race science in Britain was the anthropological community and here it was a subject that remained prominent on the agenda even after 1933. The Royal Anthropological Institute included racialist thinkers and 'a formalist approach to race was still widespread' into the 1930s.[153] It was, however, the subject of much division and egalitarians within the field, who argued against racial superiority or inferiority but not necessarily the reality of race, struggled to move the institute as a whole away from racist ideas. These divisions meant that collective rebuffs of scientific racism were not possible from anthropological quarters. Therefore, egalitarians relied on individual efforts to counteract racist arguments.[154] One of these private endeavours was *We Europeans: A Survey of 'Racial' Problems*, published in 1935.[155]

We Europeans, though ostensibly authored by the eminent Julian Huxley and A. C. Haddon, was also the work of Jewish anthropologist Charles Seligman and Jewish historian of science and medicine, Charles Singer. Similarly to Roth's *The Jewish Problem*, Jewish race science, like other forms of communal defence, was thought to be more effective if its Jewish origins were fudged over or completely disguised. As with *The Jewish Problem*, the collaborative authorship of *We Europeans* led to a profusion of different voices within its pages. Nonetheless, *We*

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[152] Ibid., pp. 1 and 179.
[153] Key racist anthropologists were the anatomist and anthropologist, Arthur Keith, archaeologist and evolutionary anthropologist, G. H. L. F. Pitt-Rivers and botanist, geneticist and anthropologist Reginald Ruggles Gates. The issue of race was discussed throughout the period. In April 1934 the Race and Culture Committee was established, which published an interim report on the subject in 1936. The International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, which debated definitions of race, took place in 1934 and the annual British Academy meeting of the zoology and anthropology sections witnessed similar discussions in 1936. Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 285-289.
[154] Ibid., p. 296.
[155] Huxley and Haddon, *We Europeans*.

Europeans was an egalitarian effort and strongly condemned the use of 'race' in a political context, as it was a concept surrounded by ignorance.[156] As Elazar Barkan has argued, the corrective offered by the book was based in the main on 'verbal acrobatics'. Terms such as 'race', 'blood' and 'stock' with their political connotations were simply replaced by those considered more neutral, such as 'type', 'people' or 'ethnic group'. The word 'Aryan' similarly was exposed as a linguistic term with no basis in genetics. Its authors blamed the pseudo-science of popular race science for the gross misuse these designations had suffered.[157]

Roth's approach to the question demonstrates borrowings from *We Europeans*, strengthened by the fact that Charles Singer, one of the ghost writers, was a contemporary of Roth.[158] Like Singer and Seligman, Roth drew attention to the absurdity of the use of the terms 'race' and 'Aryan'. Their use, he argued, could be convenient, though certainly not politically. To do so was essentially a 'scientific monstrosity'. He continued

> It is one of the most regrettable features in contemporary intellectual life that an imposing pseudo-scientific structure – sometimes dominating public affairs – can be erected on the basis of a linguistic misusage.[159]

The corrective of language found in *We Europeans* to some extent disguised the fact that, as in Roth's 'contribution pieces' and 'If England Had an Aryan Test', the discussions were based on traditional understandings of ethnology. The authors all failed to deny the biological and anthropological reality of race.[160] The shortness of the Welsh and the tallness of the Scots were therefore discussed as truisms, and the country was classified as featuring people with light colouring in the east and those with dark colouring in the west.[161] Such classification extended to the Jews. They argued that '[b]iologically it is *almost* as illegitimate to speak of a 'Jewish race' as it is of an 'Aryan race'' (my emphasis), and that 'the Jews can rank neither as nation nor even as ethnic unit, but rather as a social religious group'.[162] Demonstrating the varied voices behind the text, and the split between the ambivalent Huxley and his

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[156] Ibid., p. 7; Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism*, pp. 296 and 305.
[157] Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism*, p. 307; Huxley and Haddon, *We Europeans*, pp. 18-20, 25, 107-108 and 150.
[158] Huxley and Haddon, *We Europeans*; Cecil Roth, 'The Jew as a European', being part ii) of 'The Challenge to Jewish History', pp. 22-38.
[159] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. viii.
[160] Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism*, pp. 299-300.
[161] Huxley and Haddon, *We Europeans*, p. 236.
[162] Ibid., pp. 96-97, 181-186 and 274

younger colleague, Haddon, in particular, they simultaneously described Jewish physiognomy in racial terms. They discussed the distinct 'nostrility' of the 'Jewish nose' and described a Ashkenazi/Sephardic split in the following terms.

> The chief characteristics of the Ashkenazim are round and broad face, short concave nose, and small grey eyes, with inclination to stoutness ... Sephardim tend to approach the Mediterranean type ... with oval face, nose prominent and often thin and shapely, long black hair and beard, large almond-shaped eyes, and melancholy cast of countenance.[163]

As the above quotation demonstrates, whereas Joseph Jacobs had been 'inclined to support the long-standing belief in the substantial purity of the Jewish race', at least some of the authors of *We Europeans* preferred to speak of the Jews as an admixture of types. In this understanding, the ancient Jews were believed to have been formed through a 'crossing' of peoples and later, diaspora communities had then 'crossed' with the non-Jewish inhabitants of their countries of residence.[164] Roth followed this view by arguing that conversion in both directions and 'illicit admixture' through human relations over 2000 years 'necessarily modified whatever purity of stock may originally have existed'.[165] For example, he described Disraeli as 'pronouncedly Jewish and at the same time (as was to be expected) pronouncedly Italian in appearance'.[166] By talking in terms of racial mixing, however, both Roth and *We Europeans* failed to entirely subvert the notion of an original or hypothetical pure racial type.

As Roth's *The Jewish Problem* illustrates, the loaded phrases 'Jewish racial question', 'Jewish question' and 'Jewish problem' were used interchangeably by both Jews and non-Jews in this period, as they had been at the end of the nineteenth century. Without the ancient and religious notion of 'chosenness' and the belief in the preordination of the course of Jewish history, problems such as 'the uniqueness of Jewish historical experience ... what was once called the 'mystery' of Jewish survival through the ages [and] the relationship between Jews and Judaism' required

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[163] Ibid., pp. 176 and 184-185.

[164] Ibid., p. 96; Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 58; Joseph Jacobs, 'On the Racial Characteristics of Modern Jews', Appendix in *Studies in Jewish Statistics*, (a paper read before the Anthropological Institute, 24 February 1885), pp. i-xl, here p. xxx.

[165] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. ix; Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism*, p. 296.

[166] Cecil Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 20.

a secular and empirical answer.[167] Constructed racial, or at least, ancestral qualities and commonalities have sometimes filled the breach in the name of giving meaning and coherence to Jewish self-identification.[168] It is important to note, however, that 'a belief in the reality of race did not mean that any one race was necessarily superior to another'. Although many Jewish race scientists used the same language, and sometimes even the same methodology, as their racist contemporaries they rejected the use of their science for 'chauvinistic purposes'.[169]

Further, John Efron has argued that Jewish race science was not merely a reaction to antisemitism but was 'propelled by its own peculiarly Jewish inner dynamic'. Roth hoped to solve the post-emancipatory crisis of Jewish identity and the vacuum left by the failure of assimilation through Jewish spiritual, cultural and historical education. In the same way Jewish race science sought to redefine Jewish identity on modern terms.[170] Roth, too, saw the benefits of such a strong basis of Jewishness for the sake of ethnic pride and Jewish survival. His approach to the racial question, although it shared features with both the work of *fin-de-siècle* and inter-war Jewish race scientists, involved many tensions.

A racialist accusation during the 1920s and 1930s posited that the Jews themselves applied a racial criterion of Jewishness, which demonstrated the success and reality of eugenic principles.[171] Roth observed in 1943 that Jews themselves were

> beginning ... to adopt Nazi terminology and definitions. We have ceased to think of the criterion of the Jew as Judaism: a Jew is to us now a person of Jewish birth, whatever his beliefs.[172]

Elsewhere, however, Roth had indignantly denied this notion and particularly the use of the example of Israel Zangwill's 'The Chosen People' to illustrate it. He explained that the unity of the 'Chosen People' referred to the 'spiritual progeny of the

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[167] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1996), pp. 95-96.
[168] See Nils Roemer, 'Jewish Literature Inside and Outside of German and English National Literary Canons', in Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman (eds.), *The Image of the Jew in Europe, 1789-1914*, (forthcoming), (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004) and Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995) for discussions and examples of the 'centrality of racial discourses in the self understanding of modern Jews', (Roemer).
[169] Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, pp. 3, 9 and 12; George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, (Madison, USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 123.
[170] Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, pp. 4, 7 and 176.
[171] Thurman B. Rice, the American academic eugenicist, was a proponent of this view in the late 1920s. Gilman, *Smart Jews*, p. 41.
[172] Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', p. 3.

Patriarchs – not merely their physical descendants'.[173] In this sense 'race' became a metaphorical and metaphysical term of definition. Indeed Roth was often found to be uncomfortable with definitions of Jewishness that bore no relation to religiosity. He explained that 'normally, in the absence of … a religious distinction, [he] would find it difficult to assess precisely what a Jew is'.[174] Even in *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, he would only claim as Jewish any person 'whose immediate ancestors professed the Jewish religion'.[175]

In his contribution pieces Roth did not treat each notable individual in the same way. The differences reveal more about the complexities of his understanding of the racial or otherwise basis of Jewish identity. In reference to the important and controversial figure Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher of Jewish parentage known as the 'first secular Jew', Roth pointed to the intense debate surrounding his Jewishness and then stated '[b]ut all would agree that his peculiar flavour owes at least something to his origin'.[176] Following the historiographical model of 'self-ghettoisation' of Jewish subjects identified by David S. Katz, Roth made no mention of the strong English Quaker influence Spinoza incorporated into his thought.[177] Roth preferred to stress Judaism as 'the cultural tradition from which Spinoza sprang and in which he spent his early and impressionable years' as the main inspiration for the works of the eminent thinker.[178] In this analysis, Roth underlined the importance of cultural influences and early Jewish education on the forming of an individual's personality and yet suggested that later influences could not compete with this unchanging Jewishness.

Roth's approach to Benjamin Disraeli was different to his treatment of Spinoza, partly due to the nineteenth-century English Prime Minister's perceived enduring Jewish sympathies. In *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, Disraeli's Jewishness was not problematised and he was included several times in relation to his literary efforts and his place in public life.[179] Roth's interest in Disraeli as a hero of

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[173] Roth, 'The Jew as a European', p. 37.
[174] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. viii.
[175] Ibid., p. x.
[176] Ibid., p. 164; Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics,* vol. I The Marrano of Reason, (Princeton: New Jersey; 1989), p. 172.
[177] David S. Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, pp. 60-77, here pp. 65-69 and p. 74.
[178] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. 164.
[179] Ibid., pp. 102, and 272-278.

British Jewry was further developed and expressed in his biography of the politician and author. Here he explicitly set out

> to sketch his personality, to indicate the Jewish element in his background, and to elucidate how far, if at all, this affected his career, his outlook and his policies.[180]

Disraeli's early childhood baptism did not particularly render him less Jewish in Roth's eyes, who traced his Jewish ancestry to *Converso*, Spanish and Italian Jewish families and described his appearance as 'pronouncedly Jewish'. So Jewish was Disraeli, Roth explained, that he even managed to die on a significant date for Jewish tragedy, 19 April.[181] For Roth this date featured in Jewish history as a '[r]ecurrent anniversary of massacre'. It was, he explained with melodrama, 'marked throughout our history by a trail of blood'. It was a date, he continued, that could 'hardly be rivalled by any other for its tragic recollections'.[182]

Roth speculated, further, about the degree of Disraeli's religious Jewish identity. He suggested that even as a boy he was reluctant to be baptised due to his level of 'Jewish education and Hebraic consciousness'. Had a Reform community existed at the time of Isaac D'Israeli's dispute with the synagogue leading to his move away from Judaism, then the family would never have turned from their religion.[183] Roth argued that although it was 'manifestly absurd to suggest that Disraeli [could] be considered doctrinally a Jew', it was even more difficult to demonstrate his adherence to a Christian doctrine. His beliefs were instead a form of 'Judaic ethical monotheism'.[184] For Roth 'it [was] not only a man's ancestry, but also what he consider[ed] his ancestry to have been, that condition[ed] his life'. It was Disraeli's belief that he descended from the Sephardi Jews, 'no less than the intellectual qualities that he had inherited from his actual forebears' that defined his 'preposterous character' and formed his Jewish sentiments.[185]

Roth was desperate to identify Disraeli as a Jew or at least a *Converso*. Nonetheless, he was aware of contemporary and more recent antisemitic accusations concerning the motivations for Disraeli's political decisions and was nervous about contributing to this milieu. English historian, Goldwin Smith, had attributed

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[180] Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, p. v.
[181] Ibid, pp. 12, 20 and 170.
[182] Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days,* pp. 95-96.
[183] Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, pp. 19 and 22.
[184] Ibid., pp. 67 and 79.
[185] Ibid., pp. 13 and 67.

Disraeli's political action to 'his Jewish blood'. Lucien Wolf's answer to Smith's ranting had failed to distance him from the basis of Smith's biological understanding of Jewishness and merely inverted the tenor of his conclusions.[186] Roth admitted 'an obsession with the East' on Disraeli's behalf, which he attributed to his 'racial and ultimate religious background'. He vehemently denied, however, that his approach to the Eastern Question was 'in any way determined nor even influenced by his Jewish sympathies, as was alleged by his enemies'.[187] Roth avoided the discussion of political motivations anyway as it smacked of divided loyalties. He preferred to emphasise Disraeli's social legislation, which revealed 'that Jewish craving for social justice which is one of the heritages of the Bible, and that Jewish sympathy for the under-dog'.[188]

In this, his 'burning compassion for suffering humanity', Roth claimed Disraeli followed Jewish tradition as did, though from a different perspective, Karl Marx.[189] The place of Marx in the canon of Jewish heroes was particularly controversial. By the rules applied to other converted Jews with positive connotations Marx must be claimed and was claimed by Roth in regards to journalism and influence on historiography.[190] Inversely, however, stressing the Jewishness of the baptised Marx was an antisemitic trick used to support ramblings regarding the Jewishness of communism and political dissention.[191] Roth's solution was to introduce a sliding scale of Jewishness that reflected when the individual rejected Judaism, how 'Jewish' their ideas or contributions were and how 'friendly' they remained towards Jews and Judaism.

Marx was, on this score, not like Disraeli, he noted. In both the cases of Disraeli and Marx, their fathers were the point of rupture of the family from Judaism. However, Marx's 'unfriendliness' and Disraeli's opposite sentiments towards the Jews led Roth to construct a difference in the nature of their separation from the faith. Whereas, in regards to Disraeli, he stressed the young future Prime Minister's

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[186] Goldwin Smith, 'The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. XXIII, no. 137, New Series, (May 1878), pp. 691-709, here p. 691; Lucien Wolf, 'What is Judaism? A Question of To-day', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. XXXVI, no. 212, New Series, (August 1884), pp. 237-256.
[187] Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, pp. 133 and 144.
[188] Ibid., pp. 118-119.
[189] Ibid., pp. 118-119.
[190] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, pp. 114 and 121.
[191] Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present Day*, (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 157.

reluctance to convert, for Marx he distances the Jewish connection by emphasising that his father's conversion took place before he was even conceived.[192] Working under the assumption that communism was a negative or at least unpopular political stance, he described Marxian theories, beyond their origins in notions of social compassion, as 'far from being essentially Jewish'. He claimed instead that they were 'a reaction against the decorous conclusions drawn by another theorist who happened (like Marx) to be a Jew by birth', David Ricardo. According to Roth, the far less problematic Ricardo was

> rather more Jewish than Marx, as he had been born and bred in the faith of his fathers, which he left only after attaining manhood. Unlike Marx, moreover, his attitude towards Jews and Judaism was friendly to the end.[193]

Roth's complex conception of race and Jewish identity was further revealed in *The Jewish Problem*, where race, though admitted to be a concept rejected by biologists, was included, along with religion, nation, and a moral or messianic impulse, in the definition of Jewishness. Race was not entirely rejected, but was subsumed within a wider notion that eventually boiled down, for the authors, to the very vague and unexplained idea of the possession of 'a sense of decency ... [and] a sense of loyalty'.[194] Similarly Roth's tentative advocacy, in his response to Leftwich, was for the isolation of an 'approach or an attitude ... ascribed to [a] Jewish background' as a substitute category for race.[195]

Roth's approach to the question of race was deeply influenced by his intellectual position as an historian. History was important in turn-of-the-century race science. For the Jewish historian interested in race it was even more of a key factor.[196] Anti-Jewish race science was often based on ancient calumnies predicated on Jewish physical and mental difference. Therefore the intellectual response to the assertions of race science was forced to look to the past.[197] Further, to some racist antisemites, Jewish biological essential difference offered 'an explanation for the longevity of their civilization'. Jewish race scientists, however, denied this claim and argued instead that the 'physiological and psychological characteristics of Jewishness were

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[192] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, p. 278; Janowsky, 'Apologetics for Our Time', p. 227.
[193] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, pp. 279.
[194] [Golding], *The Jewish Problem*, p. 212.
[195] Roth, 'A Wrong Approach to Jewish Writers?', p. 4.
[196] Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 4.
[197] Ibid., pp. 5-7.

primarily determined by history'. External historical forces were understood to have caused any negative traits and internal historical developments explained positive factors, for example, continued Jewish survival. It was therefore because the Jews organised their lives and their communal and religious life as they did that Jews had survived the ages.[198]

Roth was clearly in agreement with this historical principle, which partly explains his keenness to maintain Jewish religious and communal life and to educate Jewish youth about their heritage and the miracle of Jewish existence. He defended his attribution of Jewishness to the baptised Disraeli as 'the historic experience of centuries cannot be blotted out by a ceremony of a few moments' duration' as if 2000 years of Jewish history was somehow ingrained within each Jewish individual. He similarly described the so-called Jewish characteristic of sympathy for the under-dog as 'one of the results of his [the Jew's] history'.[199] A Jewish 'freshness of outlook' and 'faculty for synthesis' were also put down to 'the circumstances of their history'.[200] In this way, the shared history and heritage of the Jewish people as a nation was somehow understood to be the essence of Jewishness. This was transmitted through the generations and expressed as a characteristic general attitude.

It is apparent that, although Roth repeatedly resorted to concepts such as the 'cross-fertilization' of Jews and non-Jews and spoke of the existence of 'Jewish blood', it need not follow that these racial signifiers, though certainly informed by racial discourse, revealed a belief in genetic and atavastic biological certainties.[201] Similarly to the immediate post-Enlightenment world, where the concepts of 'people', 'nation', 'class' and 'race' were not discreet, for Roth 'race' was an imprecise and romantic notion.[202] Roth's approach, like that of *fin-de-siècle* Jewish race scientists, involved a 'transvaluation of the concept of 'race''. Similarly to 1960s American culture, ''roots' were to be celebrated, not denied ... [and] seeing oneself as being part of a 'race' was a strengthening factor'.[203]

This romantic, empowering and historical quality to Roth's understanding of hereditary Jewishness was already evident in Roth's *A History of the Marranos*,

[198] Ibid., pp. 175-178.
[199] Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, pp. 118-119.
[200] Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, pp. vii and xi.
[201] Roth, 'The Jew as a European', pp. 36-38.
[202] See Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society*, (London: MacMillan, 1996), p. 80.
[203] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 171.

published in 1932.[204] This focused on the 'secret Jews' of Spain and Portugal from the fifteenth century until the present day, whose connection to Judaism, especially from the sixteenth century onwards, was in some instances very remote. He claimed

> [i]n race, in belief, and largely in practice, they remained as they had been before the conversion. They were Jews in all but name, and Christians in nothing but form.[205]

Throughout the book, Roth made reference to 'Jewish blood' and 'Jewish descent' and spoke of 'racial origin ... [being] betrayed' by the activities of individuals, whilst simultaneously condemning the application of the limpieza or 'purity of blood' principle in Inquisitional Spain.[206] For Roth and many others, however, *Conversos* were romantic analogies for modern Jewry. With their sustained sentimental attachment to Jewish ritual and traditions, *Conversos* displayed cultural fidelity in the absence of formal adherence to Judaism. This, in the end, ensured the survival of Jewry, and the establishment of the modern, and significantly voluntary, Jewish communities of the Atlantic seaboard.

As the case of Roth's *A History of the Marranos* shows, on a practical level, it was difficult for historians of British Jewry not to adopt unsatisfactorily vague definitions of Jewishness. In the historical construction of a category of 'British Jewish', as with the example of the emergence of women's history, meaning needed to be attributed and coherence applied retrospectively to incidents and personalities that might support Jewish historical relevance in England. Roth was attempting to unearth the Jewish presence in the country throughout history thus legitimising the contemporary Jewish community and countering the negative image of the alien and wandering Jew. Tracing the religious identity of historical characters was a task of sufficient difficulty. For a period of well over 300 years, however, professing Jews were excluded from Britain and so alternative definitions would necessarily have to be devised to achieve this goal. In a pamphlet produced by Roth with some involvement with the Board of Deputies, *The Jews in Defence of Britain*, he drew attention to the difficulty of definition in the British-Jewish example. After an overview of the thirteenth century, he admitted:

> [i]t will have been noticed that I have not taken in the foregoing passage any account of religious allegiance; for the prejudice against professing

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[204] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, (Philadelphia, USA: JPSA, 1932).
[205] Ibid., p. 20.
[206] For example Ibid., pp. 25, 26, 49, 74-75, 85, 155, 296, 319, 320, 370 and 371.

Jews was so strong as to constitute an insuperable barrier. ... We can still less apply a confessional test in the subsequent period, when professing Jews were not admitted into England.[207]

He continued then to outline the achievements and biographical information of 'soldiers of Jewish extraction'. In a similar vein to his description of Disraeli,

> one can hardly make any theological or psychological deduction from this fact [that professing Jews are not to be found]: for even baptism could not be expected to endow the unbeliever with military valour that he previously lacked.[208]

There were some who would have seen baptism as the obvious explanation for the success of these 'Christian soldiers'. But, moreover, since martial aptitude was a matter of individual inclination and not religiously determined, as Roth rightly surmised, no more could he attribute success to their early instruction in Judaism as to their baptism.

The marrying of Roth's romantic racial conception, the problem of the 300 year hiatus of Jewish presence in England and his ultimate intellectual response to British racial antisemitism was achieved through his construction of a 'racial' British Jewishness and the deconstruction of the notion of a pure English race. This final local example illustrates how the British-Jewish intellectual milieu of this period was not only a response to 1930s and 1940s racial antisemitism, but was part of

> a unique post-emancipatory venture in Jewish self-definition and self-assertion ... impelled by [both] the external force of antisemitism and the internal need to reassert a Jewish ethnic pride that had been battered by the winds of assimilation.[209]

Roth challenged and opened up this exclusive definition of Englishness via a racial discourse. The work of Roth's antisemitic Oxford predecessors, William Stubbs and Edward Freeman, rested on the concept of an institutional, philological and hereditary 'English racial purity', which enabled them to explain the apparently paradoxical English collective drive towards individualism.[210] Roth, however, preferred to stress the 'racial hybridity of the English' and pointed to the foreign descent of Churchill,

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[207] Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Defence of Britain: Thirteenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, Presidential Address, 27 October 1940, advance reprint from *TJHSE*, vol. XV (London: JHSE, 1940), p. 9; see also Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions', p. 12.
[208] Roth, *The Jews in the Defence of Britain*, p. 9.
[209] Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 176.
[210] Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1990), pp. 43-45; Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 16.

Gibbon, Defoe and importantly George III and Victoria to illustrate the absurdity of the opposite claim. Their 'foreign extraction', he argued, did not threaten their Englishness, in fact 'it may have made them somewhat more so, in that their appreciation of the English genius was the more unquestioning'.[211]

In 1933, Roth wrote to Philip Guedalla, chairman of the Board's Press Committee, putting forward the idea of republishing Daniel Defoe's 'True-Born Englishmen' as 'a useful antidote to present day racialism'.[212] Defoe's early eighteenth-century satirical ballad was written as a response to John Tutchin's attack on William III and his 'foreign' advisors. Defoe believed that a nation composed of such a great mixture of peoples, including the Romans, Gauls, Lombards, Saxons, Danes, Picts, Normans and Huguenots, had no right to despise 'foreigners'.[213] He 'roundly mocks as willed amnesia any attempt to insist on the nation's racial purity'.[214] He quipped

> The silent nations undistinguished fall,
> And Englishman's the common name for all.
> Fate jumbled them together, God knows how;
> Whate'er they were, they're True-Born English now.[215]

With such 'mixed relics', Defoe could only conclude that 'A True-Born Englishman's a contradiction'.[216] Although Roth's suggestion did not come to fruition, the purpose of such a publication is clear. Defoe's poem uses history and what in the twentieth century would have been understood as race theory, in order to undermine the nationalist notion of a pure English race and to demonstrate that like the Normans, Lombards and Huguenots, the Jews were True-Born Englishmen now. This was an apologia; however its purpose was not merely to answer racial antisemitic fascist agitation. Opening up racial Englishness was the prerequisite for a form of Anglo-Jewish self-assertion that utilised a proto-multi-cultural discourse to construct an 'Anglo-Jewish race'.

In the invention of an Anglo-Jewish race, Roth solidified Anglo-Jewish belonging by introducing the idea of a post-Expulsion Anglo-Jewish diaspora and its

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[211] Baucom, *Out of Place*, p. 15; Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, pp. 13, 86-87.

[212] Letter Cecil Roth to Philip Guedalla, 1 November 1933, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/95, SUA; see also Letter Philip Guedalla to Cecil Roth, 3 November 1933 and Letter Cecil Roth to Philip Guedalla, 8 November 1933, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/2/97 and 98, SUA.

[213] Daniel Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman and Other Writings*, ed. by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. x-xiii.

[214] Baucom, *Out of Place*, p. 16.

[215] Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman*, p. 35, lines 364-367.

[216] Ibid., pp. 30 and 36, lines 171 and 372.

legacy. He claimed that after the disaster of 1290 'the blood of these medieval English Jews must necessarily have suffused the whole of northern Jewry, at least.' Roth then departed from his usual separation of pre-Expulsion Anglo-Jewry of mostly French origin and Resettlement Jews of *Converso* and Sephardic background to construct an ancestrally distinct Anglo-Jewishness. He claimed that in the period of Expulsion there must have been some, who would later beget the 'Resettlers',

> to whom England's leafy lanes and the wide sweep of the downs and the bare loveliness of the new ploughed fields were as familiar and as beloved as they are to us.[217]

In this way, Roth reinvented the Resettlement as the return of exiled Anglo-Jewry. In the same way that Jews remained Jews in exile from Israel, and that *Conversos* remained Jews when estranged from the religion of the fathers, Anglo-Jews remained Anglo-Jews during the period of Expulsion. With the invocation of Anglo-Jewish 'blood', Jewish settlement in England became reinvented as an uninterrupted 'racial' belonging. Anglo-Jewry were imbued with an almost *Volkish* connection to the land that conceptually subsumed borrowings from both modern nationalist theory and an ancient Jewish longing for Zion. Anglo-Jewish history was, therefore, grounded in a romantic and ephemeral conception of an Anglo-Jewish essence that bridged even the 360-year interruption of the Expulsion period.[218]

The insecurities of the British-Jewish community in the 1930s and early war years were many and varied, and were confronted in a plethora of ways. Roth's work during this period, often since pigeon-holed as communal defence, focused predominantly on ensuring Jewish, British-Jewish and Anglo-Jewish survival. The threat to Jewish existence, he believed, did not stop at external, antisemitic forces. It emanated from within in the shape of the assimilatory drive. For Jews to survive as Jews in the twentieth century, as the German-Jewish example illustrated, a culturally and spiritually stronger sense of Jewishness needed to be cultivated. Jewish education, specifically historical education, could, therefore safeguard against Jewish 'indifferentism' and the loss of members of the community by their own volition. It could also protect Jews from external physical threat, or at least instil a sense of dignity and Jewish pride. This would avoid what Roth perceived as the ultimate tragedy of the meaningless and bewildering death of the persecuted non-Aryan.

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[217] Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', p. 3.
[218] Ibid., p. 3.

The Jewish use of the language of race science is a particularly good example of how Jewish apologia can be understood also as a mode of Jewish self-expression and self-assertion. Roth, himself, showed a clear understanding of this phenomenon in his assessment of his Jewish Disraeli's racialism. In the same way that Germans had constructed race as a basis for antisemitism, Roth argued,

> Disraeli, wishing to identify himself with a people from whom he was religiously divorced, similarly elaborated the idea of 'race' as a basis for his pro-semitism ... Disraeli's conception of 'race' was as unsound scientifically and historically as that of the Nazis, although his conclusions were so wholly different.[219]

Roth's analysis also underlined the important part he believed history to contribute to an ethnic understanding of Jewishness and the positive effect such an understanding could have on Jewish self-respect. He wrote

> [t]he conception of Race not merely became an instrument for restoring Disraeli's personal balance, or perhaps even his self-respect, but attained an overwhelming importance in his eyes as the mysterious key to history.[220]

For Roth, however, an ethnic collective feeling was not enough. For Jews to survive the onslaught of the Nazi period, Judaism and Jewish culture and heritage must survive. He was, in 1942, not optimistic.

> We should rebuild on a sounder – and more Jewish – basis. But will we? ... I have no hesitation in foretelling what will happen. Ruined Jewish institutions, in many cases, will not be rebuilt. Ruined Jewish life will not be pieced together again. The disaster of destruction and scattering in the past decade will prove to have been a powerful solvent. The Jews, taken as a whole, will have learned nothing and will have forgotten everything. With no object other than to recover the physical wellbeing of the Age of Assimilation, they will race blindly towards the precipice again.[221]

In 1943, as part of his efforts for the rebuilding of Jewish life on a 'more Jewish' basis, Roth turned his attention to the reclaiming of European-Jewish cultural property. The following chapter will deal with Roth's role in post-war Jewish reconstruction and the significance for Roth and British Jewry of the changes in the world scene, when Roth was forced to construct a new British Jewishness in the face of the transfer of Jewish centres from Europe to the United States. The notion of an Anglo-Jewish race and rooting Jewishness within the English landscape will also be

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[219] Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli*, p. 67.
[220] Ibid., p. 67.
[221] Roth, 'A Century and a Half of Emancipation', pp. 1-12.

followed up in relation to Roth's writing of provincial Anglo-Jewish history and travelogues in the post-war period. Further it will expand the analysis of Roth's role as educator beyond the written word in the production of heritage by exploring the implications for British-Jewish identity revealed by the celebration of the Tercentenary of the resettlement of the Jews in England in 1956.

Chapter 3

Cecil Roth and the Cultural Significance of Time and Place for the Jewish Community in Post-War Britain, 1943-1964

Post-war conversations over British-Jewish identity were in Roth's work couched less in terms of a pseudo-racial rhetoric, and were negotiated more via ideas of diaspora and empire within the context of the new significance of globalism and localism.[1] Stuart Hall has argued that the late modern world as a whole can be identified by the two contradictory characteristics of globalisation and localism. Globalisation came in the form of homogenisation and assimilation, whereas the reassertion of localism, often in reaction to globalisation, was manifested in the recourse to notions of ethnicity, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism. Hall's discussions referred to ideas of nationalism. They can, however, be extended to offer an explanation for the prevalence of regionalism, an even more intensive expression of localism, which will be emphasised here.[2] Regionalism was represented in British historiography by W. G. Hoskins and the Leicester School.[3] Hoskins argued that the global perspective of the post-war period and the sensitivity over changes to immediate physical surroundings, due to wartime destruction and post-war modern planning, encouraged a local backlash. Local history grew in popularity and local heritage sites and places of historical interest were identified and established.[4] This chapter will explore how Roth reflected both of these trends during this period through his contribution to the debate surrounding European cultural reconstruction, his approach to the relationship between Britain and America, his interest in local history and his travel writing.

Along with the Allies in general, many within the British-Jewish community began in 1943 to look forward to a victorious post-war future. Illustrating this intellectual shift, Cecil Roth as president of the JHSE called a conference in the same year to address the future of confiscated and heirless cultural material in Europe, and,

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[1] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, (London: UCL Press, 1997), pp. 170-173.
[2] Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in Stuart Hall, D. Held and A. McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures*, (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), pp. 273-316, here pp. 300, 310-314.
[3] Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1990), pp. 233-236; W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England*, Third Edition, (Essex: Longman, 1984).
[4] Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 6-7 and 255.

more widely asked questions about the future of worldwide Jewry.[5] As we have seen in Chapter Two, Roth attached great significance to the maintenance of Jewish culture to ensure Jewish survival. In the post-war period this was still the case; however the Jewish world was not as it was. The key concerns now related to the location of Jewish life and specifically where Jewish cultural life might be situated in the post-war scene. What Roth perceived as 'indifferentism' was dangerous for British Jewry when fascist victory, abroad or at home, was a possibility.[6] It became clear to Roth, during the war, that British-Jewish indifference endangered others beyond itself. Roth spoke of British Jewry having to shoulder the burden of responsibility for European-Jewish scholarship 'since outside Palestine there is no one left in the Old World who can do it'.[7] Yet, in Roth's estimation, post-war British Jewry was not up to the task. It was an anxious and divided community that, to Roth, failed to grasp its significance and the importance of its intellectual endeavour.[8] Further, as the globally and financially depleted position of Britain in the new world became clear, Roth attempted to renegotiate British-Jewish identity accordingly, especially in light of the formation of the state of Israel. Britain's position on the 'American side of Europe' was no longer integral.[9] To replace the physically and geographically advantageous situation which had existed before the war, Roth, along with others in post-war Britain, constructed and embellished the notion of the 'English-speaking Era'.[10] If Britain no longer had the power to rule the world, she had the means to set the rules. Intellectually, linguistically and historically Britain and British Jews could remain central to a new globalised world.

This discussion of Roth in the post-war period ends in 1964. The historiographical paradigm of periodisation has been to define the post-war period as beginning in 1945 and ending in 1964, with the election of another Labour government. The characterisation of the period as one of growing affluence,

[5] Cecil Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives', opening address at the Conference on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives, 11 April 1943, *Contemporary Jewish Record*, vol. VII, (1944), pp. 253-257.
[6] Cecil Roth, 'Anglo-Jewry is Threatened with Extinction', *South African Jewish Times*, (28 March 1945), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[7] Cecil Roth, 'Presidential Speech, The Jubilee Meeting, 3 June 1943', *TJHSE*, vol. XV, (1939-1945), pp. 167-177.
[8] Cecil Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age: A Scholar Discusses the Creative Out-look', *Commentary*, IV, (October 1947), pp. 239-333; Cecil Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry', (1960), Cecil Roth Papers, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA.
[9] Cecil Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (February 1957), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[10] Cecil Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era', *Jewish Life*, (November-December 1952).

modernisation and political consensus has more recently been unpacked and undermined, which in turn challenges the usefulness of confining 'post-war' to these dates.[11] That said, here 1964 will serve helpfully as the end point as, having seen the country through the changes and the continuities of the period, Roth chose this date to leave Oxford for Jerusalem; a move that challenged his previous reconciliation and celebration of his diaspora identity.

i. 'Anglo-Jewry's Tremendous Responsibility': Cecil Roth and European-Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, 1943-1950[12]

In the same way that the Nazis had sought to destroy and corrupt Jewishness through their despoliation of Jewish cultural property, the recovery of the same material took on the symbolism of the restoration of Jewish life. Likewise, its redistribution replicated the movement of Jews and Jewish life out of Europe. Robert Liberles claims the redistribution of rescued communal property 'provide[d] a touching footnote to the passing of the sceptre of Jewish life' from Europe to the New World.[13] Roth believed the task of restitution, however, was not only significant on an allegorical level but, was also the very real and essential precondition of the survival of Jews as a culturally and religiously distinct entity in the post-war world.[14] Cecil Roth was among the first to identify the importance of the Nazi onslaught on Jewish culture.[15] In 1943 he described the Nazi assault against the Jews as also one against 'all Jewish spiritual and intellectual values'. He argued that alongside the attempt to exterminate Jewish life in Europe there had developed a bid to 'destroy, or else,

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[11] Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds.), 'Introduction', in idem., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964*, (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), pp. 1-21.

[12] Roth, Cecil, 'The End of a Century: A Year of Terror and Trial: Anglo-Jewry's Tremendous Responsibility', *Jewish Chronicle*, (27 September 1940).

[13] Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History*, (New York, USA: New York University Press, 1995), p. 240.

[14] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', pp. 253 and 256-257.

[15] The appropriation of cultural property during World War Two has been described as a prism through which the structure and nature of the Nazi regime can be understood. The seizure of property was a specific tool of Nazi terror against the Jews of Germany and the occupied territories. It was economically beneficial to the regime, but also allowed for the individual dehumanisation and paralysis of the victims. The commandeering and perversion or destruction of particularly Jewish cultural material symbolised the Nazi attack upon Jewish life. By extinguishing and corrupting the Jewish cultural heritage, it has been argued, the Nazi regime paved the way for their physical removal and ultimately their annihilation. Jonathon Petropoules, 'German Laws and Directives Bearing on the Appropriation of Cultural Property in the Third Reich', in Elizabeth Simpson (ed.), *The Spoils of War: World War II and its Aftermath: The Loss, Reappearance and Recovery of Cultural Property*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), p. 106; Michael J. Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma: The Inheritance of Jewish Property', *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. XX, (1998) pp. 625-655, here p. 625.

pervert, every monument of Jewish culture, every evidence of Jewish antiquity, and every object of Jewish art'.[16] Roth explicitly identified despoliation as part of the process of the Holocaust after isolation and preceding and facilitating extermination.[17] Therefore, he understood the attempted rescue of despoiled property to be an act of defence and defiance.[18] Roth's involvement with the Committee on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Archives and Libraries (JHSE Committee) established by the JHSE and the Board of Deputies' Sub-committee C of the Reparations and Compensation Committee (sub-committee C), serves to illustrate his position. More widely, it reflected the situation of British Jewry in the post-war period through the negotiation of global and local identity via the worldwide redistribution of cultural artefacts and material.

In March 1943 Cecil Roth was reported as having:

called attention to the need of providing for the restoration of Jewish collections and libraries in Germany and the occupied territories which the Nazis have seized.[19]

A month later Roth and Norman Bentwich, along with others with connections to the JHSE, held the Conference of the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives.[20] A range of representatives from various sectors of British and European Jewish communities were invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting as stated in Roth's opening speech, as president of the JHSE, was to establish a sub-committee and guiding principles regarding the problem and to submit these to 'the competent authority'.[21] Later the same year the Board of Deputies also established a committee to look into the matter, of which Roth became a member.[22] The relationship between the two committees was strained throughout the negotiations.

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[16] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 253.
[17] Cecil Roth, 'The Last Days of Jewish Salonica: What Happened to a 450-Year-Old Civilization', *Commentary*, vol. X, no. 1, (July 1950), pp. 49-55, here p. 52.
[18] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 253.
[19] The suggested clause for a peace treaty covering this issue was: 'Germany shall restore to the international authority (appointed for reconstruction in Europe) all the collections of books, manuscripts, archives, pictures and other works of art and ritual objects which have been robbed or confiscated since 1933 from Jewish communities and Jews in Germany or occupied territories.' 'Reparation for Destruction of Jewish Property, A Report by Norman Bentwich', 4 March 1943, Board of Deputies Papers, ACC3121/C11/7/3D/1, LMA.
[20] 'Restoring a Destroyed Culture: Historical Society Conference', *Jewish Chronicle*, (16 April 1943).
[21] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 256.
[22] Roth's opening speech from the JHSE conference was circulated to the new sub-committee C of the Compensation and Reparations Committee as a memorandum in September 1943. Letter David Mowshowitch to Mr Istork, 1 November 1943, letter David Mowshowitch to Sacher, 1 November 1943 and letter Cecil Roth to David Mowshowitch, 29 October 1943, and letter Cecil Roth to David Mowshowitch, 17 October 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/C11/7/3D/1, LMA.

This was a factor which possibly contributed to the ineffectual restitution policy of British Jewry in comparison to admirable American efforts.[23]

In January 1943, the USA, USSR, Britain and 15 Allied governments had issued the Inter-Allied Declaration Against Acts of Dispossession Committed in Territories Under Enemy Occupation or control, known as the London Declaration. The declaration promised to undo Nazi looting and restore the property to those involved as far as possible.[24] When the war ended, the British policy regarding Jewish cultural treasures in the British Zone and elsewhere was much less clear and less synchronised than that of the US Zone authorities. The British government was certainly unwilling, during 1946-1948, to confront the issue due to a preoccupation with the Palestine question. There was a concern that any restitution would fund weapon acquisition by the Zionist military force in Palestine, the Hagana, and the illegal immigration of Jews to Germany and Palestine itself.[25]

The heightened fear of the accusation of divided loyalty among British Jews due to the sensitivity of the situation in Palestine also restricted Jewish pressure on the issue.[26] This was a position which contrasted with American Jewry's confident, swift and sophisticated mobilisation in the name of the cause, notably under the leadership of Roth's contemporary Salo Baron.[27] In Britain, fear of antisemitism and immersion in the British liberal imagination meant that, when the issue was raised in communal circles in 1940, the primary concern was the desirability of keeping such claims general and not specifically Jewish.[28] This followed the lead of the British and American governments who saw Jews as 'problematic victims' and unhelpful in the construction of wartime atrocity propaganda. In addition, to emphasise particular Jewish suffering was believed by many to be 'against liberal, universalistic

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[23] See for example Letter Oscar Rabinowicz to Selig Brodetsky, 7 March 1947, Letter Cecil Roth to A. G. Brotman, 29 June 1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.

[24] Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', p. 632; 'The London Declaration, 5 January 1943', Appendix, Simpson, *The Spoils of War*, p. 303; Ronald W. Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World: A History of the Claims Conference*, Second Edition, (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 11.

[25] Zweig, *German Reparations*, p. 2.

[26] See Cecil Roth, 'Divided Loyalties: Do They Enrich the Jew?', *South African Jewish Times*, (26 July 1946), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[27] Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', pp. 625-655, esp. p. 633; Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, pp. 266-337.

[28] See Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); S. Adler-Rudel raised the issue to the Central Council for Refugees, which referred the matter to the Joint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association probably some time in 1940. Note of Discussion, 12 March 1940, BoD Papers, ACC3123/C11/7/3D/1, LMA.

principles'.[29] Furthermore, Leonard Stein of the Board of Deputies three years later expressed his anxiety about the potential reaction of governments to an international authority dealing specifically with Jewish claims. He feared that such an organisation might also allow them

> to wash their hands of responsibility for the reconstruction of the Jewish Communities and to regard their Jewish citizens as belonging to a different category from their other citizens.[30]

The subsuming of Jewish claims within the general picture caused some problems in dealing with the fate of heirless Jewish property, as the fundamental nature of this issue was its specificity and its unique need for extra-governmental resolution. For this reason, but also due to the lack of receptivity of the British authorities, the British-Jewish community showed no signs of imitating Baron and Jerome Michael's sustained negotiations with the Whitehouse on this issue.[31]

Nevertheless, since the London Declaration, the question of reparations, compensation and restitution of Jewish property and funds has constituted an important element of post-Holocaust communal Jewish life. The centrality and complexity of the problem has been reflected in the array of organisations established to address it and the intense and lengthy nature of the negotiations that ensued.[32] The

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[29] Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 126-127.

[30] 'Reparation for Destruction of Jewish Property', Memorandum by Leonard Stein, 7 March 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/C11/7/3D/1, LMA.

[31] Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', p. 633.

[32] In the summer of 1944, Baron, the Columbia Law Professor, Jerome Michael and the Conference on Jewish Relations (CJR) established the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) under the leadership of Baron, in order to collaborate in the dispersal of Jewish heirless cultural property. In April 1947 the JCR was incorporated, as was a separate organisation, the Jewish Restitution Commission, later to become the Jewish Restitution Successor Organisation (JRSO). Baron's JCR became a member organisation of the JRSO and eventually took over the cultural arm of the restitution project. The JRSO also included the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which was responsible for non-cultural property. On 23 June 1948 the JRSO was officially recognised by the Military Government in the US Zone, in Regulation 3 to Law No. 59, as the successor body for recovered Jewish property. In November 1949 a consultation was held regarding the establishment of a successor organisation in the British Zone, which, although it involved Norman Bentwich, did not include Roth. The founding organisations were the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel. Member organisations also included the AJA, the Board, the Council of Jews form Germany and the Association of Jewish Communities in North West Germany. The Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany was established as a result of this meeting and the French branch began work in March 1952. In October 1951, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany was established in New York with representation from Anglo-Jewry, especially Barnett Janner MP, the then vice-president of the Board of Deputies and Sir Henry D'Avigdor Goldsmid of the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief. Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', pp. 630-639; Edward M. W. Warburg, 'JRSO Annual Report 1947-48', 'Report of Consultation of Interested Organisations on the Question of Setting up a Jewish Trust Corporation in the British Zone of Germany', 1 November 1949, and Memorandum of Association for The Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany, BoD Papers,

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priority of many in the early years of the debate was the relief and compensation of the surviving victims.[33] The fate of cultural property was an added concern, particularly felt by those, like Roth, involved in the preservation of the Jewish past for the Jewish present and future.

When it came to formulating policy for the fair redistribution of material the future of Jewish Europe was what was at stake, and for many there was no such thing. The formation of the State of Israel in 1948 provided an obvious alternative destination for recovered communal property, and this was a policy which many supported to differing degrees. Roth proposed that heirless property and that of decimated communities and synagogues should be placed 'in the custody of' the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. His JHSE Committee resolved to 'deposit ... the material on trust with a Jewish Community or institution competent to receive it or, in default, with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem'.[34] A. G. Brotman sent a circular to Jewish Organisations on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Board of Deputies, advising that they had made a request to the authorities that the Hebrew University be recognised as a trustee body for the administration of Jewish heirless property. He claimed that this action had special approval from the JHSE special committee.[35] Sure enough, the same month, Roth wrote to Brotman reiterating that the community

> should press for the transference to 'Jewry' (in effect I suppose, the Hebrew University) of all objects of Jewish interest, however acquired ... now in German public possession.[36]

This suggested his approbation of the idea of the centre of Jewish life being transferred to the Holy Land.[37]

ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA; Zweig, *German Reparations*, pp. 15, 28-31, 72, 114 and 140; C.I. Kapralik, *Reclaiming the Nazi Loot: A Report on the Work of the Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany*, (London: Jewish Trust Corporation, 1962), esp. pp. 88-89.

[33] See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime, 1933-1945*, (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1998).

[34] Resolutions of the JHSE Special Restoration Committee adopted at the Conference on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives, 11 April 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.

[35] Circular letter by A. G. Brotman to Jewish Organisations, 26 June 1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.

[36] Letter Cecil Roth to A.G. Brotman, 29 June 1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.

[37] Ultimately, the priorities for relocating the some 250,000 books in the US Zone were first, the Jewish National and University Library in Israel, then surviving Jewish communities in western Germany, third, European Institutions outside Germany and sponsored by the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and, finally, any other foundation deemed appropriate after questionnaire. Of these 250,000 books 40 per cent went to Israel, another 40 per cent went to the US and the remaining 20 per

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Roth's approach to 'reconstruction', however, remained ambivalent. This ambiguity reflected British Jewry's own uncertainty in the global scene. Roth qualified that only objects belonging to communities 'which are unlikely to be revived' should be removed to Jerusalem. He also drew specific attention to his careful use of the term 'in the custody of' and admitted 'there is the possibility that institutions which now seem dead may ultimately be revived' at which time the material should be returned.[38] Roth's position was not comparable with, for example, Baron's straightforward rejection of European claims on the material and unequivocal aim to send the treasures to America and Israel 'where Jewish heritage thrived' and the material could be used as it was intended. Baron's Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) questioned the feasibility of restoring Jewish cultural institutions destroyed or dispersed by the Nazi machine in their original forms and locations. It declared that it would 'seek to help redistribute the Jewish cultural treasures in accordance with the new needs created by the new situation of world Jewry'.[39] The assumption behind such a decision is clear. Jewish cultural spiritual life was now to be found in America and Palestine.[40]

For Roth, although Israel provided a useful destination for safeguarding Jewish cultural goods and indeed Jewish culture, the Jewish diaspora was not obsolete and its ancient settlement in Europe might yet be renewed. Before the Second World War, Roth had argued the essential 'European-ness' of the Jewish people. He repeatedly established that the Jewish presence in Europe dated back over two thousand years and that this longstanding association was more ancient and more meaningful than those cultures that were presumed European in the modern world. For example, he asserted, recalling the words of Defoe's *Trueborn Englishmen*, discussed in the previous chapter, that when the Jews reached Europe the 'amalgam

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cent went to Britain, South Africa and others. Similarly, of 212 cases of recovered silver and textiles, 87 and 83 cases of museum and synagogue pieces went to Israel and the US respectively, 3 each of synagogue pieces only went to both Britain and South Africa and 11 went to the Joint Distribution Committee in Paris for European communities. Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', pp. 640-644.

[38] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 257.

[39] Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, p. 239.

[40] US concerns were invariably at the apex of a 'triangle of interests' between the international Jewish community, the American authorities and the surviving European-Jewish communities, each battling for their share of the JRSO collection. Similarly, the Claims Conference was dominated by American interests at the expense of European communities. Reflecting this attitude, when Baron was co-opted to chair the Claims Conference's Advisory Committee on Cultural and Religious Applications, in 1953, he did not include a single European in his list of experts, forcing the conference to intervene, and was frequently criticised by European-Jewish interests for his American-centrism. Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', pp. 632-634 and 638; Zweig, *German Reparations*, pp. 106-107.

that we term the English', like the Spanish, Russians and French, were 'not yet dreamed of'. Roth reserved a special animus for the Germans, stating they were 'still the savages – not always noble – whom Tacitus described'. He clarified that '[w]hoever were the strangers on the Rhineland when the Nazis came to power, it was certainly not the Jews – the only representatives in it, perhaps, of its inhabitants of sixteen centuries ago'.[41] He shared this view with his friend Charles Singer, one of the unacknowledged writers of *We Europeans*, who claimed the Jews as culturally the 'first Europeans': European whilst the rest of Europe was 'in its barbaric incoherent childhood'.[42] Even the name of 'Europe', Roth took pleasure in announcing, owed its origins to Asiatic, even Palestinian derivation, being the name of a 'Semitic damsel' who was kidnapped by Zeus.[43] Roth's argument was, of course, in direct refutation of Nazi calumnies. He was also, however, challenging histories of Europe produced by British historians such as H. A. L. Fisher. Fisher saw European history as the story of Aryan man and the passing of civilisation from West to East.[44] Roth implicitly passed comment on Graetz's criticism of European culture as having to raise itself to the Jewish level. Roth was positive towards 'European' culture as essentially it *was* Jewish and even after the war he was not prepared to accept a complete severing of Jewishness and Europe.[45]

After the war, the argument became tragically academic as the long association of the Jews and Europe had been brutally torn asunder. Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Latvia and Greece had suffered losses of more than eighty per cent of their Jewish populations through emigration and extermination. The USSR, Hungary, Austria, Holland and Yugoslavia had lost between fifty to eighty per cent. In relative terms the percentage of Jewish losses totalled eight times those of the Russians, almost eight times those of the Poles, ninety times that of the British and 525 times those of the USA. In terms of the future survival of European Jews the

[41] Roth, Cecil, 'The Jew as a European', being part ii) of 'The Challenge to Jewish History', Presidential Addresses, 20 October 1936 and 11 January 1938, *TJHSE*, vol. XIV, (1935-1939), pp. 22-38, here pp. 30-34; Cecil Roth, 'European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XVI, no. 4, (April 1929), pp. 293-306, p. 296.

[42] Edwyn R. Bevan and Charles Singer (eds.), *The Legacy of Israel Essays*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

[43] Roth, 'The Jew as a European', p. 23.

[44] Roth quoted from Fisher in his *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, (London: MacMillan, 1938), pp. 319-320; Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 47.

[45] Nils Roemer, 'Towards a Comparative Jewish Literary History: National Literary Canons in Nineteenth-Century Germany and England', in Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman (eds.), *The Image of the Jew in Europe, 1789-1914*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), pp. 27-45, here pp. 31-32.

tragedy was all the more felt as a higher percentage of children than adults had perished and communal leaders who might have led their communities to recovery had been early targets and also early migrants. In addition the heartland of Hebrew and Yiddish culture and Jewish orthodoxy, Eastern Europe, had been largely broken up.[46]

For Roth, the heavier blow to European Jewry in cultural terms had been the loss of Sephardic centres, such as the Greek community of Salonica as shall be further discussed below. It was this 'higher' Sephardic heritage that British Jewry now more than ever needed to safeguard. For Roth British Jewry was a Sephardic community that owed its modern form to the mass exodus from fifteenth-century Spain. He set out the post-war task of British Jewry as to replicate the 'Jews of Spain in her most glorious age' and to similarly 'keep the banner of Judaism, or Jewish culture, of the Jewish spirit, flying in Europe'.[47] The sense of obligation and duty, often unfulfilled, of the torchbearers of Sephardic greatness was to imbue Roth's thinking in terms of the position of British Jewry and, more generally, the English-speaking Jewries throughout the post-war era. As early as 1940 he drew attention to 'Anglo-Jewry's tremendous responsibility' as the only remaining 'free' Jewry in Europe and the most numerous. For Roth, the responsibility for the rescue of the remainder of the 'Monumenta Judaica of the Continent of Europe' fell squarely on the shoulders of the JHSE as 'the only Jewish scientific body now left in Europe'.[48]

Yet British Jewry's ability to fulfil its great responsibilities was impaired by its weakened position after the war. Britain had not been occupied by the Nazis, but had suffered serious bomb damage to densely populated Jewish areas in London, including synagogues and communal property. Roth and others had argued for the special needs of British Jewry from the beginning of the discussion of the issue of reconstruction. The dilemma of the 'special' British case caused much heated debate amongst the various organisations involved in restitution. One of the principles of allocation of the Claims Conference, for example, that theoretically prohibited British Jewish claims, was that restitution funds would not be used to replace fundraising and that donor countries could not be recipients.[49]

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[46] Zweig, *German Reparations*, pp. 45-47.
[47] Roth, 'Anglo-Jewry's Tremendous Responsibility'.
[48] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', pp. 256-257.
[49] Zweig, *German Reparations*, pp. 139-141.

After the Mocatta Library was destroyed by enemy action in 1940, Roth was very active in his role as the president of the JHSE, in procuring replacement books and manuscripts for the new library.[50] In Roth's opening speech at the JHSE conference on restoration in 1943 he claimed

> it would not appear altogether preposterous that the important Jewish cultural patrimony destroyed in this country as a result of the German bombing-raids – for example, in the Mocatta Library in London – should be made good from similar sources.[51]

In 1945, he wrote to Brotman regarding 'the possibility of obtaining compensation in kind for the Jewish Historical Society for its losses in the Mocatta Library' in the same way as this was being arranged for other public collections that had suffered war damage.[52]

Roth's JHSE Committee even (though unsuccessfully) requested that the British Museum receive first choice of the non-Jewish books not sent to Israel due to gaps left after war damage.[53] And Rabinowicz contacted Baron in 1949 protesting over the allocation of art, which was 40 per cent to Israel, 40 per cent to the US and 5 to 7 per cent for Britain, South Africa, Canada and Argentina. He wrote, revealing a strong local patriotism, that of all the countries receiving art:

> only we in Britain have suffered great damage and destruction at the hands of the enemy, and that accordingly our museums in this country have a claim for a higher share of the total of the museum objects to be distributed.[54]

Despite being one of the first to raise the issue of cultural restoration in 1943, Roth's commitment to the project plummeted thereafter.[55] When it came to the actual redistribution of the collected goods, in both the US and British Zones, Roth's presence in the negotiations was negligible beyond his early involvement in the formation of the British-Jewish committee's policy. In part this must have been due to Roth's dislike of committees and communal affairs. He was, it appears, more of a

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[50] For example, Letter Cecil Roth to Sidney Salomon, 8 January 1941, BoD Papers, ACC3121/E01/78, LMA; Letter Cecil Roth to Jacob Marcus, nd., Jacob Marcus Papers, MS col. 210, AJA, Cincinnati.
[51] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 256.
[52] Letter Cecil Roth to A. G. Brotman, 29 June 1945, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.
[53] JCR Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Directors, 21 December 1950, Papers of Salo W. Baron, cited in Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', p. 652.
[54] Letter Oscar Rabinowicz to Salo Baron, 14 October 1949, Papers of Salo W. Baron, cited in Kurtz, 'Resolving a Dilemma', p. 645.
[55] Letter Joshua Starr to Selig Brodetsky, 27 October 1947, Letter Oscar Rabinowicz to Salo Baron, 27 October 1947, Letter A. G. Brotman to Cecil Roth, 12 November 1947, Draft letter Brotman to Joshua Starr, 20 November 1947, BoD Papers, ACC3121/C11/8/2/2, LMA.

creative thinker, more comfortable with the big picture than in hammering out the detail. It may also have been due to his frustration at the lack of sway his historical perspective held with communal leaders.[56] Nonetheless, Roth's influence can be clearly seen in the policy adopted by the Jewish Trust Corporation (JTC) in the British Zone. European Jewish communities here were permitted to select for themselves what they needed and the rest was to go to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.[57] Moreover, Roth may have recognised British Jewry's rapid decline in status in the world Jewish scene, with the same shock felt by many, Jews and non-Jews, in a post-war Britain in the 'Age of Austerity'.[58]

British Jewry's response to the restitution effort symbolised its changing role in the post-war scene. The British-Jewish view, represented by Roth, incorporated both the idea of the nostalgic actual reconstruction of European-Jewish communities and the progressive concept of cultural restitution in the USA and Israel. Unlike the simple forward-looking principle of the removal of Jewish cultural property to shifted Jewish centres, the British-Jewish need to restore something lost as well as create something new both looked to the past and the future. This perspective signified its simultaneous psychic occupation of the realms of the Old and New Worlds and reflected the wider trend in post-war Britain of both 'aspiring towards the future, but at the same time gazing nostalgically back towards the past'.[59] The ambivalent attitude of Roth towards post-war Jewish cultural reconstruction reflected the tension between his understanding of the special relationship with and responsibility towards the decimated European-Jewish communities, his strong need to identify with English-speaking co-religionists across the Atlantic and his passionate sympathy for the developing Jewish cultural life in Israel. This very global perspective was also battling against and interwoven with a local gaze which concentrated on the damaged position of British Jewry within Britain and of Britain within the world. The tension between the global and the local was to become a feature of Roth's work and action in the post-war period, as shall be further explored in the following section.

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[56] Letter Cecil Roth to Sefton Temkin, 20 January 1950, Records of the AJA, MS137, AJ95/ADD/JM/5, SUA.
[57] Kapralik, *Reclaiming the Nazi Loot*, pp. 88-89.
[58] See Michael Sissons and Philip French (eds.), *Age of Austerity, 1945-1951*, Second Edition, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1986).
[59] Pearson Phillips, 'The New Look', in Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, pp. 115-136, here p. 136.

ii. 'The English-Speaking Era': Cecil Roth and the Recasting of British Jews and British-Jewishness in the Post-War Global Climate[60]

At the same time as Roth and British Jews were addressing the issue of European-Jewish restitution and restoration, they were also involved in a general process of reconstruction of Britain as a whole. This was related to the redefinition of her global relationships in terms of empire, Europe and America. In the post-war period, global power and significance further shifted away from Britain, and British Jewry, and moved towards the USA, and the Jewish communities of the New World, including in Israel. In the post-war period European-Jewish life was perceived to have come to an end. Recent historiography has tended to repeat this notion.[61] David Weinberg, however, has stated that this view needs to be revised. He points to a post-war European-Jewish community that was asserting its distinctive identity and its potential as a 'third way' between Israeli isolationism and American individualism. The position of British Jewry in relation to Europe was not clear. British Jews sometimes defined the British Jewish experience as unique. They sometimes considered themselves as part of European Jewry and attempted to be part of a European-Jewish revival. At other times they allied themselves more closely with their American coreligionists and adopted a more paternalistic approach to the remaining European communities. British Jews and European Jewries, however, reacted defensively to American involvement in reconstruction efforts. It was generally understood that European Jewry could not be 'muscular' like the globally, politically visible American-Jewish community. It was, however, believed that it held spiritual and intellectual significance from which American Jewry drew its strength.[62] Roth's part in the British-Jewish conversation with the outside world in this period reflected all these many positions.

Throughout his career Roth simultaneously asserted a, sometimes irreconcilable, inward-looking Britishness as well as a cosmopolitan, diasporic identity, which looked sometimes to Europe, sometimes to America and sometimes to Israel. In the 1950s, these 'double-facing' concerns inspired and aided Roth and British Jewry. They reassessed and reasserted their position in both local and global

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[60] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'.
[61] See for example Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe Since 1945*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996).
[62] David Weinberg, 'Between America and Israel: The Quest for a Distinct European Jewish Identity in the Post-war Era', *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. V, no. 1, (Summer 2002), pp. 91-120, here, pp. 91-96 and 100-101.

terms, as a diasporic entity. This enabled the community to 'interrogate the universal with the particular' and 'to use cosmopolitanism to press the limits of the local'.[63] As 'place' took on a new significance in the period, simultaneously the question of time, the past and the future, was re-explored. The last section discussed how Roth and British Jewry approached the issue of using the past in the form of European objects of heritage to shore up the future in the form of new and dynamic Jewish communities in *Eretz Israel*. The combination of the imagining of an 'exciting future and the ancient past' was to form a theme in post-war Britain more generally. It was as integral as place in Roth's recasting of British Jewry for the post-war era, in the wake of the *Shoah* and the formation of the State of Israel.[64]

An important forum for the negotiation of post-war British identity was the Festival of Britain. The Festival of Britain is an event that is increasingly being recognised as significant in modern British history in that it offered punctuation to the reconstructive and austere immediate post-war period and helped the country look hopefully towards the future.[65] The Festival was held throughout the year of 1951, just before Labour's election defeat and the end of their post-war administration. Many have understood the event as a distinctly Labour project and a vehicle for selling their ideals of social welfare and reform. Yet Festival year meant more than political propaganda; in fact the planners took great care to avoid mention of Labour policies in the displays.[66] It was an educational project as well as a time for joyous abandon and for the showcasing of modern British architecture and design. In fact the term 'Festival' became synonymous with modern style and remained in usage long after the Conservatives had levelled much of the developed South Bank.[67] The Festival planners believed war-torn and ration-weary Britons deserved a party.[68] At the same time, the Festival offered an opportunity to face the nature of post-war

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[63] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, pp. 170-173.

[64] Becky E. Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 44.

[65] Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, pp. x and xvii; Michael Frayn, 'Festival', in Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, p. 324; Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*; See Conekin, Mort and Waters, *Moments of Modernity*.

[66] Adrian Forty, 'Festival Politics', Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier (eds.), *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 34; Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, pp. 17-18.

[67] Conservative Minister of Works, David Eccles, levelled the South Bank site on the defeat of the Labour government in autumn 1951. The site was turned into a garden for the Coronation celebrations. Forty, 'Festival Politics', p. 38.

[68] For the deprivations of the immediate post-war period or the 'Age of Austerity' see the essays in Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, especially that by Susan Cooper, 'Snoek Piquante: The Trials and Tribulations of the British Housewife', pp. 23-42.

Britishness head on and to confront the country's new place in the world scene. It ignored the context of empire and ostensibly turned its back on European integration. In fact, all things 'foreign', except the tourists, were supposedly censored from the displays and the entertainment.[69] Nonetheless, Festival style was that of Scandinavian clean and modern lines that introduced to the South Bank a 'strange 'un-English' atmosphere of space and light and sparkle' and the 'New Look' that so characterised the period as a whole issued from the Parisian House of Christian Dior.[70]

In the re-imagining of the community it became clear that the Festival was a party to which not all British people were invited. Distinct religious groupings were prohibited from having representation in the main celebrations. The Festival was not supposed to include any overtly religious and cultural references, as it was intended to be a purely secular event covering only the material progress of the country.[71] This secularity was by no means achieved. Becky Conekin argues that the Festival combined the religious with the political in its imagining of Britishness.[72] The Church of England was treated as the normative denomination and religion and was the only religious body to have representation on the Festival Council in the shape of the V. Rev. A. C. Don (who had acknowledged receipt of Roth's Blood Libel volume on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1935).[73] A Festival Form of Divine Service was issued after a plea for church support from Festival planners and a variety of religious events were held. The Festival even had its own official church, the Church of St. John, which was situated adjacent to the South Bank site.[74] The Festival was opened with a sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury in St. Paul's Cathedral. Although the Cathedral evoked symbolism beyond Christianity in the post-war period, as an 'icon of wartime survival', the overriding message was that Britishness and Christianity were synonymous.[75] This was confirmed in the Lion and the Unicorn Pavilion, which explicitly explored Britishness as a combination of the

[69] Forty, 'Festival Politics', p. 35; Conekin, The Autobiography of a Nation, pp. 27-30.
[70] Harry Hopkins, The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964), p. 271; Phillips, 'The New Look', pp. 117-136.
[71] Barnet Litvinoff, 'Britain's Jewish Intellectuals Look Ahead: Israel Grants a New Lease on Life', Commentary, vol. XIII, (May 1952), pp. 448-455, here p. 449; Roy Strong, 'Prologue', Banham and Hillier, A Tonic to the Nation, p. 6; Sidney Salomon, 'The Anglo-Jewish Exhibition: Illustrating a Century of Achievement', Jewish Affairs, (August 1951), Hugh Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/86, SUA; Board of Deputies Annual Report, 1950, p. 18, Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/86, SUA.
[72] Conekin, 'The Autobiography of a Nation', p. 118.
[73] Inyang Isola Ime Ebong, 'The Origins, Organisation and Significance of the Festival of Britain, 1951', (University of Edinburgh: doctoral thesis, 1986), p. 48.
[74] Conekin, The Autobiography of a Nation, p. 118.
[75] Idem., pp. 117-118.

Lion's strength and the Unicorn's fantasy, established Christianity as the third aspect of the British character alongside Law and the Constitution.[76]

Despite the marginalisation of minorities as minorities in the planning and implementation of the Festival, individual members of the British-Jewish community were involved. Many of the community's bright young things were numbered amongst the architects, designers and artists working on the main Festival attractions.[77] Yet, for the Board of Deputies and those acting in the defence of the community, a visible Jewish presence in the festivities demonstrating their participation in and contribution to the post-war national project was of prime importance. It would, they believed, demonstrate the Britishness of British Jewry. To this end, a group of Jewish intellectuals and defence workers, including Roth, held an unofficial British-Jewish event for the occasion, which took the shape of an exhibition of Anglo-Jewish life, 1851-1951, held at University College, London, in Festival year.[78]

The defensive tone and blandness of the Anglo-Jewish exhibition has been dealt with elsewhere.[79] It is, however, the differences between the communal Jewish contribution and the Festival at large which is most revealing of the intellectual position of the British-Jewish elites in relation to the rest of the country at this time. The activities and exhibition held by the community five years later on the occasion of the Tercentenary of the Re-admittance of the Jews in England, it has been noted, was a much more confident affair.[80] The Tercentenary celebrations can actually be

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[76] R. D. Russell and Robert Gooden, 'The Lion and Unicorn Pavilion', Banham and Hillier, *A Tonic to the Nation*, pp. 96-101

[77] Litvinoff, 'Britain's Jewish Intellectuals Look Ahead', p. 449.

[78] Cecil Roth was a vice-president of the organising committee. Litvinoff, 'Britain's Jewish Intellectuals Look Ahead', p. 449; *Britain on Show to the World*, General Festival of Britain Leaflet, Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/18, SUA; Book Exhibitions Leaflet, Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/6, SUA; Board of Deputies Annual Report, 1950, p. 18; Board of Deputies Annual Report, 1951, Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/83; Editorial, *Jewish Chronicle*, (6 July 1951), p. 12.

[79] Tony Kushner, 'The End of the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show': Representations of the Jewish East End, 1887-1987', in idem. (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 78-105, here pp. 83-84.

[80] Roth and his fellow organisers were, it has been convincingly argued, happier dealing with the earlier period of the Resettlement than they had been covering the last one hundred years in the Festival of Britain. This confidence was expressed, for example, through a less apologetic history of the formation of the State of Israel and the display of the history of the normally neglected history of the immigration of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 21 artefacts, though still a small proportion out of the total 802 objects, pertained to East End Jewry, including items from the Jewish Tailors' Strike 1889 and the first volume of the Yiddish, left-wing journal *Der Arbeter Freint*. Kushner, 'The End of the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show'', p. 83; *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History in Commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles*, (London: East and West Library for the Tercentenary Council, 1956), pp. 69-70 and 78-80.

understood as the British-Jewish Festival of Britain. Some of the personnel involved in the main Festival were now available to assist the British-Jewish events. These included the Tercentenary exhibition designer, Misha Black, who was heavily involved in the general Festival as a member of the Festival Presentation Panel and Design Group, the co-ordinating Architect for the upstream section of the South Bank Exhibition, the co-ordinating designer for the Dome of Discovery as well as a co-architect for the Regatta Restaurant and the Bailey Bridge.[81] Another example was the designer of the Tercentenary shield, Abram Games, who in 1951 had been the artist responsible for the ubiquitous Britannia and compass Festival emblem.[82]

The extent to which an overwhelmingly conservative communal leadership involved in the Tercentenary, including Roth as the President of the JHSE, embraced the modern ideas of these cutting edge designers was limited. Misha Black's suggestion to organise the Tercentenary exhibition to 'tell a story', which had been the Festival approach, was rejected in favour of a traditional chronological, historical approach and Abram Games had to fight off challenges to his simple, geometric, yet historically inspired, design as it was thought by some that it should include traditional Hebrew inscriptions.[83] The Tercentenary shield was a playful design, based on the emblem of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, and featured an open tent of Jacob 'with two Tudor roses springing gracefully from each flap'.[84] Nonetheless, the fresh input of these individuals did have an impact and one which may well explain the difference between the 1951 and 1956 Jewish exhibitions more satisfactorily than any real change in the community's position. In addition, the Festival provided the Tercentenary organisers with another model of celebration and display, although this sometimes sat uncomfortably with the original idea of the 1887 Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition as the predecessor. For example the catalogue for the National Book League's Festival display was suggested as a model for the

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[81] Banham and Hillier, *A Tonic to the Nation*, pp. 82.

[82] Naomi Games, Catherine Moriarty and Jane Rose, *Abram Games Graphic Designer: Maximum Meaning, Minimum Means*, (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2003), p. 183.

[83] Executive Committee Minutes, 5 May 1955, Papers Relating to the Mounting of an Exhibition on the Occasion of the Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in England, 1956, MS116/17, AJ49/17, SUA; Exhibition Sub-Committee Minutes, 8 August 1955, Tercentenary Papers, AJ49/34, SUA.

[84] For Abram Games see Games *et al.*, *Maximum Meaning, Minimum Means*, pp. 25, 180 and 183, and his official website at <www.abramgames.com>.

Tercentenary Book Exhibition and the Tercentenary Concert was held at the Royal Festival Hall.[85]

Where the Tercentenary could be seen most convincingly as a delayed British-Jewish Festival of Britain was in its engagement with post-war notions of place and time. Becky Conekin's recent monograph emphasises the dual significance of time and place in Festival discourses, but the 1951 Jewish contribution did not reflect the wider festivities in these respects to any great degree.[86] The main Festival was, in many ways, a forward-looking event. Robert Hewison has argued that this has been overestimated in accounts of the Festival. Conekin, however, convincingly posits that there was actually little in the way of nostalgia, but instead the combination of the 'exciting future and the ancient past' was stressed. She points to the fact in support of her case that no professional historian was employed by the Festival.[87] Although this does not and did not preclude the amateur presentation of the past, it points to a lack of emphasis on history. This was born out by the disappearance of the 1851 Great Exhibition as a focus of commemoration for Festival year, during the planning stages. The Victorian, imperial grandeur of the nineteenth-century world's fair and the associated evocation of British global prestige and power was no longer considered relevant in the post-war period as they had been replaced by economic and political contraction and insecurity.[88] More simply, Victoriana was stylistically thought to be out-of-date. It was considered too pretentious and over-fussy for post-war egalitarian and utilitarian tastes.[89]

In sharp contrast, the Anglo-Jewish exhibition embraced the 1851 anniversary and, therefore, the past. The event, for example, was described as 'present[ing] a picture of Anglo-Jewish life in the period 1851-1951', and the Jewish contribution to the Great Exhibition was evoked throughout Festival year.[90] 1851 was an obvious point of reference for the British-Jewish festivities as it coincided with an important date in the achievement of Jewish political emancipation in the country. This focus

[85] R. D. Barnett, 'Summary of Comments on Scheme drawn up by Cecil Roth', Memo of Book Exhibition, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/197, SUA; 'Provisional Arrangements for Tercentenary Celebrations', Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/46A, SUA.
[86] Conekin, The Autobiography of a Nation.
[87] Idem., pp. 44, 46 and 83.
[88] Strong, 'Prologue', p. 7.
[89] Conekin, The Autobiography of a Nation, pp. 80, 88-90.
[90] Board of Deputies Annual Report, 1951; Some Jewish Contributions to British Trade and Industry, (London: Anglo-Jewish Exhibition, 1951), Harris Papers, MS136, AJ36/7, SUA; 'Anglo-Jewish Exhibition', Jewish Chronicle, (6 July 1951).

could be seen in Sidney Salomon's article on the exhibition which was subtitled 'Illustrating a Century of Achievement'.[91] The contents of the Survey published to accompany the exhibition and the fact that it was written by Roth, a professional historian, underscored the emphasis on the past and its bearing on the present as well as the neglect of the future from the exhibition's narrative. Only in the section on Zionism is any reference made to the future, where Roth expressed his hope that relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews in Israel would be further strengthened 'in the years to come'.[92]

The Tercentenary celebration organisers, however, had much more of an eye on the future of the community. The event was inescapably held to commemorate the resettlement of the Jews in the country in 1656 and was accompanied with historical debate and presentations and evocations of the past, not least by Cecil Roth. Nonetheless, in comparison to 1951 the future featured far more prominently in 1956. Jewish youth, for example, were made the special focus of the celebrations as it was believed an investment in this group would help safeguard a Jewish future in the country. Jewish youth organisations were made the main beneficiaries of the Tercentenary appeal as funds were desperately needed to pay for running expenses and training for youth leadership. The age group 14-25 was specifically targeted as this was considered 'the period in which Jewish losses are greatest; viz. between early adolescence and the setting up of a home'.[93]

It was not only in the internal dynamics of the community that the Tercentenary was looking towards it future. The future position of Britain and British Jewry in the new world order was also confronted, especially by Cecil Roth. The neglect of an international context in the 1951 Jewish exhibition was in step to a degree with the main Festival narrative. Global contexts were here also underplayed due to the uncertainty over the basis of Britain's place in the world without the empire. Culturally, however, the Festival involved a greater degree of cosmopolitanism in a design sense than the British-Jewish contribution. British

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[91] Salomon, 'The Anglo-Jewish Exhibition', pp. 27-30.
[92] *Festival of Britain 1951: A Survey of Some of the Aspects of Anglo-Jewish life illustrated in the Anglo-Jewish Exhibtion at University College, London. July 9 to August 3*, (London: n.p., 1951), p. 17.
[93] 'Sub-committee on the Methods of Celebrating the Tercentenary', Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/39, SUA; Aims and Objects Sub-Committee, 'Aims and Objects of the Tercentenary Celebrations – Report to the Executive Committee, 25 January 1954, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/13, SUA; Executive Committee Minutes, 17 March 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/9, , SUA; 'Memorandum – amplifying paragraph 2 of the Report of the Sub-Committee on 'Methods of Celebrating the Tercentenary", Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/46A, SUA.

Jewry's Festival of Britain in 1956 built on some of the themes of Festival year and added multifaceted global contexts that both evoked the spirit of the British empire and the diasporic nature of the community.

The subject of the Tercentenary celebrations was fundamentally international. The Resettlement evoked the notion of Sephardic, *Converso* Jewish communities fleeing the long reach of the Inquisition to the more tolerant climates of the Atlantic Seaboard countries and underlined the diasporic status of the British-Jewish community. Furthermore, the post-war shift in the global standing of the nation affected British Jewry as both members of the British population and as members of the Jewish diaspora.[94] As Roth observed '[a]s the US has taken over England's position in the world, so US Jewry has inherited the status previously enjoyed by Anglo-Jewry – and far more so'.[95] Despite being the largest Jewish community in 'free' Europe, mass emigration to America from the ravaged communities of the European Continent ensured that British Jewry's numerical significance was outweighed.[96] Also, the British withdrawal from Palestine and the subsequent formation of the State of Israel, though greeted positively by some in the community, ironically stripped Jews in Britain of their centrality in the struggle for the establishment of a Jewish National Home and, therefore, depleted their world status and confidence.[97] At a conference in Jerusalem in 1957, Roth complained that so much had been said about American Jewry and Israel that it was 'time for [the audience] to be reminded of the existence of English Jewry'.[98]

The Tercentenary significantly nearly coincided with that of American Jewry, which was celebrated in 1954-55 and recalled the settlement of the 23 Jews who landed in New Amsterdam in 1654.[99] This neat coincidence allowed Roth, British Jewry and, to a degree, American Jewry to reevaluate the two communities'

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[94] See Litvinoff, 'Britain's Jewish Intellectuals Look Ahead', p. 448.
[95] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?', p. 198.
[96] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?', p. 198.
[97] See David Leitch, 'Explosion at the King David Hotel: Britain and the Problem of Palestine', in Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, pp. 45-67; Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 59.
[98] Cecil Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XLVI, (Autumn-Winter 1958), pp. 84-90, here p. 85.
[99] For the Festival of Britain see Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*; for the Jewish contribution to the Festival of Britain see *Festival of Britain 1951: A Survey* and Kushner, 'The End of the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show'', pp. 83-84; for the English Tercentenary see *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History in Commemoration of the Tercentenary* and Kushner, 'The End of the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show'', pp. 85-89; for the coincidence of both Tercentenary celebrations see Cecil Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty: The New World and the Mother Country*, (London: Anglo-Jewish Association, 1954), (reprinted from *Commentary*, vol. XVII, (February 1954), pp. 109-117).

relationship with each other in the changed global scene. Despite early enthusiasm on both sides, very little coordination between the two celebrations actually took place.[100] It was agreed that publications should be exchanged and that 'the two offices should exchange ideas and views on suggestions and problems' and it was suggested that the British contingent might send speakers to the States to lecture on 'the problems of Anglo-American Jewry relations past and present'.[101] Any transatlantic tercentennial discussions, however, were piecemeal, reflecting the wider tensions and even hostility extant between the two countries during the post-war period.[102]

Although the American participants in this inter-communal conversation were very keen to coordinate with the British community, their British interlocutor perhaps misunderstood the gesture. American-Jewish history, and in extreme cases, the American-Jewish community itself, was not thought of in Britain as existing entirely in its own right. For example, Rabinowicz suggested that American money might be forthcoming for the financing of the British Tercentenary as 'for many decades American Jewish history was just Anglo-Jewish history'.[103] Moreover, it was believed that American-Jewish history belonged to Anglo-Jewry (like the other British-Jewish communities) as a mere, and somewhat wayward, branch off the

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[100] Ralph Samuel, the Chairman of the American Jewish Tercentenary Committee, left the USA in 1952 on a tour of France, the Netherlands and England to establish international support for the American Tercentenary and to perhaps coordinate with the English celebration. The minutes of the English Tercentenary Committee mention his visit and his wishes but say little more. On his return, Samuel reported that he had spoken with a handful of leading personalities of the Anglo-Jewish community but that coordination was prevented as English planning had not reached the organisational stage at the time of his visit. Minutes of the Tercentenary Committee, 11 September 1952, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ 49/3 SUA; Circular letter to Members of the Tercentenary Committee from Ralph Samuel, 23 September 1952, Bertram Korn Papers, MS col. 99, 1/7, AJA, Cincinnati; Ben Gallob, "Ike' May Launch 300th Birthday of US Jews', *The National Jewish Post*, (2 January 1953), Tercentenary Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[101] Roth himself repeatedly made offers of speaking on subjects related to the American Tercentenary in letters to Henry Hurwitz of the *Menorah Journal* and to Jacob Marcus. In the end, however, it seems that Roth was only involved in a small symposium under the auspices of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, where the 'major achievements of American Jewry' were discussed. Although his name appeared on an early draft of scholars to be invited to the Conference of Historians, organised by the American Jewish Historical Society on the occasion of the Tercentenary, he did not appear at the conference and there is no evidence of an invitation having been sent. Oskar Rabinowicz, 'Report on my Discussions in New York', Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/41, SUA; Letter from Cecil Roth to Jacob Marcus, 27 February 1953, American Jewish Archives Records, MS col. 687, Cecil Roth File, AJA, Cincinnati; Press Release, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 10 September 1954, Cecil Roth Nearprint, Box 1, Clippings, AJA, Cincinnati; Tercentenary Committee Papers, American Jewish Tercentenary Celebration Collection, I-11, AJHS, New York.

[102] The connection with the USA was based upon a love-hate relationship, which grew increasingly intense in proportion to the level of association between the two countries. The Palestine Affair had caused a 'widespread sense of national pique', which frequently presented itself through an 'unreasoned hostility to America and all things American.' Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 109; Leitch, 'Explosion at the King David Hotel', p. 66.

[103] Rabinowicz, 'Report on my Discussions in New York'.

family tree. In 1927, Roth was keen for one of his articles to appear in America to be prefixed by an explanatory note that 'for present purposes, England is to be regarded as including America'.[104] 'By and large', he wrote, in 1954, almost thirty years later, 'American Jewry, in its formative period in the 18th century, was simply a microcosm ... of English Jewry'.[105] It is not surprising, therefore, that Jacob Neusner found it necessary to point out for the benefit of *Jewish Chronicle* readers that 'America is not ... simply a "jumbo-sized" England with a few Europeans thrown in'.[106]

The superior attitude displayed by many in British Jewry towards their American coreligionists persisted even at a time of dwindling British-Jewish status and ever-increasing American-Jewish global status. It would take more than a shift in the realities of the world scene to change the imperial mindset of specifically the British and likewise British Jews. Roth utilised the Tercentenary and the coincidence of the comparative American celebration to embrace an international grounding for British Jewish identity that was diasporic but also imperial. Robin Cohen has drawn attention to the fact that the original Greek meaning of the term 'diaspora' was more akin to the ideas of colonisation and migration rather than those of victimhood, exile and 'collective trauma', characteristic of Jewish, African, Palestinian and Armenian usages. He stresses, in a similar vein to Roth's article on the positive causes of Jewish migration, as discussed in Chapter One, that in the case of the Jewish diaspora, often taken as a model of the experience, not all migration was forced and that historically the Jewish dispersal was ambiguous.[107]

The concepts of empire and diaspora were combined in a British-Jewish context by Roth to allow the recasting of the global British-Jewish position. During the Festival of Britain the sponsored identity was exclusive of Empire; there was 'no Elgarian evocation of our mighty past'.[108] The Festival planners instead turned their attention to re-imagining Britain outside the context of empire. One way that this was achieved at the Festival and more generally in the post-war period was through the two interconnected notions of Britain keeping international significance both as a moral power and as the linguistic originator of the new modern world. The Lion and

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[104] Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 11 November 1927, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[105] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 16.
[106] Jacob Neusner, '300 years of American Jewish Life', *Jewish Chronicle*, (11 June 1954).
[107] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 2; Cecil Roth, 'Persecution or Economics?: The Causes of Jewish Migrations', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 4, (June 1931), pp. 337-348.
[108] Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 270; Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, p. 183.

Unicorn Pavilion guidebook stressed the latter of these. It claimed '[t]hrough the English language, once upon a time, a huddle of British Islanders founded a mother tongue. Through it, to-day, two hundred and fifty million people can converse together'.[109]

In the post-war, post-imperial period the notion of Anglo-Saxon mission, which had formed the central spine of the moral justification of the empire, was easily adapted to the concept of 'Anglo-Saxon patriotism' or 'the English-speaking peoples'. As the 'lost dominion' it was not imagined that America could be again included in a 'Greater Britain'. Nonetheless, Anglo-Saxonism could unite the States and Britain, along with other useful ex-colonies, whilst evoking and maintaining English centrality.[110] Although Roth observed that the term Anglo-Saxon was 'more than a little ridiculous for Jewish purposes', as a linguistic concept it shaped Roth's vision of the world, especially in the post-war context.[111] In 1947 he added a leading essay question to his *A Bird's Eye View of Jewish History* that asked '[w]hat is the reason for the present importance of English-speaking Jewry?'[112] He explicitly clarified his philologically based designation of the 'English-speaking element' in world Jewry as 'the Jewish communities of the 'Anglo-Saxon' countries', 'England, the British Commonwealth, and the United States of America', for whom 'the native and natural language' was English.[113]

In 1928, Roth observed that English-speaking Jewry came second only to Yiddish-speaking communities in their influence on the Jewish world.[114] The wartime destruction of Yiddish communities and culture meant that for Roth the post-war period heralded the 'English-Speaking Era'. Roth was never what could be called a Yiddishist anyway and favoured Hebrew as the modern international Jewish tongue. He never learnt Yiddish and in 1949 published an article entitled 'Yiddish has no Future', in which he described the language as a 'sectional tongue' and charged it as

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[109] Cited in Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, p. 96.
[110] Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 489; Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness*, (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 215.
[111] Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 11 November 1927, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[112] Annotated, working copy of Cecil Roth, *A Bird's Eye View of Jewish History*, (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1935), p. 396, CRP, MS156, AJ147, SUA.
[113] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'; for the idea of the philological identification of peoples through language see Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 30.
[114] Cecil Roth, 'Jewish History For Our Own Needs', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 5, (May 1928), pp. 419-434, here p. 425.

being a 'cause of disunion among Jewry'.[115] This position was not untypical within British Jewry and was associated with the imagining of the community as middle class and integrated but also, due to the dichotomy with Hebrew, was a Zionist stance. It was not Hebrew, but English, however, that Roth identified as the most important language for modern Jewry. Together the Jews of America and the British Empire and Commonwealth constituted 'numerically, the greatest homogenous linguistic bloc that there has ever been in the Jewish world'.[116] Further, as a body he compared it favourably with nineteenth-century German Jewry at its peak of cultural output as being 'far greater in numbers, in wellbeing and ... on the whole in enthusiasm'.[117]

The principle of the English-speaking peoples was very useful to Roth. Ultimately, as the birthplace of the most important language in the world, England and, therefore, British Jewry could be presented as superior to their 'brash' cisatlantic cousins.[118] The purity of the English language was considered of integral importance to the country becoming an imperial power in the eighteenth century. In the same way Roth asserted English, at least linguistic, ownership of the United States as he struggled to come to terms with the 'translation' of his work into 'colloquial American' when published in the USA.[119] The concept of the English-speaking era, however, managed to acknowledge the current supremacy of America and American Jewry, whilst recalling their English and Anglo-Jewish origins. The social and political progress of the USA could be ascribed to 'the common heritage of the English-speaking world' without damaging the English ego.[120] For example, in a Burkean assessment, Roth stressed the importance of the American emancipation of her Jewish population as a continuation of English values and not a break from them when he emphasised that it was social emancipation as immortalised in the US Constitution on the establishment of American Independence, 'rather than the enactments in France a few years later, which set the tradition for Jewish

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[115] Cecil Roth, 'Yiddish has no Future', *South African Jewish Times*, (September 1949), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), p. 129; Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 40-76.
[116] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'; Roth, 'Jewish Culture: Renaissance or Ice Age', p. 329.
[117] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'.
[118] Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry'.
[119] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 25-27; Letter Cecil Roth to Herbert Solow, 11 November 1927, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/3, AJA, Cincinnati.
[120] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'; Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 16.

Emancipation in the modern world'.[121] Liberal treatment of the Jews was, in fact, passed to America, the child, by England, the parent country.[122]

It is significant that Roth chose to demonstrate that emancipation, as the natural continuance of English values, owed its origins in America to English influence. The notion of the English-speaking peoples acted as a device to separate the experience of Jews in England and her colonies, including America, from the European example of persecution and trial. Roth, where possible, avoided the word 'resettlement' when describing the event in preference for 'the tercentenary of the establishment of our modern Jewish community'.[123] This piece of wordplay removed the implication of the expulsion, linguistically severing the link of British-Jewish history from European-Jewish history, which Roth had at times helped to contrive. For Roth, British-Jewish history and American-Jewish history was an anti-lachrymose history. He asserted:

> It is not only wrong but it is absurd, it is ludicrous, to speak of England and the United States in the same terms as one would speak of Russia and Poland and Germany ... England has been our mother, she has not been our stepmother ... she has been our "*Osmeneth*", our nurse, in the fullest and tenderest sense of that Biblical term.[124]

Exponents of the American-Jewish view, at the time of the Tercentenary, would have agreed with Roth in terms of their own past, but would not have bracketed England together with their land of the free. The preferred interpretation of American-Jewish history and of American history in general was that 'the attitudes, customs, and laws of the Old World were almost at once anachronistic'. Problems relating to the position of the Jews in America were often attributed to the connection with England, as was illustrated by an account written on the occasion of the American-Jewish Tercentenary. This suggested that anti-Jewish prejudice in the social sphere in the late-nineteenth century was due to the rise of an English notion of ancestral aristocracy and the importance placed on being able to display ties to England.[125]

Roth contested this view and argued that '[t]he new and free development of a Jewry without any social distinction took place simultaneously on both sides of the

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[121] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 14.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p. 4.
[124] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', pp. 86-87.
[125] Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, 'The Acquisition of Political and Social Rights by the Jews in the United States', *American Jewish Year Book*, (1955), pp. 43-98, here pp. 43 and 72.

Atlantic'.[126] He demonstrated his point in a refutation of the possible 'myths and legends' that were likely to arise during the course of the historical celebration of the American Tercentenary. Roth feared that 'the observance of this great anniversary may see a revival of the now superseded melodramatic presentation of the early chapters of the history of the United States in relation to the Mother Country'.[127] In the general dastardly picture of the Old World, Roth argued, 'England was on the whole an honourable exception'. Taking every right given to the new American community in order, as they were presented in literature published by the American Tercentenary Committee, Roth set out to match each one in the simultaneous English experience.[128]

Roth took his argument even further by claiming that the situation in England was actually preferable to that in the United States in an inversion of the tendency he perceived where 'all on the one side of the Atlantic is bright, and all (or almost all) on the other side is made to appear dark'.[129] Instead of being merely part of an American plurality, British Jews enjoyed being fully integrated within a British unity. Due to the 'English experience and because of the record and the psychology of the English people', what happened on the Continent, Roth asserted, could never happen in Britain. And, remarkably he added, this could be said with more confidence even than in the USA, as the low level of tension even over something as difficult as the Palestine Affair provided evidence of the degree of Jewish acceptance.[130] In addition, he artfully conjectured that the only reason that political emancipation was delayed in England was due to the high level of social emancipation. In contrast to the USA, he explained, social restrictions against the Jews in England were too rare to warrant any special emancipatory legislation.[131] For Roth British-Jewish experience was representative of, and indeed the source of, the ideas of the New World, in the same way that he had argued that the Jews were the source of European civilisation.

As with his input in cultural reconstruction ten years previously and in parallel to the general conversations in Britain at the time, Roth's work aligned British-Jewish history with the American Jewish experience as the holders of modernity and the

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[126] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 85.
[127] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 3.
[128] Ibid., pp. 7-11.
[129] Ibid., p. 3.
[130] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 85.
[131] Ibid., p. 86; Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, pp. 6-7.

future juxtaposed to the old world of Europe. He concluded his piece on the American-Jewish Tercentenary with

> We the Jews of the Anglo-Saxon world are brought together not only by a common destiny and a common tongue, but also by a similar historical experience.[132]

The construction of the English-speaking era was integral in Roth's formation of a 'foundation myth' to create a shared past in which the community could root their perhaps less than cohesive contemporary group identity. British-Jewish identity was not submerged within the English-speaking category but was part of an isolation of a specific and unique definition of British Jewry's past and present. The romantic Sephardic *Converso* past of the Jewries of the Atlantic seaboard was used as the shared foundation myth both of a diverse and divided British Jewry and of English-speaking Jewry in general.

The British celebrations stressed the Sephardic origins of the secret Jewish community in Britain and those who joined them, fleeing the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal, after the readmittance at the time of Cromwell.[133] Similarly, despite his voyage occurring over a century before the arrival of the 23 Jews in New Amsterdam, the constructed Sephardic Jewishness of the Genoan Columbus, or at least of his crew and navigational methods, provided an appropriate motif for the American celebrations.[134] Columbus acted as a romantic character who reiterated the Jewish claim to longevity and American citizenship in the same way that Italian-Americans utilise his memory. In addition, Columbus directly tied the establishment of the new Jewish world with the Spanish Expulsion, as the edict commissioning Columbus's voyage and that expelling the Jews from Spain were issued on the same day. Roth also contributed to the American construction of a Jewish Columbus, demonstrating

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[132] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 16.
[133] See the *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History in Commemoration of the Tercentenary*, pp. 18-21 and 27, esp. Roth's introduction, p. 5.
[134] See, for example Abraham G. Duker, 'A Brief Review of American Jewish History', *Community Manual, 1654-1954 The American Jewish Tercentenary*, American Tercentenary Collection, I-11/7/3, AJHS, New York; *Tercentenary Exhibition of Historic Documents, Prints and Pictures covering the 300 years of Jewish life in the USA*, (New York: Committee for the 300th Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in the USA, 1954), American Tercentenary Collection, I-11/9/1, AJHS, New York; *Under Freedom: An Exhibition Commemorating the Three Hundredth Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in the United States of America*, (New York: American Jewish Tercentenary Committee and the JTS, 1954).

his support for the symbolic representation of the transference of Jewish cultural power directly from Sephardic Spain to English-Speaking America.[135]

In the same way that Columbus took on a special role in the American-Jewish foundation myth, the British Tercentenary overemphasised the role of Dutchman Menasseh ben Israel in securing the resettlement and therefore the birth of the modern Anglo-Jewish community. A whole section of the exhibition, entitled 'Menasseh ben Israel and his Mission,' was dedicated to him, a commemorative medallion featuring his portrait was produced and sold for the occasion and early plans featured an eventually unfilled proposal to organise a pilgrimage to the tomb of Menasseh ben Israel in Middleburg, Holland.[136]

Beyond the dubious claims that it was Menasseh's 'writings that had prepared the mind of the English people to welcome the Jews again in their midst' and his 'engaging personality' that supposedly cast a spell over Cromwell, there is little, as Roth himself admitted in his earlier biography of the character, *Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi, Printer, Diplomat*, that qualifies his description as 'the founder of Anglo-Jewry'.[137] The desperation to give credit to the Dutchman with the romantic *Converso* past for engineering the safe return of the Jews to England stemmed from his utility as an historical hero for the strengthening of British-Jewish identity. Menasseh offered a Sephardic and religious character, a rabbi, in fact, who apparently embarked upon a mission to resettle the Jews in England as an act of preparation for the fulfilment of the messianic prophesy.[138] The Tercentenary and specifically the character of Menasseh provide the opportunity for the emphasis of the Sephardic past of the community and the common heritage with and actual parentage of American Jewry. It also allowed for the underlining of the British-Jewish importance, historically, religiously and politically, in the establishment of the Jewish State.

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[135] Cecil Roth, 'Who *Was* Columbus?: In the Light of New Discoveries', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XXVIII, no. 3, (October-December 1940), pp. 279-295.
[136] *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Anglo-Jewish Art and History in Commemoration of the Tercentenary*, pp. 19-21; Minutes of the Tercentenary Celebration Committee, 17 March 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/9, SUA; Minutes of the Tercentenary Celebration Executive Committee, 17 June 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ 49/10, SUA; Minutes of the Tercentenary Celebration Committee, 26 July 1956, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/24, SUA; Medallion order form and photographs, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/177, 178 and 181, SUA.
[137] Cecil Roth, *Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi, Printer, Diplomat*, (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1934), pp. 282, 231 and xi.
[138] Roth, *Menasseh ben Israel*.

For Roth, who saw the world in the context of both empire and exile, Anglo-Jewry was at the centre of an empire and a diaspora. Robin Cohen's redefinition and typology of the term allows for a comparison of the Jewish diaspora with the British imperial diaspora, both of which utilised a notion of chosenness.[139] He associates Zionism with British empire building, suggesting that the realities of the imagined 'ingathering' of exiles actually more readily evokes the facilitating of white settlement in far away places by British chartered companies.[140] Roth anticipated this parallel but approached it from the opposite perspective. He used the imagery and language of empire to describe the original and ancient migration of Jews out of the Holy Land. He referred to the very early Jewish settlers as 'pioneers' who 'penetrated through untold dangers' to bring 'the germs of Western civilisation' and 'centers of humanization' to the 'barbarous lands' and 'dreary wastes' of Europe. Such language evoked the rhetoric of empire. To characterise Europe before the arrival of Jewish colonists as wasteland followed the technique of negation. This, for empire builders, provides 'a kind of provisional erasure, clearing a space for the expansion of the colonial imagination'. Describing the continent as barbaric followed the imperial process of debasement whereby differences between the colonised and coloniser are emphasised to justify intervention – the land contains only savages who will benefit from the civilising influence of the new arrivals.[141] And, in an artful piece of rhetoric that marvels over the historical significance of Palestine facing the West rather than the East, Roth concluded how it was 'to Europe rather than to Asia that it has sent its children as colonists'.[142] British Jews, as the combination of the descendants of the culmination of the ancient Jewish colonisation of Europe and the British inheritors of the spirit of empire, had been 'chosen' twice. They represented the ultimate global and local force: more Jewish than the Jews and more British than the British.

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[139] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, pp. 67 and 116.

[140] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 116.

[141] Roth, 'The Jew as a European', p. 31; David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 7, 77-78 and 92.

[142] Roth, 'The Jew as a European', p. 30.

iii. The Cultural Significance of 'Places of Jewish Interest': Cecil Roth, Provincial British-Jewish History and Jewish Tourism[143]

According to Stuart Hall, the post-war period ushered in a new cultural localism as a reaction to increasing globalisation.[144] Hall was referring to an upturn in nationalisms, but this trend, as W. G. Hoskins noted, extended to a new emphasis on regional concerns and local history. The Festival of Britain reflected this trend through the significance given to 'place' in the form of the provinces and regions. The main events were held in London, specifically on the South Bank and at Battersea Pleasure Gardens. Yet, there were two touring exhibitions by land and by sea, centrally organised events were held in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and a number of regional Arts Festivals took place. Independent Festival events were encouraged and held around the country.[145] The Anglo-Jewish 1951 exhibition was less concerned with the involvement of the provinces beyond the fact that visitors from them might be in London during Festival year.[146] The 1956 Tercentenary celebrations, however, followed the Festival of Britain precedent. It encouraged local events but also sought provincial representation on the central council. Although the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition did not tour due to security concerns, it was recommended that 'every encouragement be given to the provincial communities to organise similar exhibitions illustrating their history'. In addition, the London based Tercentenary lecture series was repeated at other locations around the country.[147] So, at the same time as 'looking out' in order to re-cast the place of Britain and British Jewry in the world, the Tercentenary celebrations were 'looking in' to express the cultural meaning of place in British-Jewish identity and the security of localism.

The tension between global and the local, empire and exile, was played out in the attention Roth paid to, on the one hand, local, as in regional and provincial Jewish history, and, on the other hand, international Jewish travel, in the late 1950s and early

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[143] Cecil Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest in Europe for this Year's Tourist', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (January 1961).
[144] Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', pp. 300, 310-314.
[145] Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, pp. 8, 116, 123 and 155-156.
[146] Board of Deputies Annual Report, 1951.
[147] Minutes of Council Meeting, 20 January 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/6, SUA; Executive Committee Minutes, 17 June 1955, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/11, SUA; Exhibition Sub-Committee, 5 May 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/25, SUA; Executive Committee Minutes 17 June 1953, Tercentenary Papers, MS116/17, AJ49/10, SUA.

1960s.[148] Developing a trend already established, mainly by Roth, in the 1930s, local and provincial British-Jewish history became more significant after the war. Interrelated to this phenomenon was the growth of Jewish, and indeed general, touristic literature in the period. Both genres were useful, as the example of Roth demonstrates, for reaffirming British-Jewish identity in the face of domestic and global considerations, through the presentation of particular versions of the past.

Wartime destruction and decay of the local environment was for many tastes continued in Britain after the end of hostilities in the shape of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. By the mid-Fifties, half of the 15 planned New Towns had been built. Their emphasis on utility in modern design and town planning that fitted in so well with the idea of a social revolution was less compatible with the preservation of the country's antiquarian and picturesque architecture and landscape.[149] The destruction of historic landmarks initiated an effort to stem the flow of the erosion of the country's heritage or to at least to record it, as, to some, the evidence of England's age and former greatness appeared to be running like sand through an hour glass.[150] Bill Williams, historian of Manchester Jewry, described the phenomenon as 'a determination to preserve at least the memory of a familiar world which was fast slipping away in the wake of 'urban renewal'.[151] Historiographically, the trend was epitomised by the 'Leicester School', represented by W. G. Hoskins and H. P. R. Finberg. The Leicester School's local emphasis was a reaction to increasing globalisation and modernity, which Hoskins believed was unravelling community ties and a sense of place.[152] Refocusing history upon geographically specific spaces, it was hoped, would enable them to be 'culturally loaded with a system of significant symbolic weight which transform them into 'places''.[153]

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[148] Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, (London: The Jewish Monthly, 1950); Cecil Roth, *Jews in Oxford After 1290*, (reprinted from *Oxoniensia*, vol. XV, 1950); Cecil Roth, *Jews of Medieval Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society, New Series vol. IX, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951); Cecil Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe', *Jewish Heritage*, (Spring 1959); Cecil Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening: Jewish tourists overseas should visit synagogues; some helpful advice: what to see, how to act in England, France, Italy, Holland and Israel', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (June 1960); Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest'.
[149] Hopkins, *The New Look*, pp. 474-476.
[150] Hoskins, *Local History in England*.
[151] Bill Williams, 'Heritage and Community: The Rescue of Manchester's Jewish Past', Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, p. 133.
[152] Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, pp. 234-236; Hoskins, *Local History in England*.
[153] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propanganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1947*, (Rochester, USA: University of Rochester Press, 2003), p. 152.

The increasing popularity of local history in the wider society was reflected in the Jewish example predominantly through the pioneering work of Roth in this field. This work, however, was not confined to the post-war era. In the interwar period he had already published a serial dealing with the history of a different provincial Jewish community each edition in *The Jewish Monthly*, which was later to be republished in book form, and had treated the communities at Penzance and Portsmouth to 'more or less exhaustive studies'.[154] During his wartime presidency of the JHSE, his presidential addresses focused on elements of provincial history.[155] For many in British Jewry, including Roth, local history provided a means to establish the longevity and depth of Jewish settlement in the country and demonstrated a reaction to antisemitic accusations of globalism and internationalism.

The localist grounding of a Jewish past firmly within the physical past of the country was, however, a very usable strategy for post-war British Jewry in establishing 'spaces of belonging' as '[c]harging geographical sites with cultural significance is one of the well-known processes of establishing a collective memory'.[156] It has been argued by Ian Baucom that localism allowed for explanations of nationalist ideas via place as opposed to race or ethnicity, and therefore English identity, in localist understanding, is not predetermined and can be acquired or lost.[157] Baucom ignores, however, the fact that racial and ethnic identities are often further reinforced by being tied to ideas of place. Racial discourse can be even more explicit in local contexts due, in part, to the usefulness of place in constructing collective memory. In countering racial localism, rooting British Jewry into the countryside and provinces was a useful strategy.

Roth admitted in his *The Rise of Provincial Jewry* that:

> [i]n view of the ... immigration at the close of the last century which all but overwhelmed the older element, it is not only of interest, but of importance, to demonstrate that the English Jews are rooted in this country.[158]

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[154] Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*; Cecil Roth, *The Portsmouth Community and its Historical Background*, (London: JHSE, 1936), (first publ. in *TJHSE*, vol. XIII, (1932-1935), pp. 157-187); Cecil Roth, 'Penzance: The Decline and Fall of an Anglo-Jewish Community', *Jewish Chronicle Supplement* (May and June 1933).
[155] Roth, 'Presidential Speech, The Jubilee Meeting', p. 170.
[156] Bar-Gal, *Propanganda and Zionist Education*, p. 152.
[157] Baucom, *Out of Place*, pp. 16-17, 20 and 30.
[158] Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, p. 12.

Emphasising the longevity of the British-Jewish community, and therefore the long connection of the Jews with Britain, was significant at a time when its 'Britishness' was questioned by some in the country, who were suspicious of the effect of Zionism and the existence of a State of Israel upon British-Jewish patriotism.[159] Furthermore, for Roth, the specific chocolate box variety of picturesque and historic 'Englishness' conjured up by an association with medieval provincialities was particularly beneficial for the community's image as it overturned the 'urban Jew stereotype'. The same association between ethnicity and land was used to strengthen Anglo-Jewish identity and to support the notion of an Anglo-Jewish race. It was no coincidence that the racial memories with which Roth imbued 'returning' English Jews were all connected to the physical landscape in the shape of 'leafy lanes', 'the wide sweep of the downs' and 'the bare loveliness of the new ploughed fields'.[160]

Local Jewish history's association with a geographically specific apologetic was revealed when Roth and the JHSE visited Lincoln, at the invitation of the Lincoln Architectural and Archaeological Society and the mayor in 1934 as discussed in the previous chapter.[161] As the blood libel had again reared its ugly head under the influence of Nazi anti-Semitism, the tour, which included Lincoln Cathedral where the tomb of the child can be viewed, served to secure a public denunciation of the alleged ritual murder of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln by the Jewish community in 1255. Simultaneously, the inclusion in the tour of more positive historical sites of Lincoln associated with the pre-expulsion Jewish community facilitated the rooting of the history of the Jews firmly into the actual physical history and landscape of England. The building known as 'Jew's Court', which Roth argued would have housed the synagogue of the medieval community, provided an apt end point to the excursion and attention was also brought by Roth in his concluding lecture to the adjacent

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[159] Tony Kushner, 'Anti-Semitism and Austerity: the August 1947 riots in Britain', in Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Racial Violence in Britain, 1840-1950*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), pp. 149-168.
[160] Cecil Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', being part i) of 'The Challenge to Jewish History', Presidential Addresses, 20 October 1936 and 11 January 1938, *TJHSE*, vol. XIV, (1935-1939), pp. 1-21.
[161] 'Lincoln and Pre-Expulsion Jewry, Jewish Historical Society's Visit, The Blood Libel Officially Denounced', *Jewish Chronicle*, (29 June 1934), pp. 25-26.

property, known as Jew's House, that was thought to be the oldest inhabited house in England.[162]

For British Jewry, old Jewish buildings in Britain breathed historical importance not only into their locale but also into British Jewry itself. Writing about Lancaster, John Urry argues:

> because there has been a 'rich' history the old buildings appear not merely old but historically important, and in turn the buildings signify that the place is properly old – that it is…steeped in history.[163]

Old Jewish buildings across the country were an indelible reminder that British Jewry itself was 'properly old.' Additionally, the associated theory that the Jews introduced stone houses to the country allowed for the emphasis of the Jewish contribution to Britain's landscape, skills and greatness.[164]

Old synagogues were especially treasured as they highlighted the timeless religiosity of the British-Jewish community through the ages as well as recalling the long held British principle of religious tolerance. It is significant, for example, that it was the threat to the historic Spanish and Portuguese congregation's Bevis Marks synagogue that moved Roth's predecessor, Lucien Wolf, and others to form the Anti-Demolition League in 1886. This movement is credited with being the precursor to the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition and the JHSE.[165] The Ashkenazi synagogue was equally important in Roth's lifetime. Unlike Bevis Marks however, it could not be saved from demolition as it was destroyed in a wartime air-raid. In Roth's *History of the Great Synagogue,* the building represented British Jewry as a whole as an institution which 'for two hundred and fifty years has combined Jewish and British

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[162] 'Lincoln and Pre-Expulsion Jewry', pp. 25-26; Cecil Roth, 'Medieval Lincoln Jewry and its Synagogue', *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History,* (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1962), (first read as a paper at Lincoln in 1934 and published as a brochure by the JHSE in 1934), pp. 52-56.
[163] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies,* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 118.
[164] The link between Jews and Norman stone houses is not so clear cut. There were Jews in medieval England who did not live in stone houses and stone houses in England who were not inhabited by Jews. An association of sorts is, however, generally accepted by historians. Raphael M. J. Isserlin, 'Building Jerusalem in the 'Islands of the Sea': The Archaeology of Medieval Anglo-Jewry', in Sharman Kadish (ed.), *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain,* (London and Portland, USA: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), pp. 34-53, here pp. 39, 42-43; Joe Hillaby, 'Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century', in Patricia Skinner (ed.), *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives,* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 15-40, here p. 34.
[165] David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages?: Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry', in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage,* p. 32.

ideals'.[166] By using the historic building as a focus, Roth was able to root the history of a British-Jewish community into the physical and social landscape of London as well as into its past.

An ancient manmade edifice stands as the legacy of a past society and evokes a sense of permanency and resistance to erosion or ruin. For Roth, the Great Synagogue represented British Jewry. Its wartime destruction was therefore a symbolic event in the same way that the untouched St. Paul's Cathedral evoked positive feelings of survival for post-war Britain.[167] It was, he believed, an irony that in the same air-raid Westminster Abbey had been damaged. The Anglican community and more widely non-Jewish British life had been superficially injured in the war, whereas British Jewry's survival had, he believed, been called into question.[168] The community had been severely undermined by evacuation and worse by 'indifferentism' and intermarriage.[169] The appearance of Roth's monograph on *The Rise of Provincial Jewry* and the publication of his researches on the Jews of Oxford were an attempt to bring Jewish meaning and Jewish cultural education to the very doorsteps of the inflated body of post-war provincial Jewry.[170]

Much of Roth's local Jewish history goes to great pains to allow the reader to picture the geography of the past events in reference to the modern topography of the town in question. In his *History of the Jews in Medieval Oxford*, Roth located the medieval Jewish quarter through the street names and buildings extant at the time of writing. For example, Roth revealed that the road known as St. Aldate's in Oxford was previously known, during the Middle Ages, as the Great Jewry. He was also eager for specific sites of Jewish historical interest, for example the site of the Jewish burial ground from 1232 to 1290 that lay under Oxford Botanical Gardens, to be marked as such.[171] With his work on specific histories of local Jewish communities in

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[166] The volume was completed in the early years of the war but paper shortages delayed its publication. Cecil Roth, *History of the Great Synagogue*, (London: Goldston, 1950).

[167] Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, pp. 117-118.

[168] Roth, *History of the Great Synagogue*, p. viii.

[169] Cecil Roth, 'Letter From England', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (October 1941); Roth, 'Anglo-Jewry is Threatened with Extinction', p. 2, Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[170] Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*; Roth, *Jews of Medieval Oxford*; Roth, *Jews in Oxford*; Roth, 'Anglo-Jewry is Threatened with Extinction', p. 2, Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

[171] Concerning a rose garden in Oxford Botanical Gardens, on the site of the old Jewish cemetery, that was being restored for the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation in 1953, Roth apparently suggested that '[t]he fact ... be stated, and linked with her benefaction, in any inscription that may be placed here in connexion with the restoration.' Cited in a letter from Henry Hurwitz to Mrs. Albert Lasker, 5 March 1953, Henry Hurwitz Papers, MS col. 2, 50/6, AJA, Cincinnati.

Britain, Roth both attempted to label British Jewry for British Jewry as well as a non-Jewish audience as 'properly old' and yet not dead and buried.

Roth's local history worked also as pieces of travel literature, which could be beneficially read in conjunction with visiting the locations as a means of imbuing Jewish meaning throughout the British landscape for Jewish travellers.[172] The construction of picturesque, especially, Englishness for foreign consumers was also part of a general trend in the post-war era that was associated with the growth of mass travel and tourism. During Festival year, tours of Britain were planned, though unrealised, as a means to establish a picture of the country as diverse yet united.[173] Charles Plouviez described the 1950s as the beginning of the "English disease". It was, he explained, when the English no longer attempted to lead the world as an industrial and imperial power and instead became 'the world's entertainers, coaxing tourists to laugh at our eccentricities, marvel at our traditions and wallow in our nostalgia'.[174] The British Travel Association (the Tourist Division of the British Tourist and Holidays Board) was established in 1947. It sent representatives around the globe to encourage tourism to Britain. Travel guides and local histories allowed for the contrived authoritative representation of what constituted English tradition, landscape and way of life. This contributed to the rise of 'autoethnography' and the construction of 'culture-for-export' and added a 'new gloss to the Ancient British Tradition Industry'.[175] This was revealed by the nature of Festival publicity abroad when four London buses, iconographic of England's anachronistic eccentricity, were sent on a tour around the continent.[176]

After the Second World War, the wartime development of transport and communications and wartime experience of foreign climes opened up new possibilities and the inclination for travel.[177] By the end of the 1950s advancement in cheap mass air travel and car ferries and changes in working conditions legislation contributed to tourism being one of the fastest growing of Britain's industries. The

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[172] Bar-Gal, *Propanganda and Zionist Education*, p. 152.

[173] Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, p. 128.

[174] Charles Plouviez, employee in the Festival Office, 'A minor mannerism in art history', both in Banham and Hillier, *A Tonic to the Nation*, p. 166.

[175] James Buzzard, 'Culture for Export: Tourism and Autoethnography in Postwar Britain', in Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, (eds.), *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, (Ann Arbor, USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 299-319, here pp. 299-301; Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 464.

[176] Bevis Hillier, 'Introduction', p. 15.

[177] Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 21; Bertram M. Gordon, 'French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem', in Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*, p. 240.

stability and growth of the economy in Britain and America provided the disposable income and the further modernisation of work and home afforded the time for travel to a much wider demographic than before.[178] Jewish communities were touched by the general travel epidemic arguably to a greater degree than non-Jews. As a diaspora, the Jewish population were more likely to enjoy real or imagined international connections.

For some more recent commentators, such as literary theorist Paul Fussell, the dawn of mass tourism signified the end of travel. Travel is distinguished from tourism by its active acquisition of authentic knowledge as opposed to the tourist's supposed passive and superficial experience. Others, such as John Urry, Dean MacCannell and Rudy Koshar, argue contrarily that the modern 'tourist's gaze' is as much an active search for meaning and identity as the constructed notion of the 'traveller's' authentic experience.[179] As a seasoned traveller himself, Roth's own identity was shaped by his foreign excursions and he set about encouraging others to take consciously Jewish trips abroad for the purposes of Jewish education and cultural strengthening. In this respect, Roth hoped to 'travel-ise' Jewish tourism in order to exploit the opportunities for immersion in Jewish heritage that modern travel allowed. It is clear that he categorised his own experiences abroad as those of a 'traveller', and not a tourist. His time, for example, staying in an Italian *Pensione* was, he believed, an 'insight into the old authentic Italian Jewish life, surviving from Ghetto days'.[180]

Roth intended his travel guides to encourage others, whom he presumed might otherwise be mere passive tourists, to attach specific Jewish meaning to the sights he recommended that they must see and become involved in the Jewish communities they might encounter during their visit.[181] It has been argued that the process of travel writing tends in fact to distance the reader from the subject. It is a form of aestheticization, of 'distantiation, transformation, privilege, displacement,

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[178] In 1937 the Holidays-with-Pay Committee reported that only one and a half million workers were receiving paid holiday. By the end of the war, however, 14 million were entitled to one week. 1951 saw the campaign for two weeks paid holiday, which was to become the norm and higher wages and the five-day week all contributed to the travel culture. By 1958 2 million Britons were going abroad for their time off. Hopkins, *The New Look*, pp. 341 and 461.

[179] Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*, pp. 2-4; see Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*; Rudy Koshar, 'What Ought to Be Seen': Tourists' Guidebooks and National Identities in Modern Germany and Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. III, no. 3, (1998), pp. 323-340; Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1989).

[180] Cecil Roth, 'A *Pensione* and People', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XLVII, nos. 1 and 2, (Autumn-Winter 1959), pp. 104-116, here p. 105.

[181] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', p. 22; Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest', p. 24; For the use of travel guides in the 'framing' of tourist sites see Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*, p. 9.

consumption, and alienation'.[182] Roth, however, hoped to bring co-religionists together in different countries in order to strengthen religious and cultural ties. On a very basic level the purpose of the travel guides was to remind Jewish tourists not to abandon their Judaism whilst on holiday. The subtitle to one guide read very explicitly 'Jewish tourists overseas should visit synagogues', another stated 'the traveller should remember that synagogue attendance is as much his duty when he is on vacation as on Friday evenings at home'. The more pressing reason, however, to Roth, was simple; 'where else in a strange land can a Jew more conveniently observe local Jewish life, emphasise Jewish solidarity, and even make Jewish contacts?'[183]

Travel and tourism were, for Roth, important means of cultural exchange. Encouraging Jewish visits to Britain and Europe was part of a dual process of cultural fluidity across national borders and a means of strengthening the ties of the diaspora.[184] In the same way that it was thought that American tourism to Europe could be the catalyst for European recovery, Roth believed struggling European and British-Jewish life could be bolstered by vibrant American-Jewish travellers coming into their midst.[185] In turn, American Jewry could be both infused with the romance and strength of European-Jewish history and warned of the consequences of losing sight of their Jewishness by touring Jewish sites in the Old World and in the process visiting the Jewish past.

In the wake of World War Two, visiting the war-torn lands of continental Europe took on a special significance for the Jews of the US and Britain. The Holocaust tourist industry did not take off until the 1980s and 1990s and the fall of the Iron Curtain when Zionist and genealogical 'roots' tours took, especially, American Jews on a 'discovery of the tangible evidence of their own heritage'.[186] This fuelled a growing Jewish tourist industry, which reintroduced the notion of a type of pilgrimage into what in the modern world had arguably become a secular

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[182] Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 43-60.

[183] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', p. 22; Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest', p. 24.

[184] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', p. 22; Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest', p. 24; See James Clifford, 'Traveling Cultures', in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, P. A. Treicher with L. Baugham and J. Macgregor (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-116; Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 135.

[185] The potential financial benefits of American tourists in revitalising post-war Europe were discussed in 1946 by the Organization for European Economic Co-operation sponsored conference on 'American Tourists in Europe' and in the later study on 'Tourism and European Recovery', 1947. See Buzzard, 'Culture for Export', p. 302.

[186] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, USA and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 135 and 149.

pursuit.[187] Nonetheless, the desire both to visit the places where individual family tragedies occurred and to witness the decimation of Jewish communities in Europe had its origins long before this. A 1962 guide to Jewish sites of interest in Europe claimed that 'American Jews are pouring into Europe by the tens of thousands annually' for diverse motivations such as business, pleasure, family connections and visiting former homes or battle sites. Gruber, herself, acknowledges that her own family visited continental Europe in 1959, 1962 and 1966.[188] Roth's travel guides to Europe and Israel were published in 1959, 1960 and 1961 and included references to modern monuments erected in Europe in memorial of the Holocaust. For example, his piece on Amsterdam included an illustration of the Anne Frank House.[189] In his description of Paris he urged the reader to visit the monument to the Unknown Jewish Martyr, which was erected in 1956 in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi regime.[190]

Roth himself must have been amongst the first Jewish visitors to post-Shoah Europe. In 1945 and 1946, he visited Italy and Greece on an army lecture tour on behalf of the British War Office.[191] Whilst in Greece he visited the formerly extensive Jewish centre of Salonica, or as he described it, 'had the horrible experience of visiting this charnel house of historic memories'.[192] Roth's outrage at what he witnessed was profound. He was, understandably, distressed at the evidence of the great loss of human life that had occurred. He also strongly lamented the cultural damage that had taken place.[193] The ancient and extensive Salonican Jewish cemetery had been and was still being vandalised at a steady rate, serving as a quarry for the repair and rebuilding of even the local ancient church of St. Demetrius on the

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[187] See Suzanne K. Kaufman, 'Selling Lourdes: Pilgrimage, Tourism, and the Mass-Marketing of the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century France', in Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*, pp. 63-64; Bertram M. Gordon, 'French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem', in Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*, pp. 239-240; Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, p. 133.
[188] Bernard Postal and Samuel H. Abramson, *The Landmarks of a People: A Guide to Jewish Sites in Europe*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. vi, cited in Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, note 8, p. 263; Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, p. 134.
[189] Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe'.
[190] Roth, 'A Jewish Tour of Europe'; see Zweig, *German Reparations*, p. 158.
[191] 'Programme of the Tour of Dr. Cecil Roth' and 'Visit of Dr. Cecil Roth', Private Collection of Joseph Roth.
[192] Roth, 'The Last Days of Jewish Salonica', p. 55; see also Letters and papers of Cecil Roth relating to the Jewish community of Salonica and in Greece generally at the end of the Second World War, 1946-1948, MS Roth (pers) 8, Brotherton Library, Leeds.
[193] Roth, 'The Last Days of Jewish Salonica', pp. 49 and 55.

instructions of the Director of Antiquities for the province.[194] Roth's despair at this destruction was felt all the more poignantly as Salonica was, to Roth, on the eve of the war, the 'greatest center of Sephardic Jewry', and a 'strange island of 15th-century Spain in a setting of 20th-century Greece'.[195]

To Roth, the European-Jewish past, and significantly a Sephardic past, was being plundered and lost on a daily basis. The Salonica cemetery served for him as a symbol of a particular type of European-Jewish heritage and the destruction that threatened it. Similarly, Roth was gravely upset over the fate of Italian Jewry.[196] Always close to his heart as his historic starting place, Italian Jewry had served throughout his career as his model of Jewish cultural vitality, infused with Sephardic-like Renaissance verve. After visiting Italy with the War Office at the end of the war, Roth demonstrated he had not lost hope for Jewish Europe when he recommended that:

> [i]t is of importance to the Jewish cause that Italian Jewry should live, both for itself, for its great tradition, for its symbolic value, and as a potential centre of Judaism in the future.[197]

Demonstrating his historiographical and cultural bias, despite Italy being a collaborating nation, Roth was concerned to demonstrate that anti-Jewish policy was forced upon the kindly and tolerant Italian people by the German fascists.[198] At the same time, however, Roth believed that it would be 'contrary to nature' to allow any Jewish cultural material to return to original German locations as the German people had lost their right to any items used for antisemitic purposes during the regime. The scope of Roth's restorative vision went further than heirless Jewish property and encompassed any such Jewish object held in Germany 'however acquired and however long possessed'.[199] He stretched the point further when he suggested the possibility of obtaining a clause in a peace treaty that would provide for 'the surrender to the Jews of all objects of Jewish interest (and conceivably of Jewish

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[194] Cecil Roth, 'Vandalism in Salonica', *Jewish Chronicle*, (22 November 1946); Roth, 'The Last Days of Jewish Salonica', p. 51.

[195] Roth, 'The Last Days of Jewish Salonica', p. 55.

[196] Cecil Roth, 'The Tragic Lot of Italian Jewry', *South African Jewish Times*, (23 November 1945, Private Collection of Joseph Roth.

[197] Cecil Roth, 'Italy's Jews', headed Jewish Hospitality Committee for British and Allied Forces, CRP, MS156/ADD3/3, SUA.

[198] Roth, 'Italy's Jews'; Roth, 'The Tragic Lot of Italian Jewry'.

[199] Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums', p. 256.

provenance – Nephrititi) in the German state collections'.[200] In direct contrast to his eagerness to return to his beloved Italy as soon as the opportunity presented itself, Roth refused to set foot on German soil and only did so briefly many years later.[201] This was not an uncommon reaction. Gruber admits that on her family excursion to post-war Europe what she most remembered was 'being determined not to spend the night, or spend any money, in Germany'.[202]

Roth stressed that the Jewish tourist should not expect to see vibrant Jewish communal life in Europe. Of Italy, for example, he warned that the tourist would not see a large synagogue turn out by American standards as 'Nazi devastation wrought havoc with Italian Jewish life'.[203] Similarly, he described the ancient Sephardic synagogue in Amsterdam as a 'lifeless shell', serving only 'a pathetically small congregation, almost of ghosts'.[204] Roth emphasised that, although the fate of these communities was usually eventually sealed by the Nazis, the roots of the decline of many European communities were sown years before they came to power. In a piece of historical fiction written by Roth, contemporaneous to the travelogues, entitled 'The Last Survivor' a sorry old man is portrayed as the last of a community that had been eroded through intermarriage and indifference. The story concludes with the elderly gentleman reciting the *Kiddush* on *Yom Kippur*, mourning for the death of his community.[205]

As the above story indicates, Jewish life in Europe in the post-war period was portrayed as being all but dead and buried. Visiting Europe for Jews in the post-war, post-*Shoah* period was seen to be like visiting the past, both in terms of nostalgia for pre-Nazi Jewish Europe and the more immediate and terrible experience of death and destruction. Zionist tours exploited and contributed to this feeling and used the constructed and exaggerated emptiness of Europe to promote the attractiveness of a full, dynamic and healthy Jewish life in Israel.[206] Tourism played an important role in the development of *Eretz Israel* and later Israel in cultural and financial terms.[207]

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[200] Cecil Roth in a letter to David Mowshowitch, 29 October 1943, BoD Papers, ACC/3121/C11/7/8D/1, LMA.
[201] Roth, *Cecil Roth*, p. 51.
[202] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, p. 134.
[203] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening, p. 24.
[204] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening, p. 24; Roth, 'Places of Jewish Interest', p. 25.
[205] Cecil Roth, 'The Last Survivor', unpublished manuscript, CRP, MS156, AJ151/6/15, SUA.
[206] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, pp. 149-150.
[207] Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933*, (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 1997), p. 125.

Zionists encouraged tourism to the country as such travel acted as indirect support of the settlement.[208] A large proportion of the urban population were engaged in the tourist industry, especially in Jerusalem and ports such as Jaffa.[209] In 1936 the *Jewish Chronicle Palestine Supplement* drew attention to the importance of 'The Economics of Tourism' as an invisible export that can be invaluable for the foreign trade balance. Figures of tourists to the country were on the increase. In 1932, 63,253 people had visited Palestine. In 1935, however, 106,823 tourists had made for the country, spending £1,225,000.[210] One of these travellers in 1935 was Cecil Roth, whose trip was funded by a grant from the "Marks and Spencer' family'.[211]

On his return, Roth obliged a multitude of requests to record his impressions of the Holy Land. Despite commenting on a 'cult of ugliness' in the new settlements, Roth was very positive about the country as a tourist destination.[212] He lamented that:

> In our enthusiasm for Palestine's past, and for Palestine's future, we have overlooked the fact that it is one of the world's beauty spots, which it is worth coming any distance to inspect.[213]

The more ethnographical style of his descriptions, where Roth focused upon his impressions of the country and its people, compared to the topographical approach of the work on Europe, demonstrated Roth's perceived 'otherness' of the Jews in Palestine. For example, Roth marvelled at the array of 'types' to be seen in the country and recounted anecdotes about characters he had met such as the scripturally well-read chauffeur and the rich American hostess who had donated all her jewellery to the cause. There were, he commented, 'few ethnological types entirely unrepresented'.[214]

The emphasis of people over places was also evident in his later coverage of tourism to Israel.[215] His description leans towards the anthropological, with an emphasis on 'types' of Jews and Judaism that can be viewed. According to Roth, '[i]n the course of an hour, one can observe Jewish types and usages which encompass the

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[208] Stephan Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State, 1936-1956', (St. John's College, Oxford: doctoral thesis, 1997), p. 207.

[209] Gideon Biger, *An Empire in the Holy Land: Historical Geography of the British Administration in Palestine 1917-1929*, (New York; St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 29-30.

[210] 'The Economics of Tourism', *Jewish Chronicle Palestine Supplement*, (1 May 1936).

[211] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 100.

[212] Cecil Roth, 'Aesthetics in the New Palestine', *Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, (December 1935), pp. vii-viii; Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project*, p. 112.

[213] Cecil Roth, 'Land of Promise: Some Impressions and Types', *The New Judea*, (November 1935).

[214] Cecil Roth, 'Types Seen in Palestine', *Opinion*, (October 1935), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Roth, 'Land of Promise', pp. 25-26.

[215] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', pp. 22-25.

entire world and stretch over a dozen centuries of time'.[216] In writing about Israel it was not just the grand architecture of the synagogues or other buildings with a Jewish historical interest that were worth seeing, but the type of people and the form of worship found there. He wrote, and the contrast to the deserted synagogue in The Last Survivor is apparent:

> [h]e who has not spent the Sabbath in Jerusalem does not know what the taste of the Sabbath can be; and he who has not attended synagogue in Jerusalem on Friday night or Saturday has no idea of Jewish piety and devotion.[217]

Thus he reinforced the idea of Israel being a source of inspiration, an example of how to lead a Jewish life that Jews in the Diaspora should aspire to.[218]

For Roth the trip to Israel was the Jewish Grand Tour in microcosm. It was an invaluable Jewish education and a two-way process of cultural exchange and enrichment. Zionists hoped that tourism to Israel would 'connect European and American Jews with the place, to create bonds that would lead to specific behaviours, including future visits and greater donations to the Zionist causes'.[219] Originally the Zionist vision was that short trips would translate into later permanent migration. Yet this subsided as tourism became integral and sufficient as a stand-alone ritual activity. The trip to Israel became ingrained in the 'practice of diaspora Zionist nationalization' and acted as a 'reformulation of a central myth of Judaism – exile, return, redemption'. The Jewish tourist in Israel was fulfilling their journey to becoming a 'complete Zionist' whilst reinforcing their western Jewish identity, which allowed them to 'remain a Zionist outside Zion for most of one's life'.[220] Roth had made this journey and yet, unusually he still made *Aliyah*. The following section will discuss the motivations for this action.

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[216] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening', p. 24.
[217] Idem., p. 24.
[218] Weinberg, 'Between America and Israel', p. 99.
[219] Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project*, p. 127-129.
[220] Idem., pp. 126-127 and 146.

iv. 'Some of my Best Friends are Anti-Zionists': Cecil Roth, 'Zionophilia' and Leaving England[221]

> "When were you last in Palestine?' inquired a newspaper representative
> who came to see me shortly after my arrival.
> "Nearly two thousand years ago," I said. My reply was not altogether
> jocular; for there is one great difference for a Jew between a visit to
> Palestine and a visit to any other country outside the place of his birth. In
> the latter case, he arrives. In the former, he returns.[222]

In 1964 Roth left his beloved Oxford and permanently 'returned' to Israel.[223] It would be easy to read a quite straightforward symbolism into this action of a rejection of British Jewry and Britain and an embracing of the new world offered by the State of Israel. As is invariably the case with Roth, however, there was nothing straightforward about his Zionism or about his motivations for both leaving England and arriving in Israel. In the first section of this chapter we saw that Roth valued Palestine and then the State of Israel as the keeper of Jewish heritage for the good of the Diaspora. In the last section, similarly, Israel featured in Roth's travel writing as a vehicle for the Jewish education of visitors, as part of what was this time a two-way process of cultural exchange. The question remains then, how did Roth's cultural Zionism, which never denied the viability of the diaspora and indeed saw the post-war period as the era of the Jews of the Anglo-Saxon countries for the Jews, lead to his physical abandonment of British Jewry and the ultimate Zionist act of *aliyah*?[224]

As has been already touched upon, for British Jewry the question of Palestine, the State of Israel and Zionism took on specific British dimensions. The British Mandate of Palestine both gave British Jewry an added importance but at the same time an added burden. The leaders of British Jewry at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 prided themselves on their position of influence with the British government, at the centre of an empire, working for the sake of Jews the world over.[225] As the Palestine situation progressed, however this influence was depleted as was evidenced by, for example, the 1939 White Paper, and eventually lost altogether

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[221] Cecil Roth, 'In the Service of Zionism', unpublished manuscript, c.1965, p. 1, CRP, MS156, AJ169, SUA.
[222] Roth, 'Land of Promise', pp. 25-26.
[223] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 207.
[224] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'; Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, p. 16.
[225] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*, (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 219-220.

with the end of the Mandate in 1948. Furthermore, the actions of the British government and the escalation of the troubles became respectively a potential embarrassment and something of a possible hazard to the well-being of British Jews whatever their views on the situation.[226]

Although Jewish resettlement in Palestine was unequivocally part of the newly elected post-war Labour administration's foreign policy, the appointment of Ernest Bevin to the post of Foreign Secretary led to the aggravation of the problem rather than its alleviation.[227] Hopkins argued that the Palestine affair was for Britain 'the most baffling and the most humiliating' of a generally bewildering period.[228] For British Jewry this discomfort was felt double-fold and not always for the same reasons. The bomb attack on the King David Hotel, which housed the secretariat of the British Mandatory Administration and the British Army in Palestine headquarters, on 22 July 1946, marked the beginning of the end of British rule in the country and caused a deep rift in Anglo-Jewish relations. When two British soldiers were hanged in response to the execution of three Irgun fighters, British Jewry directly suffered due to the anti-Jewish reaction in Britain, which was vented through localised rioting.[229] Ultimately the British decided to pull out of the region suddenly leaving no support structures in place and, some believed, embarked upon a policy of selective blockade and supply in order to attempt to aid the Arab effort in the inevitable violent outbreak that was to follow.[230] Building on a British-Jewish sensitivity due to the uncomfortable fact that it was their own government that had closed emigration to Palestine, during the later stage of the Third Reich, British policy in the region further alienated the country's Jewish population. In addition, the non-Jewish reaction to Jewish terrorism caused British Jewry to become separated from the national consensus.[231]

For Roth, the veteran apologist, the accusation of 'divided loyalties' that the Palestine affair inevitably triggered had to be conquered. As early as 1935, after his first trip to Palestine, Roth was at pains to demonstrate the loyalty and Britishness of

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[226] Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 233-234; Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle Between the British, the Jews and the Arabs, 1935-1948*, (London: André Deutsch, 1979), pp. 194-239.
[227] Leitch, 'Explosion at the King David Hotel', p. 54.
[228] Hopkins, *The New Look*, p. 59.
[229] Leitch, 'Explosion at the King David Hotel', pp. 43, 48 and 58-59; Kushner, 'Anti-Semitism and Austerity', pp. 149-168.
[230] Leitch, 'Explosion at the King David Hotel', p. 63.
[231] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', pp. 44 and 55-56.

Palestine. For the occasion of the coronation of the King in 1935, Roth wrote a piece that included the dedication – 'Palestine joins with the British Empire in offering his majesty, together with its humble duty, its loyal congratulations'.[232] In 1946, Roth dealt with the issue even more explicitly, asking in the context of the new Palestine, 'Divided loyalties: Do they enrich the Jew?', which he answered in the affirmative adding that all people have a complex of allegiances. Roth emphasised that a person's overriding loyalty should be to that which is morally right. This played on the post-war ideal of Britain taking the lead as a world moral power, which was responsible for, or at least attributed with, the general consensus towards granting independence to colonies.[233] For Roth, righteousness, as a Jewish ideal, 'must be set supreme above international affairs'.[234] Elsewhere Roth described the accusation of 'double loyalties' as an anti-Zionist 'bogey' and explained that the concept had never caused a problem for Jews in the English-speaking world as they were 'fully aware that every man owes political loyalty solely to the country in which he has made his home and of which he is a subject'.[235] Nevertheless, according to Roth, unilateral political allegiance does not preclude multilateral sentimental and passionate sympathies. In fact, he believed in the beneficial consequences for all humanity of the possession of 'a plurality of intense sympathies'.[236]

Frequently, however, Roth revealed an ambiguity in his position when it came to the establishment of a Jewish National Home.[237] In the 1930s and 1940s, Zionism was not the majority viewpoint amongst British Jewry. Many had lost faith in the movement. It was thought that it was mismanaged and overly focused on fundraising.[238] After 1945, however, there was a growing feeling that the Jews of Europe had been let down by the Allies, including Britain.[239] The non-Jewish response to the Holocaust initiated the radicalisation and wider appeal of British Zionism. The State of Israel, once established, it has been argued, enjoyed almost

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[232] Cecil Roth, 'The Kingdom of Jerusalem: The Connection of the English Royal Family with the Holy Land', *The Palestine Post*, (6 May 1935).
[233] See John Higgins, 'Partition in India: The Atlee Government and the Independence of India and Pakistan', in Sissons and French, *Age of Austerity*, pp. 179-195; Roth, 'Divided Loyalties', p. 37.
[234] Cecil Roth, 'The State of Israel and the Diaspora', (1949), CRP, MS156, AJ151/ADD/3/3, SUA; Cecil Roth, 'Judaism and the World's Crisis', Address given at the Hampstead Synagogue, 10 April 1943, *Hampstead Synagogue Bulletin*, (October 1943.
[235] Cecil Roth, 'The State and World Jewry', *Hadassah Newsletter*, (April 1958), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[236] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 89.
[237] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', p. 219.
[238] Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project*, p. 5.
[239] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', pp. 41 and 89.

unanimous British-Jewish support to differing degrees and the 1950s saw the consolidation of the Zionization of the community. Nevertheless, in 1952 Roth commented with incredulity how, despite the fact that a Jewish National Home was now a reality, 'anti-Zionism [was] not yet dead'.[240]

In 1948, Joseph Leftwich suggested that perhaps the Zionization of British Jewry was not as complete as it appeared, and doubted how much Zionism had actually transformed the 'spirit of Anglo-Jewry'. It was, Leftwich argued, the nature of the community to stay 'on the safe-side' and that side was now Zionism.[241] Certainly, 1948 and the formation State of Israel, posed a problem for diaspora Jews. They were suddenly faced, according to the arguments of the author, Arthur Koestler for example, with a choice between their countries of birth and the ancient homeland, between assimilation or *aliyah*.[242] Most British Jews positioned themselves beyond the essentialism of Koestler and believed that their Zionism could exist within the diaspora. The result was a type of 'patriotic Zionism' or a 'form of a supplemental diaspora nationalism adapted to their participation in the British nation-state'.[243] The call for a Jewish National Home in its British form had always involved both a general Zionist and a specific British dimension, with many arguing for a maintained close association with Britain.[244] Roth, for example, when ostensibly playing devil's advocate at a Jerusalem conference by voicing the views of the 'good English assimilationist', perhaps revealed his own concerns over the totality of the Israeli distancing from Britain:

> There are some people still, not only in England, even in Israel, who would have preferred this country to have been a Dominion. But what has happened has happened. The Jewish State is accepted and this assimilated English Jew of mine passionately wishes it well.[245]

The formation of the State of Israel was certainly not an unequivocally positive event for Roth. It was a reality that he in many ways found problematic. He pensively warned that the new situation would mean that 'every aspect of Jewish life

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[240] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', pp. 42, 58, 390-396 and 402; Cecil Roth, 'With Anti-Zionism not yet dead, here is a balance sheet of what Zionism has done for you', *Jewish Herald*, (19 September 1952), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA.
[241] Joseph Leftwich, 'What's Wrong with Anglo-Jewry?', *The National Jewish Monthly*, (May 1948), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.
[242] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 118; Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', p. 165.
[243] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', pp. 165, 408 and 422.
[244] Ibid., p. 99.
[245] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 87.

[was] going to be affected, whether we like it or no'.[246] Specifically, he shared some

of the concerns of the Zealots whose religious understanding of the return to Zion led

them to believe the secular Zionists had 'jumped the gun'.[247] He sardonically raised

some of the massive religious implications of the new state of affairs for the diaspora

by pointing out that 'will it not savour of hypocrisy to petition humbly that our exiles

should be 'gathered from the four corners of the earth', when all that the exiles need

to do is to go to the nearest travel agency and book their tickets?'[248] He strove to

resolve the tension between religion and secular political Zionism. Even before the

establishment of the State of Israel, Roth went out of his way to emphasise that,

contrary to reports, Palestine was by no means irreligious. In his travel pieces on the

country during and after the British Mandate he stressed the extent of piety and depth

of spirituality and knowledge of scripture amongst even the least likely of

individuals.[249] He remonstrated against accusations, however, that anti-Zionists

necessarily were not faithful to their religion, defending anti-Zionist and non-Zionist

British Jews, Claude Montefiore and Lucien Wolf, as faithful and devoted Jews.[250]

Elsewhere, he thanked God for Zionism and denied it was a lack of commitment to

Judaism that lay behind his support, but it was because he understood Judaism as a

practical religion.[251]

Roth was reported as saying in 1958 that he 'accept[s] Israel' as 'a fact,

created by Hitler and Bevan (sic)'. In other words, the formation of the State of Israel

was the result of world politics not unearthly revelation.[252] Nonetheless, the idea of

the providential path of Jewish history, of persecution and deliverance, as discussed

in Chapter One, was borrowed to give religious meaning to the happening. In this

understanding, the creation of a Jewish State became the God-given redemption for

the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust.

> When out of the depths of its greatest disaster the Jewish people snatched
> its greatest triumph, the crisis of despair was overwhelmed, defeated. At

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[246] Roth, 'The State of Israel and the Diaspora'.

[247] Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 120.

[248] Roth, 'The State of Israel and the Diaspora'.

[249] Cecil Roth, 'Cecil Roth Clarifies Misconceptions or the Long-Moot Question: 'Is Palestine Irreligious?'', *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, (30 August 1935); Roth, 'Types Seen in Palestine', pp. 13-15; Cecil Roth, 'Judaism in Palestine', *Great Britain and the East*, (12 December 1935), pp. 750-751, CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening'.

[250] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 87.

[251] Roth, 'With Anti-Zionism not yet dead'.

[252] Harold Feldman, 'European Jews First With British Historian', *Jewish Exponent*, (13 June 1958), Cecil Roth Nearprint, AJA, Cincinnati.

the same time its recurrence was rendered, humanly speaking, impossible.[253]

The 1948 edition of *A Short History of the Jewish People* ends the chapter entitled Catastrophe, which catalogued the terrible events of the Second World War with the phrase: 'The Providence that guides the process of history had ensured that the Jewish future was safe.'[254]

The guarantee of Jewish survival was integral to Roth's support of the Jewish state. A remarkable piece of fantastical writing where Roth meets the Emperor Titus in Caesarea, illustrated his feelings of relief over the Jewish future but also his belief in the continuity of Jewish history. Roth sets the ancient Roman Emperor straight on a few matters.

> You didn't overthrow the Jewish G-d, but the Jewish G-d overthrew you. Ancient Rome is dead ... The Roman Empire is dead too ... it crumbled to pieces hundreds of years ago. But the Jews are still alive ... You couldn't afford to wait, but we could: and we waited; and there is a Jewish State again, after all those long centuries.[255]

Roth's view of the place of Zionism and the formation of the State of Israel within Jewish history was one of historical continuity and not radical rupture. In this his Zionism more closely resembled that of cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'Am, rather than the political Zionist Theodor Herzl.[256] Herzl was not interested in the past. With the return to Zion, he believed, the tragic, lachrymose history of the diaspora would be abandoned. Ahad Ha'Am, however, envisaged the integration of the diasporic historical legacy into the new Israeli national culture.[257] Roth followed Ahad Ha'Am in his belief that diaspora Jewry, because of being 'heirs to two traditions', could contribute even more to the community in Palestine. Demonstrating the compatibility of the concept of the strength of English-speaking Jewry and his Zionism, Roth claimed, in 1946, that that which was best about the American and British character was reflected in American and British Jewry and therefore they had 'a specific function to perform in the New Palestine which is now being built'.[258]

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[253] Cecil Roth, 'The State and World Jewry'.

[254] Cecil Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, Illustrated Edition, (London: East and West Library, 1948).

[255] Cecil Roth, 'Interview With Titus: Noted Historian in Strange Encounter With Roman Emperor', *Jewish Life*, vol. XIX, no. 1, (September-October 1951).

[256] David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1995), p. 5.

[257] Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, p. 4.

[258] Roth, 'Divided Loyalties', p. 4.

Like Ahad Ha'Am, Roth also supported above all the development of a cultural centre in Palestine. Through this Jewish strength in the form of Jewish culture, heritage and education could radiate throughout the diaspora and support Jewish survival. In fact he noted how he believed that Zionism could 'do far more for us in the Diaspora than we can do for Zionism'.[259] He credited Zionism with saving Jewish morale, saving victims of oppression and with establishing a 'new Jewish unity'.[260] The point of Palestine, he believed in 1935, was to develop a centre of quality not quantity where a Jewish cultural revival could take place and was taking place in the field of Hebrew for example.[261] The country was not large enough, he argued, to support the whole of the world's Jewish population, not even just all those facing oppression.[262]

Once the State of Israel was a reality, however, it had far-reaching benefits outside its own borders. No longer, he argued, could the *Galuth* be used as an excuse for poor achievement or bad behaviour. Jewish standards in the chosen diaspora must be raised.[263] In addition he believed that the perception of the Jews amongst non-Jews had been improved due to the establishment of the State of Israel. They were seen as people of the soil and as fighting men. For Jews themselves these positive images served as a preferable alternative to that of passivity and impotence. As Roth exclaimed, 'at last we are building, not repairing'.[264] In terms of a cultural transmittance from Israel to the diaspora, however, Roth was disappointed. Israel had had, he complained, no 'influence on the spiritual life of the Diaspora' and there had been no diasporic revival in Jewish culture or Hebrew literature. Roth believed the Israeli would agree with the truth of his observations but would answer:

> "What of it? Life in the Diaspora is doomed. It is not our duty to bolster up what is anyhow fated to die. If you wish to remain Jews, come and join us. *Aliyah* is the only solution."[265]

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[259] Cecil Roth, 'New Light From Zion?', *Jewish Gazette*, (29 October 1954), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA; Cecil Roth, 'Has There Been New Light From Zion?', *Jewish Herald*, (1954), CRP, MS156/ADD/3/3, SUA.

[260] Roth, 'The State and World Jewry'; Roth, 'With Anti-Zionism not yet dead'; Cecil Roth, 'Cecil Roth Discusses: Can Palestine Solve the Problem of the Jew?', *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, (23 August 1935), (pp. 243 and 252), p. 243; Roth, 'In the Service of Zionism', p. 1.

[261] Roth, 'Can Palestine Solve the Problem of the Jew?', pp. 243 and 252.

[262] Roth, 'Can Palestine Solve the Problem of the Jew?', p. 243.

[263] Roth, 'The State of Israel and the Diaspora'.

[264] Roth, 'The State and World Jewry'; see Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, Second Edition, (Oxford and Portland, USA: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), pp. 121-143.

[265] Roth, 'New Light From Zion?'.

Roth enigmatically concluded this piece with the infuriatingly vague statement 'I do not say that I agree'. Maybe his elusiveness was not a deliberate veil and pointed to his genuine confusion.[266] Nonetheless, Roth did make *aliyah,* but not until a decade later. Once a resident of Jerusalem, especially at the time of the 1967 Six-Day War, it appears his Zionism intensified dramatically and was politicised. His wife's, idealised, account makes this clear, as does the tone of the additional sections on the State of Israel that were appended to his *Short History* in its later editions.[267] For example, in the 1969 edition he wrote:

> The Six Days War had been perhaps the most brilliant campaign in military history ... the Israel army had shewn itself the best fighting force in the region – and more so since it was a citizen army intent not on conquest but on self-protection.[268]

The reasons for Roth's decision to leave England to live in the State of Israel were manifold but not, it appears, clear-cut. As early as 1927, when Roth was searching for gainful employment as a professional historian, he was pushed by Judah Leon Magnus to join the Institute of Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He had steadfastly and repeatedly refused. Admittedly, family commitments in England may have been a factor in his decision, as may have been his desire to work in Italian history and his Oxford loyalties.[269] According to Irene Roth, Cecil's close association with various Israeli individuals and institutions, such as Itzhak Ben-Zvi especially, were important factors in his decision to finally leave.[270] In the early 1960s, he was offered the task of editor-in-chief of the Encyclopaedia Judaica, which was to be based in Jerusalem.[271] He was to take up this position, and this may have played a role in his decision to move to the country. His brother Leon, the philosopher attached to the Hebrew University, had died the year before and Roth had also expressed a desire to maintain the Roth association with Israel. Leon had in fact returned to England in 1951 after he apparently found his pacifist politics at odds with the realities of the State of Israel.[272] Importantly, Roth was due to retire from his

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[266] Roth, 'New Light From Zion?', p. 5.
[267] Roth, *Historian Without Tears,* pp. 223-233; Cecil Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People,* Newly Revised Illustrated Edition, (London: East and West Library, 1969).
[268] Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People,* p. 467.
[269] Letter Judah Leon Magnus to Cecil Roth 23 December 1927 and 13 May 1928, CRP, MS156, AJ151/1/A/3/30 and 31, SUA; see the description of Roth's early academic career in the Thesis Introduction, pp. 11-16.
[270] Roth, *Historian Without Tears,* p. 190.
[271] Ibid., p. 200.
[272] Ibid., p. 201.

position at Oxford University in 1964. This alone might innocuously explain the move and the reason for its timing. However, for a long time Roth had intended to spend his retirement in Florence. It is, therefore, significant that Roth not only abandoned British Jewry, but his beloved Italian Jewry and European Jewry as a whole. As important as the pragmatic if ambivalent motivations undoubtedly were, they should not, however, entirely disguise the ideological gestures contained in the move.

Roth's cultural understanding of Zionism and his passionate sympathies for the State of Israel after its formation did not require his making *aliyah* for coherence. Only a radical minority did make the move with most British Jews refashioning their Zionism after 1948 into a form of supplemental nationalism entirely compatible with their role in British life as British citizens.[273] Like the majority, Roth was working out his relationship with the new State and the cogency and continued validity of his position as a Zionist in the diaspora. Immediately after the formation of the new state, he prophesised, almost pejoratively, that:

> [t]he only persons who will be left in [the *Galuth*] will be in due course those who desire to remain in it, largely because of their degree of wellbeing is so great that they do not want to give it up.[274]

In 1958, however, his argument had been tempered and he asserted that '[w]e – even the most nationalistically inclined among us - live outside of Israel because, on mature consideration of the new situation, we choose to live there'. Reflecting his cultural Zionist leanings and his connected reluctance to abandon the diaspora, in the later piece he emphasised the benefits of the State of Israel for the diaspora. As he and other Zionists knew that they could transfer to the new State at any time, he argued, they could be 'psychologically more acclimatized and more at ease in the Diaspora than [they] were ten years ago'.[275]

In direct refutation of the Koestler position of *aliyah* or assimilation, Roth claimed, at a Jerusalem conference in 1957, that there were in fact two types of assimilation: the pre-1933 German kind that discarded Jewishness and paid the price and the ideal of the English assimilated Jew who was integrated but still entirely Jewish.[276] How this sat with his anti-assimilationist stance as discussed in Chapter

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[273] Wendehorst, 'British Jewry, Zionism and the Jewish State', p. 87.
[274] Roth, 'The State of Israel and the Diaspora'.
[275] Roth, 'The State and World Jewry'.
[276] Roth, 'Clean and Unclean Assimilation', p. 84.

Two was not entirely clear. In the same paper, he provocatively drew attention to his concerns over the 'weakening of the Anglo-Jewish community by the migration of the most eager elements among the youth'.[277] The diaspora was still Roth's central concern, and more specifically, British Jewry came foremost in his worries. Throughout the post-war period, however, there emerged in Roth's work a developing theme of frustration and disappointment surrounding English-speaking Jewry generally and more particularly the once great British-Jewish community. In numerous articles Roth called attention to the loss of intellectual achievement and cultural importance of the community. The decline of the great families and the end of the 'halcyon age' of the Edwardian and late-Victorian eras when British Jewry 'constituted the ideal of the emancipated community', had led, according to Roth, to the triumph of 'indifferentism' amongst the community.[278] His nostalgic and mournful assessments of the state of British Jewry caused some discomfort and displeasure amongst others during this time. At an after-dinner speech for a B'nai B'rith lodge in 1961, Roth's pessimistic account of the community was challenged after he claimed that British Jewry had 'lost its intellectual grip'.[279]

Joseph Leftwich remarked in 1948 that he himself, Roth and Louis Golding were increasingly critical of British Jewry, but was eager to stress that this was as members of it and that its condition was no worse than any other.[280] Roth echoed this sentiment in a 1960 assessment that admonished British Jewry with producing the lowest Jewish cultural activity in the world. He commented that the community was 'a maddening community, but it is a community – a poor thing but our own'.[281] Leftwich remarked that behind the criticism was the belief that British Jewry was 'worth belonging to and worth fighting to improve'.[282] Perhaps Roth, in 1964, was no longer convinced that British Jewry could be saved.

Upon Roth's arrival in Jerusalem and his acceptance of a part-time lectureship at Bar-Ilan University, he became the victim of an historical smear campaign. Rabbi Bromberg had taken a passage from Roth's *Short History* out of context in order to falsely demonstrate that he was a heretic. Two months after his arrival in Jerusalem

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[277] Ibid., p. 88.

[278] Cecil Roth, 'The Anglo-Jewish Association and Anglo-Jewish Intellectual Life', *Jewish Monthly*, vol. I, no. 1, (April 1947).

[279] 'What Happened to the Intellectuals?', *The Jewish Chronicle*, (19 May 1961).

[280] Leftwich, 'What's Wrong with Anglo-Jewry?', p. 326.

[281] Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry'.

[282] Leftwich, 'What's Wrong with Anglo-Jewry?', p. 326.

Roth suffered a heart attack, attributed by his wife to the extreme stress of the controversy, although an earlier account dates the illness before the public scandal.[283] During his recuperation, according to Irene Roth, Cecil was keen to leave Israel and settle in Florence, but notably not to return to Oxford.[284] After he was fully recovered and 'L'Affair Roth' had blown over any plans to leave Israel were abandoned. Only two years after arriving in the country, however, Roth accepted a visiting professorship at City University and later Stern College for Women both in New York. Thereafter he divided his time between Jerusalem and New York.[285] Roth's surviving commitment to English-speaking Jewry was also revealed in his work with the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Roth declared that '[c]learly, the Encyclopaedia Judaica must now be orientated towards the English-speaking world on one hand, and towards Israel on the other.'[286]

Like the heirless property that he had agitated to safeguard before the end of the war, Roth's migration symbolised the transference of Jewish life in global terms from the Old World of Europe to the New World of America and Israel.[287] Before leaving England in 1964, Roth had tried a variety of strategies to shift the position of Britain in the world scene. He attempted at times to sever its association with Europe and, therefore, in some understandings, the Jewish past. He conversely worked hard to contrive an integral role for British Jewry in the growth and successes of the communities in America and Israel and hence a stake for British Jews in the Jewish future. To this end, he formulated the idea of the 'English-speaking Era'. This borrowed from imperial rhetoric, to underline the relevance of British Jews in the post-war period.[288] During the American Tercentenary he went out of his way to link the British-Jewish and American-Jewish experience and characterised Britain as the originator of Jewish liberty, severing the connection with the Old World lachrymose past.[289] Similarly, Roth attempted to maintain the importance of Britain in relation to Israel after the loss of the British Mandate, which had provided British Jewry with

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[283] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, pp. 208-209; Circular Bulletin of Information, Cecil Roth to Jacob Marcus, 30 December 1964, AJA Records, MS col. 687, AJA, Cincinnati.
[284] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, p. 209.
[285] Roth, *Historian Without Tears*, pp. 218-222 and 234-235; 'Circular Bulletin of Information' enclosed with Letter Cecil Roth to Jacob Rader Marcus, 30 December 1964, American Jewish Archives Records, MS col. 687, Cecil Roth File, AJA, Cincinnati.
[286] Cecil Roth, Preface to a promotional brochure for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Encyclopaedia Judaica Papers, AR1296, LBI, New York.
[287] Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, p. 240.
[288] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'.
[289] Roth, *Two Cradles of Jewish Liberty*, pp. 109-117.

global status before the formation of the State of Israel.[290] His travel writing leant towards the ethnographic when discussing Israel. This anthropological approach gave Roth and his diaspora readers, as with British imperial travel literature, the power of the gaze. The diaspora was permitted to cast its eyes over the new nation, its people and places, to pass judgement and to claim ownership. The gaze asked what Israel could do for the diaspora.[291] Through his travel guides Roth and British Jewry assumed the role of a gateway between the Old World and the New World.

At the same time as post-war globalisation encouraged engagement with the world scene and favoured the internationalism of diaspora communities, it also caused a localist reaction.[292] Both in terms of national concerns and regional questions, Roth like many others, turned his gaze inwards to root British Jewry within the country. He hoped to reassure a disconcerted British Jewry as well as to counter non-Jewish suspicions over so-called Jewish divided loyalties.[293] The post-war period was therefore, for British Jewry, one of the simultaneous looking outwards and looking inwards. They also looked to the future and to the past in order to reconcile what being British and Jewish could mean in the post-war period. After 1964, Roth changed his focus, having battled against what he perceived as the growing disinterest in Jewish culture in 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry' for many years, he left for Israel to reconcile a new identity as part of a British-Jewish diaspora in Israel and America.[294]

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[290] Roth, 'What Has Happened to British Jewry?'.
[291] Roth, 'Travel IS Broadening'; Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, p. 19.
[292] Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', pp. 274-277 and 310.
[293] Roth, 'Divided Loyalties'.
[294] Roth, 'This Maddening Anglo-Jewry'.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that the characterisation of Cecil Roth as 'an historian lacking grand themes or a philosophical self-awareness of the implications of his intellectual project' is unfounded.[1] His themes may have been contradictory at times, but they undoubtedly existed and provide an insight into the historiography of the period from a Jewish, British and British-Jewish perspective. Roth's attempted 'normalisation' of Jewish history and his efforts to bring it into line with European periodisation, revealed his Oxford roots, but also pointed to a very Jewish understanding of the significance of American- and British-Jewish history. Locating modernity for the Jews as well as the rest of the world at the time of the Renaissance not only fitted with his academic training but allowed for the emphasis of the new world communities over the old; Sephardic over Ashkenazi, 'port Jews' over 'court Jews'.[2] At the same time he occasionally retreated into a comfortable religious language for describing Jewish experience. For example he utilised the lachrymose conception and comparative history in a way which removed Jewish history from the normal processes of historical causation. The recurrence of these strategies, despite his protestations, underlined the importance he placed on Judaism, but was not atypical for the period amongst Christian scholars.

One of the partly religious rhetorical devices through which Roth understood the past was that of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history. Roth's reaction to the portrayal of Jewish history as one long catalogue of persecution and suffering was in the main negative and he echoed the work of Salo Baron in this area.[3] This allowed and called for the construction of a British-Jewish past that was aligned with the American-Jewish experience and so relevant in the modern world. Also, it raised the idea of the ambivalence of emancipation. Roth was later to lament how the apparent gains of the age of emancipation brought also sacrifices of communal identity and strength. At the same time, British-Jewish history and Jewish history in general was distanced from the ubiquitous German-Jewish model. For a significant length of time

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[1] David B. Ruderman, 'Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment', in David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (eds.), *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 128-142, here p. 140.
[2] David Cesarani (ed.), *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002).
[3] Salo W. Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall we Revise the Traditional View?', *Menorah Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 6, (June 1928), pp. 515-526.

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Germany and Eastern Europe formed the main centre of Jewish historiography. It was, therefore, the task of the pioneers in British-Jewish scholarship to create a field and an interest for the history of the Jews in Britain distinct from the continental experience. The early British-Jewish historians were aware of or perceived the necessity to legitimise the pursuit of what was generally considered a relatively unimportant local and minority history in terms of the German-Jewish model and general British scholarship. The battle for uniqueness, present at the birth of British-Jewish history production, was never surrendered and Roth carried the banner throughout his career.

Despite Roth's pioneering status in British-Jewish historiography, he has consistently been criticised and dismissed as Whiggish and apologetic by his descendants in the field. The 'Judaized version of Whig history' was apologetic because it portrayed the Jews as an integrating minority, flattered British tolerance and equated Jewish emancipation with modern rationality and civilisation as opposed to the irrational barbarity of medieval persecution.[4] Roth, however, in his challenging of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history, questioned the gains of the emancipation. On deeper analysis, therefore, Roth cannot be so easily located squarely within this school or within an apologetic canon in general. Identifications of apologia in British-Jewish historiography, which have focused predominantly on Roth, invariably have closed off closer analysis of the contribution to history he and others have made. British-Jewish apologetic history in the period in question was not merely concerned with talking to the outside, but was about a community conversing with itself. It was, like all history, a project of self-identification through the study of the past.

Roth believed that a key part of the struggle against adversity involved the strengthening of Jewry as a community. The boosting of Jewish morale through education, and specifically historical education, was essential in the fight for Jewish survival. Culturally and religiously Jewish Jews had escaped eradication through countless episodes of persecution in the past. From this record the modern Jew should, Roth believed, draw strength and learn the value of community and heritage. His work with the Board of Deputies was, then, often fraught with disagreements and

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[4] David S. Katz, 'The Marginalization of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History', in Tony Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 60-77, here p. 61.

tension, as he suspected defence work could actually weaken Jewish resolve. During the difficult years of the 1930s and 1940s Roth worked to boost Jewish morale and esteem via his various forms of 'ethnic cheerleading'. His contribution pieces stressed the Jewishness of Jewish achievements; he encouraged informed and religious connections to Judaism and, with his own community in mind, constructed the notion of an 'Anglo-Jewish race', in order to paint a picture of the community as being imbued with the qualities of both heritages.

The insecurity of British Jewry stemmed from the changed global scene in the post-war period in a variety of different ways. First, as the centre of world Jewry shifted from Europe to the New World countries of America and Israel, British Jewry strove to find its feet. It found itself standing with one foot in the grave of Jewish Europe. European-Jewish life was and is still in some quarters perceived as having come to a dramatic end with the Second World War. David Weinberg has argued for a reassessment of this position and points to the upsurge in European-Jewish consciousness after 1945. British Jewry saw itself sometimes as part of a European-Jewish revival. Not unlike the general situation, however, in the main the Jews of Britain perceived themselves as a unique case or as enjoying a special relationship with America. The example of Roth can be seen to illustrate the complex relationship between Britain and the rest of Europe that Weinberg describes.[5] He understood British Jewry to have a special responsibility for European-Jewish revival as the largest remaining 'free' European-Jewish community. He was also at pains to demonstrate the affinity British Jews had with their coreligionists across the Atlantic. Furthermore, he underscored a unique British-Jewish identity and role in the Jewish world as the historical and linguistic centre for the 'English-speaking era'.[6]

Weinberg suggests that European-Jewish communities overestimated British Jewry's strength in the post-war period.[7] The community and the country emerged a shadow of its former self as the smoke and dust of the destruction of war settled and the extent of the physical, political and financial damage could be surveyed. British Jewry's status within world Jewry was diminished along with that of Britain in the global scene. America and American Jewry rose from the ashes as the greater global

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[5] David Weinberg, 'Between America and Israel: The Quest for a Distinct European Jewish Identity in the Post-war Era', *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. V, no. 1, (Summer 2002), pp. 91-120, here pp. 91, 95-96.
[6] Cecil Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era', *Jewish Life*, (November-December 1952).
[7] Weinberg, 'Between America and Israel', pp. 96-97 and 100.

powers. Roth's efforts towards the reconstruction of archives, libraries and museums in a ravaged Europe, revealed his inner conflicts over the redistribution of Jewish life in the post-war period. He did not exclusively argue for heirless property to come to Britain (although his concern over the bombed Gustav Tuck Theatre and Mocatta Library was palpable). Instead he argued for their being sent to *Eretz Israel* to be held on trust for the community as a whole, until a time when the European communities might be able to use them again.[8] The relics and archives of nonexistent European-Jewish communities being sent to Israel was not for Roth a denial of the significance of the Jewish diaspora past but an affirmation of its relevance to the Jewish future. Roth believed in the reinvigorating and unifying powers of a Jewish State of Israel, as a source of comfort, inspiration and spiritual and intellectual guidance for a coexisting Jewish presence in the diaspora.

The post-war British-Jewish community suffered from a lack of confidence. This was partly due to the general decline of the country in the world scene, but was also due the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and the global prestige this had brought British Jews. This event was also problematic in that it stirred an antisemitic reaction in the country. The British-Jewish involvement in the Festival of Britain provided an insight into their position vis-à-vis the general British context. British Jewish participation in the event was influenced by both the changing nature of Britain's place within the face of global politics and the connected sense of increasing insularity in a country in the grip of irreversible global, political and economic decline. The Jewish contribution to the Festival reflected the introspection of the post-war period in the nation as a whole, and further, ignored the new global perspectives that the liberal organisers and radical designers of the Festival had tried to explore. In the wake of antisemitic rioting, the Jewish Festival exhibition was defensive and conservative and as a result turned its back on the global context that had been and remained so important to the issue of cultural reconstruction. The Tercentenary celebration five years later, in which Roth was so heavily involved, acted in some senses as the 'Festival of British Jewry'. It was a far more confident event and one which provided adequate opportunities for the confrontation of international contexts,

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[8] See Cecil Roth, 'The Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives', opening address at the Conference on the Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries and Archives, 11 April 1943, *Contemporary Jewish Record*, vol. VII, (1944), pp. 253-257.

particularly that of the relationship with American Jewry, in the fashioning and representation of the local character.

As we have seen, the relationship between British- and American-Jewish history and scholarship was always important to Roth. However the developments of the 1940s intensified the need for the emphasis of a common Anglo-American heritage and culture. He was a lone British-Jewish voice attempting to carve out a niche or capture some significance for an enlarged British Jewry and their history amid the ever-changing global character of Jewish intellectual endeavour. For Roth American and British Jewry did not merely have a linguistic connection. The two countries' Jewish communities shared much more in common, culturally and historically. The coincidence of the two tercentenaries and the close connection of Anglo-American Jewish origins that this underlined to Roth was a very clear indication of this intimacy. Roth underlined the similarities of the British and American shared Jewish past. He demonstrated the British origins of liberal treatment of the Jews, showing how the situation in seventeenth-century Britain was even preferable for Jews to that in America. According to Roth, the absence of emancipatory legislation in his home country merely pointed to a lack of restrictions and an advance state of social and *de facto* freedoms and rights for the Jewish community. Through such an assessment Roth was able to posit British Jewry and Britain as the source and inspiration for America's fair treatment of its Jewry.

As a final confirmation of British-Jewish significance in the new American-Jewish world order, Roth developed the idea of the 'English-speaking era'.[9] This gave British Jewry a central role in the shape of the new world scene. His concentration on the British relationship with America, therefore, revealed a local focus and a way of understanding Britishness. As we have seen in this thesis, Roth fascination with the local was also expressed via his pioneering interest in regional British-Jewish histories. The post-war concentration on the regional, as demonstrated by the importance of the provinces in the Festival of Britain and then the Tercentenary celebrations, allowed the construction of a particular version of British Jewry to be preserved and communicated to its members. W. G. Hoskins argued that local history fuels a sense of belonging. He claimed that people 'belong to a particular place and the bigger and more incomprehensible the modern world grows the more will people

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[9] Roth, 'The English-Speaking Era'.

turn to study something of which they can grasp the scale and in which they can find a personal and individual meaning'.[10] Roth wrote Jewish history into the ancient, pre-expulsion British landscape. In doing this he hoped to remind readers of the longevity of the Jewish connection with the country and to convince British Jews of their right to dwell in it. The notion of the 'Anglo-Jewish race' was here again evoked. He linked pre-expulsion Jewry with that of the resettlement through a connection with the British landscape. Flowing through the veins of the 'returning' Jews to Britain was an atavistic appreciation for the country's 'leafy lanes', 'the wide sweep of the downs' and 'the bare loveliness of the new ploughed fields'.[11]

Roth, as a travel writer of the Jewish diaspora, also turned his local gaze outwards. It has been argued that geographically enclosed nations can use 'touristic autoethnography' to 'preserve or 'salvage' social forms that are ... passing into irrelevance' and to attempt to construct 'one coherent picture of a unified culture'.[12] Roth used the medium of travel literature to emphasise the religious unity and similarity of Jewish communities the world over as a symbol of strength. But also, in the process, to stress the differences between dying but picturesque communities in Europe and the vibrant Jewries of the New World, as a warning to maintain and nurture distinct Jewish heritage. As his sad story of The Last Survivor illustrated, Roth believed, it was not the Nazis who sealed the fate of so many European-Jewish communities, it was the communities' own neglect of their cultural and religious roots that weakened them in the face of external attack.[13]

For Roth in the post-war period visiting the State of Israel was to gaze upon the future (and the ancient past) of world Jewry. To explore Jewish Europe was to look upon its disaporic past. To many this dichotomy underlined the fact that the diaspora was doomed. For Roth an excursion to either could be used to emphasise the importance of maintaining Jewishness in the diaspora. Jewish life in Israel was to act as a cultural and religious inspiration for diaspora Jews. Reminders of the destruction of European-Jewish life, such as the abandoned synagogues of Italy and the

[10] W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England*, Third Edition, (Essex: Longman, 1984), pp. 6-7.
[11] Cecil Roth, 'Some Jewish Contributions to English Life', being part i) of 'The Challenge to Jewish History', Presidential Addresses, 20 October 1936 and 11 January 1938, *TJHSE*, vol. XIV, (1935-1939), pp. 1-21.
[12] James Buzard, 'Culture for Export: Tourism and Autoethnography in Postwar Britain', in Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, (eds.), *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, (Ann Arbor, USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 299-319, here p. 309.
[13] Cecil Roth, 'The Last Survivor', unpublished manuscript, CRP, MS156, AJ151/6/15, SUA.

memorials to the Holocaust already erected in Holland and Paris, were to act as a lesson to surviving communities. It could show how assimilation in the German mould had failed and could teach the value of maintaining a Jewish sense of identity. Roth's travel literature embodied his own understanding of the global position of British Jewry as acting as a gateway for American Jewry to Europe and Israel whilst establishing the shared past and identity of his own communities. By doing this he reaffirmed the significance of the British-Jewish experience in terms of both the European-Jewish past and for the American and Israeli Jewish future.

In 1964, Roth left Britain for Israel, rejecting his earlier ambition to retire to his beloved Florence. Even as a Zionist it did not necessary follow that Roth had to make *aliyah* for the sake of consistency. An understanding of diaspora Zionism, which did not demand emigration, had already been negotiated by this late stage. Moreover, Roth's position as a Zionist was not clear cut. He demonstrated a position more reconcilable with cultural and religious than political Zionism. And did not usually suggest that *aliyah* was a necessary requirement for a diaspora Zionist. Even as an Israeli his position remained ambiguous. Although his commitment to the Zionist cause intensified he simultaneously accepted a position in America which removed him from permanent residency in the Jewish state. English-speaking Jewry was thus never fully abandoned. And neither was British Jewry. His continued association with Britain was demonstrated by his ninth and final presidency of the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1968. Roth's last presidential address, 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?', a defence of the field, revealed his enduring commitment to the pursuit of the British-Jewish past, despite the fact that he was no longer involved in its present.[14] Anecdotally, his continued connection with the British-Jewish past and specifically his picture of Britain as a cradle of Jewish liberty alongside America was illustrated by his choice of residence in both his new homes. His Jerusalem property was located in Balfour Street, recalling the British author of the 1917 declaration supporting the creation of a Jewish National Home. His New York apartment was in the Oliver Cromwell Hotel, which remembered Cromwell's supposed sympathetic centrality in the resettlement of the Jews in England.[15]

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[14] Cecil Roth, 'Why Anglo-Jewish History?', Presidential Address, 17 September 1968, *TJHSE*, vol. XXII, (1968-1969), pp. 21-29.
[15] Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), pp. 207 and 218.

This thesis set out to locate Roth as an historian and writer of the Jewish and particularly the British-Jewish experience. It is, as it turns out, intensely difficult, ultimately, to neatly place Roth anywhere. Nonetheless, it is his amorphic quality that is so instructive and makes further study of this hitherto neglected historian worthwhile. His contradictions and complexities usefully reflect the multiplicity and entanglements of modern Jewish identity and experience as well as the divisions and confusion within British Jewry and Britain throughout the middle of the twentieth century.

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