Semitic discourse: English identity and the nineteenth-century British novel

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SEMITIC DISCOURSE:
ENGLISH IDENTITY AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL

BY

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BA, Drew University, 1991
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DISSERTATION

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in
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September, 2001
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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Dedication

For my father, who taught me the importance of restricting myself to a single sentence, and my mother, who encouraged volumes.
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ABSTRACT

SEMITIC DISCOURSE:
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by

Heidi Kaufman

University of New Hampshire, September, 2001

The following study examines the manner in which nineteenth-century British novels use a Semitic discourse to imagine and construct Christian English people as racially pure. One result of the growing presence of assimilated Jewish people living in England in the nineteenth century was the fear that they might pass undetected and pollute the “purity” of English blood. In response to this phenomenon, the narratives in this study illuminate not only cultural anxiety about the historical lineage that links Judaism and Christianity, but the threat this link posed to the very idea of English Christian racial purity. My claim, that English identity is produced out of a Semitic discourse, does not mean that English characters become Jewish or that Semitism exists in the cultural realm only when Jewish characters appear in novels, but that a pervasive Semitic discourse enables the articulation of English racial purity in this period. This dissertation reads Semitic discourse in the nineteenth-century novel for the purpose of exposing the places where English identity appears not in opposition to Hebrew and/or Jewish culture, but as a result of a narrative return to an imagined historical moment when Semitic and Aryan “became” distinct racial categories. Included in this dissertation are novels that directly address or comment upon Victorian concerns about race, religion, nation, British imperialism, Semitism, and Victorian anthropology in works by Maria Edgeworth, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Charlotte Tonna, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot and H. Rider Haggard.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is a little alarming to reflect that contempt of the Jews is contempt of Christ, and if the Church is correct, contempt of God. For we rather forget that the Christian God was a Jew, though no doubt this was a Divine mistake and the “nationality” of Christ should have been English. ¹

In the following study I argue that nineteenth-century British novels use a Semitic discourse to imagine and construct white-skinned Christian English people as racially pure. During the years this dissertation covers, from 1817-1885, English culture was concerned about the preservation of English racial purity, in part because of the growing presence of assimilated Jewish people living in England. One prevailing anxiety about Jews had to do with the fear that they might pass undetected and pollute the “purity” of English blood. The British novel reflects this racial anxiety by imagining Jewish characters who try and fail to pass as English characters. In this process, nineteenth-century novelists depict their culture’s fears about the racial implications of Anglo-Jewish assimilation.

Critical conversations about the figure of the Jew in nineteenth-century literary culture have tried to address the presentation of Jewish identity as a definable racial or national category. In his article, “‘The Secret’ of English Anti-Semitism: Anglo-Jewish Studies and Victorian Studies,” Michael Ragussis examines converted Jews, Jews who

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attempt to pass, or Jews who are rejected from English culture and the “secretiveness” that marks Jewish literary figures. His play on words is important since the Jew’s identity is never really kept secret — the other characters in the texts that he examines can always see through the Jew’s disguises. Ragussis draws upon the figure of the Marrano in his discussion of these Converso novels. Since converted Jews were viewed suspiciously, Ragussis claims that most nineteenth-century literary depictions of Jews share one thing in common, “family origins [that] can be traced to the Iberian Peninsula. . .”(500). Unlike Ragussis, my dissertation does not argue that Jewish identity depends upon a connection with origins in the Iberian Peninsula. I will instead focus on George Gordon, an English Protestant who converted to Judaism in the years immediately following the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots. I then illustrate the ways in which English racial identity is mapped out against and through constructions of Jewish racial identity in novels by Maria Edgeworth, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Tonna, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, and H. Rider Haggard. Therefore, I focus not on Jewish people or Jewish culture, but on the fact that in the nineteenth-century novel English identity is constructed by the use of a Semitic discourse.

In the second plate of The Harlot’s Progress (1731) William Hogarth, an eighteenth-century engraver, depicts an early version of this phenomenon. The engraving details M. Hackabout who sits next to the image of the Jewish merchant, her clothing falling off, indicating both her recent foibles (she has just been caught with another lover who attempts to sneak out unseen by the merchant) and her desire to distract the Jew, thereby protecting her lover with her body. The young, black servant
mirrors her servile pose, holding his hands in a position identical to hers while clutching
his teapot, thereby uniting the themes of colonialism, capitalism, and exploitation.
Protecting his tea cup, and by association tea, china, and trade, the merchant is half
covered by the table. The image of the monkey in front of him, however, fills in his
missing parts. The left front tea-table leg mirrors the curve of the monkey’s leg, while
the monkey’s hat and hand holding his scarf look strikingly like the merchant’s wig and
hand holding the tea cup. Indeed Hogarth marks the Jew’s body with a series of half
coverings that reveal just enough to indicate his non-English (because Jewish) identity,
while simultaneously pointing to the merchant’s desire and failure to pass as an English
gentleman. The engraving suggests that the monkey’s mimickery of human behavior is
not far off from the merchant’s mimickery of English behavior — marked by his white
wig which slides off and his china which breaks. Like the monkey, the Jew can dress up
as an English gentleman, but he is always a Jew. And like the prostitute with her
fashionable clothes and early signs of venereal disease on her face, the Jew’s racialized
identity outwardly marks him as a source of societal corruption. His attempts to pass as
wealthy and English are matched and undercut by products available for consumption—
the African boy, the Harlot, and the expensive paintings hanging on the background
wall depicting Biblical Jews. The engraving suggests that despite his money, the Jew
cannot buy English identity and instead is aligned with the images he thinks he defines
himself against. Accordingly, the Jew is duped by his own economic devices of
assimilation.

On another level though, Hogarth dupes his own purchasing audience. Just as
the Jewish merchant buys the expensive old master paintings and brings them into this domestic scene, so do consumers who hang Hogarth’s engraving, and the Jewish Biblical scenes inside that engraving, on their own walls. For example, one painting depicts the story of Jonah outside Nineva. Jonah learns that it is through his own integration into the fallen city that the corrupt, non-Jewish people can be saved. The painting can be read as a reminder that the Jews should become integrated into dominant society so as not to covet selfishly God’s legacy. Yet, a closer look at the painting reveals the parallels between Nineva and London. Thus the God who looks down on Jonah and Nineva, also looks down upon the Jewish merchant and Hackabout. The presence of this painting inside the frame of the engraving suggests that Hackabout’s moral decline is a symptom, not a cause, of a society ruled by too much attention to material gain and a waning religious presence in the everyday lives of its people. Hogarth cleverly suggests, though, that the Jew is no more or less guilty of this than Hogarth’s own purchasing audience; for just as the Jew is mocked for his attempts to assimilate through consumption (of Harlot, black child, and material objects obviously acquired through colonial trade), he too is purchased, hung, and otherwise consumed by Hogarth’s audiences who need to know the Jew in order to ostracize him. We find that the representation of a Jewish merchant, and the references within Hogarth’s engraving to other textual images of Jews (Jonah), serve as both the vehicle and the obstacle for Jewish inclusion into English culture. Despite his efforts, the portrait of the Jewish merchant, as well as the reference to other Jews embedded in the engraving, function as a reminder that the threat of Jewish infiltration is minimal — for
the Jew will always be detected as an imposter with a wig that perpetually falls off, revealing his true identity underneath.

Frank Felsenstein in *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes* notes that the significance of the second plate lies not only in “its graphic depiction of the bamboozling of a fashionable Jew, but in the extraordinary cultural influence that it was to have”(54). Theophilus Cibber’s pantomime, also called *The Harlot’s Progress*, surfaced within a year of Hogarth’s progress and was followed by the anonymous ballad opera entitled *The Jew Decoy’d; or the Progress of a Harlot*, which focused mostly on the second print in the Hogarth series. Todd Endelman maintains that the proliferation of responses to Hogarth’s Jew, and the host of similar depictions of Jews that followed, were “derived from the then common prejudicial notion that Jews were exceptionally lustful and that their wealth, when put at the service of their sexual longings, was a threat to English womanhood” (130). Yet, the merchant’s sliding wig suggests much more than mere Jewish deceitfulness, lust, or consumption in the eighteenth century, but also reflects emerging concerns in this period over maintaining English identity as racially pure.

Hogarth’s print, and the subsequent reworkings of the harlot theme, surfaced in the years preceding the Jew Bill controversy of 1753 which was concerned with whether or not Jews could become naturalized as English citizens. James Shapiro has explained the tensions associated with the debates over this significant piece of legislation: “the buried threat occasioned by the naturalization of Jews had to do with the surprising vulnerability of English social and religious identity at this time: if even a Jew could be English, what could one point to that defined essential Englishness?” (199). The issues
that emerged at the time of the Jew Bill controversy are, however, part of a longer continuum stretching at least as far back as the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 until the present day. While Hogarth's series appeared after the Conference at Whitehall (1656) which formally allowed Jews to be readmitted to England, it also anticipated the Jew Bill of 1753. Maria Edgeworth's novel Harrington (1817), which will be the first of the novels my dissertation will examine in depth, is set in the late 1740's when Harrington is around seven- or eight-years old and hears his father discussing the Jew Bill with other men. Already suffering from an irrational paranoia about Jews, the young Harrington's fears are only bolstered by the anti-Jewish sentiments he hears in this conversation. The novel traces Harrington's "recovery" from his fear of Jews, culminating with the Gordon Riots (1780) — the historical events with which Charles Dickens begins his novel Barnaby Rudge (1841), the second major focus of my study. Although these texts were written in the nineteenth century, eighteenth-century contexts are embedded in their literary depictions of Jewish and English identities as racially distinct categories. Taking a cue from eighteenth-century cultural formulations of Jewish identity as depicted in Hogarth, my analysis of the nineteenth-century novels that revisit this earlier historical moment will focus specifically on the question of blood, racial purity, and whiteness. I will then explore how these concerns reemerge and evolve in later novels written throughout the nineteenth century. For example, George Eliot's Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch (1871-72), represents not only a character who is falsely accused of being a half-hidden Jew, in the tradition of Hogarth's merchant, but also a character whose fate in the novel exposes the implications of
miscegenation for English identity. Implicit in these images of Jews who try to pass as English is an allusion to the half English children who will be produced by a union between Jew and gentile.

In recent years, literary scholars have shown a continued interest in representations of Jews in English literature. Anne Aresty Naman, for example, in her book *The Jew in the Victorian Novel: Some Relationships Between Prejudice and Art* explores this terrain by examining how prejudice functions in art from a sociological and psychological perspective. Naman’s work fits into a tradition of viewing Jewish stereotypes as fixed forms that are projected from dominant culture’s hatred, fear, and insecurity about Jews. In more recent years scholars have considered literary depictions of Jewish characters as part of a larger discourse about imperialism, nationalism, and racial and religious identity. Anne and Roger Cowen in *Victorian Jews Through British Eyes*, for example, assemble a collection of visual images of Jews from Victorian newspapers and magazines. The Cowens focus their collection on popular print materials that reflect the lives of Jewish people living in England in the Victorian period, rather than fictional portrayals of Jews by gentile writers. The Cowens are careful to read stereotypes of Anglo-Jews against events like immigration, imperialism, and the nineteenth-century diamond boom.

Critical attention to the subject of stereotypes serves as a foundation for two important approaches to the study of Jewish images in English culture. One trajectory of scholarly inquiry focuses on Victorian Jewish writers and Jewish cultural studies. This approach would include works such as Linda Gertner Zatlin’s *The Nineteenth-
Century Anglo-Jewish Novel, David Cesarani’s *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991*, and Michael Galchinsky’s *The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England*. Somewhat separate, though related to this group, is the recent surge of reprinted works of nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish writers. Meri-Jane Rochelson’s interest in Amy Levy, combined with Melvyn New’s edition of the *Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy 1861-1889*, and Linda Hunt Beckman’s biography of Levy have emphasized the importance of Levy’s work not only for Anglo-Jewish history and literature, but also for studies in the Victorian novel. Along these lines, Rochelson’s edition of Israel Zangwill’s *Children of the Ghetto* reminds us of the fact that Jewish writers, among many other non-Christian English writers, have been excluded from an all-Christian English literary canon.

A second strand of recent scholarship in the field focuses on the ideological mechanisms through which depictions of Jews produce and reflect Jewish culture in England and Europe. This category would include Michael Ragussis in *Figures of Conversion: ‘The Jewish Question & English National Identity* and Gauri Viswanathan in *Outside the Fold*. Both Ragussis and Viswanathan examine Jewish characters in British novels who attempt (and usually fail) to assimilate, pass, intermarry, or become otherwise absorbed into English culture. Ragussis maintains that we can see how England’s own national identity was called into question through the “rhetoric of conversion” as it attempted to “secularize this notion of tolerance toward the Jews” (6-7). Gauri Viswanathan traces England’s own perception of itself as a “‘tolerant’ state from its colonial provenance, [drawing] on significant literary works to elucidate the
problematic, dual characterization of conversion as assimilation and dissent” (xvii). Despite the fact that both Ragussis and Viswanathan draw their evidence from narratives in which characters attempt to assimilate or pass, intermarry or become absorbed as English, few, if any, of these representations actually depict “conversion” proper as an act that entails not only change, but the renunciation of one religion in favor of another. Viswanathan and Ragussis use the term “conversion” to include a disparate range of possibilities, including assimilation, passing, absorption, hiding, and intermarriage. I deviate from these critics by building on Sander Gilman’s claim that “[t]he Jew remains visible, even when the Jew gives up all cultural signs of his or her Jewishness and marries out of the ‘race.’ It is the inability to ‘pass’ which is central here” (“The Visibility of the Jew in the Diaspora,” 9). I show that Jewish conversion or assimilation is never really an option for Jewish people living in dominant gentile culture.

Another current approach to images of racial difference in the nineteenth century is exemplified by Jennifer Devere Brody’s Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture in which Brody analyzes cultural and racial categories through the “supposedly distinct fields of Victorian Studies and African American Studies” (6). Using Paul Gilroy’s work The Black Atlantic and Joseph Roach’s notion of the “circum-Atlantic world” Brody disrupts “the usually aporetic relationship between Victorian Studies and African American Studies [which] is refigured so that the putative ‘objects’ and ‘subjects’ of these disciplines, which are thought to be distinct and mutually exclusive, are read together” (6). Brody locates her examination in the literary
production of the black woman ("mulattas, octoroons, prostitutes") who (re)produce English subjectivity in this period. She maintains that "black (racialized and sexualized) women were indispensable to the construction of Englishness as a new form of "white" male subjectivity... [examining]... constructions of what might be the nineteenth century's most important 'miscegenated' coupling: black women and white men" (7). Brody's work is important for its focus not only on the presence of non-white people in literature from this period, but also because she foregrounds how these images of non-white people suggest much about literature's role in maintaining English whiteness as a racial category.

In the following chapters I will build on Devere Brody's excellent readings of nineteenth-century literature by examining what depictions of Jewish history and culture, or Semitic discourse, suggest about both the construction of English Christian racial identity, and the maintenance of that identity. Thus, I look at a discourse about Jewish history and culture — as opposed to Jewish historical subjects or Jewish characters — to learn about how they serve English needs. As a discourse, I maintain that Semitism is embedded in the symbolic and narrative structure of fictional depictions of English characters. Underlying my readings of Semitic discourse’s maintenance of English racial identity is a problem that arises when one racial category looks like another. The only way to distinguish one race from one another is to imagine and construct them as looking different. Along these lines, I examine, like Brody, "the construction of Englishness as a 'white' identity" in order to address this question: how did Victorian texts construe Englishness as 'masculine,' 'white,' and 'pure?"(9).
This phenomenon appears in a famous scene from Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) in which Mr. Brockelhurst, the Evangelical director of Lowood School, publicly chastises young Jane for her unchristian-like behavior. Placing her on a stool in front of her teachers and peers, Brockelhurst proceeds to hurl abuse on Jane, exclaiming:

> Ladies... Miss Temple, teachers, and children, you all see this girl?... You see she is yet young; you observe she possesses the ordinary form of childhood; God has graciously given her the shape that He has given to all of us; no signal deformity points her out as a marked character. Who would think that the Evil One had already found a servant and agent with her? Yet such, I grieve to say, is the case. (78)

The adult Jane narrates this early childhood trauma by explaining “I felt their eyes directed like burning glasses against my scorched skin” (78). It is tempting to read this passage for its religious, that is Christian, undertones. Along these lines, Jane’s affiliation with the Evil One is the natural starting place for her autobiographical account of her development into a Christian. Lowood is one of several reforming institutions (Gateshead Hall, Lowood, Thornfield Hall, Moor House, Morton, Ferndean) that ultimately succeed in suppressing Jane’s rebellious behavior, and drawing out a more tempered, feminine, Christian identity. Yet, this passage might also be read for its allusions to imperial ideology through which, Suvendrini Perera rightly maintains, nineteenth-century novels such as *Jane Eyre* “processed and naturalized” so thoroughly that “not only [would] the novel... be a different form without empire but... empire is unimaginable in its particular form without its processing and legitimization in the novel”(7). Accordingly, the narrator’s choice to describe her skin as “scorched” not only symbolically alters the color of her skin, but in foreshadowing Bertha’s burned skin.
as she throws herself onto the burning flames at Thornfield in a displaced performance of the Indian ritual of sati, it also serves to align Jane with a character who appears in this novel as un-English. Brockelhurst’s continued speech both complements and complicates the narrator’s construction of her early identity, thereby drawing into focus the manner in which this little English girl with white skin is produced as a visible site of difference.

it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God’s own lambs, is a little castaway; not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example; if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body to save her soul; if, indeed, such salvation be possible. . . .(78)

As if this were not torture enough, to be ridiculed publicly, Jane is called an “interloper” and an “alien.” Alienating her, Brockelhurst reasons, might enable her salvation. In his final words, Brockelhurst explains that Jane’s benefactress, Mrs. Reed, sends Jane to Lowood out of concern for the purity of her own children, “fearful lest her [Jane’s] vicious example should contaminate their purity: she has sent her here to be healed, even as the Jews of old sent their diseased to the troubled pool of Bethesda; and, teachers, superintendent, I beg of you not to allow the waters to stagnate round her”(79).

Indeed, the waters never do stagnate around Jane, and she is healed from her early status as figurative Jew as a result of her movement through various locations and stages through which her Christian progress is mapped. Becoming Christian, then, means shedding the impure and diseased vestiges of her “Jewish” past. Jane of course,
is not turned into a Jew here, but Brockelhurst relies upon a Semitic discourse to construct this little English girl, with white skin, who “possesses the ordinary form of childhood” lacking any “signal deformity [that] points her out as a marked character” as different. The reference to the Jews at Bethesda then, is the culmination of a string of signifiers that racialize Jane as a non-Christian white-skinned person. Despite the fact that Jane the narrator is critical of Mr. Brockelhurst’s Evangelical hypocrisy (we are told that his family members who bear witness to this sermon are decked out in fancy clothing and elaborate hairstyles — hardly the marks of meek, Christian, Evangelical femininity), both Jane and Brockelhurst allude to the same problem that arises with their acts of outing Jane as an alien — she looks just like all the other English girls in the room. While the narrator solves this problem by depicting her earlier, humiliated self as having scorched skin, Brockelhurst must work harder to produce Jane as different from the other English students. His solution is to compare Jane to a Jew.

Borrowing from a Biblical source, Jane’s outsider status is premised in part by an allusion to Biblical Jews. Just as the Jews were sent to Bethesda to be reformed, Jane is sent to Lowood to be turned into a Christian. However, this alignment of Jewish history with Jane’s original self does not suggest that Jane is Jewish, nor does it lead us to believe that her autobiography is a conversion narrative. Rather, the reference to her Jewish origins is her point of departure from which she grows into a Christian English women, whose past is rooted in Brockelhurst’s apparently random comparison of Jane with the Jews at Bethesda. Much later in the novel, after Rochester proposes to Jane, he teases her by accusing her of marrying him for his money. We understand that Jane’s
Christian development is well under way when she replies, “What do I want with half your estate? Do you think I am a Jew-userer, seeking good investment in land?” (294).

The significance of Jane’s early alignment with Jews is striking, and causes us to reconsider the significance of, among other things, her teacher’s name (Miss Temple), but also of the narrative structure of Christian development which her early association with Jews enables.

In a period when Anglo-Jews were becoming increasingly assimilated into English culture, and when racial science and philology insisted upon a hierarchy of races, as a Christian nation, England had to negotiate the fact that Christianity was based on a narrative about Jewish people (Christ, Mary, and the apostles were all Jewish). The Christian Bible links Hebrew and Christian culture, not only because the major Christian players were all Jewish, but because the Jewish Bible has been subsumed, and thus appropriated, by Christianity. In the wake of this narrative appropriation, the Torah was contextualized by Christianity as an “old” prefiguration of the “new” Christian document. Accordingly, the stories and the manner of reading those stories in the Torah were rendered important insofar as they anticipated Christ and the New Testament. This act of appropriation, of subsuming Jewish history as it appears in the Torah and appropriating it as the Old Testament, reconfigures the Jewish Bible as part of a Christian narrative that anticipates the New Testament. Nineteenth-century novels reenact this Christian appropriation of Jewish history and culture not only by making seemingly random references to Jewish history (like the one Brockelhurst makes), but by the very structure of their narratives, which reenact the imagined moment when
Christianity emerged as a distinct religious category from its Hebrew origins. Beginning as early as the eighteenth century, when the novel is becomes codified as a distinct genre, we see the emergence of a national narrative reflected in and produced by British fiction that charts individual character development, such as the one that appears in *Jane Eyre*.

The allusion to Jane’s Jewish origins is one important consequence of English anxiety about producing, and thus preserving, a nation of racially pure and culturally superior Christians. The ideological implication, of course, is that by remaining Jewish, Hebrew culture failed to evolve, and thus remains in a state of superstitious, narrow-mindedness. Jane is not merely compared to a Jew, but is depicted as she progresses from a symbolic Jew into an English Christian. Her act of writing this fictional autobiography constitutes an act of returning to her origins, to imagine and construct the moment where she emerged as a Christian from a Jewish past. As I show in the following chapters though, it is not enough to return to the past to construct the origins of English Christian identity. Rather, these novels must repeatedly perform the ritual of returning to the past for the maintenance of English identity. For this reason, we read the title of *Jane Eyre* as the vehicle that enables this perpetual return, and the perpetual maintenance of Christian identity that this return enables. Jane Eyre marries Edward Rochester, and thereafter become Jane Rochester. The anonymous author’s choice to represent herself by her maiden name “Eyre” foregrounds her original identity, which Brockelhurst constructs by the reference to the Jews at Bethesda, even after she has progressed and changed her name to Rochester. Just as the Christian scriptures

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recontextualize Jewish history as important insofar as it anticipates Christianity, the name "Eyre" in the title perpetually returns Jane to her former figurative Jewish identity even after she marries and takes a new, married name.

Like *Jane Eyre*, British novels are shaped by a narrative unfolding that reenacts a culturally constructed moment when Christianity severed its relations with Judaism. In an effort to preserve and thus produce English identity as racially distinct and racially pure (such as Mr. Brockelhurst's description of Mrs. Reed's children) nineteenth-century novels produce a Semitic discourse to underscore the "fact" that Jews were racially, nationally, and religiously distinct from Christians. In the process, these Christian narratives draw our attention not only to the history that links Judaism and Christianity, but to the threat this link posed to the very idea of English identity. My claim, that English identity is produced out of a Semitic discourse, does not mean that English characters become Jewish, or that Semitism exists in the cultural realm only when Jewish characters appear in novels, but that a pervasive Semitic discourse enables the articulation of English identity in this period, even as that discourse is based on a flawed logic. Accordingly, Jewish history and culture is represented by nineteenth-century novelists in such a way that links Jewish and Christian history and that simultaneously formulates a Jewish and Christian racial divide. By this logic then, Jews and Christians are depicted as having originated from the same stock, and are simultaneously imagined as biologically distinct from one another.7

Recent literary scholarship has reshaped the critical discourse for talking about and understanding the presence of both Jewish writers and Jewish characters in English
fiction in nineteenth-century England. As important as this work is, however, it has bifurcated a prominent phenomenon which my dissertation will address. In our quest to find all of the Jewish characters, and ascertain their authors’ racist or ideological suppositions, we have fallen into the trap of overlooking seemingly random or unrelated references to Jewish history and culture in the nineteenth-century novel. The reference in *Jane Eyre* to the Jews at Bethesda is one such example that might be dismissed as just a sign of the times, as yet another example of English antisemitism. Unlike every other study of Semitic discourse in the nineteenth-century British novel, I will read this discourse not for what it suggests about Jewish identity, but for what it suggests about the production and maintenance of English identity.

Two recent critical studies are central to my argument. First, James Shapiro in *Shakespeare and the Jews* maintains that representations of Anglo-Jews can be read as England’s attempt to construct a national identity that is defined against a Jewish other. The shift from religious category to national identity helps England to articulate its own distinctiveness (and superiority) within its borders. Using a Saidian approach to identity and culture, and reading an earlier moment in literary history, Shapiro maintains that the preoccupation with Jews in early modern England was in fact an example of how the “English turned to Jewish questions in order to answer English ones”(1). In the process of examining the constructed opposition between gentile and Jew in English history, Shapiro points to one underlying cause of such distinctions. Inherent in such a study is the issue of “what led early modern English men and women to think of themselves and other people, especially Jews, in terms of what they imagined to be racial
difference”(11). I will build on Shapiro’s notion that “racial difference” is a construct that helps England to define itself as a nation against a definable (because constructed) other. My work also grows out of Bryan Cheyette’s Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945 in which he examines the manner in which Semitic ‘cultural difference’ exposes the fact that “a dominant racialized discourse” exists “at the heart of what constitutes the received definitions of literary ‘culture’”(4). Rather than attempt to discern whether or not literary depictions of Jews are philo-Semitic or antisemitic8 Cheyette proposes instead that the figure of the Jew be read as a discourse: “But it is not just the difference in power relations between a dominant and subordinate culture that results in a radically unstable construction of ‘the Jew’. The indeterminacy of the Semitic representations under consideration meant that ‘the Jew’ can be constructed to represent both sides of a political or social or ideological divide. . .”(9). Along these lines, Cheyette examines images of ‘the Jew’ “as subjects of a ‘discourse’ and not as historical subjects” (11). Although Cheyette is looking at Jewish characters in the nineteenth-century novel, and I examine texts in which Jewish characters are absent, we proceed by a similar logic by underscoring the importance of representations of Jewish history and culture for the production, not of Jewish or Anglo-Jewish identity, but of English identity.

In the following chapters I show that Christian English cultural dominance exists not only in narrative moments in which the Jewish character appears, such as Fagin or Daniel Deronda, or when English characters are imagined in the act of making disparaging comments about Jews. Instead I show how a race discourse covertly
normalizes, naturalizes, and legitimates a particular set of cultural assumptions and positions. As David Theo Goldberg explains, “These expressions include beliefs and verbal outbursts (epithets, slurs, etc.), acts and their consequences, and the principles upon which racialized institutions are based” (41). White, Christian English identity, however well its racial identity is hidden, produces a race discourse out of the very fabric of its institutions, its cultural sphere, its morality and belief in God, and in its righteous claims to imperial expansion. Thus, English people, authors, or characters don’t need to make racist statements to enact and produce their identity as racially superior. The fact alone that they are the ones speaking with the power to determine and control not only their own identity, but everyone else’s as well, is enough to secure their position at the top of a hierarchy of racial categories. Goldberg continues, “It follows that race is a discursive object of racialized discourse that differs from racism. Race, nevertheless, creates the conceptual conditions of possibility, in some conjunctural conditions, for racist expression to be formulated” (42). In this sense, the dominance of Semitic discourse in novels from this period is important for what it enables in the production of English racial identity as supreme, dominant, and apparently invisible.

Although Jewish people have had to contend with the power of such literary depictions, at its root antisemitism is not about Jews but about those who need to see and understand Jews in a particular way for the maintenance of their own identity. I have chosen novels that best elucidate the power of Semitic discourse to produce English identity. I do not mean to suggest that these are exceptions or special cases, but
rather, are emblematic of a pervasive cultural pattern. In particular each chapter
examines the particular uses of Semitic discourse which, I argue, controls two specific
aspects of English Christian identity. The first is English Christian racial identity which
is reflected in novels by a ritualistic return to the past which, I argue, imagines a
moment in time when Christianity emerged as distinct from its Jewish origins. The
Christian Biblical appropriation of the Hebrew Bible is thus reenacted each time English
characters return to the past, a past which they negotiate by the terms of their “new”
Christian identity. Thus, Victorian culture must continually produce the origins of their
Christian identity in order to imagine and produce their racial distinction from their
Jewish roots. For example, the three British adventurers in *King Solomon's Mines*
return not only to an imagined African origin, but to a displaced Jewish origin,
symbolized by King Solomon's temple remains which Haggard places in British
imperial space.

A second feature of English identity which these novels produce out of a Semitic
discourse is English cultural identity or secular identity which is managed by
enlightened narrators who represent Jewish history in order to valorize English cultural
superiority over Jewish culture. This pattern of representation appears prominently
among authors who seek to prove that they are above or outside their culture's
antisemitism. The depiction and appropriation of Jewish history and culture is the
mechanism by which they promote themselves as modern, open minded, liberal, and
tolerant of difference. In this process, these authors depict Jewish history and culture in
apparently complementary ways, suggesting that since Jews are as good as Christians,
they ought to be extended the same respect extended to English people. This logic has a contrary effect, though, as it erases important differences between Christians and Jews, and only acknowledges as important those aspects of Jewish history and culture that are perceived to be the same as Christian culture. This act of appropriating Jewish history for the promotion of English identity follows the same pattern of Biblical appropriation that happens when the Christian Bible subsumes and appropriates the Jewish Bible. As such, the Jewish narrative is recontextualized as important when it anticipates the Christian Bible.

In his study of the Biblical origins of narrative, Stephan Prickett maintains that in eighteenth century English culture the Bible “underwent... [a] profound refashioning”(1) whereby it not only become increasingly used in public and private discourse, but, Prickett explains, this surge of Biblical allusions in Christian culture were “a kind of all-embracing literary form that was invoked to encompass and give meaning to all other books.” This phenomenon “was seen by some as a paradigm of our entire literary culture — and ultimately of the collective hermeneutical process by which any culture develops and inculcates its distinctive way of understanding the world” (1-2). Of course, this is not to suggest that this was the first time in the history of the Western world when the Bible functioned as a central cultural document. Prickett explains that the Bible was not just a book in this period, but The Book, and as such, functioned as a paradigm for literary culture in general, and the emerging novel genre in particular:

As a result the idea of what constitutes a book came to include within itself that notion of unity with diversity, of openness and plain meaning with secrets and polysemous layers of meaning. The concept of narrative
was to evolve with the novel assumed the possibility of many parallel stories — sometimes apparently unrelated; it took for granted sub-plot and main plot; stories within stories; parallel, complementary and even contradictory stories that may link thematically rather than by direct influence. (3)

Connected to this form of narrative is the simultaneous development of the British novel which took the shape of several stories, plots, and subplots, and the unification of many narratives under one separate cover. Because Biblical writers and scholars assumed that there was thematic unity in a text, reading was a process of discerning that unity. This was as true for novels as it was for the two parts of the Christian Bible. Because Biblical writers and scholars assumed that

there was a meaning to the whole cycle of human existence, and later interpreters developed this to assume that every event described in the Bible, however trivial it might seem, had a figurative typological or, as we would now say, symbolic relation to the whole, it became habitual in other areas of existence also to look for narrative, with a pattern of hidden meaning, rather than expect a mere chronicle of events. (4)

Books then, charted not just a sequence of events, or stories, but connected disparate components by constructing links and relations between them. Prickett adds,

This was a quality already present in the Hebrew Bible, but the Christian project of appropriating the Hebrew scriptures and presenting itself as the legitimized heir to Judaism gave the process a new urgency. . . In its literal sense, much of what now became the ‘Old Testament’ bore little or no relation to the superstructure constructed upon it. In many cases, indeed, its narratives and even ethical teachings actually seemed to contradict those of the New Testament. The need to interpret texts was thus not an incidental phenomenon of the new religion, but a response to a problem that was essential to its foundation and subsequent development. In this sense at least, critical theory was what Christianity was all about. (5)

Our current practices of reading novels that chart individual character development have occluded the fact that both the structure of the novel and our reading and critical
practices of the novel are all essentially Christian. In this process, Prickett explains, because Christianity began with a sense that it differed radically from the world that preceded it, and that even in its own sacred texts had to be effectively defamiliarized, the interpretive function of narrative was uniquely central right from the start. ... the compilers of the New Testament. ... saw in the past not merely a sequence of events, but a problem with a meaning that had to be explained. ... It is therefore hardly surprising if, in our biblically based culture, the inherent expectation of a book include not merely narrative but revelation: a sense that some hidden mystery is to be unfolded and even explained. (5-6)

Thus, when Berenice in Maria Edgeworth's Harrington is revealed to have been a Christian, when Will Ladislaw in George Eliot's Middlemarch is mistakenly revealed to have been a Jew, when the Jewish Alick in Charlotte Tonna's Judah's Lion has a revelation and sees Christ as his Messiah, and when the explorers in H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines “discover” the hidden diamonds in King Solomon's temple, we discern a narrative structure rooted in an original Jewish “problem,” as Prickett puts it, that is in need of being solved. Just like Prickett's reading of the New Testament, all novels begin by illuminating the sequence of events that preceded them, and that brought their characters, with their particular problems, into being. In other words, when readers pick up a novel, they are aware that time and events have brought these characters, with their particular situations, into being. In this sense, we begin reading novels in the middle of the story, at the moment when new problems, in need of resolution, are about to arise. I maintain that the structure of all novels follow the very same pattern Prickett described as the Christian appropriation of a Hebrew past. Even when novels are not explicitly invoking Biblical narratives, they grow out of an “absent” problematic past that is both subsumed by the beginning of the novel and appropriated.
by the events that occur in the narrative itself. In other words, the novel requires that "absent past" in order to move on from it to follow the progression of events that the past invokes. The relationship between the "absent" events that invoke the novel’s plot and the "present" narrative itself that we read, and that appears as a result of the earlier events, parallels the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and The Christian Bible in secular Christian culture.

We read Jane’s progress on two levels then, first in the symbolic alignment of early “Jewish” Jane, as figured by Brockelhurst, to later Christian Jane who must be physically separated from her cousins in order be cleansed, reformed, and to progress to the higher stage of Christianity. The second level, related to the first, is the fact that Jane’s progress is narrated by an “anonymous”9 voice, who returns to her origins to trace her progress from a pre-Christian to a Christian state. This act of looking back to the origins of her identity as narrator and author, who evolved through the ritual of figurative movement from one home to the next, is a Christian pattern of revelation and redemption. As scholars such as Barry Qualls have noted, the alignment of Jane’s journey to Christian’s journey in Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress, we find that the narrator Jane returns to her origins to negotiate her pre-Christian identity with her contemporary identity as English Christian woman. Thus the act of looking back is more than just a quest to find her origins, but constitutes an act of subsuming them, in the very process of narrating a story about her development.

The following study will examine nineteenth-century novels that use what Cheyette has called a Semitic discourse to construct English Christian identity. This is
not to suggest that such references do not also produce information about Jewish identity, but rather, my interest is in what they suggest about the desire and manner by which English identity was produced and imagined out of a Semitic discourse. The failure to sever links between Jewish and Christian histories however, is an important aspect of the problem I expose: for, this narrative ritual of returning to the Semitic origins of Christianity is essential to the process of cleansing English Christian identity of that past. Narrative references to the past, or to characters' origins are thus much more than acts of setting the context, but illustrate the politicized structure of the narrative that ritualistically reenacts, by symbolic allusion and narrative progress, the Christian act of subsuming and appropriating Jewish culture. I return to Perera's claims only with a slight modification. In addition to naturalizing an imperial ideology, the British novel also naturalizes Semitic discourse and a race ideology intent upon distinguishing between Jews and Christians. Thus, not only would the novel exist in a different form without Semitic discourse, but English identity in its particular form is unimaginable without its processing and legitimization by Semitic discourse.

Two central problems give rise to the proliferation of and causes for nineteenth-century Semitic discourse. The first problem, hardly new to the nineteenth century, but complicated by developments in this period such as scientific racism, philology, and anthropology's quest to "discover" human origins, was the imagined historical filiation of Christianity and Judaism in antiquity. It goes without saying that England was decidedly a Christian nation in the nineteenth century. Thus, to be Jewish meant that one was by definition, not English. This national separation between these two religious
categories was ultimately verified and naturalized by science, imperialism, and “secular” culture, such as the novel. Through the objective reasoning of nineteenth-century positivists and scientists, the separation between Jews and Christians was carefully managed by what Jean-Pierre Vernant calls “scholarly myths” that were “steeped in erudition, informed by profound knowledge of Hebrew and Sanskrit, fortified by comparative study of linguistic data, mythology, and religion, and shaped by the effort to relate linguistic structures, forms of thought, and features of civilization.” (ix-x). Despite this objective analysis and scientization of the history of humankind and the development of the West, Vernant emphasizes that such myths were, “also... fantasies of the social imagination, at every level”(ix). Indeed, the social imagination not only shaped such myths, but was also, in turn, shaped by them. The novel in this period played a significant role not only in maintaining such divisions, but in producing racial differences between Jews and Christians. The return to the origins of civilization was thus also a return to a perceived moment in time when divisions were thought to have been codified. Vernant explains, “As scholars established the disciplines of Semitic and Indo-European studies, they also invented the mythical figures of the Hebrew and the Aryan, a providential pair which, by revealing to the people of the Christianized West the secret of their identity, also bestowed upon them the patent of nobility that justified their spiritual, religious, and political domination of the world” (x-xi). This search to find the roots of Western Christian culture was not merely bound up with the recovery of lost information about English racial origins, but rather was a movement aimed at explaining the foregone conclusion that Aryan culture was superior.
to Semitic culture. Nonetheless, this pair, Hebrew and Aryan, remained a pair, linked by the very discourse that enabled their distinction from one another. Vernant continues, “The Hebrew undeniably had the privilege of monotheism in his favor, but he was self-centered, static, and refractory both to Christian values and to progress in culture and science. The Aryan, on the other hand, was invested with all the noble virtues that direct the dynamic of history: imagination, reason, science, arts, politics”(x). Indeed, the fabric of English Christian culture — eighteenth-century Reason, the Romantic Imagination, imperial progress, nineteenth-century social reform — was woven out of the illusion of a secular identity that rendered English identity white, noble, Rational, progressive, and Aryan, and thus, the opposite of its Hebrew “twin.”

In *Dying For God*, Daniel Boyarin reminds us that such efforts to locate the exact moment of Christian emergence from a Hebrew source were based on a mistaken belief that Christianity appeared at one finite point in history, in the moment when the followers of Christ evolved out of their Jewish origins and became Christian. However, this view of Christian origins is part of an elaborate mythology that simplifies a four hundred year historical process. Boyarin explains,

In the Jewish world of the first century, there were many sects competing for the name of the true Israel and the true interpreter of the Torah — the Talmud itself speaks of twenty-four such sects — and the form of Judaism that was to be the seedbed of what eventually became the Church was but one of those sects. . . scholars have come to see that if we are to speak of families at all, we need to speak of a twin birth of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism as two forms of Judaism, and not of a genealogy in which one — Judaism — is parent to the other — Christianity. (2)

Nineteenth-century scientific efforts to validate distinctions between Semitic and Aryan
tribes were premised on such a historical moment that exists only in mythology and in history writing. Boyarin adds, that this myth of two biological racial identities existed in ancient times not in “a single, unambiguous, clear, linear story, but one of doubling and doublings back, of contradictions and obscurities” (6), and as late as the second century “the border between the two was so fuzzy that one could hardly say precisely at what point one stopped and the other began” (11). This is not to suggest of course, that differences do not exist between Judaism and Christianity, but rather that exact distinctions between the histories and identities of these two groups has been produced by a Western discourse intent upon looking back to its production of an originary moment of birth to distinguish itself as racially “different” from (and superior to) its Semitic antecedents.

English culture in general, and the British novel in particular, played a fundamental role in presenting these myths as facts. Even when, or especially when, “rational” or “objective” thinkers from the nineteenth century claimed to reflect facts, as opposed to religious myths, they were obviously still perceiving and constructing such facts from within dominant Christian culture whose identity was already “known” to be superior to Semitic culture. In Languages of Paradise Michael Olender explains that

The authors of the nineteenth century were hostages, as we are no doubt too, to the questions they set themselves. Though they cast aside the old theological questions, they remained attached to the notion of providential history. Although they borrowed the techniques of positivist scholarship, took inspiration from methods perfected by natural scientists, and adopted the new perspective of comparative studies, they continued to be influenced by the biblical presuppositions that define the ultimate meaning of their work. (19-20)
In its quest for objectivity, secular culture never fully abandoned a Christian framework for organizing the world. Thus, secular Western culture remained linked to a Christian structure of storytelling, fact finding, and history making even as it claimed to be objective and unbiased.

Vernant’s and Olender’s analyses are important not only for exposing the fact that racial differences were produced by a science of origins that failed to see how objectivity was produced out of the naturalization of an ideology of Christian origins. For this reason, English novels are not racialized exclusively when a Jewish character appears on the scene, but in the very language, symbolism and narrative structure that produces English identity. In other words, the discourses of English nobility, Victorian Progress (industrialism), Reason (science), and imperial expansion (“onward Christian soldier”) are always already racialized as white, English, and Christian. Race is not only important when an African or a Jew or an Indian character appears in the text, but rather, whenever anyone appears in the text, since everyone in culture is constructed within a race discourse as having a racial identity. Reading whiteness as a racial category, then, means seeing how it is constructed as superior, pure, and privileged, and how, even within the tradition of literary scholarship, it has been read as the invisible norm against which other racial categories are defined and made visible.

In the following chapters, I examine nineteenth century novels with the explicit purpose of showing how the presentation of secular English identity exposes the manner in which Christianity (also known as secular, white, Aryan identity) is embedded in, endorsed by, and produced as a result of the symbolic, structural, and thematic elements
within the nineteenth-century novel. Reading Semitic discourse then, means exposing the places in the nineteenth-century British novel where English identity appears not in opposition to Hebrew culture, but as a result of a ritual return to a culturally constructed moment of appropriation when Semitic and Aryan "became" distinct racial categories. In contrast to Bronte's depiction of Jane's spiritual (and by extension, racial) development is Arnold's essay *Culture and Anarchy* in which he illustrates the mechanism by which English racial superiority is secured through the representation of Hebrew culture. Specifically, his chapter "Hebraism and Hellenism" continually asserts that "The final aim of both Hellenism and Hebraism, as of all great spiritual disciplines, is no doubt the same: man's perfection or salvation. The very language which they both of them use in schooling us to reach this aim is often identical" (477). As the essay develops, however, Arnold subtly shifts his argument to show that despite the fact that Hebrew and Hellene are almost exactly the same spiritually and culturally, they evolve from different racial stock. By the end of the chapter, after learning that Hebrew and Hellene aspire toward the same ends by different means, and are both therefore, commendable and valuable, Arnold asserts, "Science has now made visible to everybody the great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race, and in how signal a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people; and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism (484). Having transformed these two equally important brothers who share the same origins into different races, here Arnold moves one step further by explaining that they are racially divided. Moreover, English
racial identity comes from Hellenic stock. Realizing perhaps that such a claim places
him in the dangerous position of presenting a biased perspective against Hebraism,
Arnold adds quickly,

But nothing more strongly marks the essential unity of man, than the affinities
we can perceive, in this point or that, between members of one family of people
and members of another. And no affinity of this kind is more strongly marked
than that likeness in the strength and prominence of the moral fibre, which,
notwithstanding immense elements of difference, knits in some special sort the
genius and history of us English, and our American descendants across the
Atlantic, to the genius and history of the Hebrew people. (484-5)

Here Arnold recovers Hebraic culture by showing its importance in enabling the moral
superiority and “genius and history of us English” to exist in its then current state. In a
matter of a few lines, Arnold returns again to the Hebrew origins of Christian culture in
the very same passage in which he asserts (and thus produces) a racial distinction
between on the one hand, English Indo-European Hellenic stock, and on the other,
Semitic stock.

“Hebraism and Hellenism” exposes Arnold’s and his culture’s anxiety about
their historical relationship to Jews by protesting too much that Hebrew culture is
important and ought not to be dismissed. In the act of making this point we find three
facets of Arnold’s argument that are repeated in British novels from this period. First, is
the assertion that Hebrew culture is important because it has enabled Christian
superiority over, among many others, Jewish people. In an apparent gesture of flattering
Jews by promoting interest in Hebrew culture, Arnold instead reveals that Hebrew
culture is most important because it enables Christians to be better, more moral,
geniuses. Second, Arnold repeatedly emphasizes the fact that Christianity evolved out
of both Hebrew and Hellenic culture. And third, Arnold, like the authors I include in this dissertation, believes that he has control over the discourse about Jews and the conceptual framework through which he imagines Jewish culture. His emphasis on the import of Hebraism serves as a decoy, by distracting the reader from seeing that what he describes is not Jewish history and culture, but the representation and appropriation of Jewish history and culture from his unstated (and thus invisible) position within dominant Christian English culture. Thus the rhetorical structure of Arnold’s production of English Christian identity is rooted in a Semitic discourse that is part of a much larger cultural discourse in this period.

Like the novels I analyze, my dissertation begins before the beginning — that is before the nineteenth-century novel. My second chapter will focus on Maria Edgeworth’s and Charles Dickens’s literary representations of George Gordon who instigated the Gordon Riots (1780) and later converted to Judaism. Written as an attempt to vindicate herself from claims that her earlier novels portrayed Jews in a negative light, Edgeworth publishes Harrington (1817) with intentions of painting a more appealing portrait of them, and by extension, of herself. As she imagines the Gordon Riots, Edgeworth transforms them from anti-Catholic riots to anti-Jewish riots. She includes angry rioters who, in their fury, yelled into the streets of London, “No wooden shoes” to protest Papal authority. However, since “shoes” rhymes with “Jews,” the slogan quickly evolved into “No Jews, No Wooden Shoes.” Dickens depicts these same riots and their aftermath in Barnaby Rudge (1841) by including “real” characters from the riots, including the quirky and eccentric George Gordon himself. The two
novels' depictions of a Jewish anti-hero rework the historical event in such a way that anachronistically incorporates Gordon's Jewish identity. Both novels therefore offer particularly useful material through which to examine the novelistic construction of the Jewish subject in English politics.

My third chapter examines two texts that have been called "Zionist" novels — Charlotte Tonna's *Judah's Lion* (1837) and Benjamin Disraeli's *Tancred* (1843) — to show how a discourse about Jewish nationalism was the vehicle by which Evangelical Christianity (Tonna) and British Imperialism (Disraeli) could flourish. I argue in this chapter that these novels not only appropriate Jewish national narratives for the production of English national identity, but also work to erase important differences between Jews and Christians. This erasure is not just dismissive, but maintains that since Jews are just like Christians, they ought to convert to Christianity which will allow them to become properly English. Yet this process of showing that Jews are really the same as Christians, ultimately turns back on itself to produce racial distinctions between Jews and Christians. In the end, these novels assert that Jews may convert to become good Christians, but they will never be true born English people since they are biologically or physically different from the English.

Moving roughly twenty years ahead in my fourth chapter, I will consider the trope of passing in Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72). Through her emphasis on wills, Eliot underscores the importance of origins, and specifically of English Christian origins, which this novel depicts as having come from characters who are falsely identified as Jewish. Thus, as Casaubon looks to the past to discern the Hebrew origins
of Christian culture, Bulstrode attempts to hide the fact that he inherited his fortune from a man who is believed to have been both a “Jew pawnbroker” and Will Ladislaw’s grandfather. Eliot’s act of looking to the past parallels the narrator’s act of looking to her origins in *Jane Eyre.* And like Jane, even as the characters in *Middlemarch* move beyond the past, the structure of the novel forces them to return to their origins as a function of maintaining their English identity.

In the fifth chapter, southern Africa is the site of H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) which serves to commodify Jews not only by their associations with diamonds, but also with the Biblical story of Solomon, whom Haggard portrays incorrectly as having control over diamond mines. His depictions of southern Africa imagine not only an ancient white past in *She* (1887) and *King Solomon’s Mines,* but also a Jewish history that was overtaken by a whiter, and, according to the logic of these texts, more advanced, culture. I argue in this chapter that the changing diamond industry after the discovery of diamonds in south Africa in 1867 becomes a point of tension between Jewish and English claims to economic power. While Haggard names his novel after an important and wealthy Jewish king, he portrays Solomon as an absence who exists in the form of a hollow cave in the ground where his temple once stood. Solomon never actually makes any appearance in the text, but rather is marked by an absence. Others, especially Quartermain, must speak and think for Solomon whose absent subjectivity is supplemented by diamonds that not only objectify, but commodify Solomon because of his absence. Like Hogarth’s Jewish merchant and Lord Gordon, Solomon is represented and appropriated as an object that can be
constructed, viewed, and displaced by an audience whose invisibility is contingent on their capacity to imagine the figure of the Jew in a particular way. In common among all of these novels is the politicized act of looking back to the past to construct origins of English Christian identity against an imagined Jewish race, culture, and religion. As the next chapter on the Gordon Riots will attest, this act is more than just the construction of historical linearity, but a powerful process by which English culture negotiates its Hebrew history against its desire to be, and thus produce itself as, racially pure.
1. Braybrooke 73.

2. The derogatory nature of this term has been lost among many contemporary scholars. I refer to this word throughout the dissertation with extreme caution, using it only to refer to scholarly references and contexts. The Spanish word “Marrano” means swine or pig, and is therefore not simply a reference to Spanish Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism while practicing Jewish rituals in secret, but also invokes a demeaning image of Jews. Instead, I will use “Converso” to denote Spanish Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism.

3. I will use “Biblical” or “the Bible” to refer to what has been identified in English culture either anachronistically as “The Jewish Bible” or incorrectly as “The Old Testament.” According to Jewish culture and religious practice, the Bible does not anticipate any newer version of itself.

4. See Sharpe’s Allegories of Empire and Spivak’s “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.”


6. This is a stereotype with a long history. For interesting discussions of the implications of seeing Jews as antiquated and not evolved see Zygmunt Bauman’s Modernity and the Holocaust, especially chapter 2, and Amanda Anderson’s “George Eliot and the Jewish Question” in which she traces “The Hegelian tradition” of viewing Jews as “incapable of themselves becoming modern.” Anderson examines the nineteenth-century view that “Being modern meant having a self-active or reflective relation to one’s cultural heritage; Jewish culture, by contrast, was construed as a form of legalism (extrinsic law) that one followed unblinkingly. The Jews thus are fundamentally unfree insofar as they fail to develop the dimension of interiority that characterizes Protestant Christianity and the capacity for self-authorization of beliefs that forms the core of the Enlightenment conception of autonomy” (42).

7. I do not mean to suggest that all Christians are the same or that all Jews are the same, but that Victorian culture, in imagining a separation between them, erased important differences among Jews and among Christians.


9. The original title page from the 1847 edition of this novel read:
   Jane Eyre: An Autobiography
   Anonymous
   Edited by Currer Bell
CHAPTER II

"ENGLAND IN BLOOD"¹

The English Jews are, as far as we can see, precisely what our government has made them.
Thomas Babington Macaulay²

The subject of the dream is the dreamer.
Toni Morrison³

During the week of June 2, 1780, Lord George Gordon organized a group of 50,000 people to meet at St. George's Fields, Southwark for the purpose of marching to Westminster to demand the repeal of the 1778 Catholic Relief Act. Gordon and his followers maintained that emancipated Catholics threatened the stability of the English throne.⁴ Gordon also feared that Catholic emancipation was a government ruse providing England with Catholic soldiers to fight, as he put it, the "'mad, cruel, and accursed American War'" (Hibbert 22). As president of the English Protestant Association, and a vehement pacifist, Gordon peacefully led this group and their petition to Parliament.⁵ Despite Gordon’s intentions, though, the protest quickly turned into what Christopher Hibbert describes in Queen Mob as a violent revolt by the poor against anyone in authority, anyone who might be held responsible for their poverty and discontent, their dangerous malaise. [The Rioters]. . . struck
out in irrational, unthinking desperation, unconsciously hoping to release in their uproar the frustrations and irritations of years of neglect. Any reason for violence would have done. Only the spark was needed. Popery was as good an excuse as any other. (117)

Hibbert, among other scholars, maintains that the week-long riots were a result of class oppression. Others, however, believe that the riots had much more to do with systems of oppression, such as racism or intolerance toward Catholics, that cut across class lines. Yet, even in 1780 opinions about what actually caused the riots varied. Dismayed at the violence he had unwittingly inspired, Gordon published a letter on the second day pleading with the rioters to stop their violence in the name of England and Protestantism. In this document he urges

all true Protestants. . . to shew [sic] their attachment to their best interest, by a legal and peaceable deportment, as all unconstitutional proceedings in so good a cause can only tend to prevent the members of the legislature from paying due attention to the united prayers of the Protestant petition. (Hibbert 100)

His efforts failed, however, and the rioters continued for a week, opening and emptying prisons, looting shops and Catholic homes, and burning down houses of Parliamentary figures who supported the Catholic Emancipation Act. By the end, as David Katz reminds us, “[t]he rioters caused ten times as much damage during that single week as occurred in Paris throughout the French Revolution, and paid the price of 290 deaths during the disturbances and twenty-five executions afterwards” (304). Ultimately Gordon was acquitted for his role in instigating the riots, but not without having to plead insanity. And, if there was any doubt about the validity of this charge, it was later “confirmed” with Gordon’s conversion to Judaism sometime between 1783-1786. Dr.
H. Selfe Bennett, one of Gordon’s contemporaries, explains “to a Christian, whether Protestant or Romanist, such a sudden perversion from the religion of his forefathers appears eminently unreasonable” (DeCastro 248). Admittedly, it is a bit odd that the passivist president of the Protestant Association instigated a bloody revolt against the English government in the name of protecting England from the “threat” of Catholics, and then later converted to Judaism.

In this chapter I examine two prominent nineteenth-century novelistic depictions of two facets of George Gordon’s public identity: his efforts to preserve the purity and power of English national identity and his later status as a Jewish convert. Both Maria Edgeworth’s *Harrington* (1817) and Charles Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) assert, in distinct ways, that toleration toward religious difference will not bring about the dissolution of England. To illustrate this point, both novelists turn to the Gordon Riots to criticize anti-Papal attitudes espoused by Gordon, and the popular anti-Jewish sentiments expressed on the occasion of Gordon’s conversion to Judaism. In their protests against what they interpret as the remains of an antiquated prejudice, left over from the eighteenth century, these novels imagine a more liberal nation for the future, one marked by toleration toward Catholics and Jews alike.

This chapter will not compare the “actual” event or the “real” Gordon to these fictional counterparts. Rather, I will read these two novels for the manner in which they reflect and produce Semitic discourses about the Jewish George Gordon, in the case of Dickens’s novel, and about the anti-Jewish Gordon Riots, in the case of Edgeworth’s. Both authors represent and appropriate Jewish history in their assertions that Jews are
not a threat to Englishness, and by extension, in their claims that English national
identity will not be dismantled or tainted by a show of liberality toward Jews. We find
that an imagined Jewish history, invoked by Gordon’s anti-Catholic riots and his later
conversion to Judaism, is brought into the service of a race discourse that works to
separate and consolidate Jewish racial identity from English racial identity. My central
claim is that as these novels turn to events from the past to reflect their criticism of
English intolerance toward Catholics and Jews, they imagine racial distinctions between
Jews and English people. This act of looking back accomplishes much more than just
recall history, but in fact, produces a Semitic discourse in the production of English
identity. The appropriation of Jewish history and culture in these novels serves two
specific purposes. First, it enables both authors to produce their identity as liberal and
tolerant in comparison to the “antiquated” anti-Jewish opinions they include in their
novels. Along these lines anti-Semitism is imagined as an attitude that once existed in
the eighteenth century, but is no longer a problem among liberal-minded English people.
For this reason, the Semitic discourses that appear in these novels are put into the
service of producing and maintaining nineteenth-century English identity through the
appropriation of both Anglo-Jewish history and Jewish Biblical history. Second, these
novelists’ depictions of Gordon and of English antisemitism reveal that they believe
themselves to be qualified to speak on behalf of the Jews. Thus, they assume that they
have conceptual control over both English antisemitism and its effects on Anglo-Jews.
Yet, in their representations of Jewish history and culture, both Edgeworth and Dickens
inevitably reproduce the very ideology they criticize by thinking that they are qualified
to speak on behalf of Jews, thereby failing to recognize that the version of Jewish history that appears in these pages is a product of their own imaginations. Readers are not exposed to Jewish history, but to Christian appropriations of Jewish history.

The chapter title “England in Blood!” comes from a pamphlet published during the week of the Gordon riots that claimed to provide a “full account of the bloody tyrannies, persecutions, plots and inhuman butcheries exercised . . . by the see of Rome” (Hibbert 97 n1). The expression “England in Blood” became a cry for, and testament to, English solidarity in the face of the new Catholic Emancipation Act. Protestors wondered how Catholics could become English by virtue of having lived on English soil. In their process of wondering, English identity itself was called into question. As Gauri Viswanathan points out in Outside the Fold, this event raised the question “Could an Englishman be both English and Catholic, Jewish, Nonconformist?” (9). The 50,000 rioters delivered their petition to Parliament and demanded the reinstatement of Catholic restrictions. In the same year, England was engaged in a colonial war with America. In the unfortunate position of fighting two battles at once, England was quite literally in blood as she lost the war abroad, while she struggled to control the violence at home, which was justified in the name of blood.

In the early nineteenth century, being English meant much more than simply living on English soil or having an affiliation with the Church of England. Rather, “true” English people were thought to have certain cultural markings, manners, and educations that set them apart racially from other groups of people. According to this period’s understanding of race, English identity was genetically determined and
biologically bound. As Nancy Stepan explains, late eighteenth-century European culture accepted the notion that “human races were separated from each other by profound mental, moral and physical differences as to constitute separate biological species of humankind” (2). David Theo Goldberg adds that “racist expression assumes authority and is vested in power, literally and symbolically, in bodily terms... human bodies... are classified, ordered, valorized, and devalued... Corporeal properties have also furnished the metaphorical media for distinguishing the pure from the impure, the diseased from the clean and acceptable, the included from the excluded” (54). Both Jews and Catholics were considered threats to the English nation, though not for the same reasons. Anti-Catholic propaganda from this period suggests that the real threat of Catholics living in England was their perceived desire and power to supplant the English throne, and to bring about the ruin of Protestant English rule. The title page to The Appeal from the Protestant Association to the People of Great Britain, published on November 5, 1779, asserts “To design the Advancement of POPERY, is to design the Ruin of the State, and the Destruction of the Church; it is to sacrifice the Nation to a double Slavery, to prepare Chains both for their Bodies and their Minds” (Haydon 210). English anxiety about Jewish people living in England was based on a different kind of logic. Jews were not so much a political threat, as were Catholics, but a threat to the stability of English secular identity. As Todd Endelman explains, one prominent fear of the Jews was “[t]he power of Jewish money to corrupt the English way of life” (101). By the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, a rising number of middle class Anglo-Jews presented a new problem. Jews could now dress like the English, read what
the English read, and behave in a manner thought to be common to English people. This process of Jewish acculturation (which had tremendous consequences for modern European Judaism) meant that Jews could not necessarily be outwardly detected as Jewish. Endelman adds though, that “Realizing that the Jews had abandoned the outward signs of dress and speech that had set them apart previously from other men, essayists and journalists rediscovered the alleged distinctiveness of the Jews in the physical structure and coloring of their faces — something Jews were incapable of changing” (124). I would add that, in addition to essayists and journalists, novelists also “rediscovered” signs of Jewish difference. In the case of Edgeworth and Dickens, these outward signs appear, however, on characters whose identities are fluid, such as George Gordon who converts from Protestantism to Judaism in Dickens’s work, or Edgeworth’s depiction of Berenice Montenero, who is identified as a Jew because of her dark complexion, even though she is revealed to be an English Protestant by her mother’s lineage. I argue that this superficial effort to differentiate Jewish racial identity from English racial identity (which simultaneously renders all Jews as “the same” and all English as “the same”) is, in part, a response to anxieties about the places where these two categories overlap.

The Catholic Emancipation Act and the public’s ridicule of Gordon’s conversion to Judaism reminds us of late eighteenth-century’s categorization of national identity by religious and racial delineations. Accordingly, one wonders about the use and implications of the term emancipation. How can the extension of political and religious freedom to Catholics endanger the security of English racial purity if it was biologically
bound? In fact, this issue had been contested with the Jew Bill controversy which still lingered well into the nineteenth century as Anglo-Jews struggled for their own emancipation. Todd Endelman explains that the extension of political and civil rights to Jews had vast consequences for the English. It “meant the abandonment of any real notion of England as an avowedly Christian nation — or so the opponents of Jewish emancipation generally argued” (*Radical Assimilation* 50). And, if Jews could not be naturalized as citizens, by what logic were Catholics being “emancipated?” At the same time, while questions of religious emancipation were in the air, late eighteenth-century culture was also preoccupied with other related kinds of emancipation, such as abolitionism. I use this chapter to show that the Gordon Riots and their aftermath are emblematic of one significant anxiety underlying nineteenth-century anti-Jewish attitudes by showing that the threat of the Jews was based in this period on the fear that they “could” pass. This notion, of course, was premised on the assumption that Jews would want to pass as English. The act of imagining a tolerant and liberal England opening its doors to strangers is paralleled in these novels by portrayals of English identity as culturally desirable among outsiders living in England. Thus, both novels reveal not a genuine toleration toward racial and religious difference but, as Gauri Viswanathan argues “the limits of tolerance” (22) toward difference. She explains, Maria Edgeworth’s *Harrington* and Charles Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* end up affirming the dominant community of English Protestants, while making gestures toward extending political rights of citizenship to Jews and Catholics. Indeed, the pressures on literary form to manage conflicting social tendencies, which are often resolved by neutralizing and absorbing religious difference in a uniform social identity, uncannily reproduce the anxieties of a secular world in dealing with threatening
On one level, both Edgeworth and Dickens make visible efforts to find a voice for outsiders through, among other things, representations of the Gordon Riots. By the same logic, however, both texts protest strongly (indeed, suspiciously so) that their nation is secure, outsiders will be included, but not absorbed, so there is little cause for worry. David Theo Goldberg has explained of this kind of liberal thinking that

As modernity commits itself progressively to idealized principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as it increasingly insists upon the moral irrelevance of race, there is a multiplication of racial identities and the sets of exclusions they prompt and rationalize, enable and sustain. Race is irrelevant, but all is race... The more ideologically hegemonic liberal values seem and the more open to difference liberal modernity declares itself, the more dismissive of difference it becomes and the more closed it seeks to make the circle of acceptability. (Goldberg 6)

We see all of these qualities in Edgeworth’s depictions of the riots and rioters who are fighting on behalf of social equality for all, which they enforce by their violence against Catholics and Jews. Both novels suggest contradictorily that by eradicating England of figures such as Gordon, and the antiquated, racist thinking of the rioters, that England will take on a more tolerant national identity — one that is inclusive of difference. My intent is to examine the process by which racism is reinstated by the very texts and liberal thinking that seek its eradication.

Viswanathan has argued that during this time England became increasingly interested in seeing itself as liberal minded — that is, tolerant of religious and racial differences, as illustrated in the new Catholic Emancipation Act. At the same time, however, English colonial governance in India diverged from this vision by undertaking
to transform “Indians into deracinated replicas of Englishmen, even while they remained affiliated with their own religious culture” (5). England used its legal system to remove restrictions at home previously placed on religious minorities and dissenters, such as Catholics and Jews, while at the same time, attempting to Anglicanize Indians abroad. Reading this paradox Viswanathan explains, “If cultural histories can be understood as woven together in an intricate design, cultural criticism then becomes an act of disentangling them from their knotted past” (4).

However, by viewing cultural histories as woven together, we reproduce the logic that separate strands exist, were once separable, but as a result of culture have “become” knotted. While I agree with Viswanathan that a woven, tapestry-like cultural production exists, I do not believe that the separability of the strands is ever produced outside the ideological intervention of a dominant discourse that places itself in charge of doing the separation or disentangling. Thus, the tangled relations between individuals and their cultures is imagined as separable strands that are later tangled. The act of disentangling or even of seeing the strands as tanged is an act that reproduces an ideology of racial division. Ella Shohat astutely notes an alternate approach to reading the production of racial difference in culture: “The point is to place the often ghettoized discourses about geographies - ‘here’ versus ‘there’ - and about time - ‘now’ versus ‘then’ - in illuminating dialogue. A relational approach, one that operates at once within, between, and beyond the nation-state framework, calls attention to the conflictual hybrid interplay of communities within and across borders” (89). Viswanathan, for example, looks at Gordon’s role in these texts and in the Gordon Riots
as an anti-Catholic, Protestant leader, rather than a Protestant convert to Judaism, or she reads Edgeworth’s Berenice Montenero as a convert to Judaism, rather than as a character who is both Jewish (by her father) and Protestant (by her mother). Rather than pull these identities apart, in a labeling process, I will examine the implications of reading hybrid English identity as it works to construct and imagine itself as racially pure. In her discussion of representations of the Gordon Riots in these two novels, Viswanathan stops short of exploring the significance of Gordon’s conversion after the Gordon riots — a fact which I argue, is imbricated in these novels’ depictions of the Gordon Riots. These novels are able to function as powerful Semitic discourses, in part, because of Gordon’s conversion to Judaism.

Building on Morrison’s claim that the “subject of the dream is the dreamer,” I will analyze the novelists’ depictions of Jews for what they say about those who need to imagine Jews in this way for the production of their own identity. In other words, by accepting Jews into English culture, Edgeworth and Dickens simultaneously imagine themselves as liberal minded and as cultural insiders, capable of conferring status and inclusion onto others. My examinations of these novels show, however, that while Jews are apparently extended admittance into English society, they are simultaneously imagined in these novels as culturally and racially distinct from, and inferior to, English people. Jews may be allowed in, but they are never depicted as legitimate insiders. Goldberg explains that the significance of such liberal discourses goes far beyond “meaning making,” but comes to assume authority and confer status — reflect the material relations that
render them dominant. More significantly, they articulate these relations, conceptualize them, give them form, express their otherwise unarticulated and yet inarticulate values. It is this capacity — to name the condition, to define it, to render it not merely meaningful but actually conceivable and comprehensible — that at once constitutes power over it, to determine after all what it is (or is not), to define its limits. To control the conceptual scheme is thus to command one’s world. (9)

When novelists depict English characters in the act of allowing Jews to enter English space, when Macaulay acknowledges what he can see about the Jew, we are only too aware of how these images imagine English identity as cultural key holders, and of what Macaulay necessarily must exclude from his vision in order to maintain his identity. Thus, in both novels we find that meanings or identities of Jews and English people are not merely produced and rendered meaningful, the Jews as tolerable and the English as tolerant, but such novels function as linguistic empires that fashion Englishness as separate from Jewishness, and in the process, reaffirm that the English are linked by their universal status as insiders while Jews are unified by their status as aliens.

One clear example common to both novels is the depiction of the rioters as poor, white Londoners. Peter Linebaugh’s examination of the Gordon Riots in The London Hanged reminds us of the importance of the international and multiracial cast of characters who participated in these anti-Catholic attacks, including “English, Italian, German, Jewish, Irish and Afro-American” rioters (336). He explains,

The London Black community consisted of between 10,000 and 20,000 people — 6-7 per cent of the population. This population was active during the week of 6 June. Later Ottobah Cugoano would speak for this community when he said “the voice of our complaint implies a vengeance”. . . . Charlotte Gardiner, “a negro,” marched with a mob (“among whom were two men with bells, and another with frying pan and tongs”) to the house of Mr. Levarty, a publican . . . Charlotte Gardiner was

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a leader of this march. She shouted encouragement ("Huzza, well done, my boys — knock it down, down with it") and directions ("Bring more wood to the fire"), as well as taking two brass candlesticks from Levarty's dining-room. . . . [O]n 4 July she was found guilty and sentenced to death. One week later she was hanged. (Linebaugh 351)

It is worth considering Cuguano's and Gardner's voices not only for the implied irony of the date of Gardiner's sentencing (July 4), but also as reminders that black British protesting voices have been written out of both novelistic depictions and of critical writing on their depictions of the rioters. Both Maria Edgeworth and Charles Dickens are careful to include English, Catholic, Irish and Jewish characters in their versions of this event, yet neither includes discussions about the role of blacks, ex-slaves, Indians, or others who were not only participants and activists in the Gordon Riots, but who also perished by hanging for their acts "against" a nation — a nation that denied them citizenship rights. Indeed, Dickens's failure to include blacks in his detailed portrayal of the riots stands ominously against the implied successes of the young men who escape their fathers' oppression by running off to make fortunes in colonial West Indian trade. Although the "objects" of their trade are never specified, one can assume that their money comes from slave trading or the trading of products produced by slaves on plantations. However, Dickens's and Edgeworth's choices to write out of their histories the presence of black protestors does not eradicate blacks from their novels. Rather, it points to black British and black English history as an absence in these texts. Such absences must also be read against both novels' liberal assertions that England ought to be more tolerant of difference, by welcoming people from various nations, races and religions. We find in these novels that such toleration applies exclusively to those with
white skin, like Catholics and Jews.¹⁰

In “The Civil Disability of the Jews” published in 1830, Macaulay’s claim that “the Jews are as far as we can see what England has made them” (123, my emphasis) accurately describes the problem of seeing and not seeing, or the logic of (and anxiety about) the visibility of racial distinctions on the body. In this statement, Macaulay suggests that the Jews are only what the English have made them — that is, Jewish history, identity and culture exists only so far as Macaulay and the English can see or recognize it as such. At the same time, this sentence highlights the limits of that vision (as far as we can see), suggesting that there may be more to the Jews that is beyond his and his culture’s vision. Macaulay’s wording in fact, points to the real subject of these representations of Jews in novels by Edgeworth and Dickens — a culture of seeing and constructing English identity that works very hard to imagine and remind itself of its distinction from and superiority over Jews, even in the act of asserting that it loves Jews, and that Jews ought to be welcomed in. In this chapter, I will examine what Macaulay and his culture fail to see — that is, what they must fail to see for the maintenance and preservation of their own identity — which is that English identity exists in these novels through a Semitic discourse. The two are thus contingently linked by the very discourse that wants to separate them. Blindness to this fact come at a price though, as Toni Morrison explains, for “it requires hard work not to see”(17).
Contemporary scholars have been conscientious about recalling the occasion that inspired Maria Edgeworth to write *Harrington* (1817). A letter of 1815, written to Edgeworth by a Jewish-American woman named Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, offered ambivalent praise of Edgeworth’s earlier writing. After bestowing numerous compliments on Edgeworth’s *Practical Education*, Lazarus extended an uninvited critique of Edgeworth’s representations of Jews in her *Moral Tales for Young People* and in her novels, explaining

> How can it be that she, who on all other subjects shows such justice and liberality, should on one alone appear biased by prejudice: should even instill that prejudice into the minds of youth! Can my illusion be mistaken? It is to the species of character which wherever a Jew is introduced is invariably attached to him. Can it be believed that this race of men are by nature mean, avaricious, and unprincipled? (Macdonald 6)

Edgeworth responded to Lazarus’s critique by writing *Harrington*, which, she confessed in a letter response, enabled her to “make all the atonement and reparation in my power for the past” (Macdonald 8). Not only did Edgeworth make an earnest effort in this novel to offset her earlier anti-Jewish representations with more complimentary ones, but she even went so far as to inscribe her own self-critique into the narrative. In a moment of reflection, Lord Harrington, the first-person narrator who, as a child, is debilitated by his fear of Jews, points to Edgeworth’s children’s tales as indicative of a larger cultural problem, asserting

> Since I have come to man’s estate, I have met with books by authors professing candour and toleration - books written expressly for the rising...
generation, called if I mistake not, Moral Tales for Young People; and even in these, wherever the Jews are introduced, I find that they are invariably represented as beings of a mean, avaricious, unprincipled, treacherous character. Even the peculiarities of their persons, the errors of their foreign dialect and pronunciation, were mimicked and caricatured, as if to render them objects of perpetual derision and detestation. I am far from wishing to insinuate, that such was the serious intention of these authors. (Butler and Manly 176)

In this passage we find echoes of Lazarus's letter, as well as Edgeworth's explanation for her negative representations of Jews (they were not the "serious intention" of the author). Edgeworth confronts her own past in Harrington as well as depicting several discourses in English literature and history that imagine and construct Jewish identity, such as the continued popularity of Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, the debates surrounding the Jewish Naturalization Bill of 1753, and the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780 followed by Gordon's much publicized conversion to Judaism.

Indeed, this novel not only rewards Edgeworth's attempts to vindicate herself from her reputation as anti-Jewish writer, but also traces Harrington's effort to overcome his fear of Jews so that he can marry Berenice Montenero, whom he misidentifies early in the novel as a Jewess. By the novel's conclusion, however, Edgeworth reveals the truth about Berenice's identity — she is the child of a Jewish father and an English Protestant mother. In fact, the ending is a threefold surprise; for not only is Berenice revealed to have been a Christian, and Harrington revealed to have been a racist in his stereotyping of Berenice, but our reaction of surprise exposes the reader's own complete and unquestioning espousal of Harrington's racism. In fact, Lazarus alluded to this problem in a letter response to Harrington in which she
remarked,

Let me therefore... confess with frankness that in one event I was disappointed. Berenice was not a Jewess. I have endeavored to discover Miss Edgeworth's motive for not suffering her to remain such; it appears that there must be another, besides that of the obstacle it presented to her union with Harrington; and I have at length adopted an opinion suggested by my dear father, that this circumstance was intended as an additional proof of the united liberality and firmness of Mr. Montenero's principles.

Edgeworth subsequently responded to Lazarus's query explaining, "I wish you would thank your kindhearted father for the reason he gave for my making Berenice turn out to be a Christian. It was a better reason than I own I had ever thought up" (23). In this letter exchange we find the real problem that plagues readers of this novel: Is Berenice Montenero a Christian or a Jew? I will address this question by reading Edgeworth's construction of Berenice's ambivalent identity alongside other characters in this novel about whom we might ask the same question.

My central claim is that Edgeworth is in fact tapping into an epistemological problem in her presentation of Berenice as both Jewish and English, which raises another question — is it possible to view these identities as mutually exclusive when they are represented within a Semitic discourse? If Christ and the Apostles were Jewish, how can Jews ever really be extricated from an English national identity that is by definition Christian? To illustrate this point, Edgeworth turns to several examples of what Michael Ragussis refers to in "Jews and Other 'Outlandish Englishmen': Ethnic Performance and the Invention of British Identity under the Georges" as the "the cross-dressing Gentile" (792) or specific instances in which "a gentile character... disguises
himself as a Jew” (792). Ragussis maintains that we read this phenomenon as a sign of the uncertainty of English identity during this period when Britishness was redefined by colonialism, England’s union with Scotland, the Jew Bill debates, and the Irish union. In contrast to Ragussis, I maintain in this chapter that Edgeworth’s representations of “Jews” who turn out to be “gentile” and “gentiles” who turn out to be “Jews” points to more than just an instability of British identity during this period; for one could argue that any national consciousness is always in a state of redefinition. Rather, I will show that Edgeworth interrogates the paradoxical logic of alienating Jews in a Christian nation. Along these lines, how does a country banish the Jews without also banishing Christ? The result of this problem for English culture is an elaborate construction of Jewish history and culture that guarantees English Christians, control over Jewish history and culture. In this process we see not only that Jewish history is appropriated for the benefit of dominant Christian culture, but also that dominant Christian culture needs to keep producing and imagining the Jew for the maintenance of its own identity. My reading will consider the relationships among Edgeworth’s surprise ending, a misguided narrator who makes racist assumptions about Jews and Christians, and Edgeworth’s inquiry into the nature of English national identity which she represents by the union of Berenice and Harrington — an English couple with Jewish ancestry.

Set in the years between the Jew Bill debates of 1753 and the Gordon Riots of 1780, Harrington charts the history of Lord Harrington who, as a small child, was disciplined by his nanny, aptly named Fowler, with a story about Jews that traumatizes him throughout his childhood. And despite Sheila Spector’s claim in “The Other’s
Other” that Edgeworth was “in limbo between her two worlds. . . neither Irish nor English” (308), in this novel she is engaging in and representing a dominant discourse about English identity. The novel is set in England and includes scenes at an evening performance in London of The Merchant of Venice, an argument among several of the male characters on the subject of the Jew Bill debates, and a chapter depicting the Gordon Riots. Furthermore, the narrator himself is a member of the English gentry whose position in the text alternately intersects and overlaps with Edgeworth’s representations of English Jews. Despite her national affiliation, this novel is primarily concerned with the manner in which this particular historical moment calls into question English national identity as a distinct category that can be detected by distinguishing features on the body, or by a person’s behavior. Edgeworth begins the novel with descriptions of Fowler’s efforts to make Harrington more compliant by pointing to the Jewish old clothes dealers outside his window, who, she explains, don’t really have old clothes in their satchels, but the bones of Christian children.12 As a result of this harrowing story, Harrington undergoes a traumatic breakdown. He recalls,

The impressions made on my imagination by these horrible tales was greater than my nursery maid intended. . . . From that moment I became her slave, and her victim. I shudder when I look back to all I suffered during the eighteen months I was under her tyranny. Every night, the moment she and her candle left the room, I lay in an indescribable agony of terror; my head under my bedclothes, my knees drawn up, in a cold perspiration. I saw faces around me grinning, glaring, receding, advancing, all turning at last into one / and the same face of the Jew with the long beard, and the terrible eyes, and that bag in which I fancied were mangled limbs of children. (169)

Harrington’s mother resolves to pay the Jewish old-clothes beggars to stay out of view
of her son — an act that backfires when the gentile old-clothes beggars congregate around their home to capitalize on Harrington’s fear of Jews.

In the next few chapters the novel addresses contemporary political attitudes toward Jews and, in particular, the Jew Bill. While listening to his father participate in a discussion with his friends on this topic, Harrington is exposed once more to anti-Jewish attitudes. His absorption of these views is affirmed in this scene in which his father asks for his opinion of the Jews. The seven year old child is applauded by his father and company when he claims, “the Jews are naturally an unnatural pack of people, and you can’t naturalize what’s naturally unnatural” (179). Thus, Edgeworth sets up this tale by these early childhood scenes which suggest that Jew hatred, or prejudice, begins at a young age when children are powerless to reject the views they hear at home. Commenting on the process of identity formation, Edgeworth’s depictions of Harrington’s sensationalized breakdown illustrate that he is a victim of Jew hatred, and that his espousal of his father’s racism serves as a kind of antidote, as the mens’ applause for the young boy is followed by a diminishment of symptoms from his trauma.

By the time he leaves for boarding school, Harrington’s antipathy toward Jews is firmly entrenched and, indeed, even bolstered by his friendship with Lord Mowbray. Together the two boys pick fights with the Jewish peddlers who sell their wares at the school. Gradually Harrington becomes critical of Mowbray’s abusive treatment of the Jewish pedlars and, in a climactic moment, takes the side of the Jew over his own friend — an act that suggests English prejudice, and not Jewish behavior, is the real cause of
Jew hatred. Later, while studying at Oxford, Harrington befriends a Jewish scholar who teaches Harrington about Jewish history and culture. Despite this education, Harrington never completely questions his own racist assumptions. We find that Edgeworth is, in fact, critiquing the system of education that includes Jewish history and culture, but neglects to include English racism as part of that curriculum. Edgeworth’s tongue-in-cheek depictions of Harrington’s “education,” which fails to help him overcome his fear of Jews, points to the fact that the subject of English anti-Jewish attitudes is the English. Thus, learning about the Jews is a kind of liberal subterfuge that effectively distracts Harrington from learning about English hatred toward Jews.

The remainder of the novel traces Harrington’s effort to court and finally win Berenice Montenero, who is falsely assumed by all of the characters, including the narrator, to be a Jewess because of her skin color and entrance into the theater with the vulgar Mrs. Coates. Edgeworth’s choice to present The Merchant of Venice as the setting for the scene in which Harrington falls in love with Berenice foregrounds a history of English racial discourse that has the power within Edgeworth’s fictional narrative to divide and ultimately unite these two characters. After a series of tests, Mr Montenero is convinced that Harrington has overcome his fear of Jews, and accepts him as a suitor to his daughter. Harrington’s parents also reconcile their differences with their son — whom they had previously threatened to disown if he married a Jewess — when they learn that Mr. Montenero takes a personal financial loss to help save the English banking system that is in danger of collapsing from the Gordon Riots. The characters in the novel interpret this as an act of generosity rather than an act of survival.
and self-protection in a society alternately ambivalent and hostile to his presence in England. Ultimately, Harrington’s father realizes that perhaps he has been too harsh in his judgment of the Monteneros. In the final pages of the novel, Edgeworth has Mr. Montenero reveal the surprise about Berenice’s true identity stating, “‘She is, I hope and believe, my daughter. . . but her mother was a Christian, and according to the promise of Mrs. Montenero, Berenice has been bred in her faith, a Christian — a Protestant’” (327). Shocked upon learning that they had previously misjudged Berenice, Harrington’s mother exclaims, “‘I knew she was of a good family from the first moment I saw her at the play — so different from the people she was with’” (327), indicating the racist views that informed their assumptions about Berenice’s identity remain deeply entrenched and unquestioned. In the final scene, Mr. Montenero encourages Harrington to make peace with his nurse maid, the source of his fear, stating that he should celebrate his own happiness by “forgiveness of our enemies” (331). Harrington’s father agrees, asserting that “‘none but a good Christian could do this!’” to which Berenice responds with a question, “‘and why not a good Jew?’” (331). This final exchange stands as a warning; for, even though the Monteneros have been granted insider status, English society retains its assumptions about the differences between Jewish and Christian identities and its valorization of English Christian culture as innately superior to all other ethnic groups living in England. Edgeworth’s choice to end in this way doesn’t endorse Harrington’s father’s view, but rather points to the hypocrisy of inclusion politics. Thus, even though Harrington’s father appears to have overcome his fear and hatred of Jews by accepting the Monteneros, this is not a sign that he has overcome his racism,
which remains embedded in his patriotism for England and Englishness.

The significance of Edgeworth’s representation of *The Merchant of Venice* in *Harrington* along with her surprise ending has been the subject of much attention and confusion among scholarly readings of this text. In *Figures of Conversion* Michael Ragussis uses a psychoanalytic paradigm to argue that Edgeworth’s reliance upon the *Merchant of Venice* is central to her text for, “... no portrait of a Jew can exist in English without reference to it, and the English imagination seems unable to free itself of Shakespeare’s text”(58). Assuming that there is a mythic “English imagination” as Ragussis suggests, whereby all English people imagine Jews in the same way, we cannot help but wonder about characters and subplots in *Harrington* that fail to comply with Shakespeare’s model. Thus, Ragussis’s reading makes the case for influence — that is, he claims that *The Merchant of Venice* influences Edgeworth’s novel, as well as every other English literary reference to Jews. Building on Ragussis’s claims that *The Merchant of Venice* invokes the racial tension in *Harrington*, Catherine Gallagher has argued in *Nobody’s Story* that, “If Harrington (and by implication the author) seem to have inflated the significance of the Jews, by the tale’s end we understand that such an inflation is normal, perhaps even inevitable [for English Christian writers, readers, and fictional characters alike], since the Jews can never be just themselves”(312). According to this logic, Jews have an “inflated” significance because of their affiliation with texts like *The Merchant of Venice*. Yet, Ragussis’s and Gallagher’s prioritization of mythic archetypes and of the cultural import of *The Merchant of Venice* prevents them from seeing that Shakespeare’s text appears nowhere in Edgeworth’s novel.

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Instead, we find in *Harrington* Edgeworth’s fictitious representation of her characters’ responses to a depiction of Macklin’s performance of Shylock. This is not a mirror image of Shakespeare’s play, but a fictional representation, produced by novelistic discourse, whose subjects include Berenice, Harrington, and Mrs. Coates, and not Shylock and Jessica.

Considering Shakespeare’s influence on Edgeworth has some obvious advantages, especially given the abundant references to the play throughout *Harrington*. However, dangerous blind spots often emerge from arguments whose search for similarities between texts rely upon allusions to earlier literary works, thereby eclipsing significant differences between what Ragusssis terms the “host” and “parasitic” texts when he speaks of *The Merchant of Venice*’s influence on *Harrington*. As Bryan Cheyette rightly argues “the radical emptiness and lack of a fixed meaning in the constructions of ‘Semitic difference’. . . results in ‘the Jew’ being made to occupy an incommensurable number of subject positions which traverse a range of contradictory discourses. . .” (*Constructions* 8). To see representations of Jews only as existing in the shadow of Shylock not only overlooks this range of “contradictory discourses” which Edgeworth constructs in her novel, but limits us from seeing how influence runs in several directions at once. So, for example, while the *Merchant of Venice* may have been in Edgeworth’s mind when she first wrote this novel, London performances of this text as well as the host of other cultural references depicting Jews13 helped shape her readings of Shakespeare. Furthermore, the fact that Edgeworth’s novel is set in 1753, the year in which the Jew Bill is passed and repealed, and during the Gordon Riots of
1780, suggests that Edgeworth’s interest in the racialization of the Jews is hardly “inflated” because of its connection to Shakespeare. In fact, Edgeworth calls into service more than just a reference to Shylock and Shakespeare as she appropriates an entire Semitic discourse though which the categories of English, Irish, Jewish, and Christian are portrayed as both distinct from and contingent upon one another. Thus, embedded in Edgeworth’s discourse about the Jew Bill and in her portrayals of Jewish characters are a series of images of English gentiles whose depictions not only point to places where English and Jewish identity overlap, but also to the English desire to keep them—and thus construct them—as distinct from one another.

Ragussis also maintains that the final disclosure of Berenice’s true identity constitutes a conversion, in the tradition of Jessica from *The Merchant of Venice*. He explains,

> But when we are told at the end of Harrington that Berenice is no Jew, but a Christian, we come upon a covert form — at once literary and cultural — by which Jewish identity is once again exiled. Berenice’s suddenly disclosed Christianity is a way of converting her... Conversion is, after all, the culturally established means by which the Jew is allowed to enter the community. (77)

Here Ragussis uses the novel’s ending to privilege the heterosexual marriage plot between Berenice and Harrington. Accordingly, all of the significant events in the text are interpreted in light of this couple’s final union. In *Outside the Fold*, Gauri Viswanathan builds on Ragussis’s claims by maintaining that

> The difficulty of assimilating Jews in English society, even from a seemingly liberal point of view, has a narrative counterpart in the figurative conversion of Berenice to Christianity. Her “conversion” is not only a convenient device to smooth the plot’s ragged edges but also a
concession to the limits of tolerance. . . The heroine Berenice is presented as already Christian and her father Montenero as irreversibly foreign. Berenice is reassuringly preserved as English, and the threat of miscegenation is indefinitely deferred and successfully kept outside the history of the English nation. (22)

Reading Berenice within a tradition of religious conversion, Viswanathan maintains that Berenice’s “conversion” ushers out “the threat of miscegenation.” Likewise, Ragussis argues that “Jewish identity” is once again “exiled” by this “conversion.” Yet, in order to see the ending as religious conversion, we must conflate such disparate issues as passing, assimilation, conversion and discourses of racial differentiation. In fact, I would like to argue that interpreting the ending of this novel as an example of “conversion” is a gross misreading of this text; for, not only does Berenice’s identity remain constant throughout this novel, but even her marriage to Harrington doesn’t erase the fact that her father is granted insider status, despite the fact that he is a Jew. Indeed, miscegenation is never ushered out of England in the novel’s conclusion, but is revealed to have been there all along in the very depiction of English identity. Berenice is neither converted nor transformed. As her father asserts in the novel’s conclusion, “Berenice is not a Jewess. . . She is, I hope and believe, my daughter. . .but her mother was a Christian, and according to the promise to Mrs. Montenero, Berenice has been bread in her faith, a Christian - a Protestant . . . An English Protestant” (327). Clearly, Berenice is not converted, but rather we are made aware of her “true” identity and, in this moment, we are confronted with our own previous racist assumptions about her identity, based largely on Harrington’s descriptions of her physical appearance. Instead of redirecting our shock onto Berenice, by calling this text a conversion narrative, I
suggest instead that we acknowledge our complicity in perpetuating the racist discourse Edgeworth represents and which her critique unwittingly reproduces in this text. The ending is therefore not a statement about Berenice’s altered state, but the exposure of the reader’s and the characters’ stereotypical assumptions about her identity that originated with Harrington’s depictions of Berenice. Edgeworth’s use of an unreliable narrator causes her readers to fall into the same trap as the characters she depicts. Yet, at the same time, she too falls into the same trap of stereotyping in her depictions of Mrs. Coates’s behavior, and by the suggestion that the final union between Harrington and Berenice is acceptable to their families because they both turn out to have been English all along. We are reminded of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus’s’s questioning of the ending— do we read Edgeworth’s choice not to allow a Jew and a gentile to marry as a sign of her own resistance to this act?

The source of Viswanathan’s and Ragussis’s interpretation of this novel as a “conversion” narrative stems from their emphasis on *The Merchant of Venice* as the paradigm by which we are to understand Berenice’s union with Harrington. By reading Edgeworth’s novel as a mere revision of *The Merchant of Venice*, both Viswanathan and Ragussis overlook the fact that this union of lovers in *Harrington* resonates with related motifs that have no place in Shakespeare’s text. By taking this union out of the context of the novel, we neglect to notice the importance of George Gordon’s conversion to Judaism in Edgeworth’s representation of the Gordon riots. Also connected to Berenice’s identity is Edgeworth’s construction of Mrs. Coates, the gentile woman whom Edgeworth has Harrington interpret as a Jew, and the widow Levy, an
Irish Catholic named after the Levite tribe in Israel, notable for their role as protectors of the Covenant of the Ark. In fact, Berenice’s exposed identity is one of many examples in which Jewish identity and Christian identity are linked in this novel. Edgeworth turns to these examples, not to valorize the cultural import of *The Merchant of Venice*, but in an apparent liberal gesture toward accepting all people regardless of their religious differences. In the process of representing Jewish history (through Irish, Christian, and Jewish characters) she appropriates that history in order to counteract Lazarus’s observations about Edgeworth’s earlier antisemitism. Edgeworth’s novel operates as a Semitic discourse not by depicting Jewish history and culture, but by appropriating that history and culture in the production of her own identity, as liberal-minded and tolerant of religious difference. This process is exemplified in her return to the Gordon Riots which, contrary to every other historical interpretation that I am aware of, Edgeworth depicts as anti-Jewish rather than as anti-Catholic. As her narrative turns to the past to produce and imagine the Riots from a Jewish perspective, Edgeworth not only assumes conceptual control, but more specifically, she appropriates The Gordon Riots, and the events in the text that lead up to the Riots, for the promotion of English cultural superiority.

In the scene where Harrington attends the theater and the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* begins, Harrington, as the narrator, introduces Mrs. Coates by including his party’s reactions to her entrance into the theater. By depicting this narrative perspective, we begin to understand the terms by which Mrs. Coates is marked as an outsider — her visibility enables those who view her to remain invisible.
Likewise, as with any novel, Edgeworth’s own apparent invisibility as author enables her to visualize and critique the inappropriate judgements of the women in Harrington’s party. Harrington explains of Mrs. Coates,

There was no gentleman of this party, but a portly matron towering above the rest seemed the principle mover and orderer of the group. The awkward bustle they made, facing and backing, placing and changing of places, and the difficulty they found in seating themselves, were in striking contrast with the high-bred ease of the ladies of our party. Lady Anne Mowbray looked down upon their operations with a pretty air of quiet surprise, tinctured with horror; while my mother’s shrinking delicacy endeavored to suggest some idea of propriety to the city matron, who having taken her station next to us in the second row had at last seated herself so that a considerable portion of the back part of her head-dress was in my mother’s face: moreover, the citizen’s huge arm, with its enormous gauze cuff, leaning on the partition which divided, or ought to have divided, her from us, considerably passed the line of demarcation. Lady de Brantefield, with all the pride of all the de Brantefields since the Norman Conquest concentrated in her countenance, threw an excommunicating, withering look upon the arm — but the elbow felt it not — it never stirred. The Lady seemed not to be made of penetrable stuff.

(212-213)

In this passage we see how perceived gender, class, and race differences are mapped on the body of a woman who has obviously crossed more than one line of demarcation.

This scene produces Mrs. Coates’s identity as a visible outsider, thereby challenging the dominant and “invisible” position that articulates itself through and against her. The high-bred women’s reactions oppositionally construct genteel/gentile femininity in contrast to Mrs. Coates’s “huge arm” and “enormous cuff.” Indeed, the enormity of Mrs. Coates’s body points to the implied irony of her name. Rather than cloaking her body, the reference to a coat betrays only that she has something to hide. Mrs. Coates’s status as nobody suggests that she is not an insider or a somebody and draws our

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attention to the bodies of those who are in the position of “knowing” — the English ladies whom Harrington depicts by their reactions to Mrs. Coates.

Mrs. Coates attempts to perform insider status, but her willful and visible presence undermines her own progress. Lady Anne’s “surprise” and “horror” and Harrington’s mother’s “shrinking delicacy” are the result of more than just Mrs. Coates’s social indiscretions. Rather, according to Harrington’s view, they point to the danger she poses by making physical contact with the high bred English ladies, thereby revealing their embodied and visible identities that they desire to hide; for it is from this position of “invisibility” through which these women and Harrington are able to construct racial difference. The lesson, of course, is that, according to these women, to appear English is not to be English at all since Englishness is marked by invisibility. Ironically then, Edgeworth has Harrington visualize them, and present them to the reader as “invisible.” Edgeworth’s act of narrative exposure — or of letting us see what her characters cannot see about their own exposure — on the one hand undermines the position of authority from which they judge Mrs. Coates. At the same time, however, Edgeworth continues to maintain Mrs. Coats’s’s visible status as outsider, which enables this view to be the definitive, prevailing view of Mrs. Coates. This passage indicates that anyone, regardless of race or religion, should be welcome as long as they behave English. Edgeworth’s tongue-in-cheek depictions of the de Brantefield women and Harrington’s mother critique their snobbishness and lead us into the trap of judging them for their shallow behavior. Our critique of the upper-class women, however, is directly connected to the “surprise” ending when we are confronted with the fact that we
have committed a similar judgement about Berenice and Mrs. Coates. Edgeworth's critique of her readers may be more subtle, but its effects are just as pervasive as we experience surprise upon learning that we, like Harrington and his party, have also stereotyped Berenice as a Jew for the very same reasons as those we critique in others. We are, in effect, reproducing a similar kind of snobbery by thinking that we are outside of that critique.

Once seated, Mrs. Coates expresses concern about a missing person in her party—Miss Berry or Berenice Montenero. Harrington describes Mrs. Coates in the act of stretching "backwards with her utmost might to seize someone in the farthest corner of the back row, who" Harrington remarks, "had hitherto been invisible" (72). From the very start, Berenice is marked as an invisible presence. Yet, prior to Berenice's entrance, a racial binary is already in place between the "fat orderer of all things" and the gentile women who are horrified by such brashness. Despite Berenice's distinction from Mrs. Coates, and her near success at remaining invisible, Lady Anne gives her away when she exclaims, "An East-Indian, I should guess, by her dark complexion" (73). Berenice is set up in this passage as a series of contradictions and overlapping identities. While she is invisible, and quiet, she is also described as "east Indian" and thus distinctly, and distinguishably, not English. Once the play begins, she faints, leading Harrington, his party, and the reader to assume that Berenice is a Jew because of her skin color and her strong reaction to Macklin— the Irish Catholic playing the part of a Jew in a performance of an English play. Although her fainting spell is never explained, Harrington and his party assume that Berenice's reaction is caused by her
Jewish identity and her horror upon seeing Macklin dressed as Shylock. Her inability to fit neatly into these categories which complements Macklin’s own evasion of categorical distinctions, is part of a much larger statement Edgeworth makes about the problem of distinguishing between performances of racial and national identities. Since Berenice draws attention to herself, she is presumed to be not English. Our own invisibility as readers of this text, and Harrington’s rendering of Berenice’s actions, helps protect us from the possibility of being critiqued, judged, or racialized, and therefore enables us, like the women in Harrington’s party, to critique others and racialize Berenice without being seen.

Once the play begins, the audience’s eyes turn away from Mrs. Coates and Berenice toward Macklin in his portrayal of Shylock. Harrington explains of this scene,

The play went on — Shylock appeared — I forgot everything but him — such a countenance! — such an expression of latent malice and revenge, everything detestable in human nature! Whether speaking or silent, the Jew fixed and kept possession of my attention. It was an incomparable piece of acting: much as my expectations had been raised, it far surpassed anything I had conceived — I forgot it was Macklin, I thought only of Shylock. (214)

Here Shylock’s identity is represented and appropriated by several voices, including Shakespeare’s, Macklin’s, Edgeworth’s, and Harrington’s — none of whom distinguish between Shylock’s Jewish identity and his propensity toward malice. In a matter of minutes the Christian actor Macklin becomes the Jew that he plays. Moreover, neither Edgeworth nor her narrator recognize that Shylock is the creation of a gentile (Shakespeare and Macklin) rather, they assume Shylock is simply a Jew. Thus, the
gentile construction of Jewish performance and Jewish identity merge in the text and in Harrington’s own mind. Following this theater scene, Harrington recounts the dreams that kept him awake after Macklin’s performance: “During the whole of the night, sleeping or waking, the images of the fair Jewess, of Shylock, and of Mrs. Coates, were continually recurring, and turning into one another in a most provoking manner”(218). We know at this point that neither Macklin nor Mrs. Coates are Jews, yet their performances mark them as Jewish in Harrington’s mind. Yet, by the novel’s end we find that none are Jewish. As Harrington previously mentioned, Macklin had become Shylock in his mind, although, Macklin is actually a gentile, as is Berenice. And finally, Mrs. Coates, an English Protestant, is bound up in the mixture for the implied connection between her behavior and their “Jewish” identity. If each of these characters appears in Harrington’s dream for a different reason, their appearance together reminds us of the Semitic discourse through which Edgeworth reflects English identity in its desire to be separate from or to distinguish itself from others, such as Jews. In fact, in this passage Edgeworth even alludes to the inseparability between these categories; for how can Berenice, the child of a Jewish father and English Protestant mother, be English without also being Jewish? And Macklin and Mrs. Coates, though for different reasons, are perceived by Harrington as performing “Jewish behavior,” despite the fact that neither is Jewish. On the one hand, Edgeworth uses her narrator’s prejudice in this scene as a warning to her readers. Initially she appears to represent Harrington’s conflation of Jew with Jewish stereotype uncritically. Yet, by the novel’s end, we are all too aware of the fact that all along, there was a space between Edgeworth’s vision
and Harrington’s narration. Everything we assumed as fact, and read at face value is called into question once Edgeworth exposes us as complicitous in racializing characters in this text. We witness this again in the scene following Macklin’s performance when Harrington apologizes to Mr. Montenero for the subject of the performance. Where earlier he was clearly taken with and enraptured by Macklin’s presentation of a Jew, in this scene Harrington is contrite. When Harrington confesses, “I endeavored, as well as I could, to make some general apology for Shakespeare’s severity, by adverting to the time when he wrote, and the prejudices which then prevailed,” (219) Mr. Montenero responds:

> In the true story from which Shakespear [sic] took the plot of the Merchant of Venice, it was a Christian who acted the part of the Jew, and the Jew that of the Christian; it was a Christian who insisted upon having the pound of flesh from next the Jew’s heart. (220)

By including this “forgotten” history, Edgeworth is able to extend a critique of Shakespeare. One is left wondering why Shakespeare might have reversed these roles. Such an inversion calls attention to the constructed identity of Jews who, contrary to the message evoked by Shylock, are not necessarily evil or mercenary. Rather, it is English literary history that has chosen to see and represent Jews in this way.

In this rare moment, it is the Jew Montenero who explains English drama to Harrington, stating, “Shakespeare was right, as a dramatic poet, in reversing the characters”(220). The discussion ends here, but not without including a description of Harrington’s reaction to Montenero’s last statement: “Seeing me struck, and a little confounded, by this statement, and even by his candour, Mr. Montenero said, that
perhaps his was only the Jewish version of the story, and he quickly went on to another subject" (220). At the same time that Shakespeare is judged for "reversing" the terms, thereby perpetuating negative stereotypes of Jews, he is simultaneously vindicated for this act since it shows his allegiance to a higher cause — that of dramatic effect. And Edgeworth provides us with a Jew, of all people, to justify Jew hatred for the higher cause of dramatic effect. Again, we are struck with another example of overlapping Jewish and Christian performances of identity. Edgeworth's choice to have Montenero dismiss his interpretation of Shakespeare ("perhaps his was only the Jewish version of the story") further enunciates the English need to distinguish between Jews and Christians that Edgeworth's narrative exposes. This scene suggests that not only is this play a good example of English anxiety about its own racial purity, illustrated by Shakespeare's choice to reverse the terms, but also of Edgeworth's critique of Shakespeare because of that choice. Thus, Montenero's point that his reading is only "the Jewish version," ought to be read within Edgeworth's own critical appropriation of The Merchant of Venice.

Prior to the Gordon Riots chapter, we catch another glimpse of Mrs. Coates standing outside a fruit stand. Harrington describes her footman filling her carriage with fruit. This seemingly superfluous detail is left undeveloped, leading the reader to deduce that Mrs. Coates's gluttonous interest in the fruit is the source of her "fat bust" or "large elbow." Later, however, once the Gordon Riots have begun, and Harrington and company hide out in Mr. Montenero's home under the protection of one of the orange women, we begin to understand a larger context for the association between Mrs.
Coates, her alignment in Harrington’s mind with Shylock and Berenice, and the fruit she gathers at the fruit stand. Harrington explains that,

> Among the London populace . . . the Jews had a respectable body of friends, female friends of noted influence in a mob — the orange women — who were most of them bound by gratitude to certain opulent Jews. It was then, and I believe it still continues to be, a customary mode of charity with the Jews, to purchase and distribute large quantities of oranges among the retail sellers, whether Jews or Christians. The orange women were thus become their staunch friends. (285)

Whether or not Mrs. Coates purchases this fruit, like “certain opulent Jews” for the benefit of the orange women is less important than the link Harrington makes as he juxtaposes these scenes in his mind. When Harrington witnesses Mrs. Coates in the act of collecting oranges, he uses this information to bolster his assumption that she must be a Jew. In this process of distinguishing and exposing Mrs. Coates’s identity, as Harrington perceives it and as we unquestioningly accept it, Edgeworth once again includes us in her critique.

Edgeworth’s representations of the Gordon Riots coopt this historical event by imagining it as an attack against Jews in addition to Catholics.15 No other historian or contemporary writer comes close to making similar claims. And not only does Edgeworth assert that the Gordon Riots were both anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish, she even goes so far as to privilege her imagined Jewish version of this event. In the process she privileges not only her own appropriation of the riots, but at the same time manages to produce Harrington’s identity as a savior. Jewish history in thus produced for the purpose of imagining and constructing Jews who, as we shall see, are powerless to protect themselves, and must rely on English characters to protect them. This scene
begins with Edgeworth's inclusion of protestors running through the streets yelling "No Jews, No Wooden Shoes." Harrington explains,

The very day before Mr. Montenero was to leave town, without any conceivable reason, suddenly a cry was raised against the Jews: unfortunately, Jews rhymed to shoes; these words were hitched into a rhyme, and the cry was - 'No Jews, no wooden shoes'. Thus, without any natural, civil, religious, moral, or political connection, the poor Jews came in remainder to the ancient antigallican antipathy felt by English feet and English fancies against the French wooden shoes. (Butler and Manly 285)

In fact, this slogan circulated during the Jew Bill debates of 1753 and not during the Gordon Riots of 1780. It seems that Edgeworth imbued her fictionalization of the riots with Gordon's conversion to Judaism which took place in the years following the riots. Thus, she constructs the history of the Riots with the later history not only of Gordon's conversion to Judaism, but also of popular anti-Jewish sentiments expressed on the occasion of his conversion. Writing this novel in 1816, Edgeworth can reflect a much longer trajectory of anti-Jewish attitudes that the English society in her novel could not have anticipated fully in 1780. When she represents the Gordon Riots as anti-Jewish, Edgeworth presents this event as a symbol of a double prejudice — of Gordon's and the rioter's hatred toward Catholics, and of England's fear of the Jewish Gordon.

Set primarily in Mr. Montenero's home, the Gordon Riots chapter uses a Jewish home as the space where Harrington, his upper-class English companions, and the Monteneros are not only united, but safe from the mob of commoners intent on killing Jews (according to Edgeworth's version), and Catholics (according to everybody else's version). In a sense then, Edgeworth intensifies the danger by placing all of her characters in the home space of those whom, according to her version of this event, are
the object of attack. The chapter continues, with the inclusion of an orange woman, the widow Levy who, like Mrs. Coates, blurs several categorical distinctions as she is Irish, English, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant all at once. The widow's basket of oranges had been filled by Mr. Montenero's generosity. When she hears that her supplier might be in danger, the widow goes to his house to protect him from the mob, feeling it is her duty to help Mr. Montenero she explains,

Jew as you have this day the misfortune to be, you're the best Christian any way ever I happened on... and don’t be advertizing yourself for a Jew, nor be shewing your cloven foot, with or without the wooden shoes. — Keep ourselves to ourselves, for I'll tell you a bit of a secret — / I'm a little bit of a Cat’lick myself all as one as what they call a papish, but I keep it to myself and nobody's the wiser nor the worse — they’d tear me to pieces may be did they suspect the like, but I keep never minding, and you, Jewel do the like — They call you a Levite, don’t they? Then I, the widow Levy, has a good right to advise ye,’ . . . We were all brothers and sisters once — no offense — in the time of Adam sure, and we should help one another in all times. (286)

The riddle underlying Berenice's true identity and this novel's representation of English distinctions between Christians and Jews is illuminated with Mrs. Levy's claim that "we were all brothers and sisters once... in the time of Adam." Stated during the Gordon riots, in a moment of national and religious instability, the widow Levy presents us with a history of Jews, of Adam and the Levite tribe, and the Ten Commandments (the Levites guarded the Covenant of the Arc), all of which are embedded in the figure of the widow Levy, who is presumed to be a Protestant by the anti-Catholic rioters. Edgeworth seems to be pointing to the impossibility of distinguishing identity, but of a cultural desire to do so in the world she represents. Our desire and willingness to see the categories of Christian and Jew as parallel belies the fact that, as the widow points
out, these identities evolve out of a shared Biblical history.

Edgeworth comments once again on the constructed nature of historical “facts” and literary affect in her description of the widow’s method of protecting the Monteneros and their friends. Harrington explains, “As parties of the rioters came up, she would parley and jest with them, and by alternate wit and humour, and blunder, and bravado, and flattery, and fabling, divert their spirit of mischief” (286). By reminding us of the act of storytelling and imaginative reality, Edgeworth not only draws attention to the widow’s use of deception to protect her Jewish friend, but of Edgeworth’s awareness of deception as a tool for constructing truths. The logic of Montenero’s earlier apology for Shakespeare’s offensive portrait of Shylock, that he justifies in the name of dramatic effect, also justifies Edgeworth’s own representation of Jew hatred to intensify the Gordon Riots scene. The Jewish home can thus be read as a metaphor for the national English space that serves to protect and house Jews and Protestants alike. By the same logic, the attack against the Jews is then also an attack against the English — they are linked in their shared roles as victims and by their common home space. Nevertheless, Edgeworth’s depiction of the outcome of the riots only serves to reinscribe English difference against this Semitic discourse.

Nearly killed, the de Brantefield’s seek shelter at the Montenero’s after being falsely accused of concealing a papist. Little do the rioters know that the papist — the widow Levy — is actually concealing the non-papists. When the widow Levy offers to go to Lady de Brantefield’s house to find out if any damage has been done, Lady de Brantefield whines, “‘What is that person! — that woman!... How did she get in?...”
how did she get in?’” (288). Lady de Brantefield’s question resonates with the novel’s larger concerns about a national people and England’s absorption of “outsiders.” The widow’s sarcastic, yet honest response — “‘Very asy! — through the door — same way you did, my Lady’” (288) suggests that Edgeworth is once again casting judgement on Lady de Brantefield’s snobbery which keeps her from seeing that her life is being saved by someone to whom she refers as “that person.” Despite their safety, Lady de Brantefield is clearly uneasy about seeking refuge in a Jew’s home. She says to her daughter, “‘how could you bring me into this house, of all others — a Jew’s — when you know the horror I have always felt’” (289). Her daughter responds with “‘I declare I was so terrified, I didn’t know one house from another. But when I saw Mr. Harrington, I was so delighted, I never thought about its being the Jew’s house — and what matter?’” (289). The portrayal of Mrs. Levy as a selfless asset to the others’ safety, despite their prejudice toward her, would seem to suggest that the home space will actually benefit from the inclusion of others. And yet, on another level, the fact that the widow is poor and must rely upon Mr. Montenero to survive (in fact, at one point she even refers to him as “master”) undercuts the logic of toleration by portraying the poor’s obedience to the very system that keeps them poor. And even as Mr. Montenero’s home serves as an international arena — housing a motley group including Irish and English people, Catholics, and Jews, they are not united by their shared defenselessness. Rather, within this house distinctions are made and maintained between the refugees. For example, when the house is attacked by the mob, a gunshot goes off, killing one of the rioters. When Mr. Monetenero is imprisoned on false charges of murder, he has his
daughter write to Harrington for help. At his trial it is Harrington who proves
Monetenero's innocence and emancipates him. The message of course, is that the legal
fate of the Jews in England rests upon a few "enlightened" English men. And by
extension, young English men come into their own, that is, they become fine English
gentlemen, in the act of liberating Jews. Again, Edgeworth's critical presentation of the
shallowness of English upper-class racism creates the illusion of difference between the
privileged and racist de Brantefield women and ourselves as apparently more tolerant
and liberal minded. By projecting English racism onto the shallow upper-class, we
attempt to excuse ourselves from that critique.

It is impossible for Edgeworth to eradicate the epistemology through which we
represent, understand, resist, and judge these culturally constructed categorical
distinctions between racial and national affiliations by simply reversing the terms, or by
arguing that Jews can be as good as gentiles and gentiles can be as bad as the Jews.
Edgeworth seems to make very earnest efforts to include and tolerate those who are
different. And she has a very sophisticated knowledge of the history and language
through which such hatred is imbricated. The lesson we ought to learn from Edgeworth
though, is that nothing is easy or simple about discourse and representation. A wave of
the hand cannot dislodge ideologies, just as Harrington's university education that
exposes him to racial and religious difference will not necessarily eradicate his racist
assumptions. By presenting us with Harrington's journey toward overcoming his fear of
Jews, Edgeworth offers us a valuable lesson about our own role in perpetuating racist
discourse by thinking that we are outside of the system in which this kind of thinking is
produced and reflected. We are just as guilty of relying upon stereotypes even when, or especially when, we exclusively identify it in others.

Oddly, and obviously without considering Edgeworth’s representations of the widow Levy, Mr. Montenero, Shylock, or Mrs. Coates, contemporary reviewers were critical of Harrington for the favoritism it showed Jews. One of the reviewers from Blackwoods claims that depictions of Jews in this text are “too uniformly perfect,’ which has itself ‘thrown a degree of suspicion over her whole defense’.” (Manley and Butler xxxiii). Another reviewer faults the text by explaining, “even if prejudice against Jews is acknowledged to exist,” how can “a tale in which all the Jewish characters introduced are represented without spot, or blemish, ... assist in dissipating those prejudices”(Butler and Manley xxxiii). And while some reviewers acknowledged only unblemished portraits of Jews, others focused on Edgeworth’s negative portraits of English people. As Francis Jeffrey asserts, Harrington was “narrow and fantastic’, because no reader of Edgeworth was likely to entertain the ‘absurd antipathy to Jews’ that she depicts” (Manley and Butler xxxiii). These critical interpretations highlight a central problem in studying the Jewish “subtext” in English literature: to see Harrington as a statement about Jewish identity is to see only half the picture. The representation of “good Jews” fails to challenge an implicit Semitic discourse through and against which English identity is produced and articulated.
Unlike Harrington, *Barnaby Rudge* is not overtly concerned with the history of anti-Jewish attitudes in England, nor does it make references to Jewish stereotypes in English fiction. Rather, the novel’s primary concern is with reforming England to reflect Dickens’s view of a more liberal nation that treats all people fairly, regardless of their class position or religion. Dickens is sensitive to the fact that such political changes will not come easily and that nothing is simple about political or social reform. In the process, Dickens portrays the manner in which society effectively promotes and enacts social and political change in its aspirations toward a more tolerant national identity. In *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens offers several possibilities for enacting change, some of which fail, including the Gordon Riots, which gradually evolve to express what Dickens suggests are the legitimate complaints of the poor and working classes in Victorian London. And if the question of how a culture brings about necessary change is a major concern of this novel, then by extension, so is the issue of why change is necessary and what kinds of changes are viable.

In the course of tracing this vision for toleration toward difference, Dickens produces a Semitic discourse in the act of imagining an evolving English national identity. My reading of *Barnaby Rudge* will illuminate the ways in which Dickens paradoxically elides and separates Jewish history and English history. For example, Dickens includes an illustration in the text of his novel depicting the Jewish Biblical tale of Abraham and Isaac — of a father who attempts to sacrifice his son in obedience to
the law of God. This illustration resonates with the novel’s series of father/son relationships as well as the subject of rebellion against the law. Dickens appropriates this story as a sign of the embedded nature of old England with the Christian Old Testament, presented as Jewish history that, as the novel suggests, is in need of updating. Thus, the modern Christian, English nation Dickens imagines is one that has broken entirely from the past, from “Jewish history” as it is presented in the Old Testament. Yet, as Dickens looks forward to a reformed England, he imagines George Gordon, an actual character in the novel, who has a dream that he was a Jew. The mayhem Dickens later depicts of the Riots is, in part, a result of the conflicted identity of the president of the Protestant Association who will undermine plans for a truly Protestant nation with his own ambivalence toward his Englishness. My reading will show how Dickens’s construction of a liberal, tolerant English nation rests contingently on his representations of Jewish Biblical history and the Protestant “reformer” who succeeds in reforming only himself through his conversion to Judaism. In the end, Gordon and the old England represented by Abraham and Isaac must be ushered out in order to clear a space for the enlightened reign of the younger generation of sons who manage to produce a more enlightened and liberal England through their colonial ventures outside of England.

Like Edgeworth, Dickens turns to familial conflict between fathers and sons as prototypes for larger national conflicts. These family rifts are all linked by their shared distrust of the old system of paternal authority that sons aspire to replace with a more enlightened and tolerant system of authority. In each case, we witness fathers abusing
their power over their sons, and alternately, sons working to get out from under their fathers’ thumbs. Invoked in each example is the issue of power and the most effective mechanism for rebellion against that power — a relationship which marks not only these pairs of fathers and sons, but also Dickens’s imagined English nation and the rioters who fight to preserve it. As S.J. Neuman explains, this novel represents a moment when the English nation is in transition: “the turbulent confluence of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century values on which Augustan civility encountered Victorian socialism” (91-2). In “Barnaby Rudge: The Sincere of The Fathers” Kim Michasiw adds that a caveat to this tension is the necessity of rebellion which is

essential to the formation of identity, yet some bounds must be placed upon it... in the rivalry between son and father, between the present and the dead weight of anteriority. Total obedience to or identification with the paternal past stagnates, but complete rejection dissolves all forms delivering the rebel to another’s more malign informing power. (581)

And what is true for England, as a newly emerging socialist nation, is also true for the sons who must shed the “dead weight” of the past in order to establish a more modern identity for themselves. As we shall see, however, such rebellions function as revolutions — thereby reinstating versions of the old power abuses in the name of reform.

Dickens addresses the central theme of law and governance both literally, in his depiction of the Gordon Riots and in the character George Gordon, and symbolically, by linking these three fathers’ failures to protect their sons with the story of Abraham and Isaac. Within this framework, Barnaby Rudge highlights the inseparability of three
problems in the novel — paternal obligations to the law, paternal responsibilities to their sons, and the “preservation” of Englishness through reform. And Dickens was not only recording a concern about preserving the nation through a revised ruling practice, but clearly depicting a similar tension in his own society of the 1830's. Thomas J. Rice explains in “The Politics of Barnaby Rudge” that

In the years 1837-41 Dickens had become increasingly involved in contemporary politics, supporting the Anti-Corn Law league, the establishment of humane programmes for governing Ireland, the continued maintenance of some provision for the poor, and the agitation for National Education policies and movements threatened by the new ministry. (Rice 51-2)

Tracing parallels between characters and events in Dickens’ text within his contemporary events, Rice maintains that this “narrative embodies a fully articulated political allegory” (52). Rice's alertness to the similarities between London of 1780 and London in 1830's is extremely valid.

Yet, there are also other histories at work here. For example, Geoffrey Alderman has noted that

The granting of Catholic emancipation by Wellington’s Government made Jewish emancipation for the first time a practical possibility. The 1828 repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts would have benefitted Jews and Dissenters alike. . . . Lord Holland moved that Jews be permitted to omit these words [on the true faith of a Christian], but his amendment was lost. The position of Jews wishing to enter public life was, indeed, materially worse after 1828 for the Indemnity Act, previously passed annually to benefit dissector of all sorts, now lapsed. With the enactment of Catholic emancipation the following year, Jews and atheists alone were henceforth subject to political disabilities because of their religious faith. . . . In May 1833 a Jews' Civil Disabilities bill passed the Commons only to be defeated by the Lords. This happened again the following year. In 1836 the second reading in the Lords was never moved. (Alderman, The Jewish Community 18-20)
In fact, we need to extend the political allegory Rice outlines by foregrounding a broader set of political concerns and histories. Accordingly, Dickens’s portrayals of Gordon and the Old Testament’s presentation of Abraham and Isaac might be read in the context of discussions about, among other things, Jewish emancipation in early-nineteenth century England, or even Gordon’s conversion to Judaism in the years proceeding the riots. In fact, since both were aspiring toward full emancipation in the 1830’s a reading of this text’s Semitic discourse illuminates some overlapping concerns for Jews and Catholics, as well as English Protestant anxiety about Jews and Catholics in the period.

In *Barnaby Rudge* Dickens maps these overlapping histories of Catholic and Jewish emancipation, and the relations between the English and aliens living in England, onto the relations between fathers and sons. For example, one of the father/son conflicts we encounter in this novel is Sir John Chester who is the father of both the “illegitimate” Hugh and the “legitimate” Edward, or Ned. His character is also based upon Lord Chesterfield, whose famous letters to his son invoke yet another father and son relationship. Hugh is the product of a union between Chester and a nameless gypsy woman, and is later rejected by his father. In keeping with Victorian depictions of the gypsy figure, Hugh’s mother is abandoned by Chester and society. According to Deborah Epstein Nord, “[u]nlike the colonial subject, who remained a remote and wholly foreign figure, or the Jew, who, though outsider, functioned within English society, the gypsy hovered on the outskirts of the English world, unassimilable, a domestic and visible but socially peripheral character”(189). It is from this position that
Hugh’s gypsy mother attempts to care for her child, and her failure to do so successfully, foreshadows Hugh’s later demise. Without any income, the gypsy woman is sympathetically described by the narrator as “Tempted by want — as so many people are — into the easy crime of passing forged notes. . . . She was stopped in the commission of her very first offense, and died for it” (Dickens 578). A few moments before her hanging she reveals the identity of Hugh’s father, declaring, “If I had a dagger within these fingers and he was within my reach, I would strike him dead before me, even now!” (Dickens 579). Alluding to the dagger that Abraham uses on his own son, the gypsy recalls and represents an older England marked by corruption and greed whereby the poor must suffer for the crimes of the rich. Yet, the gypsy’s use of the dagger distinguishes her from Abraham since her aim is justice rather than, as Abraham is depicted by Dickens and his illustrators, simply following orders from the Hebrew God. In these final words, the gypsy asserts that she has one last wish regarding her son, “that the boy might live and grow, in utter ignorance of his father, so that no arts might teach him to be gentle and forgiving. When he became a man she trusted to the God of their tribe to bring the father and son together, and revenge her through her child” (579). Both wishes ultimately come true in the end when Chester is slain by a sword. Prior to his death, however, Chester is depicted as the most despicable father of all, for he not only abandons his illegitimate son, but he cuts off his legitimate son Edward when he marries for love instead of money. Swearing at Edward, Chester exclaims,

If you intend to mar my plans for your establishment in life, and the preservation of that gentility and becoming pride, which our family have so long sustained — if, in short, you are resolved to take your own course,
you must take it, and my curse with it. I am very sorry but there’s really no alternative. . . . You are so very irreligious, so exceedingly undutiful, so horribly profane. . . . It is quite impossible we can continue to go on, upon such terms as these. . . . return to this roof no more, I beg you. Go, sir, since you have no moral sense remaining; and go to the Devil, at my express desire. (Dickens 245-6)

Edward ultimately does make a lot of money, but not by marrying rich, and not before his father cuts him off. Escaping to the colonies, where he makes a fortune in trade, Edward achieves his father’s wishes through apparent hard work and earnest love. Importantly, however, both the narrator and Dickens fail to challenge the irony of sending the sons to the colonies to escape oppression, when in fact they ultimately perpetuate such abuses through colonial trade. Edward covertly reproduces his father’s abusive power in the act of escaping from his role as victim.

The father/son generational rift is a common thread running through the novel, connecting Sir John and Edward to other pairs of fathers and sons. Dickens depicts this particular relationship distinctly with an illustration of Chester, who sits alone fuming over his son. In this visual image, Chester is depicted in his living room, which is decorated with a hanging picture of the Jewish story of Abraham dangling a knife over the defiantly passive, Isaac. Abraham is apparently following, and not resisting, God’s orders by sacrificing his own son. By placing this image on the back wall of Chester’s room, Dickens’s implies that these two stories of father/son relations are linked, despite the fact that thematically they are opposites. Thus, while Isaac complies with his father, and his father complies with the Lord, Ned rebels against his father, which simultaneously positions him in opposition to the Hebrew story as well. As with
Harrington, Barnaby Rudge’s racial web naturalizes white English gentile identity by imagining the origins of that identity in an imagined Jewish history. Thus, England is able to be reformed since it has a definable history from which to break, distinguishing itself from the past because it no longer follows neither Abraham nor Isaac. In the process of making such a distinction, though, the text turns back on itself to show an earlier, antiquated English history that was once aligned with the Jewish Bible and with the Jewish George Gordon. Through this tangled knot of difference we find a sameness that must be hidden or broken with in Dickens’s image of a new, more tolerant English identity. As Gauri Viswanathan has pointed out, “Sir John exemplifies a macabre hollowness that Dickens holds up as the horrifying outcome of a decaying political order. If the desired endpoint of religious emancipation is the creation of a new order of cultural citizens, less Christian than English, . . . then Sir John Chester proved how pernicious that ideal really was” (24).

The Jewish paradigm for paternal authority in Barnaby Rudge, represented by the Hebrew God, the compliant Abraham, and the unrebellious Isaac, also reflects upon John Willet, father of Joe, who is notorious for his mistreatment of his son. Verbally abused, chastised, ridiculed and publically humiliated, Joe runs off, like Edward, in 1775 to the colonies to liberate himself from his father by defending the English armies fighting American rebels. Joe returns years later, having lost an arm in battle. He is saved, however, by his friend Edward Chester who promises to give Joe a job in his West Indian trading company. This act, however, does not completely bury Joe’s emotional scars from the text. Later when his father’s home and livelihood, The

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Maypole Inn, is destroyed by angry rioters, John Willet begins to understand the larger effects of violence that he helped instigate in his treatment of his son. As Arthur A. Adrian points out in *Dickens and the Parent-Child Relationship*, the Willet family struggle parallels the larger violence that took place during the Riots.

For John Willet the disappearance of his son is a precursor to ruin. . . . Never having shown Joe any fatherly affection. . . . he now begins to sense his loss. The destruction of the Maypole by the Gordon Riots climaxes his misfortunes and leaves him irreparably shock-damaged. When his son returns from America after having lost an arm in defense of Savannah, their earlier positions are reversed: it is the father who must now be treated like a child as he tries to fathom the mystery of Joe's empty sleeve; and the son addresses him like a father answering a small boy's questions. It is a compelling instance of retribution: the father, indirectly responsible for his sons' physical crippling, will now end his days as a mental cripple. (97)

And while both Edward and Joe succeed in their rebellion against their fathers, Barnaby Rudge, the title character, never has a chance to escape. After killing an innocent man Rudge, Barnaby's father goes under cover to escape his punishment. Mrs. Rudge gives birth prematurely to an "idiot," presumably because of the trauma she experiences upon learning about her husband's crime. Thus, Barnaby is irrevocably punished by his father, not only for his abandonment, but also because he is developmentally disabled. Raised under his mother's watchful eye, Barnaby is coerced by Hugh into leaving his mother to participate in the Riots. However, the narrator's lurid descriptions of the riots remind us that Barnaby knows not what he does. Despite the fact that Barnaby is captured and sentenced to hang, he is finally acquitted because of his disability. In this case, Barnaby's misdirected rebellion and violent acts are in fact, an extended result of his father's failure to obey the law. And yet, while Barnaby is released, his collaborator

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Hugh is not. Having lived a life of disrepute, in keeping with his mother's plans, Hugh becomes a strong voice behind the rioter's actions. The narrator is not as forgiving of Hugh as he was of Barnaby, describing Hugh's last moments as "the dogged desperation of a savage at the stake" (586). Following this introduction, Hugh begins his final monologue on the scaffold, declaring,

"If tis was not faith, and strong belief!" cried Hugh, raising his right arm aloft, and looking upward like a savage prophet whom the near approach of Death had filled with inspiration, "where are they! What else should teach me — me, born as I was born, and reared as I have been reared — to hope for any mercy in this hardened, cruel, unrelenting place! Upon these human shambles, I, who never raised his hand in prayer till now, call down the wrath of God! On that black tree, of which I am the ripened fruit, I do invoke the curse of all its victims, past and present, and to come. On the head of that man, who, in his conscience, owns me for his son, I leave the wish that he may never sicken on his bed of down, but die a violent death as I do now, and have the night-wind for his only mourner. To this I say, Amen, amen!" (596)

Sounding surprisingly sermon-like, Hugh pleads for justice in a system which marks him for the sins of his father. Poor, racially mixed, and orphaned, Hugh lacks a father against whom to rebel. His acts against the state might then be read as another misplaced rebellion, against his absent father. Nonetheless, common to each of these sons’s rebellions is the pursuit of justice. Unfortunately for Hugh, his efforts are thwarted by his own misguided and illegal behavior that get him imprisoned. In his final moments, the half-gypsy, half-English Hugh prays to a God responsible for the loss of Paradise ("that black tree on which I am a ripened fruit"), Hugh likens himself to Christ, dying for the sins of the world. Unlike Christ, however, Hugh does not redeem, but instead curses all those who are responsible for his corruption — namely, Sir John
Chester, who neglects to "own" Hugh, and therefore must "die a violent death" just like Hugh. Rebellion here is rooted by vengeance for an unfair system that punishes innocent victims. And although his wishes come true, and Chester does in fact die a violent death, Hugh never escapes his punishment. His rebellion in the riots rather, distinguishes him from the other sons in the novel like Barnaby, Joe, and Edward, all of whom are liberated from the oppression of their father's crimes.

The novel ends with the demise of all three fathers and the half-gypsy son. The sons who did not participate in the riots prosper economically and emotionally as they venture into the colonies, free from their fathers' authority. Unlike Hugh who stands to fight the unfair English system of governance, Joe and Edward don't rebel, but instead flee. Dickens suggests by this that a reformed England will never occur as long as the disease of the old order — symbolized by the rebellious rioters — is in power. Reform will instead come from England's role as an imperial power. And so, symbolically, the fathers all die or are rendered impotent by the novel's end, suggesting that the old system of governance with which they are all associated should follow suit. Anny Sadrin points out that "Dickens makes sure to orphan his heroes before the story gets started if they are to survive. And he orphans them all, one after another... Such is the rule: fathers must die that their sons may live"(14). By extension then, the old England must die if the new tolerant state is to survive.

There is reason to believe that Dickens is not just fictionalizing when he parallels a changing political order with portrayals of broken relationships between fathers and sons. And, by extension, when he parallels the old governance of the fathers
with Abraham we must question all of the paternal authorities Dickens criticizes. When Dickens wrote *Barnaby Rudge*, his own father expected a similar generosity from his son that Chester expects from Edward. Dickens's biographer Peter Ackroyd explains that Dickens became increasingly frustrated with his father at this time. “John Dickens seems to have made a habit, for example, of begging — the word is scarcely too strong — from Chapman and Hall, Dickens’s publishers” (280). Sadrin adds that where John Dickens turned to Charles’s publishers to extort money, Charles found only one way to put a stop to it:

In March 1841, a notice was inserted by Thomas Mutton, his solicitor, in the London newspapers to the effect that certain persons “having or purporting to have the surname” of his client, had “put into circulation, with a view of more readily obtaining credit thereon, certain acceptances made payable at his private residence or at the offices of his business agents” but that the “said client” was not prepared to pay debts except those contracted by himself or his wife. The young novelist must have felt sorry for himself on realizing that his now celebrated surname had somehow become his father’s pseudonym! (19)

It is not coincidence that Sir John Chester and John Willet share the same name as Dickens’s own father. Ackroyd adds,

So it is not very surprising that the early episodes of *Barnaby Rudge*... should themselves be animated by conflicts between fathers and sons, and that the theme of filial rebellion is central to the development of the entire novel. Significant too, that the men who do most to ignore or abuse or distrust their sons — Chester and Willet — both have the Christian name of John. (324)

By the novel’s end we find that, upon the deaths of the fathers, the only remaining characters are impotent fathers, sons who are developmentally disabled, women, who are portrayed as victims, and absent sons who live off of England’s extended empire. In
the course of this tale we are made to feel sorry for a motley crew of English people
including gypsies, half-gypsies, murderers," idiots," Catholics and even Jews (Gordon).
On one level, Dickens is clearly making claims for a new England comprised of
religious and racial difference, for none of the above people could have been considered
truly English under the old system espoused by the Protestant Association. However,
the very discourse Dickens relies upon to represent and imagine this new England
evolves out of an important Biblical tale. By aligning the old system of governance in
which fathers blindly obey the law, with the story of Abraham and Isaac, Dickens goes
far beyond appropriating Jewish history in his construction of English history. Indeed,
he also suggests that Jewish culture — in its antiquated form — ought to be ushered out
as well. Abraham’s presence in this text stands as an example of what not to do — that
is, the responsibility of the father to his son, the future, ought to take priority over
absolute, unquestioning obedience to the law. By following this Biblical tale, England
will remain corrupt and its culture will breed criminal behavior — as witnessed by the
abusive and irresponsible fathers, the “interracial” Hugh, and the Jewish president of the
Protestant Association.

In a conversation between Gordon and his secretary Gashford, Dickens
represents Gordon’s plight to preserve Englishness under the threat of Catholic
emancipation. Yet, in this passage Dickens imagines Gordon as tentative toward the
Protestant project, foreshadowing Gordon’s later conversion to Judaism. When
Gashford asserts, “our cause is boldness. Truth is always bold”(269) Gordon responds
with “Certainly, so is religion. She’s bold?” Gashford affirms, “The true religion is, my

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Lord." The narrator continues by describing Gordon as "moving uneasily in his seat, and biting his nails... "There can be no doubt of ours being the true one. You feel as certain of that as I do, Gashford, don’t you?" (269). Later, we witness this tentativeness again as Gordon explains that he has slept so well that he has forgotten where he is. He asks of Gashford,

'What place is this?'
'My Lord!' cried Gashford, with a smile.
'Oh!' returned his superior. 'Yes. You’re not a Jew then?'
'A Jew!' exclaimed the pious secretary, recoiling
'I dreamed that we were Jews, Gashford. You and I — both of us — Jews with long beards.'
'Heaven forbid, my lord! We might as well be papists'
'I suppose we might' returned the other, very quickly. 'Eh? You really think so, Gashford?'
'Surely I do,' The secretary cried, with looks of great surprise.
'Humph!' he muttered. 'Yes, that seems reasonable.'
'I hope my Lord — ' the secretary began.
'Hope!' he echoed, interrupting him.
'Why do you say, you hope? There’s no harm in thinking of such things.'
'Not in dreams,' returned the secretary.
'In dreams! No, nor waking either.' (279)

Here Dickens uncritically represents the shocking news of Gordon’s submerged Jewish identity by comparing it to the Protestant Association’s feeling toward Catholics.

Indeed, the two are interchangeable in their relationships to the Protestant Associations' view of itself. After Gordon leaves, Gashford ruminates:

— Dreamed he was a Jew, . . . He may come to that before he dies. It's like enough . . . I don’t see why that religion shouldn’t suit me as well as any other. There are rich men among the Jews; shaving is very troublesome; — yes, it would suit me well enough. For the present, though, we must be Christian to the core. Our prophetic motto will suit all creeds, in their turn, that’s a comfort (280).
Like Edgeworth, Dickens insists that all people are the same, race doesn’t matter and the Protestant Association’s prophetic motto “will suit all creeds” is easily appropriated for the emergence of a new England. Considering the possibility of becoming Jewish, Gashford reflects the need to polarize Christian and Jewish identities — a logic that turns on the word “though:” “For the present, though, we must be Christian to the core.” And yet, at the same time Gashford polarizes the categories of Jewish and English, he simultaneously represents them as fluid. This is clear with Gashford’s comment, “I don’t see why that religion shouldn’t suit me as well as any other.” In a moment of easing the prejudice of the Protestant Association’s campaign against Catholics, Dickens implies here that religious boundaries though currently in tact, might be dissolved in the future.

Gashford’s ruminations about becoming Jewish resonate with the widow Levy’s assertions that “we were all brothers and sisters once — no offense — in the time of Adam sure, and we should help one another in all times” (286). Like Edgeworth, Dickens calls into question the existence and need for divisive religious boundaries. However, he also reinscribes these categorical distinctions and essentialized differences between Jews and gentiles in his use of a Semitic discourse in which Abraham and Isaac and Gordon are all produced against Dickens’s vision of a reformed (and more liberal because more tolerant) England. The inclusion of Gordon’s Jewish identity is not anathema to the larger political concerns in the novel. As president of the Protestant Association and would-be Jew, Gordon has much in common with the miscegenated Hugh. Perhaps then it is no surprise that only the sons of true English blood succeed in
reforming England by escaping the chains of the past, while the half Gypsy/half English
Hugh and aspiring Jewish convert Gordon are imprisoned for their rebellious crimes. It
would be unfair to claim that Dickens had only Protestant young men succeed in this
tale, for certainly the Catholic Gabriel Varden and Barnaby are depicted honorably
throughout the novel. However, the Jewish “subtext” produces a discourse about Jews
as followers of an anachronistic God, or as passive in the face of a higher law, like both
Abraham and Isaac, or as mentally unstable, like Gordon himself.

The Riots can be read as the natural culmination of the forces of nationalism and
patriotism that became visibly prominent in England in the late eighteenth century. The
cultural elitism and will to imagine a national homogeneity intensified during the mid­
eighteenth century and, according to Gerald Neuman, many factors were at work here
including

the rise of the novel, of graphic satire and of other forms of mass
communication, the expansion of the reading public and the declining
importance of aristocratic patronage, the intensified sense of togetherness
and collective destiny brought on by the Seven Years’ war and the War of
American Independence, the “chronic” sense of military, economic and
diplomatic competition with France during this entire period, the rising
political activity of the middle and lower classes which also took place
during the early decades of George III, the sharpening consciousness of
aristocratic exclusiveness and political irresponsibility (as well as of
cultural and moral betrayal). But it was apparently the well-justified sense
of alien cultural invasion, linked in nationalist perceptions with the idea of
aristocratic cultural and moral betrayal, which furnished the root theory of
the movement. (67)

Enter the Gordon Riots. The class conflict that ensued, the perceived moral decline of
the rich, the rise of political activity of the lower classes, and the intrusion of alien
culture like Jews, Catholics, blacks and the Irish all added, in one way or another, to a
growing tension concerning the purity and stability of Englishness. As Dickens and Edgeworth work to find a place for these outsiders within English dominant culture, they manage to do so without ever upsetting the purity of Englishness as a racialized national category. What has often been referred to as the Jewish subtext in English literature — identified by Jewish or Anglo-Jewish characters — emerges in these novels as part of the discourse of Englishness. As English novels imagine a new England that is marked by liberality, tolerance and freedom from old superstitions, these novels work to create and redeem characters for the history of hatred embedded in their culture. And as both Edgeworth and Dickens assert, all people in England — regardless of national or racial or religious identity — ought to be granted legal protection and freedom. These narratives simultaneously assure their audiences that accepting difference is quite a different matter than absorbing different groups into the national sphere.

Through the parodied depictions of Disraeli in the following chapter we know that even when Prime Ministers convert to Christianity, they are still never entirely Christian or English. John Willet, Sir John Chester and Rudge are all trapped in antiquated English history from which Dickens tries to break through a Semitic discourse appropriating Jewish history as a flawed project. Paradoxically, however, Dickens’s linking of Sir John Chester, England’s corrupt eighteenth-century past, and Jewish history, never succeeds in separating its representation of Jewish and English identity from one another. Thus, in an effort to construct Englishness as different from Jewish or Catholic identity, both Dickens and Edgeworth inevitably and necessarily invoke an English identity that is contingent upon the representation of Jewish history.
The Jewish past can never disappear from the cultural sphere despite Chester’s death, or Gordon’s imprisonment, or the knowledge of Berenice’s “true” identity as an English Protestant. To see Jewishness as an identity limited to the manner in which Edgeworth and Dickens portray it is to fall into the same trap as Macaulay. In fact, the Jews are far more than what Dickens or Edgeworth appear to see, which may account for why they are seen and managed as separate and self contained in these novels.

Like Edgeworth and Dickens, Charlotte Tonna and Benjamin Disraeli return within their novels to the origins of their present cultural moment. However, they extend much further back than the eighteenth century, and look instead to Biblical history. This thematic and structural return in their narratives enables these novelists to extend their approval to Jews in the very same act in which they reproduce an ideology of racial distinctions and hierarchies that separate and order Jewish and Christian racial identities.
1. Hibbert 97 fn1.

2. Macauley 123

3. Morrison 17

4. Building on J.G.A. Pocock’s introduction to Burke’s reflections on the Revolution in France (Hackett, 1987), Susan Manly has pointed out that “the English Revolution of 1688 had been, fundamentally, a crisis in the history of the Church of England and the Anglican church-state. This crisis had given rise to the Toleration Act of 1689, in which the church-state had reluctantly agreed to cease regarding Dissenting worship as itself unlawful, while continuing to insist on the exclusion of dissenters from crown office or membership in corporations. Catholics had been excluded from the Act’s provisions, as had anti-Trinitarians or those who denied the full divinity of Christ, and who therefore denied that the church possessed authority as an extension of the divine body” (Manly 3-4). Vicious stereotypes only added to anti-Catholic attitudes in late-eighteenth century England. Hibbert explains, Catholics were believed to be “Wild and unlikely stories began to circulate and to be believed. It was spread about by zealots troublemakers in the slums and poorer districts that twenty thousand Jesuits were hidden in a network of underground tunnels in the Surrey bank of the Thames and were waiting for the order from Rome to blow up the bed and banks of the river and so flood London. .. In Southwark a rumor went about, started, it was thought, but a mad Methodist preacher, that a gang of Benedictine monks, disguised as Irish chairmen, had poisoned all the flour in the Borough, and for days many of the inhabitants would not touch any bread until it had been tested by a dog” (Hibbert 38). In addition, the Pope’s position and power within the Catholic church was cause for suspicion. Hibbert continues, “He was never for then quite real: a sort of ecclesiastical witch who exercised an evil power on the minds of otherwise apparently normal Englishmen; a bogey man with whom mothers and nurses frightened their children into good behavior. He was blamed for many parochial, and practically all national, disasters. France and Spain, the traditional enemies, were the tools by which he sought to conquer England and gain control of the poor Englishmen’s minds and bodies. His great hope and ultimate aim was to bring back to England the rack and the Inquisition” (38-9).

5. The complaints of the "true" Protestants were published as follows:
   1. One of the principle tenants of Popery is to destroy all Heretics off the face of the Earth.
   2. Papists are taught to believe everyone a Heretic who does not belong to the Church of Rome.
   3. The doctrines of Popery are inconsistent with reason; witness the doctrine of
transubstantiation.

4. Popery encourages persecution and countenances murder; witness the Martyrs in bloody Q. Mary's reign, and the inquisition to Spain and Portugal in the present day.

5. Popery allows pardons for sins past, present and to come to be bought, so that any one may commit the greatest crimes if he does but pay the Popish Priest a few guineas for his absolution.

6. Popery leads to the grossest idolatry, as it enjoins the worshiping of angels, relics, etc., and the adoration of the Host.

6. Opinions vary concerning the total number of deaths. Lord Amherst, for example, ranked casualties as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Killed by guards and Association</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By light Horse</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died in the Hospitals</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners under cure</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total killed and wounded</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Lord Wraxall’s estimate of these figures were underrated, and in the opinion of competent judges it was over seven hundred” (DeCastro 236).


10. Although is it possible that Edgeworth and Dickens knew nothing about black rioters, this seems unlikely. Thomas Gaspey’s novel *The Mystery* (1819), includes a scene depicting black rioters fighting in the Gordon Riots. Presumably, if Gaspey had access to this information, so too would Edgeworth and Dickens considering the extent of their research prior to writing their novels.

11. This is not the only place where Edgeworth borrowed from Lazarus’s writing. In his edition of their correspondence, Edgar MacDonald points out the similarities between the lives of Berenice Montenero and Rachel Mordecai Lazarus. Macdonald cites an
entire paragraph of a letter from Lazarus that Edgeworth includes as a statement made by Berenice (15, fn 13).

12. Mayhew explains that lots of poor Jews participated in the popular trade of used clothes sales. This was particularly prominent among German Jewish immigrants to England who made a lot of money off of the trendy fashion industry that inspired wealthy people to get rid of their unworn, thought out of fashion, clothing. This was a particularly lucrative trade considering the fact that so many people in England could not afford to buy new clothing.

13. See Endelman for more on popular images of Jews in Georgian England.

14. According to Jewish law, Judaism is carried through the maternal line. Thus, a child born to a Jewish father is not necessarily Jewish. A child must be born to a Jewish mother in order to be considered Jewish. According the British racial discourse in this period, the child of either a Jewish mother or father would still be Jewish because she/he would carry Jewish blood. So, even though Berenice is not Jewish by Jewish law, she is still Jewish, and English Protestant, by Christian law.

15. Mayhew refers to anti-Jewish slogans, like the ones Edgeworth describes, in earlier riots during the Jew Bill controversy. Also, See Butler and Manly introduction for more on Edgeworth’s choice to overlap these two events.

16. Henry Mayhew explains that during the Jew Bill controversy in 1753-4, “the popular ferment was at its height, undage for a Hebrew old clothes-man, however harmless a man, and however long and well known on his beat, to ply his street-calling openly; for he was often beaten and maltreated. Mobs, riots, pillagings, and attacks upon the houses of the Jews were frequent, and one of the favourite cries of the mob was certainly among the most preposterously stupid of any which ever tickled the ear and satisfied the mind of the ignorant: — ‘No jews!/ No wooden shoes!!’ Some mob-leader, with a taste for rhyme, had in this distich cleverly blended the prejudice against the Jews with the easily excited but vague fears of a French invasion, which was in some strange way typified to the apprehensions of the vulgar as connected with slavery, popery, the compulsory wearing of wooden shoes (sabots), and the earring of frogs!” (117).

17. Deborah Epstein Nord has argued convincingly that, despite the fact that people sometimes link Jews and gypsy types into one category, this was not the case in the Victorian period.
CHAPTER III

CHARLOTTE TONNA, BENJAMIN DISRAELI, 
AND THE "ZIONIST" CONVERSION PLOT

"All is race; there is no other truth."¹

While Edgeworth's and Dickens's fictional depictions of the Gordon Riots served to imagine and construct England as a tolerant, liberal nation, we find in novels by Charlotte Tonna and Benjamin Disraeli a similar impulse fueled, however, by very different motives. Like Edgeworth, Tonna in Judah's Lion (1837) and Disraeli in Tancred (1843) attempt to show toleration and respect toward Jews by foregrounding similarities between Hebrew and Christian culture, but in the process they ultimately erase important cultural and religious distinctions between them. Set in the Holy Land, these two novels stand as part of a prominent Semitic discourse, popular in the 1830's, of fictional and autobiographical accounts of English people's travels in the Middle East. In the process of showing that Judaism and Christianity are almost indistinguishable from each other as religions, these novels subtly assert a contrary claim: despite the perceived similarities in their religious practices, Jews and Christians are racially distinct from one another. The narrative and symbolic structures of both novels not only imagine and naturalize racial differences, but also assert, paradoxically,
that despite their shared theological lineage, Christianity is racially superior to Judaism. In both texts, the racial logic that orders these two groups against one another is reproduced with the symbolic gesture of returning to the Holy Land, to the place where Christian culture imagines itself as having evolved out of a Hebrew past. Yet, the return to the past is more than just a national narrative about the evolution of English Christian culture, but constitutes a powerful ritual of imagining and producing a moment in time when these religious groups parted ways for the purpose of "proving" that Christians are racially distinct from and superior to Jews.

In their readings of similar narratives about the holy land, Judith W. Page and Todd Endelman consider the implications of viewing Jerusalem from a specific national, religious, or racial perspective. In her study of Judith Montefiore's *Private Journal of a Visit to Egypt and Palestine by Way of Italy and the Mediterranean* (recorded 1827-28, printed 1836) Judith W. Page observes a "characteristically Jewish quality" (125) and a "distinctly Jewish perspective in Montefiore's profoundly spiritual responses to the history and sacred geography of Palestine" (126). According to Page, unlike Christian English writers, Judith Montefiore's "Jewish" journals "set her... apart from other contemporary records" (126). By contrast, according to Todd Endelman, Benjamin Disraeli's description of himself as "thunderstruck" upon seeing Jerusalem is "that of a European romantic rather than a Jew" ("Hebrew to the End" 113), despite his perceived identity as a Jew. It goes without saying, of course, that not all Jews, upon viewing the ruins at Jerusalem, would share the same response. By the same logic, no two Christians or Europeans would view the ruins in quite the same way either. How do
we understand the opposing claims of Page and Endelman regarding a perceived visual exclusivity that is devised along national and/or racial lines? More to the point of this chapter, is it possible for any person’s reaction to the Holy Land to remain “racially pure?”

In an attempt to consider this question more fully, this chapter will examine two popular “Zionist” novels, written and published in the years following the publication of Montefiore's *Journals*, each of which invokes the problem of racialized perspectives in viewing the ruins at Jerusalem. In the first, Charlotte Tonna's evangelical *Judah's Lion* (1843), a Christian author constructs a Jewish character who travels to Jerusalem and is so moved by the experience that he converts to Christianity. The second novel, Benjamin Disraeli's *Tancred* (1847) alternately depicts a Christian narrator who travels to Jerusalem where he falls in love and marries a Jewish woman. Despite the fact that Disraeli maintains that he is a Christian, his contemporary culture, and ours for that matter, will never let him forget that he is “really” a Jew, and that his Christian narrator is therefore imagining the Holy Land from “a Jewish perspective.” Along these lines, we might easily fall into the trap of reading both of these novels from a “particularly Jewish perspective” since each text represents “Jewish” characters and narrators who imagine and produce Jerusalem for dominant English Christian culture. In the following chapter I wish to complicate such distinctions by examining the process by which “Jewish” narrators are produced within a Semitic discourse and as such represent Christian appropriations of Jewish identity, rather than historical perspectives by Jews.

While it is true that both novels make an effort to promote and valorize Judaism
and Jewish history, neither one actually accomplishes this goal. Instead we find in both texts a similar assertion that Jewish culture and nationalism should be coveted by Christians in order to expedite the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and the second coming of Christ. This conversionist logic works by flattering the Jews into submission and yet, paradoxically, allows for the production of a "Zionist" and "philo-Semitic" Christian culture. The logic of conversion in this period, as noted by Gauri Viswanathan, is "one of the most unsettling political events in the life of a society... [because] it challenges an established community’s assent to religious doctrines and practices" (xiii). Although both of these novels have been called "Zionist"3 I will show that in fact the reverse is true; neither novel espouses or promotes Jewish nationhood or affirms Jewish culture. The act of overriding Jewish identity and of replacing it with a more "complete" identity in Christianity ultimately serves to refashion English identity as a successful conversionist culture. Thus, in the very same process of "valorizing" Jewish culture, these texts affirm instead English Christian power to control the discourse about the Jews. In both novels we find a "reformed" English identity that appears in the shape of newly converted Jews and "philo-Semitic" Christians who "love" the Jews so much that they want to make them Christian.

Michael Ragussis observes that *Tancred* is a direct response to *Judah's Lion*: "For, if in *Judah's Lion* an English Jew sets out to the East, only to discover the value of Christianity, in *Tancred* an English Christian sets out to the East, only to discover the value of Judaism" (198). While Ragussis rightly suggests that *Tancred* was a response to *Judah’s Lion*, the following analysis of these texts will show that they are not quite as
oppositional as they might initially appear. Their apparent celebrations of Jewish history and people are, instead, a covert effort to eradicate Judaism from the English national sphere. While Edgeworth and Dickens look to the past as a way of constructing the nineteenth century as a more tolerant version of eighteenth-century culture, we find in these so-called Zionist novels a similar glance to the past which is also necessary for the production of nineteenth century English Christian identity. As each of these novels produces a linear and historically bound relationship between Jewish and Christian identities, they simultaneously assert a dominant English perspective that assumes conceptual control over Jewish history and culture. Thus, in the very act of showing that Christianity evolved out of Jewish history and culture, these novels reverse that historical process, by producing “Judaism” out of English Semitic discourse.

“Zionism,” Evangelism, and Empire

Tonna’s and Disraeli’s novels invoke two prominent and deeply enmeshed cultural projects in the nineteenth century: Evangelical Christianity and what has come to be called “Zionism.” This is not the first time in history that these two movements had appeared in conjunction with one another. Beginning as early as the Crusades, and culminating with the Puritans, English Christians have had a long history of interest in the Jewish return to Palestine which, they believed, would have material and spiritual benefits for the English. In the years during and following the French Revolution, the English had not only strategic land to gain from the Jewish return, but also the
satisfaction of knowing that they were enabling the Jews to convert to Christianity by helping them find their way home.

Mel Scult has noted that the Puritan spirit, which was ultimately submerged by Enlightenment Reason and rationalism, maintained that “God's Chosen people. . . are to play a key role in the drama of God's historical plan. . . and that the Christians are very much in debt to the Jews who have been the keepers of the ‘word’ throughout history” (Scult 34). In the seventeenth century many Puritans believed that the reason why Jews had not converted was because of Church persecution, and that such antisemitic Christians would ultimately be held accountable for their treatment of the Jews. In response, an apparent ethic of liberality surfaced among seventeenth-century Puritans which aimed to promote tolerance toward the Jews, which many felt would encourage the Jews to desire Christianity as their own religion.

A century later, the unsettling years of the French Revolution brought about profound changes in the manner in which the English viewed the Jewish population in England. Mel Scult explains that as political dissent came to be affiliated with treason and evil, it was also viewed as dangerously anti-Christian. For this reason then, the late eighteenth century marks one of the first times in European history when, Scult observes, many English people began “to think primarily in terms of the political reestablishment of the Jewish people and [were] only secondarily concerned with their conversion” (71).

The rising tide of Evangelical Christianity also emphasized the importance of the second coming of Christ. Among others, John Wesley (1703-1791), a founder of
Methodism, contributed to the Evangelical Movement which was committed to the belief in the sacred, pious life of the Christian which could be brought about by a spiritual conversion or Christian rebirth. Barbara W. Tuchman explains that in the eighteenth century, many middle class and propertied people were drawn to Evangelicalism as an “escape [from] rationalism’s horrid daughter,” or the Revolution. Tuchman adds that Evangelical Christians “were only too willing to be enfolded in the anti-intellectual embrace of Evangelicalism, even if it demanded faith and good works and a willing suspension of disbelief” (180). A group of followers of Wesley, including Hannah More, William Wilberforce, and Zachary Macaulay (father of Lord Macaulay), maintained that the root of evil in contemporary England was a result of a loss or abandonment of “true religion” (Scult 86). A.L. Tibawi adds that this was not merely a response to the Revolution alone, but a “reaction to the ideas that spread before its outbreak, the economic and social changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the success of English commerce and colonization — each in its own way — contributed to the Evangelical revival” (4). Thus, a host of social, political and economic factors established the foundations for the English aristocracy’s identification with Evangelicalism which helped “maintain the social order at home and ... create[d] outlets for the new religious zeal in missionary work abroad (Tibawi 4). Like Edgeworth’s earlier intertextual references to other fictional or historical accounts of English Jew hatred, Tonna depicts English antisemitism as a way of showing not that all Christians do not hate Jews. Advocating on behalf of Jews, however, did not serve the Jewish people, but rather, enabled these
authors themselves to promote themselves as liberal minded and as tolerant of Jews. As a discourse, this production and representation of Jewish history rather serves those who control the discourse.

Among the more prominent nineteenth-century Evangelical organizations was the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, commonly known for short at the London Jews' Society which came to be one of the "major English religious and educational agencies in the Holy Land" (Tibawi 5). It was founded in 1809 by a Jewish convert named Joseph Samuel Christian Fredrich Frey whose failure to convert more than a few Jews as part of the London Missionary Society compelled him to set up his own organization specifically for this purpose. The society grew quickly, and Frey ultimately hired auxiliary societies to assist him. The Society was prosperous in the sense that ministers, such as Frey, raised very large sums of money for the organization. In fact, Barbara Tuchman notes that "by 1850 the Society had seventy-eight missionaries employed in thirty-two branch offices from London to Jerusalem and an expenditure of twenty-six thousand pounds" (184). Despite their industry, the Jews' Society ultimately failed to fulfill its goal. "After the first thirty years of operation, only two hundred and seven adults had been converted successfully, which averaged out to about six or seven a year" (Tuchman 184).

By the 1820's, Alexander McCaul had become a prominent figure in the Society. Feldman explains that during the early years the Jews' Society aimed to convert central and eastern European Jews and Jews living in the Ottoman empire. In 1829, however, the Society shifted its focus to the conversion of London Jews. Feldman adds that
“Whereas the first generation of Evangelicals had believed the millennium would be achieved through preaching the Gospel, from the late 1820's faith in prophetic interpretation led growing numbers to expect it imminently” (54). McCaul's weekly speeches, recorded in *Old Paths*, were published in 1837 of which “over ten thousand copies were distributed in the first year of publication... [and it] was translated into Hebrew, French and German” (Feldman 55). The English edition was republished in 1846, the year prior to the publication of Disraeli's *Tancred*. And, like Disraeli, McCaul believed that Christianity was a continuation of Judaism and not a separate religion. Hence, the conversion of the Jews was merely an act of fulfillment and completion rather than a transformation or conversion. Yet, as we see too clearly with Disraeli’s position within English culture, despite such efforts to vindicate Judaism because of its similarities with Christianity nonetheless maintain racial distinctions between Jews and Christians. Thus, Disraeli could convert to Christianity, but however “natural” the progression from one religion to the next, English Christian culture would continue to imagine him throughout his life as a Jew who was trying to pass as an Englishman.

By viewing the Jews as pre-Christians, the logic of Evangelical advocacy for Jewish conversion fell into the same logic of anti-Catholicism during this period. McCaul maintained that “designing” Rabbis and other Jews had corrupted the Mosaic Law of the Bible, just like Priests had corrupted Christianity. Feldman points out though that “the limitations of Judaism were different from those of Roman Catholicism for, whereas the latter reflected a perversion of Christianity, the former remained in a condition of pre-Christian stasis” (56-7). Moreover, the logic of development and
progress so pervasive in Victorian depictions of England as modern, superior to other nations, and committed to individual and national advancement, evolved alongside and as a product of Evangelical Christian discourse.

Conversion, then, was coded in the seemingly innocuous logic of cultural advancement, industrial progress, and economic growth which came to dominate discourse on the great British Empire. Tonna's novel is a visible example of the manner in which a race discourse is embedded in this culture's self fashioning — to be progressive, it goes without saying, one must also necessarily be Christian and not Jewish. As a corollary, however, one might also work to relieve the world of its current evils by participating in the conversion of the Jews, which would improve the conditions of the people living in England, not only for the purpose of facilitating the second coming of Christ, but also for the benefit of extending the empire in the Levant. These two movements — Evangelicalism and imperialism — were culturally and historically linked in the 1830's. This is one reason why it is troubling to interpret Zionism in this period as pro-Jewish, since it was presented to English people and politicians primarily as a vehicle for securing control of the Middle East. In short, to understand the politicized structure and content of the Semitic discourses in novels by Tonna and Disraeli, we must recall the related imperial and Evangelical projects from which they were drawn.

One of the primary advocates for the return of the Jews to Zion was Lord Ashley, later Lord Shaftesbury, who initially gained notoriety for his efforts to reform India. Unhappy with what he interpreted as the "corrupt" ruling practices of the East
India Trading Company, Lord Ashley proposed instead, according to Polowetzky, that the English had come to India, not just for material gain, but “to teach the true religion” (4). Converting Indians to Christianity, Ashley maintained, was a more enlightened and sound justification for imperialism. Ashley used the very same logic to convince his political colleagues to seek the acquisition of Palestine, which would not only benefit the empire financially, but would also expedite the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. By 1838 Ashley had convinced Palmerston to establish the first British diplomatic envoy to “Syria,” which, at this point, delineated the middle eastern territories including Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and western Iraq (Polowetzky 9). As Polowetzky explains Ashley maintained that “if Britain took action to establish herself in the Middle East as the Jews’ political and military protector, this great immigration would actually begin, an immigration that to someone with Ashley’s Evangelical religious convictions signified the beginning of the second coming of Jesus Christ”(9). To convince Palmerston, who was not particularly religious, Ashley put a more political spin on his plan.

Napoleon had invaded Jerusalem in 1799, but was forced back with the help of British troops. The French wanted control over the Red Sea which would give them access to India. Believing himself to be the modern Alexander the Great, Napoleon wanted to “build his empire from Egypt to the Indus”(Tuchman 164). Napoleon’s plan was twofold. First, he wanted to prevent the British from access to the region. Second, as Barbara Tuchman puts it, he wanted to “cut through a new Suez canal that would transform the Mediterranean into a French lake and channel all the commerce of the
Indies and the Levant into French hands” (164-5). Fearful of Napoleon, and intent upon helping Russia, British forces arrived in Acre and successfully pushed Napoleon's army back. However, the crisis exploded once again in 1830 when Mehemet Ali of Egypt attempted to overtake the Turkish Sultan’s place as the “independent ruler of a new Moslem state covering Egypt, Syria, and Arabia” (170). Tuchman succinctly lays out the sequence of events — on November 1, 1831, the

Egyptian Army crossed the frontiers of Syria, met the Egyptian fleet under the command of Mehemet's son Ibrahim at Jaffa, and at once advanced to lay siege to the inevitable Acre. This time Acre fell. Ibrahim, having taken Gaza and Jerusalem as well, swept forward to take Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. By the summer of 1833 he was master of all Syria and pressing against the gateway to Constantinople. In a panic the Sultan turned to Britain for help. (Tuchman 171)

When Palmerston refused to help, the Sultan turned instead to Russia. Although this plan offered a temporary fix, by 1838 another uprising was under way, and this time France joined Mehemet Ali in the celebration of their defeat of the Turkish. In response Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia formed an alliance “to unite in support of Turkey and compel Mehemet to content himself with Egypt and the administration of southern Syria for his lifetime” (Tuchman 173). Shortly thereafter Syria revolted against Ibrahim, and the British fleet “materialized out of the fog, bombarded and took Beirut, sent ashore a storming party. . . captur[ed] ancient Sidon, and then sailed southward to turn its guns on . . . St. Jean d'Acre. Ibrahim was defeated without a siege; whereupon his father's almost consummated empire collapsed like a house of cards” (173).

In the aftermath of these revolts, Ashley was able to convince Palmerston to advocate on behalf of a Zionist project ostensibly for the Jews. Yet, he reasoned to
Palmerston that such a project would also be essential to British interests as well. Lord Palmerston agreed to Ashley’s proposal on political grounds, and sent a letter to the ambassador of Constantinople encouraging him to allow Jews to return to their homeland. Polowitzky notes,

By doing this, Britain would first of all acquire a tremendous amount of prestige and good will throughout the world. But even more important than this, Britain would gain a large and loyal following directly in the Middle East, as well as a legal justification to intervene in the area militarily. Palmerston was impressed by Ashley's argument. He cautioned him, that such an elaborate scheme could only be implemented incrementally so as not to arouse undue attention. (10)

While Palmerston maintained secrecy in implementing his political scheme, Lord Ashley followed suit, by keeping his religious motives under cover. Ashley published an anonymous article in the Quarterly Review, in which he maintained falsely that “throughout Poland, Russia, and India, Jews were asking for Christian religious books to read”(11). Polowitzky adds that “It mattered little to Ashley that this fervent declaration was based completely on facts garnered from unreliable sources.” Tuchman adds that to “the Israel-for prophesy’s-sake school, the Jews were simply the instrument through which Biblical prophesy could be fulfilled. They were not a people, but a mass error that must be brought to a belief in Christ in order that the whole chain reaction leading to the second coming and the redemption of mankind might be set in motion” (178).

With increasing tension during the 1830's, England as well as other European nations gradually distanced themselves from the Middle East crisis. However, the disappearance of a priest and his servant in Damascus in 1840 led to an outbreak of
antisemitism in the region, for Christians in Damascus believed that the Jews had killed them, and planned on using their blood to make matzo for Passover. Judith Montefiore’s husband Moses Montefiore convinced Palmerston to take action. The anti-Jewish accusations that ensued caused tremendous controversy at the time. Barbara Tuchman explains: “the Damascus Incident was historically important in the development of nineteenth-century Jewish nationalism, arousing Jews the world over to the need of united action” (195). At the same time that Jews all over Europe responded with outrage, the Damascus Affair also inspired “motive for British intervention on behalf of the Jews in the Turkish Empire and awakened public opinion to their situation” (195). Thus, in flaunting the overt antisemitism of this accusation, “Zionists” sought to protect the Jews from such attacks. They reasoned, however ironically, that Jews would be unwilling to convert if they perceived Christianity to be antisemitic.

The Damascus affair created an opportunity for Peel to bolster British power in the middle eastern territories, ostensibly to insure peace in the region. His choice of appointment is telling, for he chose Reverend Michael Solomon Alexander, a converted Jew, to be the first Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem. Reverend Alexander was to serve on Mt Zion, where Solomon's Temple once stood and was, Polowetzky reminds us, “the place where many Evangelicals believed Christ would make his second coming” (18). Appointing Alexander to this position enabled England to begin to secure political power in the region in a manner that would also bolster Evangelical conversion efforts. Many supporters of Ashley and Alexander believed that British efforts to establish a Jewish homeland was an essential step toward converting the Jews to Christianity.
Along these lines, Evangelicals reasoned that once Jews saw Mt. Zion, the place where Christ would make his return to earth, they would be spiritually inspired to convert to Christianity. We see this view explicitly in *Judah's Lion*, where Tonna has her main character, Alick, experience his spiritual conversion on the occasion of visiting Mt. Zion. Tonna’s depictions of Alick’s conversion to Christianity failed to convince Anglo-Jews to follow suit. Much to Ashley's and his followers’ chagrin, Jewish immigrants did gradually flow from England to Israel, but not with the intention of converting to Christianity. (Polowetzky 19). Rather, they were interested in living as Jews in their homeland, in a place where they believed their political emancipation would be secured and would not come at the expense of cultural and/or religious assimilation. Tonna’s “Zionism” must be read in light of this historical phenomenon which reveals that the process of appropriation of Jewish culture and history was not valid exclusively by the promotion and vindication of British imperial and English Christian interests.

While Judith Page’s claims about Judith Montefiore’s particular Jewish perspective essentialize the Jewish experience, Page is not entirely inaccurate either. Nineteenth-century Jewish people probably did not view Mt. Zion in the same way as their Christian contemporaries. Nevertheless, the problem Page raises by perceiving an absolute difference in her comment about Montefiore’s Jewish journals is that of essentializing the Jewish or Christian experiences. While the two perspective may be different from one another, they are not individually unified by such differences. Rather, Jewish reactions to Mt. Zion differ among Jews, just as Christian reactions do.
too. Moreover, a surge of images (both literary and visual) of The Holy Land and Mt. Zion, produced by Jews and non-Jews, proliferated during this period. By the time Montefiore, Tonna, and Disraeli were writing their fictional depictions of journeys to the Holy Land, their readers were not only well versed in these current political controversies, but were also well aware of an industry of published travel narratives of the region. This fact calls into question whether or not it is possible for any fictional narrative in this period to recall only one particular racial or religious perspective. Can any account then, be purely “Jewish” or purely “Christian” when they are produced within a literary market, an imperial framework, and English Semitic discourse?

In the following readings of *Judah’s Lion* and *Tancred*, we begin to see a prominent impulse to racialize texts, or to see them as representative of particular racial groups. This critical impulse is thus, part of the Semitic discourse that appears in these novels whereby Jewish perspectives (Alick’s and Disraeli’s) are valorized apparently out of respect for Jews, but the act of acknowledging Jewish perspectives serves only those who have the authority to delineate perspectives as “Jewish” or Christian.” Embedded in these novels is the unspoken, invisible pronouncement, rendered on so many different narrative and figurative levels, that Jewish culture is as good as Christian culture (since the two are historically linked). In the end, however, Jewish history and culture is represented, appropriated, and coopted paradoxically for the promotion of English Christian racial superiority over Jews.
Born the child of a clergyman in 1790, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna developed a literary and political career out of her commitment to Evangelical Christianity. As a child Tonna lost her eyesight for several months and by the age of ten permanently lost her hearing. One result of feeling shut out of a world that was ill-equipped to communicate with her was an increased desire to read. In her autobiographical work, *Personal Recollections* (1842), Tonna explains that Shakespeare was among her very favorite authors, and *The Merchant of Venice* held a particular fascination for her: “The character of Shylock burst upon me, even as Shakespeare had conceived it. I reveled in the terrible excitement that it gave rise to; page after page was stereotyped upon a most retentive memory without an effort, and during a sleepless night I feasted on the pernicious sweets thus hoarded in my brain” (*Personal Recollections* 30). Later, after her conversion, Tonna was haunted by her early passion for Shakespeare, believing it to have been, Ivanka Kovacevic notes, “a sinful waste of time” (304).

The literary career that followed would not offer entertainment, but novels devoted to educating readers. Fiction for the sake of fiction was thus a frivolous waste of time, that might be better spent, Tonna reasoned, improving the lives of those who were less fortunate than herself. This view of life manifested itself not only in literary endeavors and in conversion projects, but also in Tonna’s social work which she undertook for the improvement of the lives of women factory workers and social relief for the working poor. Despite her success, Tonna is not well remembered today,
presumably because of both the didactic Christian tone of her work and because of her religious bigotry. Tonna was deeply hateful towards Catholicism and Catholics, and although she believed that her religious quest to convert the Jews was a Zionist project, readers today might have a hard time seeing it this way. In her husband’s addendum to her *Personal Recollections*, he explains that his wife was very pleased with the establishment of Jewish presses and newspapers in England and “hailed the appearance” of a new Jewish newspaper, *Voice of Jacob*, “with great joy”; for, “she had long grieved over the ignorance which prevailed amongst Christians as to the real state, character, and feelings of the Jews, and the great injury that was continually done to the cause of truth by the numberless calumnies, unwillingly propagated by sincere Christians” (342). Later he adds, “She rejoiced that the Jew could now speak out for himself, say who and what he was...[W]hen she saw that the ‘Voice of Jacob’ never failed to point the Jew to Palestine, as his own inalienable heritage, she at once gave the undertaking the full support of her pen” (343-44). This was the year prior to the publication of *Judah’s Lion*, and although L.H.J. Tonna never specifies, we can assume that he alludes to her novel when he refers to her supportive pen.

Monica Correa Fryckstedt explains that as editor of the Christian Lady’s Magazine, which she undertook from 1834-1846, Tonna showed a surprising enthusiasm for Jewish causes:

On few questions did Charlotte Elizabeth impress her personal views on her readers with such force as on the Jewish question... Thus, for instance, Charlotte Elizabeth proposed a fund to defray the travel expenses of Jews desirous of settling in Israel, ... and on hearing of the project to create a Christian Bishopric in Jerusalem, she pronounced “it a high...
privilege to receive contributions for this glorious object” . . . When the Jewish population of Mogador in Morocco had been stripped of clothing and possessions by the attacking French, Charlotte Elizabeth at once appealed to her readers on their behalf. (48).

Indeed, Tonna was so devoted to the Jewish cause, that her husband concludes his addendum to *Personal Recollections* with a description of Tonna’s final moments before her death. Using her customary sign language, Tonna “uttered these words: ‘Tell them, naming some dear Jewish friends, — ‘tell — — —, that Jesus is the Messiah — and tell’ — . Her hand had forgotten its cunning; her tongue was cleaving to the root of her mouth, — but Charlotte Elizabeth had not forgotten Jerusalem!’” (358-9). Nevertheless, scholars have, for the most part, forgotten Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, whose controversial identity marks her as a bold feminist who advocated on behalf of women’s rights and the rights of the poor as well as her identity as a meek, Christian servant.

Tonna married early to Captain Phelan, whom she followed to Nova Scotia and Ireland. While in Ireland, Tonna became increasingly aware of two social misfortunes which she believed to be linked — Catholicism and poverty. Hostile to Catholicism, the Evangelical Tonna set out to convert anyone who was not already a true Christian. Ultimately Tonna’s marriage to Phelan became abusive. Her biographers have all noted that after he abandoned her, she turned to writing as a means of supporting herself. Publishing under the pseudonym “Charlotte Elizabeth,” to prevent her husband from claims to her income, Tonna established herself as an accomplished woman of letters. In addition to publishing numerous works of fiction and nonfiction, Tonna also edited several magazines in addition to *The Christian Lady’s Magazine.*

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After the death of her first husband, Tonna married again, this time to Lewis H. Tonna whom Linda Peterson describes as “a minor Evangelical writer” who, like his new wife, thought of himself as a supporter of Zionism (44). While it is true that Tonna sets *Judah’s Lion* in Palestine, and charts the progress of Alexander Nathan Cohen’s conversion to Christianity, it is difficult to read such a narrative as truly Zionist. Yet, Peterson is not alone in thinking that this novel promotes Jewish nationalism. In fact, Tonna’s contemporary readers were so deceived by the novel’s promotion of Jewish nationalism that they wondered about it’s author’s own allegiance to Christianity.7 M.C. Fryckstedt explains,

Rumour had it she was a converted Jew, a rumour perpetuated by the *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* (39[1845], 43). To refute this false report, Charlotte Elizabeth, under the signature of “Grace,” confided to her female readers that “neither by marriage nor in any other way, directly or indirectly is she connected with the descendants of Abraham.” *(CLM 20 [1843], 222)* (94)

This claim stands strangely against the context of *Judah’s Lion* which maintains that, since all of the figures in the New Testament are Jewish, and since Jews and Christians “share” the Old Testament, Jews are simply incomplete Christians. Alexander Nathan Cohen, or Alick as he is called in this novel, experiences a spiritual conversion where he embraces Christ as the Messiah, but when he is accused of renouncing Judaism, he replies,

Renounce Judaism? Never ! Jesus never disowned it, his Apostles never renounced it; why then should I? To be a Hebrew is my privilege, my glory, my joy. I am sealed in my flesh with the seal of God’s precious promises to Israel concerning this land, which is our’s by His gift, and to which he will yet restore us openly: I hope to be sealed also with the seal of His spiritual promises in Christ Jesus, which is baptism, but not to do
away with the privileges of circumcision, which are also mine by a covenant that shall never be broken. (317-18)

According to this passage, Alick does not have to give up his Jewish roots for the sake of Christianity. Indeed, Christianity is here imagined as simply the extension of Judaism, and not as a separate religion. Yet, even as Tonna imagines these two religions as historically linked, she simultaneously draws attention to Alick’s Jewish body that cannot be rendered un-Jewish. Circumcision is both a covenant with God, and a mark of his physical or embodied distinction from Christians. Regardless of the fact that he converts to Christianity, Tonna’s inclusion of this passage serves to remind us that his body will always give him away as a Jew. The logic of this passage, and of Alick’s constructed identity as both Christian and Jew, resonates with the problem Disraeli had in this very period, of convincing his culture that he was English. They chose rather to focus on his “Jewish” body instead of his self-proclaimed identification with Christianity. Thus, in the process of claiming that Jews and Christians are almost the same, Tonna’s novel affirms that the reverse is true when it comes to identifying bodily marks that delineate difference.

Although Alick turns toward Christianity at this novel’s conclusion, he is a long way away from Christianity when the novel opens. A liberal Jew, wholly unreligious and uninterested in becoming more religious, Alick is exposed to a series of Christian Evangelicals who finally convince him that becoming a Christian requires that he first identify fully with his Jewish faith. They maintain that the true path to becoming a Christian is the acknowledgment of the Jewish kernel from which Christianity emerged.
His journey to the Holy Land is filled with moments of confusion and tension as he negotiates conflicting opinions from his fellow travelers, including observant Jews, antisemitic Christians, and apparently philo-Semitic Evangelicals who fear that if Alick does not find Christ, he will go to Hell. In keeping with the tradition of conversion narratives, Tonna also includes a small sickly, but devoutly Christian child, Charlie Ryan, whose innocent pleas to Alick make it even more difficult for him to resist embracing Christ as his savior. Ultimately, by the end of the novel, Alick does become a Christian, yet, as the above quotation indicates, his body will always mark him as a Jewish convert to Christianity, rather than a true Christian. In this powerful scene, in which Alick's identity is revealed in a new Christianized form, Tonna attempts to align his Jewish past with his new identity. Instead, she accomplishes the reverse by drawing attention to differences on his body that mark him as a Jew. When read as a Semitic discourse, we see how Judah's Lion enacts a figurative return to the place where English Christianity is thought to have emerged as a distinct racial category, to proclaim, ironically, that Jews too can be Christian.

The main character of this novel, Alexander Nathan Cohen, shortens his "family name" "Alexander" to Alick which the narrator explains, "assisted to Gentilize him" (5). The name is important not only for the purpose of enabling Alick to pass (since his name does not call attention to his Jewish identity), but also because it suggests a link between his Jewish family and Greek culture — the two families which brought about English genius, according to Arnold. When the novel opens, Alick has decided to accompany his father on a business trip to the East. His cousin Esther, an observant
Jew, is jealous that her liberal cousin will make this journey, when she would have liked to go instead. She maintains rightly that Alick is totally unaware of the importance of the Holy Land for Jews, and that her religious zeal and knowledge of Jewish traditions ought to enable her travel with them. She fails to convince her uncle, and remains at home in England.

While traveling, Alick, who was previously ignorant of and indifferent to his Jewish heritage, is exposed to a host of other characters, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, all of whom are much more knowledgeable about Jewish history than he. By the end, Alick finally embraces Christ as the Messiah, however, his path to redemption comes only after he has immersed himself in the study of Jewish life. Tonna suggests that one cannot become Christian without first understanding the history out of which Christianity was born. Once Alick’s conversion is complete, we are able to trace the narrative act of cloaking Judaism in Christian garb and the subsequent act of maintaining this figure’s embodied otherness.

Early in their journey to the East, the sailors of the ship discover a stow-away. When he is brought forward, the other travelers and sailors make fun of this Jewish “orange man” whom the narrator depicts as “a most squalid little object, of unquestioningly Jewish aspect, with a shaggy grey beard, ragged clothing, and a net of oranges in each hand. A shout of laughter welcomes the visitor, who seemed perfectly at his ease” while one of the sailors addresses him by mocking his accent: “Well, my little Moshesh, vat ish your bishnesh here?” (17). The description is telling as it imagines not only English antisemitism, but also a Jew who does not understand that the
laughter is directed at him. The jeering continues until Gordon, the ship’s Gunner, speaks up not necessarily for the purpose of defending the orange man, but because he is offended by the more general idea of criticizing Jews. This scene is invoked not for the purpose of chastising people who treats Jews disrespectfully, but to promote the idea that Evangelicals have a deep respect for Jewish history and culture. Ironically, antisemitism is used in this scene for the purpose of promoting the fact that good Christians are deeply respectful toward Jews.

If this passage’s reference to an orange men seems strange for its resonance with Edgeworth’s Harrington, perhaps even more strange is the fact that a character named Gordon is in charge of defending Judaism. It is likely that Tonna is playing with the popular discourse that produces Gordon’s identity as convert to Judaism, and defender of Jewish traditions. Tonna, however, reverses the direction of Gordon’s conversion rendering him an ardent Protestant Evangelist rather than a devout Jew. This revision or appropriation of Gordon’s identity not only reworks the history of the Gordon Riots, but also suggests that if even George Gordon is able to find his way back to the fold, that anyone else can do the same.

Horrified by the sailors’ treatment of the orange man, Alick stands up to criticize them, and in the process reveals that he is a Jew. Immediately the gunner takes a liking to Alick, not only because he is a Jew, but because Alick stood up to defend the orange man, which Gordon finds noble. After they begin to develop a friendship, Mr. Cohen calls it to an end, for fear that his son will be converted. When Alick complains to Gordon about his father’s instructions, Gordon explains that according to Mosaic law,
he must obey his father’s wishes. This scene offers another example in which an Evangelical is not only respectful toward Jews, but also places that respect before the secondary goal of converting Jews into Christians. Tonna seems to suggest here that Evangelicals do not have a one track mind. Gordon’s insistence that Alick follow his father’s orders becomes part of a larger pattern in this novel in which Jewish laws are rendered important because they are also valued by Evangelical Christians.

In a subsequent scene, Tonna develops her claims that Judaism and Christianity are compatible with each other and, when linked, create a narrative about English nationalism. While at sea Alick becomes fascinated watching a British flag, which displays the British Royal Arms, unfurled. Alick experiences a feeling of longing “to trace a fellow-feeling somewhere, that he might be tempted to speak out the delight which swelled his heart; but he was alone” (29). When Gordon witnesses Alick’s enthusiasm, he exclaims, “Ay, Mr. Cohen, there floats the Lion of Judah” to which Alick responds, “The Lions of England, I suppose you mean” (29). When Gordon insists that the lion on the English heraldry indeed refers to both, one of the sailors calls out, “this fellow Gordon making Jews of us all!” (29). In fact, the very title of the novel itself “Judah’s Lion” recalls two histories that become intertwined in this novel. The first is the story of Richard I (1189-99), also known as Richard the Lion Heart (Coeur de Lion) who not only captured Jerusalem in the third Crusade, but also added the third lion to the British heraldry to commemorate this feat.

Yet, the Lion of Judah also refers to the symbol of the lion, prominent in the book of Revelations, that Christianity reads as a prefiguration of Christ. Because Christ
could use his lion-like strength to overpower evil, he has been represented by the figure of the lion. Christ is also, contrarily depicted as the lamb, because of his willingness to respond to wrongs committed against him with the patience and understanding of a lamb. In response to the sailor’s accusation that Gordon was turning them into Jews, Gordon explains,

"I believe you will find on examination, that the arms of England contained only two lions, until our Richard the first added a third, after his conquest in Palestine, and that third lion he probably adopted as the well-known standard of the country where his greatest exploits were performed, and a chief type of Him, “The Lion of the tribe of Judah,” whose cause he professed to uphold against the infidel Saracen." (29)

Gordon’s reference to “tribe” invokes both family lineage and ancestry as well as “country” where Richard’s “exploits were performed.” Gordon suggests here that the land of Palestine, Britain and the tribe of Judah are all connected by a shared history, and a shared symbol. Yet, he fails to recognize that these depictions of Judaism, embedded in “the Lion” of Christ and British imperialism, are not really connected to Judaism, but rather operate as a discourse about Jewish history. Early Britain’s act of taking the Jewish Holy Land, which is inscribed on this symbol of England, naturalizes not only British claims to this region in the nineteenth century, but also exposes the fact that British power is grounded in the formal acquisition of a Jewish homeland. The British flag in this scene works narratively as an internal display of the effect of the larger novel. In other words, the flag itself invokes a previous historical narrative which, like this novel, appropriates Jewish culture for the promotion and maintenance of English identity. Thus, one textual medium (the flag) with its implicit national
narrative, is embedded in another national narrative, Tonna’s novel. It is no coincidence that this moment in which Britain emerged with a modern imperial identity happens on the occasion of the conquest of Jerusalem. British Imperialism and English Christianity are thus repeatedly aligned throughout British history, in a narrative that calls attention to their shared histories. Yet, the reference to Richard I’s conquest of Jerusalem is no more Zionist than Tonna’s novel, since both were devised for the explicit purpose of promoting Christianity, and not for the interests of enabling the Jewish return to their homeland. As these characters travel on a ship to the Holy Land, and reflect upon the unfurling of a flag that commemorates a similar trip among English men, we begin to see how the structural and symbolic components of this narrative work together to enact — in both the plot, and in symbolic allusions that determine how we read that plot — a reenactment of British imperial conquest of the Jewish homeland, which they naturalize and legitimize. To complicate matters further, the fact that Gordon is the one chosen to explain the Jewish origins of the British national narrative to Alick exposes one more layer of Semitic discourse in the narrative’s production of English identity.

Ruminating on Gordon’s observations, Alick himself fails to distinguish between Jewish history and the representation of that history by the flag’s symbolism. He wonders,

how very natural it would be that he, who became by his conquests lord of Palestine, should incorporate that trophy with his own. “Judah’s Lion!” he again repeated, chuckling as the thought arose, “if so, why England fights under our banner — she may point to the standard of the despised Jew, and say, ‘in hoc signo vinces’.” (30)

Alick’s observation that England represents its national identity under the claim, “in this
sign we conquer" seems ironic given the earlier scene he witnessed with the orange man. He chuckles at the absurdity of the fact that the very same people who so badly treated the orange man, whether they realize it or not, signify and celebrate their political and national existence with a symbol that evokes Jews and the Jewish homeland. By the end of the novel we understand the importance of such passages which naturalize the logic of Tonna’s conversion narrative. Her depictions of the places where Jewish, Christian, and English histories overlap enable her to advocate on behalf of Jewish conversion. Since these narratives are already intertwined, Tonna reasons, there is no need to alienate the Jews, and no reason for Jews to resist their own redemption by refusing to accept that they are already almost Christians.

Tonna’s emphasis on the similarities between Jewish and Christian beliefs is not unlike Arnold’s claims in “Hebraism and Hellenism” that despite their difference, the two share a common goal. And like Arnold, Tonna unwittingly produces racial difference out of a rhetoric of religious similarities. This occurs in the moment in the narrative when Alick and his father part ways, Alick to continue on to the Jewish homeland, and his father to return to his English homeland. Structurally Tonna’s narrative not only depicts the Jewish national narrative, but presents it from a Christian perspective. When the once unified family travels separately to different homelands, we are all too aware of how the singular unit has been separated into supplementary narratives (like the Christian Biblical separation of Old and New Testaments), one by the Father, and another by the Son. The Jewish family is symbolically turned into the Christian family — God and his son Christ — at the moment when they separate,
which simultaneously depicts Tonna’s alignment of English and Jewish national narratives. While this structure does not appear to slander the father for his choice to return home, it instead suggests that the Jewish Alick can be realigned as a Christian only when he has moved onward from his Jewish father.

Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, Alick learns that his cousin Esther has been secretly betrothed to a German named Wilhelm, whom they believe has been captured by Egyptians. Da Costa, an observant Jew and a Jewish nationalist; Alick; and the Christian Evangelical Ryan embark on a rescue mission to find him. While on their journey, Da Costa convinces Alick that he should be more devoted to Zionism and Jewish law. Alick responds with a renewed sense of his devotion to Judaism. In fact, he even renounces his gentile appearance and dresses in traditional Arab Jewish clothing. While on their journey, Ryan is persistent in his efforts to convert Da Costa and Alick, maintaining that the Talmud is really a Christian document, and that in the act of practicing what they think is exclusively Jewish, they unwittingly abide by Christian doctrines (250-51). The two Jewish men hold their ground despite Ryan’s proselytizing.

While on their quest to find the missing German, Da Costa and Alick are mistaken by Egyptians for Beduins. In a symbolic reenactment of the Exodus story, these two Jewish men are held captive by the Egyptians. Having concealed their light skin with coloring wash, and unable to speak Arabic, they are defenseless. When the captors accidentally rip Alick’s shirt, and detect “the value of the fictitious complexion”(277), Alick is bound and fastened to a camel and commanded to walk. At
the end of the day they are discovered by members of the British navy, and in particular, by Gordon. But “because he has dressed in “Arab garb” and feigned an “Arab complexion” Gordon does not recognize Alick. (281).

In keeping with the Edgeworthian tradition of a “surprise” ending in which a Jew is revealed to have been a Christian all along, we witness Alick’s sudden conversion to Christianity which comes as a result of his imprisonment. When Alick turns to Zionism, the narrative flaunts his Jewish roots, presumably by his rejection of Christianity. Yet, as Tonna reminds us repeatedly throughout this novel, Christianity need not come at the expense of Judaism.

During this period Alick is faced with the knowledge that he may die by the hands of the Egyptians. He remembers the ailing child Charlie Ryan who so earnestly sought his conversion when he said, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (290). As Charlie, the little lamb and another figurative Christ, rewrites the story of the baby Moses, Alick’s conversion links Moses to his new Testament counterpart in Jesus. At his moment of trial and revelation, Alick explains to Da Costa that he now understands the depth of Charlie’s concern:

Da Costa, I felt no anger when that Egyptian spat on me and spumed me; such an insult would, not long since, have made me fell any man to the earth, though backed by a thousand troops, era a hand could be raised to defend him; but I thought, even then I thought of Jesus, who suffered, oh, how much more! For sinners. His spirit was with me, and I forgave the trespass, even as I hope my trespasses are forgiven. (291)

While Da Costa begins to wonder if his Jewish friend has lost his mind, Alick continues,
The lion of the tribe of Judah is to those who resist him a lion indeed, terrible in his strength, able to destroy, and no man shall stand before him: but to others he is a lamb, a slain lamb, merciful and meek, able to save... . I believe with all my heart, with all my soul, that Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God. (291)

Unlike the Moses story, where the Jews escaped their Egyptian captivity, Alick’s narrative rewrites that tradition by using it as the basis of the Christian narrative about being saved by Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, Alick emerges from his Egyptian captivity a Christian rather than a Jew. National and Christian narratives are thus aligned here out of Tonna’s revision of the Exodus story. Da Costa assures himself that Alick has gone mad and has fallen prey to Egyptian sorcery. When Da Costa challenges Alick, by asking, “do you cease to be a Jew?” Alick responds with:

No, God Forbid! I do but add to the law that Moses gave, the faith that Moses held. Cease to be a Jew! When on my soul first beams the joy of acknowledging the Messiah of Israel, who shall come to reign, even already he has come to suffer... and in Israel above all others will He be glorified. I would not cut myself off from Israel. (291-92)

Da Costa astutely notes that in fact he has already cut himself off by claiming allegiance to a non-Jewish God. Alick maintains that the two Gods are not mutually exclusive. Such assertions in this novel serve to align Jewish national and religious narratives with Christianity and thus appropriate them. As the novel continues, we see how the assertion that Jews and Christians are historically and spiritually alike is the very discourse out of which this novel articulates a racial divide between them.

Following their discussion an officer removes Alick from the dungeon prison to examine him alone. Here Alick learns that he and Da Costa have been accused of participating in a robbery. Alick has difficulty redeeming himself because they speak
different languages, but when the officer calls Alick a Beduin, Alick begins to understand the implications of his mistaken identity. In response he explains, “I am a Jew: and I believe . . . in Jesus of Nazareth” (298). Although his audience is astonished by this disclosure, Alick is enlightened by it, and the narrator explains, “Alick had never in his life felt so happy as when the avowal at once of his race and his faith had passed his lips; he paused for a moment, and in the same clear, calm tone, added, ‘I am also an Englishman’” (299). The astonished audience turns to laughter upon hearing these final words. One person exclaims, “You have injured your cause . . . by the indiscreet admission of being — what you say you are: and what indeed you cannot be: for the two are incompatible” (299). Tonna offers this voice as that of one who misunderstands the fact that Jewish and Christian culture are indeed linked, and that English identity is a kind of confirmation of this union. Yet, in doing so, she suggests that there are not real, important differences between these two cultures. Even as she sought the conversion of Jews, Tonna was nonetheless aware of the fact that English culture would only reluctantly absorb newly converted Jews into the cultural fold. Thus, Alick, like Benjamin Disraeli, could convert and become a Christian, but both would always be perceived as having an embodied distinction from other Christians. Alick notes this distinction when he calls attention to the fact that he has been circumcised. In contrast, Disraeli did not need to draw attention to his Jewish body, for his culture was eager to do that for him.

Although Ragussis’ claim that Disraeli’s novel was a response to Judah’s Lion seems entirely valid, it is likely that Tonna is also responding to Disraeli himself as a
It is perhaps not surprising that the English would experience anxiety about how to handle antiquated Jews in a country dedicated to progress, expansion, and Christianity. For Tonna, the solution is simple — show the Jews that they are already Christian. For Disraeli, however, this task would prove to be more difficult, largely because it failed to work. If Tonna and other Evangelicals had succeeded in convincing their culture that Jews and Christians were essentially the same, then presumably Disraeli would have been more successful in convincing his culture that he was English.

*Tancred*

Born into a non-practicing Jewish family, Disraeli was baptized at the age of twelve and thereafter thought of himself as a Christian. He was elected to Parliament as a conservative in 1837, but later supported liberal causes such as Jewish emancipation. A Christian, a born-Jew, an Englishman, an MP, a Prime Minister, a novelist, a Tory, and a supporter of liberal causes, Disraeli's political and racial identity disrupt traditional categorical classifications. When viewed within the context of the nineteenth century, his hybrid position serves rather not so much to undermine Disraeli's credibility as to call into questions the terms of classification themselves. 11

Disraeli was born December 21, 1804, the second of five children in a progressive, atheist family. Isaac D'Israeli 12 maintained his membership to the Bevis Marks Synagogue despite the fact that he had a falling out with the temple leaders and
subsequently refused to attend services there. Todd Endelman explains, "his allegiance to Judaism was more a matter of familial and ethnic sentiment than belief and practice" (107). All four of Isaac’s sons were circumcised, though none attended synagogue. And while studying in a school for nonconformists, Isaac also arranged to have Benjamin learn Hebrew. As if this wasn’t confusing enough for his young son, in the very year when Benjamin would have had his Bar Mitzvah, Isaac arranged instead for his baptism. Clearly, as Endelman points out, the Disraeli “family was neither fully in the Jewish fold nor fully without, but occupied an intermediate or indeterminate place somewhere between these two poles” (109). Although Disraeli’s conversion to Christianity seemed to have created confusion about his identity, it nevertheless enabled him to have a political career, for no Jew was allowed to make the oath of abjuration stating that he would serve his country “on the true faith of a Christian.” As a legitimate Christian, Disraeli was able to be elected as an MP long before the abjuration oath was abandoned as a formal practice. Even though Disraeli’s conversion technically made him a Christian, as Endelman observes, it “failed to alter his un-English looks and name or erase knowledge of his Jewish origins” (“Hebrew to the End” 110-111). Charles Richmond adds that despite the advantages he gained from his conversion, Disraeli himself was addled by his loosely defined and complicated identity: “Born a Jew and baptized at the age of twelve with a father who was, if anything, an eighteenth-century deist, and a grandmother who would not consort with other Jews, it is only natural that he suffered from a crisis of identity in the 1820’s” (19). This sense of confusion about his identity was embedded in Disraeli’s fiction which sought to reconcile what he
perceived as two incompatible halves of his identity. His fiction exposes his efforts to connect these disparate halves.

Disraeli tried and failed to be elected to Parliament four times between 1832 and 1836. He was fully aware at the time that this failure was a result of English resistance to electing a Jew (even one who had converted to Christianity). Political cartoons depicting Disraeli's Jewish racial features abounded during the Victorian period. Some conflated Dickens's Fagin with Disraeli's political career. One cartoon, called "Fagin's Political School" places a Fagin-like character, with Disraeli's face, amidst other MP's. Other cartoons refer to Disraeli as "Moses Modernized" or poked fun of Disraeli's clothing (he was somewhat of a dandy) or political aspirations. There are far too many public criticisms of Disraeli to include here. However, one prominent strand in these depictions was the "fact" that Disraeli was a Jew trying unsuccessfully to pass as a Christian. Disraeli knew these images well, and would contend with them throughout his life as a Christian, trying to be an English man, in a culture that had "branded" him as Jew. To be English, this culture reasoned, was not merely a matter of becoming a Christian, but was rather a blood-based racial distinction. Hani al-Raheb explains that it was this very period of political exclusion and of shame he experienced upon recognizing the "humiliation his people suffered and accepted as a matter of course. His rebellion against such humiliation was motivated by pride, a sense of injustice and insatiable ambition" (46-7).

Such pride and humiliation are hard to miss in Disraeli's race theory, which maintained that Jewish and Moslem Arabs, as well as English Christians, were all
equally racially superior to all other races of people. Disraeli believed that Judaism and Christianity were “both... Jewish products, the second being the completion of the first” (al Raheb 53). Yet, al-Raheb explains, “of course it suits Disraeli to blur differences between the two faiths, for after all, he is seeking recognition as political leader at a time when even his own party will not give him a chance. Proving that there is really no great difference between Judaism and Christianity will remove... the obstacles his Jewishness has put along his road to power” (54). Weintraub adds that although Disraeli was not interested in questions relating to theology, according to Disraeli, “Christianity was useful to Jews. It secures their history & their literature being known to all Xdom” (265). Weintraub summarizes Disraeli’s view of the Anglican church explaining “It was impolitic of Jews... to ‘oppose’ a ‘Jewish institution’ that was insuring the survival of Judaic culture” (265-660).

While al-Raheb is correct in noting the relationship between Disraeli’s political ambition and his linked desire to become English, his novel writing reflects an even larger, and related, problem with his and his family’s self-hatred. Sander Gilman defines this deeply pervasive phenomenon as the result of the “‘outsiders’ acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group — the group in society which they see as defining them — as a reality.” (2). Rather than debunk the logic of such hierarchies, Disraeli constructs a race discourse that is just like the Christian one, with the slight adjustment that Jews should be at the top of the ladder alongside English Christians. Gilman notes,

On the one hand is the liberal fantasy that anyone is welcome to share in
the power of the reference group if he abides by the rules that define that group. But these values are the very definition of the other. The other comprises precisely those who are not permitted to share power within the society. Thus outsiders hear an answer from their fantasy: Become like us - abandon your difference - and you may be one with us. On the other hand is the hidden qualification of the internalized reference group, the conservative curse: The more you are like me, the more I know the true value of my power, which you wish to share, and the more I am aware that you are but a shoddy counterfeit, an outsider. (Jewish Self-Hatred 2)

Despite his efforts, Disraeli’s identification with dominant Christian culture failed to render him a cultural insider, since, according to the terms of English culture, he was a Jew by race and a Christian by religion. Disraeli’s pronouncements that Jews and Christians were really alike only called attention to his cultural status as a Jew who was trying to fit in as an Englishman. Throughout his life, Disraeli would always be viewed by his culture as a Jewish convert rather than a true English Christian. Like Tonna’s Alick, Disraeli can convert, but he is still embodied by his Jewish racial heritage.

English culture was fond of reminding themselves of Disraeli’s “Semitic” facial and bodily features. This, of course, was the unstated cultural supremacy that Tonna and other Evangelicals failed to acknowledge in their efforts to convert the Jews. Disraeli misunderstood race discourse as well, and thus his acts of internalizing and identifying with Christian racism ultimately perpetuated his own alienation.15 Oddly though, rather than hide or deny his Jewish ancestry, as was to be the case with H. Rider Haggard, Disraeli instead flaunts his Jewish ancestry as the very basis of his claims to Englishness.

Although Benjamin’s conversion obviously caused some genuine confusion about his identity, for Isaac this was a decisive solution to the problem of English
antisemitism. In fact, this move was common during this period as many Anglo-Jews struggled to become assimilated into dominant English culture, to gain political emancipation, and to prosper economically. Isaac D'IIsraeli's solution to Jewish emancipation and antisemitism was to opt for assimilation through conversion. Endelman notes that “Isaac D'IIsraeli's secession from the Bevis Marks congregation was in no sense remarkable. In well-to-do Sephardic families that had become rooted in English social and cultural life, indifference or even hostility to the Jewish religion was becoming common in the late-Georgian period” (107). The solution to Jew hatred, to being hated by dominant culture, was to become a part of that culture, and to change it from within. Polowetzky notes that “Isaac's ambivalence toward his Jewish heritage eventually developed into outright hostility. The Jews, he began to be convinced, were chained to irrational and counter-productive traditions cutting them off from the great family of Mankind and perpetuating their sorrow and shame” (26). Clearly, Isaac and Benjamin struggled with different varieties of Jewish self-hatred. While Isaac’s method of confronting his outsider status was to blame the ancient Jewish traditions for inspiring English antisemitism, his son’s method was the reverse — to promote awareness of Judaism’s ancient roots which brought about Christianity. Nevertheless, as my argument will show, Benjamin’s novel vision of Jewish racial supremacy fails to get outside of the racialized ideological assumptions it criticizes. Thus, in the process of “proving” that Jews should be viewed as the racial equals to Christians, Disraeli only reinscribes the very English racial superiority from which he has been, and in many cases continues to be, excluded.
If English culture was obsessed with Disraeli’s Jewish half, then so was Disraeli, who obviously worked to incorporate it into his English side. Todd Endelman notes of the period when Disraeli visited the Near East (1830), “Although Jews and Judaism were not then central to Disraeli’s sense of identity, his visit to the Near East, especially Jerusalem, was critical. . . . it initiated a period, lasting some ten to twelve years, during which Jewish themes came to occupy an increasingly prominent place in his thinking” (Endelman 113, 1998). Like his character Lord Montecute in Tancred, Disraeli traveled to the Middle East in 1830; however, Polowitzky notes that,

For much of this time he suffered from a strange and very debilitating illness. He was subject to violent headaches; he experienced periods of near blindness and was unable to move without experiencing severe pains in his limbs. This frequently left him exhausted and unable to leave his bed. Interestingly enough, no evidence has ever been discovered to show that he had anything physically wrong with him. (31)

It is tempting to speculate on the physiological forces that may have brought Tancred into being. It seems clear that Disraeli uses this novel as a way of voicing his opinions about race. However, this does not qualify Tancred as an official autobiography. One wonders about the lines between fiction, self-promotion, self-vindication, and healing begin and end when we consider Disraeli’s life and circumstances in relation to his work. Weintraub maintains that despite the mysterious illness, Disraeli continued to follow the political turmoil in Syrian Israel long after his visit in 1831: “In his imagination he had never left, and as an M.P. he was aware of the interventions of the Great Powers into Ottoman affairs, the ‘Eastern Question’ which after 1840 was never out of the newspapers” (264-65). In the end when Tancred’s trip appears to have
revived his interest in and love for Jewish culture and history, we cannot read this as distinguishable from Disraeli’s own views. Polowitzky adds that “In Spain and in Palestine he had at last gained an appreciation of his Jewish ancestry. He learned that he no longer had to think of himself merely in terms of being different form the other people he lived with; he was not required to define his personality only by what he was not. . . . Disraeli now finally embarked on a fascination with Judaism that would last for the rest of his life” (35). For this reason, *Tancred* must be read as central to Disraeli’s understanding of his identity during this period.

*Tancred* is set in Jerusalem, and depicts Jewish and Christian holy sites for English audiences. Disraeli, like the other novelists in this study, also returns to a place of origins — to the very location where Christian culture emerged from its Jewish roots. And like Tonna, Disraeli, and his protagonist Tancred, or Lord Montecute, maintains that this cite is important because it proves that there are few, if any differences between Jews and Christians. While Tonna maintains a bodily racial distinction between her Jewish protagonist and the other Christian characters, Disraeli does not. Rather, he uses his narrative to “prove” that Jews and Christians are racially, spiritually, and nationally aligned as away of inscribing a place for himself within the English cultural sphere.

*Tancred* then, in keeping with the novelistic tradition of Semitic discourse, depicts a virtual return to the past to “recover,” and thus produce, the source of Christian identity.

While this may appear to deviate from the novelistic pattern in this dissertation of using Semitic discourse to produce racial differences between Jews and Christians, a closer look reveals that Disraeli’s does repeat this pattern. The logic of Disraeli’s
argument is that Jews are as good as Christians, and therefore deserve to be subsumed into the Christian English race category. The act of making this assertion, however, promotes the very race ideology Disraeli tries to overturn. Moreover, Disraeli’s failure to understand how and why he is constructed as a racial other serves to further alienate him. As was the case with Tonna, Edgeworth, and Dickens, Disraeli’s use of a Semitic discourse to erase differences between Jews and Christians turns back on itself (and on Disraeli) to continually reproduce and represent a race ideology that maintains racial distinctions between Jews and Christians.¹⁸

Unlike Edgeworth’s stated “liberality” or concern with tolerance toward racial and religious “difference,” Disraeli was unabashedly conservative — that is committed to conserving the society into which he tried to gain admittance. This would come to haunt him though, because in keeping things the same, Disraeli undercut his own claims toward inclusion. Because he was a Christian, Disraeli was able to advance politically, but within the cultural sphere, he was usually depicted as an alien Jew rather than an English Christian. Charles Richmond explains,

In questions of foreign policy. . . . Disraeli’s opinions seem also to have coincided with those of the Tories. He neither understood nor sympathized with liberalism. The struggle of weak nations against the strong left him cold. This view was in reality the natural extension of his view of domestic politics. The guiding principle of individuals. . . was power and self-interest, and the same principle governed nations. Like most men of the “right,” he believed in conservatism and expansion, not in liberal magnanimity. To this view Disraeli adhered throughout his life: he was as much of an “imperialist” at sixteen as at seventy. (27)

Indeed, we find this imperial ideology at the very heart of Tancred, enmeshed not so much in converting the Jews, but in the acknowledgment that Disraeli was not the only
Christian to have Jewish ancestry. Indeed, he claims that by definition, anyone who is
Christian has Jewish roots. Moreover, Disraeli suggests that because of the fact that all
Christians have Jewish ancestors, they have a right to “return” to the Jewish homeland
and claim it as their own. Disraeli appropriated Jewish culture for the purpose of
legitimizing British expansion in the Near East. Michael Ragussis notes,

Disraeli simply looks beyond not only the Norman invasion but the
celebrated Saxon institutions themselves to find in Hebrew culture the
most profound basis of English national life. Disraeli in this way inserts
himself into this Anglo-Saxon tradition, makes it his own, acknowledges
his acceptance of it as an Englishman, but adds to it a more ancient
tradition of values that he feels England equally depends on. In effect, he
hopes to be understood as simply enlarging — not destroying — the
traditional “English” argument by finding a place for Jewish traditions
beside those of Teutonism. (187)

As George Eliot would later assert in response to this novel, English culture was
reluctant to forget that Tancred’s vision is created by a “Jewish” Disraeli, who is
decidedly not one of their own. In a letter dated 11 February, 1848 to John Sibree, Eliot
comments on Tancred with the following pronouncement:

On one point I heartily agree with D’Israeli as to the superiority of the
Oriental races — their clothes are beautiful and ours are execrable.... The
fellowship of race, to which D’Israeli exultingly refers the munificence of
Sidonia, is so evidently an inferior impulse which must ultimately be
superceded that I wonder even he, Jew as he is, dares to boast of it. My
gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority
in the Jews, and is almost ready to echo Voltaire’s vituperation. I bow to
the supremacy of Hebrew poetry, but much of their early mythology and
almost all their history is utterly revolting. Their stock has produced a
Moses and a Jesus, but Moses was impregnated with Egyptian philosophy
and Jesus is venerated and adored by us only for that wherein he
transcended or resisted Judaism. The very exaltation of their idea of a
national deity into a spiritual monotheism seems to have been borrowed
from the other oriental tribes. Everything specifically Jewish is of a low
grade. (Letters I, 246-7)
Eliot’s criticism of Disraeli, his novel, and of Jewish people in general, is emblematic of an English culture that had so deeply internalized the logic of English racial supremacy. As *Punch* cartoons would later attest, in similar vein, Disraeli would remain racialized as a Jew, whether he liked it or not. Or, more specifically, he would be produced in visual and literary texts not only as a Jew, but as a Jew who would never pass. Within this culture, *Tancred* emerges, and despite Disraeli’s perception that Jews and Christians were racially linked, English culture, for all of its apparent toleration toward “difference” would never quite see things the way Disraeli had hoped.

The novel begins with the announcement that the county MP will resign, allowing Tancred, the young Lord Montecute who has recently come of age, to take his place. Tancred refuses, though, and announces instead his plans to travel east, to Jerusalem. He explains to his father,

> I wish, indeed, to leave England; I wish to make an expedition; a progress to a particular point; without wandering, without any intervening residence. In a word, it is the Holy Land that occupies my thought, and I propose to make a pilgrimage to the sepulchre of my Saviour. (54)

Unlike a Jewish trip to the Holy Land, which might entail wandering, Tancred’s route is like the one Bunyan describes of his character Christian — it is a “progress” designed to carry him to the “sepulchre” of Christ. To prevent any confusion about his noted interest in the Holy Land, Disraeli constructs the indisputably English Christian character to convey his message about the importance of restoring the severed connection between Jews and Christians. Perhaps he believes that English Christian culture will be more supportive of such a plan if it comes from one of their own.
Frustrated and confused by his choice of vocation, the Duke and Duchess of Montecute attempt to prevent their son from carrying out his plans, explaining that the east is irrelevant and dangerous. Tancred nonetheless succeeds in making travel arrangements, with the help of his new-found friend Sidonia. Once in the Holy Land, Tancred experiences a host of adventures that not only test his faith, but confirm his view of racial categorization (one that he shared with the author) that Jews and Christians are among the same superior race. His picaresque-like adventures include riding camels through the deserts, fighting against Beduins, falling in love with a Jewess, and envisioning an angel on Mt. Zion. Like the adventure novels that followed forty years later by Haggard and Kipling, Disraeli’s narrative included murder, intrigue, male adventures, and exoticized women.19

Throughout Tancred, Disraeli inserts his own view that Jews and Christians should both be included in the racial category of Englishness. When Tancred explains his interest in the Holy Land to Sidonia, a Jewish man with connections in the East, Sidonia responds,

I believe that God spoke to Moses on Mount Horeb, and you believe he was crucified, in the person of Jesus, on Mount Calvary. Both were at least carnally, children of Israel, they spoke Hebrew to the Hebrews. The prophets were only Hebrews; the apostles were only Hebrews. The churches of Asia, which have vanished, were founded by a native Hebrew; the church of Rome, which says it shall last for ever, and which converted this island to the faith of Moses and of Christ, vanquishing the Druids, Jupiter Olympus, and Woden, who had successively invaded it, was also founded by a native Hebrew. (122)

Sidonia’s illustration reminds us that despite their apparent differences, Semitic discourse imagines Judaism and Christianity as two parts of the same whole. According
to this logic, maintaining differences between Christians and Jews is not only futile in such a mixed society, but is also historically inaccurate. Unlike Tonna, Disraeli is not so much advocating for the conversion of the Jews (since they are really "the same" as the Christians) but suggests instead that because Jews are "the same" as Christians, there is no reason why they should be branded aliens. In other words, given the similarities in these two cultures, Christian efforts to alienate Jews makes little sense since they are in effect, ostracizing an earlier version of themselves.

Questions of difference, and of the shared heritage or sameness between Jews and Christians in this novel, are produced out of a Christian supremacist race logic. Jews and Christians are thus linked not only by their shared history and similar religious practices, but also by their blood. In a political discussion Sidonia announces, "all is race; there is no other truth," in an effort to account for the superiority and preservation of certain nations, and the impoverishment and decline of others. He argues that this is due not just to innate superiority, but to the preservation of blood purity. Unlike other countries whose cultures have fallen into ruin,

England flourishes... Is it the universal development of the faculties of man that has rendered an island, almost unknown to the ancients, the arbiter to the world? Clearly not. It is her inhabitants that have done this; it is an affair of race. A Saxon race, protected by an insular position, has stamped its diligent and methodic character on the century. And when a superior race, with a superior idea to Work and Order, advances, its state will be progressive, and we shall, perhaps, follow the example of the desolate countries. (148-9)

According to this view, geography enables and secures English racial supremacy.

Because England is an island, it is able to maintain a level of racial purity that only the
desert could otherwise provide. So, even though Jews may immigrate to England, because they originate in the desert, their blood is just as pure as English blood. On the one hand, Sidonia asserts that the Saxon race is supreme because it follows the “example of the desolate countries” or the people from the East. Yet, on the other hand, Sidonia is producing Eastern identity out of a Western race discourse, that links blood (race), to geography (nation), to progress (Christianity).

In *Judah’s Lion*, Tonna looked to the past by setting her novel in the Holy Land. The logic behind this move was that the Jewish return to their homeland would facilitate their conversion to Christianity. Since the goal then, was Jewish conversion, Tonna erased cultural and religious distinctions between Jews and Christians. Thus, by claiming that they were almost the same as Christians, she could advocate for Jewish conversions to Christianity. In this process, however, she could produce Jewish racial difference by having Alick refuse to renounce his Jewish heritage which for him, is symbolized by his circumcision. Thus, Alick has an embodied and distinguishable difference from born Christians. Disraeli attempts a similar move in his novel. Like Tonna, he sets his narrative in the Holy Land, and maintains that this site of origination of Christian culture proves that Jews and Christians are almost the same. Yet, Disraeli’s final conclusion sets his Semitic discourse apart from Tonna’s. Instead of erasing difference as a way of producing and maintaining racial divisions, Disraeli advocates conversely that since Jews and Christians are almost the same, they should both be included as members of the same superior racial category. Yet, his act of making such proclamations serves to alienate Disraeli by flaunting the fact that he misunderstands
Englishness, since he is a Jew. In the end, racial distinctions are reinscribed as Disraeli unwittingly comes to embody the very racial form from which he believes himself to have escaped.

_Tancred_ is written during a period when racial science undergoes a profound change from a monogynist to the polygenist models of human development. The first, which dominated much of the eighteenth century, returned to the earlier notion of “the great chain” in which there was one source of all life. This view enabled the emancipatory discourses to flourish, such as the abolition of slavery or even, to some degree, Wollstoncraftian claims about the rights of women. Gradually, this view was eclipsed by the polygenist model which claimed that people did not evolve from the same source, but simultaneously from different sources. Nancy Stepan explains, “Races were no longer though of as the superficial and changeable products of climate and civilization, as the first monogenists had claimed, but stable and essential entities which caused or prevented the flowering of civilized behaviour” (4). In fact in one passage Tancred is confronted by the science of race and human development, which, he is told, corresponds with the Bible. Lady Constance describes a favorite passage from _Revelations of Chaos_, in which

> everything is explained by geology and astronomy, and in that way. . . . But what is most interesting, is the way in which man has been developed. You know, all is development. The principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing, then there was something; then, I forget the next, I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came, let me see, did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! That's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. (109)
In humorous disbelief, Tancred responds with, "'I do not believe I ever was a fish'"(109) but Lady Constance assures him,

> It is impossible to contradict anything in it. . . . Everything is proved: by geology you know. You see exactly how everything is made; how many worlds there have been; how long they lasted; what went before, what comes next. We are a link in the chain, as inferior animals were that preceded us: we in turn shall be inferior; all that will remain of us will be some relics in a new red sandstone. This is development. We had fins; we may have wings. (110)

This passage not only sets up an unquestionable historical paradigm by which to explain the relationships between Judaism and Christianity, but also vindicates the antiquity of the Jews, by showing that Christianity will follow suit. Thus, the evolution of Jewish to Christian culture is part of a natural human continuum, and therefore, cannot separate ancestors from their descendants along racial lines. Yet, as we see later in the novel, this is true not of all humans, but specifically of Jews and Christians whose racial superiority Tancred maintains, sets them apart from other races. The image of a human creature with wings and the new red sandstone does in fact appear later in the novel when Tancred finds an Angel amidst the sandstone. The new old relics are valorized by the fact that the new Christians will be just like the old Jews and, as we see in Tancred’s journey east, “this is development.”

In *Tancred*, Disraeli manages to combine the two models by claiming that Jews are racially connected to Christians, as in the great chain model, while also arguing that Jews and Christians are the only ones to have evolved from this line, and are therefore racially pure, essentialized gentiles. Sidonia explains, “The decay of a race is an inevitable necessity, unless it lives in deserts and never mixes its blood” (150). If the
decay of race is the inevitable result of a mixture of blood, then it follows that blood purity is necessary to the success and progress of countries.

When Tancred first meets the Jewish Eva Besso, she reminds him of the fact that those who founded his religion share her blood. In the following discussion we see Disraeli’s race philosophy in Tancred’s questioning, and in his gradual understanding of the implications of the Jewish origins of Christianity. It is important to remember that this understanding is produced not only by the English aristocratic Tancred, but by Disraeli, who sought inclusion into British society by the very logic Tancred articulates here. Thus, Disraeli, like Tancred, believes that Christians already show tolerance and reverence for Jews in their spiritual practices, since all of the founders of Christianity are Jews. In the following conversation both Tancred and Eva make claims for British reverence of Jewish history, not because of the intrinsic value of that history, but because Jews and Christians are members of the same race. Eva explains,

“I am of the same blood as Mary whom you venerate, but do not adore.”
“You just now observed,” said Tancred, after a momentary pause, “that it sometimes almost seems to you, that you ought to acknowledge my Lord and Master. He made many converts at Bethany, and found here some of his gentlest disciples. I wish that you had read the history of his life.”
“I have read it. The English bishop here has given me the book. It is a good one, written, I observe, entirely by Jews. I find in it many things with which I agree; and if there be some from which I dissent, it may be that I do not comprehend them.”
“You are already half a Christian!” said Tancred, with animation.

Here we find the secret to becoming a true Christian is the acknowledgment of
the Jewish origins of Christianity. The narrator continues by explaining that the “children of Israel” produced in Moses “a man of the complete Caucasian model, and almost as perfect as Adam when he was just finished and placed in Eden” (228). And not only is Moses turned into a Caucasian man, but “Jehovah recognized in Moses a human instrument too rare merely to be entrusted with the redemption of an Arabian tribe from a state of Fellaheen to Bedoueen existence. And, therefore, he was summoned to be the organ of an eternal revelation of the Divine will, and his tribe were appointed to be the hereditary ministers of that mighty and mysterious dispensation” (228). These passages serve not only to depict the race ideologies that inform Disraeli’s understanding of his own and his culture’s identity, but also vindicate him from his past, for, according to his theory it is proof of his Jewish lineage that renders him a Christian. Eva’s acknowledgment of this shared history is not just about redeeming Jews, but using a Semitic discourse, or representations of Jewish history and culture and, in this case, a Jewish character for the production of English identity.

While in the beginning of the novel Tancred claims to reform England by remembering and reconnecting with its spiritual and historical roots, by the end, such roots become the means by which English imperial interests are legitimized and naturalized. In the end, when Tancred’s parents appear in Israel, we are left wondering if they too will sever this lost connection between the English and the Jews. In fact, their presence in the end forecasts the eventual presence of English people in this imperial space, those, in particular, who come allegedly to promote the “Jewish cause” which appears in their own flesh and blood, in their son who marries this cause. More
significantly, however, their presence at the end of the novel structurally reenacts the pattern of Semitic discourse which ritualistically returns to an imagined origin of English Christian identity. Just as Jane Eyre needs to keep her former, Pre-Christian name as a symbolic return to her origins that is necessary for the production of English identity, Tancred’s parents, the people who brought him into being, return at the end to link him to a more immediate past that is emblematic of the Christian past he discovers in Jerusalem. Like Jane Eyre, Tancred must perpetuate the act of returning to his origins, which is depicted in the end when he must face his parents, as part of the maintenance of producing English identity. In this sense, his parents’ presence in the end represents and thus naturalizes a British imperial presence in the Holy Land. Daniel Bovina explains of their presence on the final page, “By transporting his surprisingly passive aristocratic hero away from his overly-close English family, deposing him in the imperial field of the Middle East, and restoring his family to him at Jerusalem at the end of the narrative, Disraeli once again performs the conjuror’s trick of confronting the alien, unmasking it as familiar, taming it, and displacing ‘England’ in the process” (318). Like Edgeworth, Disraeli attempts to show tolerance to others, indeed to himself as “other,” by erasing difference. Yet, this act ultimately reinscribes his culture’s racist attitudes toward Jews. Although Disraeli clearly thought that he had gotten around this problem with his assertion that Jews and Christians are really the same racially, he would never successfully convince his culture of this.

The persistence of anti-Semitic acts launched at Disraeli, coupled by his insistence that he was a Christian, and that Jews and Christians are linked historically
and spiritually, reminds us of the gaps between Disraeli’s self-constructed identity, and
the identity imposed on him by his culture. Michael Ragussis notes,

From the beginning, Disraeli’s trilogy met with anti-Semitic responses. *Punch* was tireless in its mockery. . . After the publication of *Tancred*, Punch remarked in a piece entitled “The Jewish Champion”: “After reading his last work of *Tancred*, we took quite a fresh view of all the itinerant sons of Abraham we met in the streets of the Great Metropolis. ‘Look at that old clothes-man,’ said we to ourselves; ‘who would think that the unmixed blood of Caucasus runs through the veins of that individual. . . ?’ It is evident that Mr. Disraeli has determined in his own mind, that until there is a Mosaic Parliament, sitting in Rag Fair, the object of his great mission will be unaccomplished” (April 10, 1847). (199-200)

Nevertheless, Disraeli thinks that he can reconfigure the terms of Englishness as he calls upon a Semitic discourse in this novel to show that the distinction between Christianity and Judaism is a false construction. When Tancred asserts, “Christianity is Judaism for the multitude, but still it is Judaism” (427), we are only too painfully aware of Disraeli’s failure to convince his culture of this. However, Disraeli himself is also not convinced. His insistent denial of the fact that Jews and Christians are very different from one another belies the fact that he is a Christian convert who will never pass successfully. Disraeli repeatedly shows that he has absorbed the racist logic he thinks he is overturning by aligning two different cultures. And in promoting Christian racial supremacy, Disraeli unwittingly contributes to his own alienation.

By showing that Jews are already half Christians, Disraeli also maintains that all Christians have a Jewish ancestry. In a moment when Tancred affirms his “right” to be in the Holy Land, we find not only a racial discourse than links Jewish and Christian blood, (and Disraeli to Christian culture), but one that naturalizes empire in that very
same process. The narrator asserts of the English aristocrat

Why, then, he had a right to be here! He had a connection with these regions; they had a hold upon him. He was not here like an Indian Brahmin, who visits Europe from a principle of curiosity, however rational or however refined. The land which the Hindoo visits is not his land, nor his father's land; the laws which regulate it are not his laws, and the faith which fills its temples is not the revelation that floats upon his sacred Ganges. But for this English youth, words had been uttered and things done, more than thirty centuries ago, in this stony wilderness, which influenced his opinions and regulated his conduct every day of his life. . . .
The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. (265)

And by this right, the British have the authority to protect the laws of Sinai, as they have been protected by them. The "Zionist" plot unravels as we learn that the real motive behind Tancred's and Disraeli's reverence for their Jewish ancestry is based upon their perceived "rights" which they believe have been granted to them by the laws of Sinai. Moses is thus not only the quintessential Caucasian, but he carries in the stone tablets, the very justification for British imperial "rights" to "ownership" of the land in the Middle East. British imperial identity is here justified and produced by appropriating Mosaic Law.

On the surface, both novels by Tonna and Disraeli repeatedly acknowledge the fact that all of the early Christians were Jews, and that Christianity would not exist without its Jewish ancestry. At the very same time, however, these novels produce Jewish history and culture within fictional accounts by Christian authors and characters. Although each of these versions of Christianity is distinct from one another, as are each author's positions in the literary marketplace and cultural sphere, both imagine, produce, and appropriate Jewish history and culture as part of the maintenance of English
identity. Thus, in the very act of gesturing toward Judaism as the origin of Christianity, these texts reverse that historical process by producing instead Christianity as the antecedent to fictional Jewish history. Knowledge about the Holy Land, about Arab Jews, Jewish Talmudical practice, Jewish spirituality, and Jewish history are all produced in these novels from the perspective of authors who either converted to Christianity and internalized English Christian racial views or by one whose chief objective was to convert Jews into Christians. Although critics have referred to Judah’s Lion and Tancred as Zionist novels, I suggest instead that we think of them as British imperial novels. My intension is not to suggest that Zionism does not appear in these novels, but rather, to acknowledge to importance of the way in which it appears in this novel as a form of appropriation of Jewish history and culture.
Endnotes


2. For more on the view that Tonna was a Zionist, see Elizabeth Kowaleski’s “‘The Heroine of Some Strange Romance’: *The Personal Recollections* of Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna” (n.6, 152), Linda H. Peterson’s *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography* (especially pages 44-46), Monica Correa Fryckstedt’s “Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna and *The Christian Lady’s Magazine*.”

3. This is a linguistic anachronism since the word “Zionism” did not appear until 1896. (OED) Even though a formal Zionist movement did not become visible within dominant culture until the end of the nineteenth century, this idea itself, of the Jewish return to a Jewish homeland, has existed for thousands of years — since the expulsion.

4. While it is true that some Evangelicals may have embraced this religious revival without analysis or critique, one would be hard-pressed to call someone such as Charlotte Tonna an anti- or non-intellectual; for she was not only a prolific writer throughout her lifetime, but she also edited her own journal, *The Christian Ladies Magazine*, and lobbied intensely for laws that would improve the working conditions of women and the living conditions of the poor. Christian she may have been, but anti-intellectual she certainly was not.

5. It is possible that the protagonist in Tonna’s novel is loosely based on Alexander, not only because they share the same name, but because Tonna’s Alick ultimately converts to Christianity after witnessing Mt Zion.

6. A prominent work of nonfiction is “The Perils of the Nation: An Appeal to the Legislature, the Clergy, and the Higher and Middle Classes” (1842) which Kovacevic explains “presents a terse and well-documented argument in favour of government intervention to regulate conditions in factories, mines, small workshops and distressed agricultural areas. It also calls for new laws concerning sanitary conditions, urban housing, rampant pauperism and better educational opportunities for the poor. Like her conservative Evangelical friends, Mrs. Tonna combined her championship of legislative reform with staunch opposition to Free Trade and Whig policies in general. Thus her pamphlet denounces the doctrines of political economy held by the free-traders, holding up to ridicule the idea that workers could be considered as free agents under such a system”(310).

7. Indeed, Tonna’s work was successful in England and in America. Kovacevic notes that “Her success as an author is shown by the fact that frequent new editions of her
works were called for, and the 11 volumes of her collected edition testify to her productivity" (304). In fact, Harriet Beecher Stowe is responsible for editing The Works of Charlotte Tonna, (1844) with an introduction. Clearly Stowe knew Tonna’s work, as Eva in Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Charlie in Judah’s Lion are similarly portrayed. It is also possible that Stowe was aware of Tonna’s earlier anti-slavery novel The System: A Tale of the West Indies (1827). Madelyn Holmes adds that “A year before her death, an article published in the July 1845 Christian Examiner proclaimed that her writings had secured ‘an unhesitating reception among most of those called Evangelical Christians’ and that they were to be found ‘the libraries and schools of the largest denominations in England and America.’ Individual works... were translated into... French, Italian, Marathi... and the Mpongwe language of Gabon in West Africa” (310).

8. Tonna’s reference to a Jew carrying oranges is suggestive of two unrelated histories which also overlap in Edgeworth’s narrative. As Henry Mayhew explains “orange men” were the newly immigrated Jewish street pedlars who sold oranges on the streets of London to earn a living. Because many of these merchants were Jewish, the term orange man usually denotes a Jewish street pedlar. In addition to the link between Jews and Orange sellers is the term “orangism” which denotes the extreme group of Protestants in Ireland. According to the OED, “Orangemen” was a term applied to a secret association of ultra-Protestants who formed a party in 1795. The double reference is striking, and suggests that Tonna, as Edgeworth before her, is recalling this particular stereotype of Jews because it links Jewish and Protestant culture in specific terms. This linking is perhaps a symbol of the larger connection Tonna makes in her claims that Jews are already just like Christians, and for this reason need not resist converting to Christianity.

9. This passage offers an interesting contrast to the ordeal Jane Eyre suffers at the hands of Brockelhurst. The young Jane is accused of being a liar, which criminalizes her. She has clearly violated one of the most important Mosaic laws — “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Joseph Kestner maintains that the link between Tonna and Bronte is certain, he explains, “In 1832 Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790-1846) published a story, “The Museum,” for the Religious Tract and Book Society for Ireland. The tale recounts the two days’ experiences of two children, Jane and Edward Cleveland, who meet a missionary, Mr. Peel, while visiting the museum. Pele derives biblical meanings from the objects the children see in their visits. Both brother and sister have the Christian names of Bronte’s protagonists Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester “(96). Kestner continues by analyzing an important passage depicting the two children in a bird room (the book Jane Eyre reads in the opening scene is Bewick’s History of British Birds) in which Edward describes an eagle as ‘eyry’(97).

10. Judah’s Lion proceeds in a manner that eerily predicts not only the plot of Tancred, as Ragussis noted, but also the pattern of Disraeli’s own life. The main character in Tonna’s novel, Alexander Nathan Cohen, shortens his name to Alick, and drops Nathan — an act which reflects Disraeli’s choice to alter the spelling of his last name long
before his political career. Like Disraeli, Nathan is brought up to “occupy his expected station among Gentile senators and officials” (4-5). As the narrator explains, “Mr. Cohen’s object in Alick’s education was to fit him for legislatorial and other functions of public life, where national peculiarities would be laid aside; or rather his nationality as a Jew altogether merged in his English citizenship” (45). Disraeli traveled east, like his literary foil Alick, with the man who was engaged to be married to his sister Sarah. Alick’s quest for Wilhelm, who is secretly betrothed to his cousin Esther also strangely parallels Disraeli’s journey.

11. Todd Endelman rightly adds that “in accounts of Disraeli’s Jewishness, there has been little consensus. Historians and biographers have labeled him, variously, a proto-Zionist, a Marrano, a racist, a proud Jew and a self-hating Jew. The truth is that none of these labels captures the complex, ambivalent character of what being Jewish meant to Disraeli at different times in his life. Indeed, it is this last point — the time bound rather than timeless character of his Jewishness — that needs to be stressed” (“A Hebrew To The End” 106).

12. Isaac D’Israeli maintained the spelling of his family name, but his son, in an effort to assimilate, changed the spelling of his name to Disraeli.

13. This did not occur until 1858. See Alderman in Paths of Emancipation.

14. In Tancred Disraeli idealizes the logic of racial supremacy in the same act of establishing the racial superiority of Arab populations, out of whom, he maintains, Christian racial superiority evolved. Tancred remarks, “the most powerful individuals of this class, who bear the titles of Emirs and Sheikhs, some of whom are proprietors to a very great extent, and many of whom, in point of race and antiquity of established family, are superior to the aristocracy of Europe” (345).

15. For a good discussion of this see Todd Endelman’s “‘A Hebrew To The End’: the emergence of Disraeli’s Jewishness.”

16. Endelman adds that “as these families drew closer to non-Jewish circles, the number of secessions, intermarriages and conversions rose — to the extent that the Sephardic population grew little, if at all, between 1750 and 1830, despite immigration from North Africa. When the Sephardim who participated in the establishment of the Reform synagogue in 1841 offered a rationale for the introduction of religious reforms, they cited defections from the community” (Endelman 1998, 107).

17. For a good account of Disraeli’s political ascension to Prime Minister see Polowetzky, chapter two.

18. Todd M. Endelman maintains that Disraeli’s interest in “Jewish themes” was not overtly visible until the middle-1840’s. After his initial election in 1837, Disraeli remained silent on several occasions when bills were proposed in favor of Jewish
emancipation. In 1837 Disraeli wrote to his sister Sarah, "'Nobody looked at me and I was not at all uncomfortable, but voted in the majority" against emancipation... (Endelman 115). However, by 1847, Disraeli was making speeches advocating for Jewish emancipation, much to the disappointment of both Tories and Liberals alike (Endelman 115).

19. Daniel Bivona explains, "While Tancred's lines of literary affiliation run backward to the Oriental Gothic of Beckford and ahead to the Ethnological Romance of such writers as Haggard and Ballantyne, this novel does serve the important literary-political function of locating orientalist fantasy in something resembling an actual Middle East whose politics are being appropriated to English political categories. In that sense, it anticipates Haggard's mythic inflation of 'Darkest Africa' into a recumbent, inviting female body awaiting penetration by the phallic hero as imperial adventurer: ethnological fantasy set in an actual geographic locale which is the locus of real British imperial desire in the late nineteenth-century. Moreover, despite its incoherence, Tancred as imperial fantasy is surprisingly compelling, at least in part because of Disraeli's translation of the symbolically of the Judaeo-Christian tradition into an imperial project" (323-4). I would add that Tonna's novel is not entirely separate form this tradition of male conquest narratives of non-Western space. Although Judah's Lion falls into several categories at once, it certainly anticipates the male adventure tradition that Haggard and Kipling popularized.
CHAPTER IV

“THIS INHERITED BLOT”:\(^1\)
ENGLISH IDENTITY IN MIDDLEMARCH’S JEWISH PART

Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary — at least the alphabet and a few roots — in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian. — Edward Casaubon\(^2\)

Do you suppose the public reads with a view to its own conversion? We should have a witches’ brewing with a vengeance then — “Mingle, mingle, mingle, mingle. You that mingle may” — and nobody would know which side he was going to take.
— Will Ladislaw\(^3\)

Readers of George Eliot’s later work, such as Daniel Deronda (1876) and Impressions of Theophrastus Such (1879), are quick to identify splits between the Jewish parts and the English parts of these texts.\(^4\) Daniel Deronda is perceived as having a disjunction between the Gwendolyn or English plot and the Daniel or Jewish plot. This impulse to distinguish between racial or national narratives in Eliot’s work has a long history, originating with Eliot’s own contemporaries, many of whom were critical or bewildered by her “failed” efforts to unite them. As one anonymous writer from the Saturday Review maintains of the novel’s portrayal of Zionism, “not only are these personages outside our interests, [but] the author seems to go out with them into a world completely foreign to us. What can be the design of this ostentatious separation

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from the universal instinct of Christendom, this subsidence into Jewish hopes and aims?” (Carroll, *Critical Heritage* 377). The impulse to see the Jewish part as distinct from the English part is not specific to *Daniel Deronda*. One contemporary reviewer of *Impressions*, commenting on the last chapter “The Modern Hep!Hep!Hep!” writes “The Jews, their history, their character, their standing in the world, their intellectual power, suggest no doubt questions of great interest and importance; but we are not prepared to answer these questions at the fag-end of a book avowedly devoted to other things, with which they bear no possible relation” (Henry 75). In her analysis of the “fag-end” of *Impressions*, Nancy Henry takes up these common reactions to Eliot’s depictions of Jews maintaining that “the history of the Jews” is not “alien matter” to the rest of *Impressions*, but rather

The dynamic between insider and outsider, epitomized in the socially marginal English gentile Theophrastus, is the book’s primary unifying force. “The Modern Hep!” is not an isolated essay on the Jews. It is a direct confrontation of the parallels and intersections of English and Jewish histories that function as the finale to the leitmotif of Jews and other outsiders... within English culture which links the previous 17 chapters. (75-76)

As Eliot herself notes the presence of such “parallels” and “intersections” when she writes in *Impressions*, “our [British] affinity with... [Jews] is only the more apparent when the elements of their peculiarity are discerned”(148). Thus, reading *Impressions* as a text that divides Jewish and English history is to miss Eliot’s point, and to reproduce the problem she exposes in this text, of imagining the Jews as a site of difference “peculiar” to English Christian culture. If this point is lost on readers of *Impressions*, it may be recovered by locating Eliot’s criticism of the construction of
Jewish difference as the natural cause of alienating outsiders in *Middlemarch*.

Both Eliot and Henry suggest that when Eliot depicts Jewish characters or Jewish national interests in her novels, she also inevitably invokes English history, since the two are linked by historical parallels and intersections. In the following chapter, I will show that the same is true in reverse: since English culture intersects with Jewish history and culture, when Eliot depicts the English, she inevitably represents Jewish history and culture. This phenomenon appears prominently in Eliot's depictions of English provincial life in *Middlemarch* (1871-72). It might initially seem odd to select *Middlemarch* as the text in which to explore Eliot's use of a Semitic discourse, especially considering the fact that there are no Jewish characters in this text. Having been trained to read for the presence of characters, or events, or form in the study of fiction scholars have tended to neglect a host of powerful references to Jewish history and culture in this novel. Examined through the lens of Jewish history and philosophy, however, it becomes apparent that a Semitic discourse appears everywhere in *Middlemarch*, in depictions of Jewish Biblical history, in Casaubon's study of the Hebrew origins of Christianity, and even in the false accusation of Will Ladislaw's "Jewish" blood. And we find that each use of a Semitic discourse to alienate characters in this narrative in fact accomplishes the reverse, by revealing instead that these outsiders are linked, by blood and law, to people who are thought to be insiders. As the delineations between insiders and outsiders prove to be ineffective markers, Eliot's narrator becomes increasingly critical of Middlermarchers' exclusionary discourse, which tries to align outsiders with Jews. We find in *Middlemarch* that even as Jewish
characters are absent from the narrative, the conceptual framework of otherness is mapped out by members of this fictional community with a Semitic discourse. For example, Farebrother observes Will Ladislaw's uncertain past in the following manner:

So, our mercurial Ladislaw has a queer genealogy! A high-spirited young lady and a musical Polish patriot made a lively enough stock from him to spring from, but I should never have suspected a grafting of the Jew pawnbroker. However, there's no knowing what a mixture will turn out beforehand. Some sorts of dirt serve to clarify. (676)

We might dismiss these "details" about Will's dirty past as signs of Eliot's "realism"—as allusive flourishes that merely add flavor and veracity to depictions of English provincial life. Read this way, we miss seeing the manner in which a Semitic discourse is the very loom on which Middlemarch's apparently disparate strands are woven. Will Ladislaw is not Jewish, but the rumors in Middlemarch racialize him as "the grandson of a Jew-pawnbroker," as a "Gypsy," a "Pole," "a quill-driving alien," and "a foreign emissary." Even as the townspeople work to show that Will has a peculiar "Jewish" past he is revealed to be linked by blood and law to several other characters who are deemed insiders in this community, for Casaubon is Will's cousin, and Bulstrode turns out to be his step-grandfather.

In this chapter I am not concerned about whether or not Will is really or officially a Jew. I will focus instead on the implications of using a Semitic discourse to ostracize English people from the town of Middlemarch. I will argue that this novel's focus on wills and inheritances alludes to English anxiety not only about Jews who have the power to pass as English, and about the importance of preserving "English" blood, but about a culture of consolidation that mandates such wills, and that leads the narrator...
to wonder, "Was inheritance a question of liking, or of responsibility?" (349). Set during the Reform Bill agitation of 1832, which addressed the problem of whether or not middle-class, white, English men should be granted voting privileges, *Middlemarch* is organized around four wills. In distinct ways, each of these wills echoes this political tension, as it raises important questions about the inheritance of privilege and the implications of maintaining distinctions between English aristocrats, who inherit not only estates and titles from their families but also their voting rights, and non-aristocratic English men who do not inherit but earn their income and social position and are therefore denied voting rights.

The first prominent will in *Middlemarch* is Peter Featherstone’s. Having written two wills, on his death bed Featherstone orders his nurse, Mary Garth, to burn the second. She refuses for fear that she will alter the course of fate. Her inaction, however, accomplishes that very thing. Had she burned the second will, Featherstone’s money would have gone to Fred Vincy, which would have enabled him to marry Mary. But because the second will remains, and takes precedence over the first, the money goes to a distant relative named Joshua Rigg. Despite his conscientiousness in having drawn up two wills, Featherstone ultimately does not get his final wish, which is to have Fred Vincy inherit his estate. Like Featherstone’s will, a second will in this novel, composed by Casaubon, also denies its author his final wish. Casaubon includes a codicil to his will which maintains that should his wife Dorothea marry Casaubon’s cousin, Will Ladislaw, she forfeits her claims to Casaubon’s inheritance. Like Featherstone, Casaubon’s wishes are unfulfilled, and his wife marries the very person.
Casaubon attempted to forbid her from marrying. A third will, written by Nicholas Bulstrode, is comprised of money which Bulstrode inherited from his first wife, Will’s grandmother. This money came originally from Will’s grandfather who earned it by the sale of stolen goods. Before marrying Bulstrode, Will’s grandmother attempts to find her estranged daughter and grandson. Bulstrode locates her family, but hides the information so that he may be the sole beneficiary of his wife’s will. Yet, it is this “Jewish money,” or money that is alleged to have come from a “Jew pawnbroker,” that Bulstrode inherits and that he uses to build hospitals and banks in Middlemarch — in short, to wield power in this English provincial town. When a visitor in town, Raffles, threatens to expose Bulstrode’s past, he attempts to make reparations by offering to include Will Ladislaw in his will. Ladislaw refuses stating, “It is important to me to have no stain on my birth and connections. And now I find there is a stain which I can’t help” (586). The stain Will alludes to here resonates with the novel’s larger concerns about delineating true insiders in Middlemarch from the mixed blood “aliens” who try to pass as insiders. Bulstrode’s will threatens to expose not only his illicit past, but also the mixing of blood that has already occurred. And finally, the last will in this novel is the aptly named Will Ladislaw, who is positioned as the key to the latter two inheritances. Will is denied his mother’s family inheritance, which instead goes to Casaubon, and later to Dorothea, but is once again kept from his family inheritance by Casaubon’s codicil. And the money that should have gone to Will from his grandfather, instead goes to Bulstrode. Ironically, the man whose name is Will is repeatedly refused his family inheritance because of his identity as an alien with mixed blood. Through
this illustration of mingled blood, Eliot exposes the fact that the more different
Middlemarchers render Will Ladislaw’s identity, the more enmeshed in Middlemarch
society he is revealed to be.

Using a Semitic discourse, Eliot’s narrator shows that English identity is always
already racially mixed, and that it is historically and legally linked to Jewish history.
Yet, this novel’s depictions of characters who try in vain to preserve ancestral links by
passing down money through wills and consolidate their power through a process of
exclusion paradoxically undermine the illusion of “pure” blood lines. Thus, even as
Eliot “realistically” portrays her characters’ concerns about maintaining a racially secure
town, she sarcastically invokes the futility and smallness of such thinking. In fact, we
find that the very exclusivity that is passed down by these wills originates with those
who are excluded from Middlemarch society. Eliot’s tongue-and-cheek narrator
effectively challenges the view she describes: of Middlemarchers’ acts of looking
forward to see where their money, status, and identity goes, while they simultaneously
resist looking back, to see the place from which it came. Despite the fact that

*Middlemarch* has received little critical attention concerning its “Jewish part,” in this
chapter I will show that in fact the representation of Jewish history and culture abound
in this novel, in the shape of a Semitic discourse that is the very platform on which Eliot
depicts England’s insecurity about preserving its own “racial purity.”

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Eliot’s knowledge of and interest in Christianity and Judaism evolved throughout her lifetime through her friendships, her travels in Europe, and her career as a translator and essay writer. Although she came to regard Jewish culture with a tremendous amount of respect toward the end of her life, such views took years to form. Born in 1819, the youngest child of Robert Evans, George Eliot, or Mary Anne Evans, later Marian Evans, later Marian Lewes, and still later, Marian Evans Cross, began her education at the age of five. A devoted governess helped foster Eliot’s religious leanings and, with the encouragement of teachers at the Misses Franklin’s school in Coventry, Eliot came to adopt a strong interest in Evangelical Christianity. Eliot’s devout religious spirit, coupled with her knowledge of French, Latin, Greek, German, Italian, and Hebrew, inspired her translation work and scholarship throughout her life. In fact, when, in 1838, at the age of nineteen, Eliot ventured to London for the first time, she refused to go to the theater with her brother, preferring instead to read by herself.

Eliot’s husband and biographer, J.W. Cross recounts of this trip to London “the chief thing she wanted to buy was Josephus’s “History of the Jews” (Cross I, 39). Although Eliot’s interest in Jewish history never waned throughout her life, it did evolve to respond to both contemporary Anglo-Jewish and European Jewish culture and her growing interest in the higher criticism.

After 1841, when Robert Evans moved with his daughter near Coventry, Eliot developed friendships with an influential group of intellectuals. Charles and Caroline
Bray, and Caroline's sister and brother, Sara and Charles Christian Hennell, helped redirect Eliot's Evangelical leanings. Struck by what they considered to be the narrow conviction of this midland woman, they encouraged Eliot to read Hennell's book *An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of Christianity*, which argued against a divinely inspired and literal interpretation of Christianity. Going against the grain of traditional Christian thought, Hennell, as well as other higher critics, instead favored the subjective rendering of power of feeling and material experiences. Suzanne Bailey explains that the higher critics “read the Bible as . . . narrative myth rather than as received dogma” (129).

Eliot's own translation of David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* or *The Life of Jesus* (translated in 1846) also shaped her view of the Bible as historical fiction. Strauss maintained that the Gospels ought to be read as myth or history, depicting as much about events as they do about the speakers of those events. Ashton explains of this work, "Strauss takes each event of Christ's life recorded in the Gospels, examining it from the supernatural, the natural, and the mythical point of view, in order to demonstrate the superiority of the mythical interpretation" (*Selected Critical Writings* xii). Bailey adds that “As the translator of Strauss and Feuerbach, and as editor of a journal which regularly discussed the higher criticism, George Eliot played a significant role in the dissemination of what in effect constitutes a new model for understanding of interpretive fictions and of written testimony” (129). Even as these writers exposed Eliot to a new way of reading the Christian Bible, they also consequently redefined Jewish history. For example, in one passage illustrating his philosophy Strauss explains,
The knowledge of the fact, that the Jews were fond of representing their great men as the children of parents who had long been childless, cannot but make us doubtful of the historical truth of the statement that this was the case with John the Baptist; knowing also that the Jews saw predictions everywhere in the writings of their prophets and poets, and discovered types of the Messiah in all the lives of the holy men recorded in their Scriptures; when we find details in the life of Jesus evidently sketched after the pattern of these prophecies and prototypes, we cannot but suspect that they are rather mythical than historical. (Ashton 6)

In offering Eliot and her culture a new way of reading Christianity, the higher critics depicted Jewish history as a mythological construction. Jewish spirituality is thus reconfigured to reflect the higher critical understanding of Jewish history as myth. As a result of her growing allegiance toward the higher criticism, Eliot found numerous links between Jewish and Christian history. Even though she viewed Christ as a mythical figure by this point, Eliot began to consider the importance of his historical context, and of the fact that this Jewish man helped found Christianity. Reading Christianity as history meant, for Eliot and the higher critics, remembering the links between Jewish and Christian history.

Eliot’s revised religious beliefs led to a major rift with her Anglican father with whom she refused to attend church since her religious conviction began to follow a different path from his. Threatening to abandon her if she did not attend church, Eliot consented, but only if she was free to think her own thoughts while at church. This incident, which Eliot named her “Holy War,” was a pivotal moment in Eliot’s religious conviction and in her emerging sense of her responsibility to fellow humans. Joseph Wiesenfarth explains that “for Eliot ‘truth of feeling’ was, finally, ‘the only universal bond of union.’ . . . George Eliot found in the ‘Holy War’ with her father the truth of
feeling that would be the hallmark of her fiction” (149).

It is likely that Eliot’s falling out with her father helped foster her interest in wills and inheritance. Toward the end of his life, Eliot nursed her father, despite their differences, and she kept the rest of the family updated on his deteriorating condition. In her biography of Eliot, Rosemary Ashton suggests that she “may have felt that by her devotion to his needs” during her father’s illness “she had more than made up for the pain she had caused him by her religious rebellion” (67). In a letter to Sarah Hennell from this period Eliot explains, “‘My life is a perpetual nightmare’” (Ashton, George Eliot 67). And yet, she remained to nurse him alone, without the help of her siblings. Regardless of her final efforts, however, her father’s will reflected his frustration with Eliot even in the end. Michael Polowetzky adds that

Robert Evans bequeathed his property in Derbyshire to his son from his first marriage, Robert Jr., and his holdings in Nuneaton to his son, Isaac, by his second wife. Mary Ann for her part was given two thousand pounds in trust and only an additional one hundred in cash. She received no furniture or other pieces of property, and the complete works of Sir Walter Scott she had so loved as a child were given to her sister Christiana. (73)

Ashton adds that this sum “was enough to make her consider living independently, but not quite enough to live on in the longer term” (68). This early event obviously had a profound influence on Eliot’s opinion of wills, the logic of inheritance, and the debt that the living pay to the dead. It is noteworthy that Eliot is prevented from inheriting Scott, her literary precursor, and instead receives an allowance that is so small that she must write novels to survive. This event mirrors the pattern in Middlemarch in which dying men work to prevent their families from inheriting the one true thing with which they

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identify.

At this point in her life, Eliot’s awareness of the implications of redefining Christian Biblical narratives for Jewish religious practices is hardly connected to any positive feelings toward Judaism. Rather, reading Jewish history as myth in some ways may have influenced her obvious dislike of Judaism at this point in her life. In a letter dated 11 February, 1848 to John Sibree, Eliot responds to Disraeli’s *Tancred* by explaining:

On one point I heartily agree with D’Israeli as to the superiority of the Oriental races — their clothes are beautiful and ours are execrable. . . . The fellowship of race, to which D’Israeli exultingly refers the munificence of Sidonia, is so evidently an inferior impulse which must ultimately be superceded that I wonder even he, Jew as he is, dares to boast of it. My gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews, and is almost ready to echo Voltaire’s vituperation. I bow to the supremacy of Hebrew poetry, but much of their early mythology and almost all their history is utterly revolting. Their stock has produced a Moses and a Jesus, but Moses was impregnated with Egyptian philosophy and Jesus is venerated and adored by us only for that wherein he transcended or resisted Judaism. The very exaltation of their idea of a national deity into a spiritual monotheism seems to have been borrowed from the other oriental tribes. Everything specifically Jewish is of a low grade. (Letters I, 246-7)

This letter haunts much of Eliot’s later work which takes up, specifically, Jewish nationalism, Anglo-Jewish history, and English anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, at this point in Eliot’s life she is undeniably and unabashedly critical of Jewish history, culture, and identity. For example, in a review of R.W. Mackay’s *The Progress of the Intellect* (1850), published three years after the Sibree letter, Eliot approves of Mackey’s assertion of Jewish influences on the development of Christianity, however pejorative.
such influences may have been. Summarizing Mackey's argument from his chapter on Hebrews, Eliot asserts,

The writings of the prophets are full of protests against the conceptions of popular ignorance, and by continually expanding and purifying the Jewish ideas of Deity, prepared the way for the reception of the teachings of Christ... [Mackey's] delineation of the origin of Christianity as an expansion of the prophetic spiritualism, yet carrying within it certain elements of Jewish symbolism, which have arrested its true development and perverted its influence — his final sketch of the confluence of Greek Philosophy and Christianized Hebrewism — are admirable, both from their panoramic breadth and their richness in illustrative details. (Selected Critical Writings 34-5)

In passages such as this one abound in Mackay's book, and in Eliot's review of that book, we find both an acknowledgment of the Jewish origins of Christianity, as well as an effort to show that those origins attempted to "arrest" or "pervert" the development of Christianity. The notion Eliot approves of in this passage is the idea that despite their shared history, Jews are marked by their attempts to prevent Christianity from evolving.

The Sibree letter and her review of Mackey's work are important in what they signal about Eliot's evolving opinions about Christianity, Judaism, Orientalism, and race. It would be inaccurate to see this view as having changed suddenly through some kind of revelation about the importance of Jewish history. Rather, her attitudes toward these subjects evolve gradually over the course of her lifetime. Ironically, even though Eliot became more tolerant and interested in Jews, she gradually increases the number of examples of English antisemitism in her work. Thus, the more tolerant Eliot sees herself, the less tolerant she depicts her society. For this reason, we cannot read Casaubon's futile work on the Hebrew origins of Christianity or the suspicion of Will's
“Jewish past” outside the framework of Eliot’s evolving anxiety about both Jews and Jew hatred in her own culture.

Eliot’s intellectual interests in the years leading up to the point when she wrote Middlemarch became increasingly concerned with the Jewish origins of Christianity. Her translation of Ludwig Feuerbach’s Das Wesen Des Christenthums (The Essence of Christianity) in 1854-55 is one such example. In a letter to Sarah Hennell of 29 April, 1854 Eliot admitted to feeling tired of the project, but nonetheless explained that “with the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree” (Haight, Selected Letters 132). According to his philosophy, Feuerbach maintained that humans had a psychological need for religion, “The essence of Christianity is the essence of human feeling... the consciousness of God is nothing else than the consciousness of the species” (xvii).

Again, Eliot espouses another non-spiritual or literal interpretation of the Bible. Bailey has explained that Eliot’s study of the higher critics, such as Feuerbach, was not an early philosophy she abandoned later when she began writing novels. Indeed, especially with the case of Middlemarch, “The formal choices made by Eliot in the novel — such as the multiplot narrative, the presentation of character through ‘second-hand’ testimony, her use of imagery which figures the world as a text to be deciphered — should more equally be read in terms of the nexus of concerns and interests raised by the higher critics” (131). Eliot used the higher critics’ philosophy of the importance of perspective and story in the construction of history to criticize the very notion of truth that Casaubon seeks in his Key to All Mythologies. In fact, even the structure of the narrative, which relies upon rumors and secrets, of lied-about truths, and of people’s efforts to deceive
one another resonates with the higher critics’ view of religion that is constantly reshaped each time it is told, depending upon the psychological needs of the speaker and the audience. In many ways Middlemarch redeems this act of mythmaking and fiction writing, in the form of denial that occurs when bad marriages are made, or in the shape of hope for those who believe they have the power to accomplish their dreams, or even in the manner of racial or social delineations that separate and place people within this provincial society. While on the one hand Eliot criticizes Casaubon for his stubborn reverence for the search for truth, at the same time she includes too many other examples of characters who attest to similar kinds of truths, based on their reliance on fictions of classification or the illusion of order that shape and authorize their lives. U.C. Knoepflmacher is right in asserting that Eliot “created in Middlemarch a fiction about the need for fictions” (69). Casaubon is no more or less guilty of such fiction making than any of the other characters in this novel. Indeed, as my reading will show, this novel exposes not only human efforts to order and classify their world through the trope of inheritance, but also the fact that such order exists beyond each characters’ will.

Shortly after her translation of Feuerbach, Eliot eloped to Weimar and Berlin with George Henry Lewes who was at that time a husband to someone else and a father. Although Eliot immersed herself as much as possible in her new surroundings, her journals from that period include a multitude of references to Jews and anti-Semitism, in particular of Lessing’s Nathan the Wise and Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice. Also prominent in her journals are Lewes’s performances of Jewish roles for their visitors. Eliot includes the following collection of references in her journals from this
3 November, I read Wilhelm Meister aloud, and then G. read part of the Merchant of Venice [sic] (34); November 21, In the evening went to Gruppe's. . . He drew some Jews' faces with a pen admirably (35); Italianische Reise until Dessoir came. He read us the opening of Richard the 3rd [sic] and the scene with Lady Anne. Then Shylock, which G. afterwards read (37); Monday 18 - we went to Prof. Gruppe's and spent a pleasant evening with him, his wife and her naive sister. G. acted a little of Shylock for them. I was amused to see that the young women's feeling towards the Jews was not much above that of Gratiano and co. Frau Gruppe when running through the wonderful speech "Hath not a Jew eyes" etc turned round to us and said "They don't feel — they don't care how they are used" (39); Friday 5, G read Shylock, but seemed to be very imperfectly understood (42); Monday March 5, In the evening Dessoir came and read Hamlet. G. acted Shylock (46); Friday 9, In the evening went to Fraulein Solmar's. G. read Shylock (47). (Johnson and Harris)

Clearly, Eliot's exposure to and engagement with Jewish themes in literature had already begun to grow beyond her reaction to Disraeli's Tancred. William Baker rightly maintains of this period in Eliot's life, "their 1854 German visit marks a turning point in her attitude to Jewish religion and culture: a change from the hostility shown in her response to Disraeli's Tancred to an active sympathy for, and a deep interest in, Judaism and the Jewish spirit" (30). Lewes's interest in Shylock and in the Merchant of Venice developed long before their visit to Germany. In March and April of 1849 Lewes lived in Manchester where he performed the part of Shylock at the Theatre Royal. He gave lectures on The Merchant of Venice in Edinburgh a few months later (Haight, Biography 130-31). In his performances, Lewes attempted to portray Shylock sympathetically. He insisted, "I say if Shylock be not represented as having the feelings of our kind, The Merchant of Venice becomes a brutal melodrama" (Ashton, G.H. Lewes 82). Eliot's awareness that Lewes had been "imperfectly understood" when he presented Shylock
favorably marks a small turning point in Eliot’s understanding of Jewish representations and of German anti-Semitism. Lewes’s biographer, Rosemary Ashton, suggests that Frau Gruppe may not have been the only one to react this way to Lewes’s performance, which was unconventional for the time. “In any case, it seems that he had not the strength of voice or physical presence to persuade an audience to accept his interpretation” (Ashton, G.H. Lewes 82). While in Germany, Eliot also read Heine, Lessing, and translated Spinoza’s *Ethics* (published posthumously), all of which exposed her to Jewish history, philosophy, and the power of literary representations of Jews. Her work on these writers would have lasting impressions on her fiction. The higher critics may very well have been the cause of Eliot’s knowledge of a shared “mythology” between Jews and Christians, but Lessing’s *Nathan The Wise* complicated this view by presenting that myth. Spinoza’s family history as Spanish conversos further complicated the theoretical detachment of the mythological emphasis of the higher critics. Her study of Spinoza’s life and work served to remind Eliot that even though religion might be a myth or a product of history, the results of antisemitism were nonetheless real.

It is tempting to see Eliot’s interest in Jewish culture as having arrived late in her career, evidenced by her interest in Jewish nationalism in her last two published works. However, her exposure to Jewish writers during these years proves that she was obviously thinking about Jewish history much earlier. In her essay “German Wit: Heinrich Heine” (1856) published after her return to England, Eliot looks to “the boyhood of the human race,” or Biblical history, explaining “The history and literature
of the ancient Hebrews gives the idea of a people who went about their business and
their pleasure as gravely as a society of beavers; the smile and the laugh are often
mentioned metaphorically, but the smile is one of complacency, the laugh is one of
scorn” (193). After castigating German literature for its failure to write anything of
value when compared to Cervantes, Moliere, or Shakespeare, Eliot concedes that
perhaps Heine is a sign of a future of German wit,

[A] German born with the present century, who, to Teutonic imagination,
sensibility, and humour, adds an amount of esprit that would make him
brilliant among the most brilliant of Frenchmen. True, this unique
German Wit is half a Hebrew; but he and his ancestors spent their youth in
German air, and were reared on Wurst and Sauerkraut, so that he is an
much a German as a pheasant is an English bird, or a potato an Irish
vegetable. But whatever else he might be, Heine is one of the most
remarkable men of this age: no echo, but a real voice, and therefore, like
all genuine things in this world, worth studying. . . . (Ashton, Selected
Critical Writings 199-200)

Heine was born to a Jewish father and a Protestant mother, and his marriage to a
Catholic led him to convert to Catholicism. From 1831-47 Heine lived in Paris, and in
1848 he contracted a spinal malady that spread to his eyes. Suffering from extreme
pain, after having rejected organized religion, Heine experiences both a physical and
emotional breakdown that is marked by his simultaneous identification with the status
of Jews living in exile. In his later work, “Jehuda ben Halevy,” Roger F. Cook explains,
“Heine compares his life in Paris, the cosmopolitan center of freedom and sensual
enjoyment, to that of the Jewish palmists in Babylon who were forced to sing their
joyful songs of Zion for the pleasure of their captors. . . . Using the motif of the
Babylonian captives, Heine responds that his heart remained in his beloved Germany

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that he was forced to leave because of his liberal efforts to change it” (16). Later in his life, Heine came to realize, contrary to his earlier position, that the “pride of birth” was foolishness, and for him the Jew was a symbol of the universal struggle for advanced ideas and thought against philistinism. Part of George Eliot’s admiration for Heine was due to the latter’s belief in a common humanity and “Democratic principles” (Baker 39). Baker adds that from Heine, Eliot “not only gained general awareness of the extent of post-Biblical Jewish suffering especially in the medieval period, and in particular the problem of being a Jew in Germany, but a deep awareness, as Daniel Deronda provides testimony, of the particular historical situations of which the ‘whole sad history’ was composed” (42).

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing also helped influence Eliot’s productions of sad histories, and in particular, of the shared history between Christians and Jews. After extensive research on the Gospels and on the history of Jesus, Lessing developed a theory maintaining that the apostle Matthew dictated his gospel in Hebrew which was then studied by early Jewish Christians for thirty years, at which point this text was used as the source for distinct Greek versions of the Gospel. Lessing’s theory suggested that there was a single lost source of the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which accounted for the differences between these three texts, as well as for the gap between Christ’s death and the beginning of Christianity. Nathan Der Weise (1779) encouraged toleration for religious difference on the grounds that Muslims, Jews, and Christians evolved from the same source.

Eliot saw this play performed in Berlin in 1854, which inspired her to read
Lessing’s other published work. When the Muslim Saladin asks the Jewish Nathan to tell him the name of the one true religion, Nathan responds with a story about three sons and one father who owned an opal ring. The father explained to his sons that whichever one was most dutiful and loving to God would receive the ring and become prince of the household. Each son, however, proved to have these qualities, and so the father promised the ring to each son. When it came time for him to die, the father realized he had a problem — how could he give the ring to one son and insult the other two worthy sons? His solution was to make two new rings so similar to the first, that even the father could not distinguish them. After the father gave each son a ring, though, they began fighting over who wore the legitimate ring, and who had more right to be the “reigning prince” (233). Nathan continues, “They seek the facts, they quarrel, /Accuse. In vain; the genuine ring was not /Demonstrable;— . . . almost as little as/ Today the genuine faith” (233). The rings have genuine differences, but they all come from the same source. When Saladin, confused, asks Nathan again for clarification about how this story of a father and three sons relates to his question about the one true religion, Nathan explains that all three religions included in this play, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, albeit distinguishable from one another, are distinct “In all respects except their basic grounds.— /Are they not grounded all in history, /Or writ or handed down? But history/ Must be accepted wholly upon faith” (233). Unsatisfied with this answer, Saladin asks who got the real ring, to which Nathan replies,

Whom then do two of you love most? Quick, speak!
You’re mute? The rings’ effect is only backward,
Not outward? Each one loves himself the most?
O then you are, all three deceived deceivers!
Your rings are false, all three.
The genuine ring no doubt got lost. To hide the grievous loss,
To make it good, the father caused three rings
To serve for one. (234)

The logic of Lessing’s argument is rooted in the shared history and blood of all three
religions, a point central to Middlemarch and Impressions. Nathan’s final assertion with
this story is that each brother “should aspire /To emulate his father’s unbeguiled,
Unprejudiced affection!” (235) since the father refused to privilege one brother over the
other two is central to Eliot’s growing sense of respect for religious difference. In a
letter to Charles Bray written in November of 1854 Eliot writes,

Last night we went to see “Nathan der Weise.” You know, or perhaps you
do not know that this play is a sort of dramatic apologue the moral of
which is religious tolerance. It thrilled me to think that Lessing dared
nearly a hundred years ago to write the grand sentiments and profound
thoughts which this play contains for the people’s theatre which he
dreamed of, but which Germany has never had. In England the words
which call down applause here would make the pit rise in horror. (Haight,
Selections 144)

Of this same performance, Eliot records her thoughts in her journal: “Both thrilled by
the grandeur of the sentiments. I felt that it was a noble inspiration which dictated such
writing. The scenery was excellent, particularly a street in Jerusalem and the garden in
the last scene. The sky was grand on our way to the theatre — the stars bright on a sable
field. I began Lessing’s Laocoon in bed” (Harris and Johnston 34). In the months when
Lewes was performing the part of Shylock for their friends, Eliot and Lewes were
reading and watching Lessing’s play about the shared origins of three major world
religions, and Eliot was reading the work of a German Jew, Heine, who depicts his
alienation with the language of Jewish longing for a homeland, Eliot was also translating Spinoza, whom she mentions almost daily in her journals from the period.

While Rosemary Ashton maintains that “Spinoza was at least as strong an influence on her thinking as Feuerbach” (Critical Writings xix), William Baker adds that “It was the work and personality of Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) whose Ethics she translated that she experienced Jewish philosophical genius”(9). A Sephardic Jew, Spinoza’s grandfather moved to Amsterdam from Spain, having lived for several generations as converso. After receiving a traditional Jewish education, Spinoza continued to devote his life to his interest in God. His major work Ethics, published posthumously in 1677, maintained that God was everywhere, manifested in every person, object and idea in the universe. Eliot’s translation work exposed her not just to the thoughts of a Dutch Jew, but of a man whose family history was shaped by hiding their Jewish past, and of worshiping in secret. It is impossible to disregard this fact when we read Eliot’s depictions of Will Ladislaw or of Daniel Deronda, both of whom, in very different ways, are depicted as having double lives — one hidden or forgotten Jewish part and another outward Christian identity. In Tractatus Theologico Politicus Spinoza argued as Baker explains, that “the Jews had maintained their historical continuity as they had preserved the historical continuity of their institutions. . . . For Spinoza, the national existence of a people was preserved in the continuity of its social inheritance and not in its mere biological continuity” (Baker 26). This idea became central to Eliot’s depictions of Jewish culture, beginning as early as The Spanish Gypsy. Polowetzky adds that “Mary Ann, who earlier claimed ignorantly that the phrase
‘Jewish philosopher’ was synonymous with ‘square circle,’ was very impressed. Many years later, in 1866, she would insist on spending an entire day treading through the streets of Amsterdam in a vain search for Spinoza’s synagogue” (71-2). Three years before she began writing *Middlemarch*, Eliot remembered Spinoza’s Jewish part of his outwardly Christian identity.

Although Eliot’s literary production was sparse during her stay in Germany, Gordon Haight maintains that it was nonetheless an important time for her intellectually. “During these months she read more intensively than at any time since her winter in Geneva; Cross fills nearly three pages with just the titles of books she read in Weimar and Berlin. . . She read probably every word of Goethe, a good deal of Schiller, Lessing, Schlegel, Heine, Uhland, and many more. . .” (Haight, *Biography* 173-4). During this period, Eliot also assisted Lewes with his biography of Goethe, visiting his house twice while in Frankfurt, and visiting the Judengasse or Jew Street which Eliot described as “a striking scene” which Haight maintains, “impressed itself so strongly on her memory that she returned twenty years later to study it as the setting for Daniel Deronda’s encounter with Joseph Kalonymos” (Biography 151). A few years later, on a return trip to Europe, Polowetzky reminds us that “Marian insisted on attending services in synagogue in all the European cities. . . She found a strange, inexplicable fascination with a faith which refused to die despite two thousand years of persecution” (79).

Eliot acknowledged the changes that her reading and experiences in Germany had wrought upon her. After translating Spinoza’s *Ethics*, and through her assiduous
readings of August Comte, Heine, and others, Eliot recognized within herself not so much an aversion to those unlike her but a common humanity. In a markedly different tone from the earlier Sibree letter of 1848, Eliot wrote in December 1859 in a letter to Madame D’Albert-Durade,

Ten years of experience have wrought great changes in that inward self: I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves; on the contrary, I have a sympathy with it that predominates over all argumentative tendencies. . . . Many things that I should have argued against ten years ago, I now feel myself too ignorant and too limited in moral sensibility to speak of with confident disapprobation: on many points where I used to delight in expressing intellectual difference, I now delight in feeling and emotional agreement. On that question of our future existence, to which you allude . . . my most rooted conviction is, that the immediate object and the proper sphere of all our highest emotions are our struggling fellow-men and this earthly existence. (Letters L H, 231)

Readers did not have to wait to read Daniel Deronda to see this philosophy in her work, for The Lifted Veil, Romola and the Spanish Gypsy, in very different ways, made gestures toward struggling fellow men who were Jewish. This theme was also present in Middlemarch, in Casaubon’s interest in antiquities, in its subtle allusions to anti-Jewish attitudes in England, and more specifically, in its depictions of English provincial life that are antagonistic toward people whom the English imagine belonging to a faith different from their own. Even as Eliot depicts Middlemarchers’ efforts to locate and alienate outsiders, she simultaneously presents their failure to do this effectively.
Race and Science in *Middlemarch*: Or, The Jewish Origins of Ants

*Middlemarch* scholars have astutely noted the effects of Darwinian theory on this text. In fact, it would be hard to miss the presence of Darwin in *Middlemarch*, in depictions of the web, in Lydgate’s and Farebrother’s scientific research interests, and in a race discourse that grew directly out of evolutionary theory, intent upon ordering and delineating species of people along a hierarchical axis. Thus, we might read Mrs. Cadwallader’s adeptness in distinguishing vermin from game as an example of typological thinking common among Victorian scientists. Likewise, we might even read Casaubon’s analysis of the evolution of western religion in a similar vein. In *Darwin’s Plots* Gillian Beer argues that both the subject matter and the form of the narration of *Middlemarch* assimilate “the implications of evolutionary ideas”(158) especially with regard to Darwin’s “tangled bank” passage. The clustering of the web and the intricate strands uniting the various and unique members of this community echo several passages from the *Origin of Species*. Beer adds that the two most prominent Darwinian insights to appear in *Middlemarch* are “those of relations and of origins”(167). Building on Beer’s reading, Sally Shuttlesworth maintains in *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* that “each part of Middlemarch life is related to every other part; individual identity is not only influenced by the larger social organism, it is actively defined by it”(143). Unlike other Victorian novels, Shuttlesworth argues, *Middlemarch* “does not revolve around the gradual revelation of hidden connections between socially disparate groups, or a cumbersome legal machinery. Indeed, the sole
links that emerge from the past — those of Bulstrode, Raffles, and Will — seem rather to disturb than affirm our sense of unity of Middlemarch life”(147). There is no doubt that Darwin was a major influence on Eliot, for evolutionary processes appear everywhere in Middlemarch. However, Shuttlesworth’s claim that absent from this novel are hidden connections between “socially disparate groups” and “legal machinery” falls short of accounting for the racial and legal ideology implicit in this novel’s emphasis on wills. The law itself is a primary system of enforcing and enabling the racist logic of family blood. If connections between disparate groups were really absent, then there would be no need to enforce the line of inheritance by law. Indeed, Eliot’s depictions of Darwinian theory are not passively rendered, but actively challenged in this text.

The connections between Darwin and Middlemarch underscore the importance of biological differences between races. In The Idea of Race in Science, Nancy Stepan illustrates the larger cultural implications of Darwin’s racial delineations, pointing out the contradictory logic of stasis and change embedded in evolutionary theory. On the one hand, Darwin maintained that natural forms were in a perpetual state of change, evolving or devolving through the competition for survival and natural selection. At the same time Darwin maintained that despite these changes, racial delineations remained static. Stepan explains,

Darwin . . . rejected the natural selection of racial traits in favour of sexual selection; racial diversity, he argued, arose long ago in human prehistory when man was still governed by instinct. The model that emerged from Darwin’s Descent of Man was one of very early race formation, followed by relative stasis. (85)
The various manifestations of race delineations in this novel, of wills, inheritances, insider/outsider culture, family bloodlines, and concerns about blood purity invite us to question Middlemarchers’ need to secure and fix blood and family lines in this town. Despite Darwin’s claim that race is more or less fixed, the people in this town are obviously anxious about racial disruptions. Eliot challenges Darwin by showing that the very Jewish blood which threatens to pollute this community is already embedded in it. With repeated references to the Jewish origins of this English Christian culture, we cannot help but wonder how the townspeople, by their own logic, miss the fact that their blood, if Christian, is already Jewish as well. In her depictions of this xenophobic, small-minded thinking, Eliot suggests that those are deemed English and pure are primarily interested in processes of change — Casaubon’s work on the evolution of Christianity from Judaism is not entirely unlike Farebrother’s study of the origin of ants which he describes as

a learned treatise on the entomology of the Pentateuch, including all the insects not mentioned, but probably met with by the Israelites in their passage through the desert; with a monograph on the Ant, as treated by Solomon, showing the harmony of the Book of Proverbs with the results of modern research. (161-2)

As we shall see later with King Solomon’s Mines, Jewish history — the Pentateuch or the five books of the Jewish Bible — is called upon to illustrate the results of modern science. In both cases, concerns about origins evolve from Jewish sources. Even as Casaubon’s study is obviously ridiculed by both the narrator and characters in this novel, we see how Middlemarchers apply the same kind of compartmentalized and evolutionary thinking to the blood and identities of people living in this town. As these
two men search for origins to ground their contemporary identities and worlds, they expose their concerns about stasis or, more specifically, about keeping change in the past. In his reading of *Middlemarch* Paul Milton explains that in the depictions of constant flux and changefulness, Eliot reveals Middlemarchers' resistance to change and the natural process: "Primogeniture is the inheritance pattern of a society where continuity of being and place is of premium value; Eliot's society is in flux and the relations represented by traditional social institutions such as the family are continuously being challenged and reconfigured"(59). Shuttlesworth and Beer are right to argue that Darwin influenced Eliot, but we might reconsider the manner in which she uses Darwinian evolutionary theory to critique some forms of biological racism.

Unlike earlier novelistic depictions of Jewish history and culture which stressed the changefulness and mutability of Jewish identity often by the trope of conversion, by the early 1870's, when this novel was in the process of being written, racial delineations were thought to have been fixed. Unlike Edgeworth's and Tonna's presentation of Jewish conversion as a welcome sign of the spread of Christianity, by the 1870's such conversions were viewed quite differently. High Victorian culture feared, rather than welcomed, conversions as biology grew to inform and "verify" racial differences between religious groupings. Thus, Jews were thought to have been racially/genetically distinct from Christians, and conversion would only result in the mixing of good blood with bad blood. The trope of wills in this novel symbolizes the ideological work of a race discourse that not only asserts the hierarchy and persistence of certain familial lines that help keep English blood pure and static, but also attempts to hide the fact that blood
lines are always already mixed or, as Will Ladislaw puts it, "mingled."

Darwin's influence on Eliot is indisputable; however, so too is that of Emanuel Deutsche (1829-1873) — the Orientalist scholar with whom Eliot was studying Hebrew and the Talmud during the very period when she was writing *Middlemarch*. They first met at a dinner party in 1866 after Eliot had returned from Amsterdam. Although numerous scholars have explored Deutsche's influence on *Daniel Deronda*, in fact she began working with Deutsche long before she began writing both *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch*. A close reading of *Middlemarch's* "Jewish part" reveals this influence, however subtle, not in relation to Zionism or to the removal of Jews from England, but with regard to the question of Jewish assimilation in England, and of the historical relationships between Judaism and Christianity. Polowitzky explains that

> Deutsche was the ideal person to introduce Marian to the intricacies of Jewish culture and history. She asked him to teach her Hebrew and he obligingly agreed. He . . . [gave] Marian lessons at least once every week for the next several years. Then, having gained a command of Hebrew, Marian obtained Deutsche's assistance in studying Talmud. (81)

We know that by 1869 Eliot had already been "brooding over her 'English novel'" ever since finishing *Felix Holt* (Haight 422). She wrote to her publisher Blackwood in 1869, "I mean to begin my novel at once, having already sketched the plan. But between the beginning and the middle of the book I am like the lazy Scheldt; between the middle and the end I am like the arrowy Rhone . . . . The various elements of the story have been soliciting my mind for years — asking for a complete embodiment"(Haight 420). During the very period in which Eliot was learning Hebrew and developing her interest in the Talmud, she was creating this embodiment in her English novel *Middlemarch*. 

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One of the central unifying forces in *Middlemarch* is the image of a web that is in danger of being dismantled every time money threatens to travel outside of the family, when mesalliances are made, or when outsiders are allowed into this provincial town. At each of these junctures, deaths, wanderings, and marriages, we see the potential for racial mixing and identity displacement. And since, as this novel attests, illicit money and blood can travel and mix undetected, characters must always be on the lookout for foreigners. This is, in part, the logic behind the construction of Will Ladislaw’s foreignness. In the case of this novel, Eliot uses a Semitic discourse as the town’s cause for ostracizing him, while simultaneously she shows that Jewish history abounds in this apparently pure and happily isolated little town. Thus, efforts to maintain the town’s smallness are all in vain since such mixings have already occurred and, despite their differences from one another, the people in this town are all connected by the very same web. Each family will in *Middlemarch*, and the efforts to secure family estates and bloodlines, illustrates not only the failure of this process to delineate people and maintain family blood lines, but the language itself comes right out of the Talmud — the book of Jewish law. The name “Will Ladislaw” serves to remind us of the power of wills and inheritances that surface with the study of ancient law. As the child of law (lad-is-law) Will’s very name suggests that as son he has, by the language of the law (The Talmud), inherited (Will) a place in this web.

Rosemary Ashton maintains that Deutsche showed the Leweses around the new exhibits at the Museum in May 1867, and a few months later asked George Eliot’s advice when writing an article published in *The Quarterly Review*. Deutsche’s famous
essay "The Talmud," published in 1867, appears to have been a great influence on Eliot's thinking. In a letter to Sara Hennell, Eliot asserts, "You really must go out of your way to read it. It is written by one of the greatest Oriental scholars, the man among living men who probably knows the most about the Talmud, and who will appreciate the pregnancy of the article" (Haight, Selected Letters 335).

In this essay, Deutsche set out to answer the question "What is the Talmud?" not only for Christian audiences unfamiliar with this document, but also by tracing its evolving significance among Jews. On its most basic level, Deutsche explains, the Talmud is a book of laws. He uses the space of this essay, however, to show that it is much more than that for both Christians and Jews. What is perhaps most significant about this document in terms of Eliot's knowledge of Jewish history is its linking of Jewish and Christian culture, both by the language of the Talmud and by the cultural history of this book within Christian European history. Deutsche's reading explains the importance of Talmudical thinking in the evolution of Jewish thought and diasporic Jewish history. At the same time, he examines the Talmud as a cultural artifact that links Jewish and Christian culture through a history of Jew hatred in the West. So, while Deutsche foregrounds the fact that "everything gentle and sublime in the religious code of the New Testament is a mere transcript from the so-called oral law of the Jews" (Polowetzky 81), he simultaneously shows how Christian culture has historically worked to disassociate itself from these Jewish roots.

Deutsche continues by explaining of the Talmud that "within a period of less than fifty years — and these forming the latter half of the sixteenth century — it was
publicly burnt no less than six different times, and that not in single copies, but
wholesale, by the wagon load” (Deutsche 422). As the essay moves on to explain some
of the basic tenets and the style of the Talmud, Deutsche adds that one major reason
why Christians reacted so strongly against it was their inability to discern its meaning:

Clement V, in 1307, before condemning the book, wished to know
something of it, and there was no one to tell him. Whereupon he
proposed— but in language so obscure that it left the door open for many
interpretations — that three chairs be founded, for Hebrew, Chaldee, and
Arabic, as the three tongues nearest to the idiom of the Talmud. . . . In
time, he hoped, one of these Universities might be able to produce a
translation of this mysterious book. Need we say that this consummation
never came to pass? The more expeditious process of destruction was
resorted to again and again and again, not merely in the single cities of
Italy and France, but throughout the entire Holy Roman Empire. (422)

The problem of understanding the Talmud stems from a difference between Western
and Eastern reading practices. Deutsche explains, “When we speak of the Talmud as a
legal code, we trust we shall not be understood too literally. It resembles about as much
what we generally understand by that name as a primeval forest resembles a Dutch
garden” (429). For this reason, the Talmud has been misunderstood as a primitive,
dangerous source of knowledge that is threatening to those who don’t know how to read
it. Deutsche continues,

Nothing indeed can equal the state of utter amazement into which the
modern investigator finds himself plunged at the first sight of these
luxuriant Talmudical wildernesses. Schooled in the harmonizing,
methodizing systems of the West— systems that condense, and arrange,
and classify, and give everything its fitting place and its fitting position in
that place — he feels almost stupefied here. The language, the style, the
method, the very sequence of things (a sequence that often appears as
logical as our dreams), the amazingly varied nature of these things —
everything seems tangled, confused, chaotic. (429)
When we read *Middlemarch* through and against Deutsche’s work, we begin to understand a larger context for Eliot’s depictions of English efforts to classify and define people as insiders and outsiders, and the web-like relations between them that defy such ordering. Eliot’s web imagery may come partially from Darwin’s “tangled bank” but at least as influential in this text is Deutsche’s description of the Talmud and the law as “tangled, confused, chaotic.”

Deutsche’s article on the Talmud, reprinted six times, made him famous. Haight reminds us that “Readers were startled by the parallels revealed between Judaism, Christianity, and other religions”(334) which Deutsche illustrates in this essay. Indeed, as my reading shows, *Middlemarch*’s Semitic discourse serves to remind us of these links and the shared history between Jewish and Christian culture, and of a racist discourse that works to separate as racially distinct Jewish and Christian identity by delineating originary blood lines and inheritances. Casaubon’s *Key to All Mythologies* on the one hand argues for such links between Jewish and Christian history. On the other hand, his study is denigrated by other characters and narrator alike, since he has failed to include or consider more recent history from the nineteenth-century. “Reared in a system of thought” which Deutsche describes as the “harmonizing, methodizing systems of the west” Casaubon’s project is doomed. His failure to see and relish in the tangled, chaotic confusion that is brought about by change and evolution prevents him from finishing his project, which in all regards is linear that therefore unnatural, un-web-like.

Casaubon is willing to examine relations between Christians and Jews, but
unable to see how such influences might evade linear, categorical thinking. In this novel imagined “Jewish money” infiltrates this town unacknowledged and is granted access through the law (marriages and wills). These acts of intermixings and traversing narratives that link Jewish and Christian culture are a vivid embodiment of Deutsche’s article. As Christian culture works to see Jews as outsiders, readers of this novel can see the futility of this thinking. Eliot suggests in all this that Darwin was right to ascertain the tangled mess that constitutes society and culture. It was Deutsche whose study of the law and whose focus on the origins of Christianity helped guide Eliot’s observations about Darwin’s biological racism. So, while it is true that Darwin may have given Eliot a knowledge of the tangled wilderness from which English Christian culture emerged, it was Deutsche who gave her the law as the link between Christian and Jewish culture.

Two years later, when after having sketched out the plot for *Middlemarch*, Eliot foregrounds these two links — one cultural and one religious — in her depictions of inheritance and wills and in her choice to include English antisemitism and xenophobia in her portrayal of English provincial life. Thus her emphasis on wills in this novel calls attention to the problem of origination and evolution of English Christian culture — a problem that underscores concerns about maintaining the purity of English blood. As Eliot has her narrator mock characters who exhibit such concerns, she simultaneously relies upon Jewish Biblical names and stories in her presentations of her English characters. Read through the lens of Jewish history, a Semitic discourse appears everywhere in this novel’s depictions of English identity. Wills serve to delineate and
naturalize the ideological work of a race discourse, even as they fail to achieve their goal of keeping money in the family.

**Inheritance and Origins**

Eliot's depictions of wills in *Middlemarch* present much more than just a snapshot of a typical English town. Rather, they foreground the implied racial logic behind the concept of blood purity and the prevention of racial mixing. While many of the characters in this novel are comforted by their belief that money and social ties will remain in the family blood line, none of the wills actually accomplishes this. Eliot presents us with a series of wills that ironically deny their authors a last will. The narrator's tone of voice serves to criticize the accepted view in *Middlemarch* that inheritances should, or even can, stay in the family blood, free from the stain of outsiders. Thus, as the narrator presents the futility of this English town's concern about racial purity, few of the townspeople actually see how ineffective their efforts are. For example, the narrator describes Mrs. Cadwallader's obsession with class and blood lines by her attention to "the exact crossing of genealogies which had brought a coronet into a new branch and widened the relations of scandal" (55). Mrs. Cadwallader works very hard to insure that everyone in her class is aware of these details with what the narrator describes as "an excellent pickle of epigrams, which she herself enjoyed the more because she believed as unquestioningly in birth and no-birth as she did in game and vermin" (55). As the narrator gently mocks such thinking, similar kinds of
descriptions recur throughout the novel which remind us of the fact that Mrs. Cadwallader is not the only one in town who is concerned with classifying people. With each description, the narrator draws our attention to the inevitable slippages that result from such pickles of epigrams. In response to Mr. Brooke’s question about how he organizes material for his work, *The Key to All Mythologies*, Mr. Casaubon replies, “In pigeon-holes partly”(18). Brooke responds with “Ah, pigeon-holes will not do. I have tried pigeon-holes but everything gets mixed in pigeon-holes: I never know whether a paper is in A or Z”(18). Indeed, we may even see our own critical methodologies that examine Jewish themes only in the presence of Jewish characters, as an extension of this line of thinking. What Eliot’s narrator mocks in these scenes is the kind of thinking that believes in the purity and stability of boxes and pigeon holes in a world that is always already mingled, one that is that is essentially unboxable. As we learn, Mr. Brooke is hardly the only one unable to classify and label effectively. Even Casaubon makes the mistake of believing there is one single source or origin of all myths, rather than viewing them relationally to multiple sources and cultures. These characters’ efforts to find origins, truths, and systems of classification are all in vain. As we see repeatedly in this narrative, people who have been absorbed as insiders turn out to have had dubious pasts, while those who are clearly marked as outsiders prove to have roots in the inner circle.

Wills, which are enforced by law, are thought to represent order and classifications, to maintain family lines, power, class, and privilege. By examining the outcome of each of these wills, however, we find that none serves this purpose. Even as
members of this community unquestioningly assume that they will inherit wealth along
blood lines, this never happens. In this process we find that families are not separated
by blood lines, but linked by them, and at the core of each blood line, and each violation
of that line, is a Semitic discourse.

The novel’s subtitle alerts us to the fact that this is a “study of Provincial life”
not in Israel or the East End of London, but in the English countryside. To safeguard
against any confusion in this matter, Eliot begins with a description of the eminently
English Brooke sisters — Dorothea, whose “hands and wrists were so finely formed that
she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin
appeared to Italian Painters”(7) and Celia, “who has more common sense”(7) that her
“clever” sister. Already we are made aware of the need to visualize difference, in the
comparison of Dorothea to a painting of the Madonna — one of the most famous Jewish
mothers. As the narrator continues by tracing the origin of the Brooke sisters’ English
heritage, we begin to see a subtle critique of the terms used to distinguish the English
from the not-so-English in this town:

the Brooke connexions, though not exactly aristocratic, were
unquestionably “good:” if you inquired backward for a generation or two,
you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers —
anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an
ancestor discernable as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell,
but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political
troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. (7)

Remarkably, this passage alludes not only to an old English lineage that includes one
who strayed, but also one who later converted. And although Celia and Dorothea are
clearly cultural insiders, the narrator goes on to remind us of the importance of

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conformity among the provincial, sarcastically adding that “Sane people did what there
neighbors did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them”(9).
Here, Eliot humorously emphasizes the importance of the visibility of difference, of
seeing outsiders, aliens, or the insane by their appearance and behavior, and of the
labeling process that inevitably results from anything out of the ordinary. At the same
time we learn that a certain arbitrariness accompanies the persecution of certain people
as outsiders, and the town’s willingness to include others, as if they were true insiders.
In a discussion between Mrs. Plymdale and Mrs Bulstrode, we see not only another
Semitic discourse at work, but one that alludes to the link that will appear between Mr.
Bulstrode and his money. Mrs. Plymdale explains to her friend, “if I was obliged to
speak, I should say I was not fond of strangers coming into a town.” Mrs. Bulstrode
responds with “I don’t know, Selina. . . Mr. Bulstrode was a stranger here at one time.
Abraham and Moses were strangers in the land, and we are told to entertain strangers.
And especially. . . when they are unexceptional” (276). Mrs. Bulstrode unwittingly uses
Jewish history to foreshadow the connections her husband is later revealed to have had
with a “jew pawnbroker.” Middlemarchers may think they can see outsiders, but truth
be told, their efforts are no more successful than Brooke’s pigeon holes.

Eliot’s Semitic discourse reveals at once Middlemarchers’ efforts to discern
insiders from outsiders, and ironically, their failure to accomplish this goal.
Simultaneously, Eliot’s Semitic discourse unites Jewish history with English identities,
even as the townspeople believe that they have prevented any such mixings. This is
painfully clear in the language Eliot uses to describe Featherstone’s will and his leach-
like family who feel entitled to an inheritance because they are family and of the same blood. Mrs. Vincy’s early comment that the Featherstone and Waule’s are “Rich as Jews” (97) alerts us to the link this town makes between money and Jews. This context also helps frame the later description of Featherstone’s family as leach-like, hoping to feed off of his inheritance. However, when these leechlike family members are proved to be Christian after all, we begin to understand that Eliot is in fact critiquing the use of anti-Semitic stereotypes as the bases for exclusion, in this case, exclusion from a will.

The narrator subtly introduces us to this family as follows:

Brother Solomon and sister Jane were rich, and the family candour and total abstinence from false politeness with which they were always received seemed to them no argument that their brother in the solemn act of making his will would overlook the superior claims of wealth... But brother Jonah, sister Martha, and all the needy exiles held a different point of view... it was not to be thought but that an own brother “lying there” with dropsy in his legs must come to feel that blood was thicker than water, and if he didn’t alter his will, he might have money by him. At any rate some blood-relations should be on the premises and on the watch against those who were hardly relations at all. Such things had been known as forged wills and disputed wills, which seemed to have the golden-hazy advantage of somehow enabling non-legatees to live out of them. Again, those who were no blood-relations might be caught making away with things — and poor Peter “lying there” helpless. (284-85)

The narrator’s emphasis on Peter’s apparent helplessness (“lying there”) foregrounds his agency in devising his will, and the false sympathy his family exhibits in their efforts to get his money. On one level, this passage presents the assumption among Featherstone’s family that because they are linked to Peter by blood, they are entitled to his property. At the same time, the very language used to present this view comes from a source that undercuts this idea, since, after all, Peter Featherstone sees their mercenary
intentions.

While it may be tempting to think that Featherstone’s parasitic relations are here compared to Jews, the narrator reminds us that they are in fact Christian. In comparison with the animals on Noah’s ark who were all feeding off of the same fodder, the narrator explains,

The same sort of temptation befell the Christian Carnivora who formed Peter Featherstone’s funeral procession; most of them having their minds bent on a limited store which each would have liked to get the most of. The long-recognized blood-relations and connexions by marriage made already a goodly number, which, multiplied by possibilities, presented a fine range for jealous conjecture and pathetic hopefulness. (310)

Eliot’s references to Biblical names in the passages describing Featherstone’s blood relatives is telling, for she includes names from both the Hebrew Bible as well as the Christian New Testament. Solomon, ruler of Israel and Judea in the tenth century B.C.E. was renowned for his great wealth, his famous gold temple, and his trade throughout the Middle East and northern Africa. Despite his great wisdom, Solomon was often depicted in the late Victorian period for his tendency to hoard gold and money, evidence of which helped foster the assumption that Jews were money hoarders. Jonah also comes from the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament, and recalls the story of Jonah whom God asks to arise and spread the word of God to pagans. Jonah tries unsuccessfully to run away from this duty. At one point he takes a boat to southern Spain, but realizing that he has brought the sailors bad luck, asks to be overthrown. God saves Jonah from being swallowed by a great fish, and Jonah is once again faced with the task of preaching the word of God to the pagans. The name Peter
recalls the story of Easter. Peter was the first to see Christ’s body rise. Martha is the one guilty of worrying about preparing supper for Christ, unlike her sister Mary who sees the higher duty of kneeling down to worship Christ rather than worrying about worldly concerns, such as food. The crossovers between the Jewish and Christian Bibles in this passage remind us of the shared lineage between these two religions, as well as the similarity of characters in each. Just as Peter is related to Bother Solomon, so are Jonah and Martha who fail to fulfill their responsibilities toward God. The Christian emphasis on self-abnegation, charity, and a rejection of worldly goods stands ominously against the “Christian Carnivora” who are all related by blood to Peter Featherstone.

As Featherstone’s relations battle each other preceding the disclosure of the will, we learn that none becomes a beneficiary. Mr. Standish, Featherstone’s lawyer, explains that there are in fact two wills and a codicil. The first will disperses the money widely among the family, giving only Fred Vincy a significant inheritance. The second will, which nullifies the first, leaves most of Featherstone’s money to a distant relative, Joshua Rigg, the remainder of which, as outlined in the codicil, goes toward the construction of almshouses for old men. Important in these passages is the linking of money, questions of legitimacy, inheritance, and Englishness, all of which are imagined around a Biblical discourse. On the surface Featherstone’s will might appear to invoke anti-Semitic stereotypes, but the narrator’s sarcastic tone, which mocks the townspeople’s use of these stereotypes. When anti-Semitic stereotypes are typically invoked, they work to separate or alienate Jews; however, in this scene, the tone and
message suggest the reverse.

The question of legitimacy, or who should inherit the money and be made wealthy, is at stake here, but so too is the link between both Solomon’s and Peter’s “Jewish money.” Although Featherstone takes the time to lay out his will, the three pieces of this document contradict one another, and his last ditch effort to secure his final wishes is ultimately foiled when Mary refuses to follow his orders. Featherstone attempts to control the future, of both his money and his family, and instead his failure to obtain his last will represents the past more than the present. Just as Mr. Brooke fails to separate papers in pigeon holes, and Casaubon is unable to find a single truth or source of all knowledge, the logic of wills fails as well. Both of these men are either laughable or pathetic, or both, because of their inability to see how systems of classification, of linearity, and of human control over their fates are elusive. Moreover, while the other characters may see these faults in Brooke and Casaubon, they fail to see how their own wills and inheritances are constructed around a similar, classificatory logic.

While Featherstone and his will are depicted with a Semitic discourse, calling upon Biblical characters, anti-Semitic assumptions about Jewish greed, and the language of outsider and insider status, the other wills in this novel build on this trope. Rather than make subtly symbolic references to Jews, money, and the Bible, Casaubon’s will and Bulstrode’s will evolve directly around and through Will Ladislaw’s place in and relationship to the town of Middlemarch. Our first introduction to Will Ladislaw happens through Dorothea’s curiosity about a picture hanging on the wall in Casaubon’s
house. Later when Dorothea, Celia, and Casaubon see Will in the garden, Dorothea remarks that he looks like his grandmother, or like the portrait of his grandmother she noticed hanging on the wall. Feeling compelled to make some recompense for the inheritance Will was denied due to his grandmother’s mesalliance, Casaubon pays for his cousin’s education. From the very beginning, Will poses a threat to this community. Unlike Tertius Lydgate, the true outsider in this novel whom, the narrator explains, “Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing . . . and assimilating . . . very comfortably,” Will is treated with suspicion and scorn. Mr. Hackbutt maintains of Will, “He is said to be of foreign extraction” (336) to which Mr. Hawley responds, “I know the sort. . . He’ll begin with flourishing about the Rights of Man and end with murdering a wench. That’s the style” (336-337). As Will develops personal ties with Middlemarchers, especially women such as Rosamond Vincy and Dorothea Brooke, the more specific those terms of alienation become. Ironically, although Lydgate really does have a “past” with a French actress who murders her husband, and Bulstrode has committed a crime by stealing money from Will’s grandmother, Will is the one whom this society chooses to alienate. Again, the novel alludes not only to the connections between these groups of people, but the arbitrary results of delineating between people, families, and blood lines.

The narrator explains that Casaubon’s antipathy toward Will did not “spring from the common jealousy of a winter-worn husband: it was something deeper, bred by his lifelong claims and discontents” (338). Will explains to Dorothea that his anger toward Casaubon comes from a sense of injustice: “It was an abominable thing that my
grandmother should have been disinherited because she made what they called a
*mesalliance*, though there was nothing to be said against her husband except that he was
a Polish refugee who gave lessons for his bread” (343). Of his grandfather Will adds, he
“was a patriot — a bright fellow — could speak many languages — musical — got his
bread by teaching all sorts of things” (343). Not unlike Daniel Deronda’s mother, Will
explains that his mother ran away from her parents, for reasons he does not understand,
to become an actress: “She was a dark-eyed creature, with crisp ringlets, and never
seemed to be getting old. You see I come of rebellious blood on both sides” (344).

Such rebellious blood causes more than a few ripples throughout the town of
Middlemarch. Sir James complains to Mrs. Cadwallader of Will, “And now I find he’s
in everybody’s mouth in Middlemarch as the editor of the ‘Pioneer.’ There are stories
going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not.” (356). Mrs.
Cadwallader responds with, “he’s a dangerous young sprig, that Mr. Ladislaw... with
his opera songs and his ready tongue. A sort of Byronic hero—an amorous conspirator,
it strikes me” (356-57). When Will begins to speak on behalf of political reform, and in
particular to support the extension of voting rights to middle-class white men, not only
does he become more of a threat, but his identity is perceived to be even more
dangerous, according to Middlemarchers. While Lydgate sees Will as “a sort of gypsy”
(434), Mr. Keck, the editor of “The Trumpet” (“The Pioneer’s” rival paper), describes
Will as “not only a Polish emissary but crack-brained, which accounted for the
preternatural quickness and glibness of his speech when he got on to a platform — as he
did whenever he had an opportunity, speaking with a facility which cast reflections on

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solid Englishmen generally” (434). The narrator continues, in a manner not uncritical of Keck: “It was disgusting to Keck to see a strip of a fellow, with light curls round his head, get up and speechify by the hour against institutions ‘which had existed when he was in his cradle’” (434). And in a leading article of the “Trumpet,” Keck characterized Ladislaw’s speech at a Reform meeting as “the violence of an energumen — a miserable effort to shroud in the brilliancy of fireworks the daring of irresponsible statements and the poverty of a knowledge which was of the cheapest and most recent description”(434). The perception of Will’s peculiarity, which begins with observations about his mixed blood and alien nature, gradually evolves into an absurd fear of his spontaneity, the manner in which he sits while visiting friends, and of his affinity toward children. In a rather glib tone, the narrator describes not only Will’s behavior, but the town’s interpretation of that behavior:

He had somehow picked up a troop of droll children, little hatless boys with their galligaskin much worn and scant shirting to hand out, little girls who tossed their hair out of their eyes to look at him, and guardian brothers at the mature age of seven. This troop he had led out on gypsy excursions to Halsell Wood at nutting-time, and since the cold weather had set in he had taken them on a clear day to gather sticks for a bonfire in the hollow of a hillside, where he drew out a small feast of gingerbread for them, and improvised a Punch-and-Judy drama with some private home-made puppets. Here was one oddity. Another was, that in houses where he got friendly, he was given to stretch himself at full length on the rug while he talked, and was apt to be discovered in this attitude by occasional callers for whom such an irregularity was likely to confirm their notions of his dangerously mixed blood and general laxity. (435)

Once his blood is “proved” to be dangerous, everything Will says and does is contextualized within this racist logic. To complicate matters, Will’s friendships with Dorothea and Rosamond add further scorn to the rumors. When Casaubon dies, and the
codicil to his will is discovered, Middlemarchers believe that Will is the cause for such a codicil, when really it was Casaubon’s own jealousy and insecurity that led him to write it.

On several occasions, Dorothea attempts to help restore Will’s inheritance, feeling that his exclusion from the family will is unfair. Casaubon sees these efforts as a sign of Dorothea’s waning sympathy towards himself, and her increasing desire for Will’s attention. If Dorothea does in fact desire Will at this point, she is unaware of it. Rather, she is strictly intent upon giving to those less fortunate than herself, and of making reparations for earlier “family” mistakes. Initially Casaubon’s dislike of Will is aggravated by Will’s decision to work for the newspaper, which Casaubon alleges is beneath Will’s class. However, the increasing sense of tension and anger Casaubon fails to stifle in discussions about Will suggest that more is at work than just family relations. The narrator explains of Casaubon’s bitterness,

To all the facts which he knew, he added imaginary facts both present and future which became more real to him than those, because they called up a stronger dislike, a more predominating bitterness. Suspicion and jealousy of Will Ladislaw’s intentions, suspicion and jealousy of Dorothea’s impressions, were constantly at their weaving work. . . . What he was jealous of was her opinion, the sway that might be given to her ardent mind in its judgements, and the future possibilities to which these might lead her. . . . He was quite sure that Dorothea was the cause of Will’s return from Rome, and his determination to settle in the neighborhood; and he was penetrating enough to imagine that Dorothea had innocently encouraged this course. It was as clear as possible that she was ready to be attached to Will and to be pliant to his suggestions. . . . Dorothea’s outpouring of her notions about money, in the darkness of the night, had done nothing but bring a mixture of more odious foreboding into her husband’s mind. (393)

Casaubon attempts to control a situation that, as the narrator suggests, is a product of his
jealous imagination. Trapped, and desperate to avoid making a promise to act without knowledge of that act, Dorothea defers answering Casaubon’s request until it is too late, and he dies.

In the end, Casaubon’s last will, to prevent Dorothea from marrying Will, remains unfulfilled just as Featherstone’s last will to burn his second will is also foiled. Neither of these men are able to control the future. Of course, inheritances still happen, but not in the manner in which they were finally intended by either author. Moreover, although Casaubon’s will may not grant him his final wish, it does effectively perpetuate and even embellish rumors about Will’s dangerous nature. After learning about the codicil, Mr. Brooke tells Sir James that Dorothea “doesn’t want to marry Ladislaw”(457). Sir James retorts, “But this codicil is framed so as to make everybody believe that she did. I don’t believe anything of the sort about Dorothea. . . but I suspect Ladislaw. I tell you frankly, I suspect Ladislaw”(457). Each of these wills presents us with a Semitic discourse intending to separate outsiders from insiders, alleged Jews from Christians, and Will from Middlemarchers. While Featherstone’s will linked Christian culture to Jewish Biblical narratives and anti-Semitic stereotypes, Casaubon’s, and later Bulstrode’s, alienates Will, not because he is a Jew, but because his identity is constructed by a Semitic discourse that renders him an outsider.

The problem of inheritance in this novel is first addressed in the image of the two sisters hanging on the wall in Casaubon’s home. One made a bad marriage, for which she paid the price of exclusion from the family estate. The other sister, Casaubon’s grandmother, marries well, and thus, her grandson inherits that estate.
Oddly, though, Casaubon is hardly of Middlemarch. Mrs. Cadwallader refers to Casaubon's mixed heritage by asserting, "Casaubon has money enough; I must do him that justice. As to his blood, I suppose the family quarterings are three cuttle-fish sable, and a commentator rampant" (52). David Carroll's notes explain that a cuttle-fish disguises itself with black ink and the family quarterings refer to "the marshaling of several coats of arms from different families on one shield" (note 52, 790). Gradually we begin to understand that Casaubon not only studies people whose lineages are impure, but that his own past, according to rumors in Middlemarch, has been polluted by "black" blood. Sir James Chettam racializes Casaubon as black when, upon learning that Dorothea is engaged to marry Casaubon, he compares her to Desdemona. Casaubon's identity here is much more complex than that of simply a bookworm. In fact he even compares himself to a wandering Jew: "I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes" (16-17). He is continually described as a masked outsider, a person of mixed "sable" or "Moorish" identity, and with links to Jewish history. Sir James's bitterness comes out when he exclaims of Casaubon, "He has no good red blood in his body" (65) to which Mrs. Cadwallader responds, "Somebody put a drop under a magnifying-glass, and it was all semicolons and parentheses" (65). Clearly Casaubon has inherited not only a blot, but blood that is punctuated by pauses, intermittent strands, and parenthetical affiliations. Like Will Ladislaw, Casaubon has inherited an impure past, but unlike his cousin, Casaubon thinks he has passed as an insider. Read within this context,
Casaubon’s *Key* symbolizes his overcompensation in thinking that his own racial lineage is pure and evolved, when in fact, his community has constructed his identity in various stages of degeneration.

It is within this context of blood polluted by parentheses and semicolons that we are introduced to the rest of Middlemarch society which, despite its efforts to maintain the illusion of separateness and security from outsiders, repeatedly proves that it has already been “polluted.” Eliot does not suggest here that outsiders are a threat, but rather, that such classifications fail to recognize the connections between and among everyone, regardless of whatever blots they may think they have inherited. Dorothea, in pursuit of a husband whom she might serve, and “who could teach you even Hebrew” if you chose, finds herself attracted to this racially uncertain, dried up, pedantic, and emotionally remote Edward Casaubon. Upon learning about this, Celia teases Dorothea by exclaiming, “you admire a man with the complexion of a cochon de lait” (19). If the reference to the skin of a sucking pig seems misplaced here, the necessity of teasing Dorothea proves to be valid; for Casaubon does turn out to be a poor choice of a husband. As readers of this text, we may stumble upon the reference to Casaubon’s pig-like complexion. Why is this image, of all others, used to describe a man who believes that the study of Hebrew will illuminate the social duties of a Christian? Later we learn of Dorothea’s interest in pigs, in her plans to build new cottages for the people who work and live on the estate. She suggests that “instead of Lazarus at the gate, we should put the pig-sty cottages outside the park-gate” (29) to keep them separate, as outsiders.

In her provocative study *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*,
Claudine Fabre-Vassas invites us to consider the implications of the folkloric history of associations between Jews and pigs. Her claim, which explains one connection between Casaubon’s pig-like skin and the accusation of Will’s Jewish blood is that in response to the fact that Jews do not eat pork, European Christian culture has historically represented Jews as either desirous of the flesh of Christian children or as linked to pigs, the very thing which they prohibit in their culture. This is evident in the term “Marrano” which describes Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity. The word “Marrano” means “pig” in Spanish and its Arabic root “mahram” means something forbidden.” Fabre Vassas explains that “The essence of the Jewish being and customs was thus interpreted with the pig as the key, and what was and is still considered a stereotype became an obsessively articulated reading, ever present in history in one aspect or another”(7). However, that the Jewish law forbidding consumption of pork was not exclusive to Jews, but manifested itself inversely into Christian culture. “While the Jews were portrayed as desirous of pork, or of the flesh of Christian children, Christians absorb this ritual through “the central mystery of the Eucharist” (8).

When we consider Fabre-Vassas interpretation of the significance of pigs, Mrs. Cadwallader’s claim that Casaubon’ blood is polluted with semicolons and parentheses, and Celia's accusation that Casaubon has the skin of a sucking pig against the fear that Will is trying to pass in this town, we begin to understand Eliot’s awareness of the network of Semitic strands used to alienate “outsiders” who are technically English, within English culture. Nancy Henry reminds us that by the nineteenth century “Jews,
whose ability to assimilate (that is ‘become like us’) was both desirable and threatening to nineteenth-century English Christians. Jews were assimilated all over Europe, many so thoroughly acculturated to the nation in which they lived, as to be indistinguishable from the ‘real’ nationals” (75).

Bulstrode’s downfall begins with Featherstone’s death and is intensified by the injustice done to Will Ladislaw by Casaubon’s codicil. Peter Featherstone’s choice, albeit not his final choice, to leave his name and estate to Rigg, draws an unsavory visitor to town. Rigg’s stepfather, named Raffles, appears at his estate with the hopes of getting money from Rigg. When Rigg refuses him, Raffles tries Bulstrode instead. Mrs. Bulstrode’s earlier offhand comment that her husband Nicholas Bulstrode was an outsider foreshadows the threat he will come to represent. Bulstrode does indeed appear to have a “past” which he has successfully hidden in Middlemarch with his money. From Raffles we learn that Bulstrode not only married Casaubon’s aunt, who is also Ladislaw’s grandmother, but that he “earned” his money under dubious circumstances by working for the “Jew pawnbroker” grandfather of Will Ladislaw. Through the sale of stolen goods — that is, goods whose origins are unknown — Bulstrode later marries the pawnbroker’s widow. Although Will’s grandmother tries to locate her daughter, Will’s mother, Bulstrode hires Raffles to hide this information so that he may be the sole inheritor of his wife’s will. Although he initially succeeds in manipulating his wife and her will, the past returns when Raffles appears in Middlemarch with stories about Bulstrode’s illicitly acquired money.

Raffles is hardly welcomed into this town, even by Will, who tries to escape a
conversation with him. Raffles succeeds, however, in telling Will about his mother’s flight from her parents. When Will learns that his grandfather had been in the “thieving line” and that his mother worked very hard to cut her connections to her parents, he responds with indignance. The narrator explains that Will

felt as if he had had dirt cast on him amidst shouts of scorn... But if Dorothea’s friends had known this story — if the Chettams had known it— they would have had a fine colour to give their suspicions, a welcome ground for thinking him unfit to come near her. However, let them suspect what they pleased, they would fine themselves in the wrong. They would find out that the blood in his veins was as free from the taint of meanness as theirs. (574)

Will’s past, contrary to the rest of the stories in this town, illustrates his mother’s effort to separate herself from her inheritance, as opposed to being denied an inheritance. But the dirt of her father’s business practices find their way to Will, who sees his inheritance as a stain of blood. This response, Eliot suggests, is part of the same vacuous logic of wills and inheritances as a means of controlling bloodlines and morality. This scene causes us to wonder why Will should inherit the responsibility of his grandfather’s mercenary habits. By extension, why should Bulstrode escape that same responsibility? The pigeon holes appear to have collapsed once again when we learn that Sarah attempted to disinherit herself by running away. Will’s appearance in town at the same time as Raffles’s undercuts Sarah’s efforts, and remind us of the inevitable links that unite all of these different people and families. Although she has no will, as Featherstone and Casaubon do, Will’s mother cannot sever her connections to other people any more than she can control the outcome of the future. Whatever past she has inherited will take shape in her son, regardless of her efforts to redirect and appropriate
that inheritance. Will’s feeling of having dirt thrown on him suggests that he has internalized the logic of blood purity and the visibility of racial distinctions.

Nonetheless, no one escapes the past. All destinies are controlled by their histories and thus, each strand in the web affects, and is affected by, all of the other strands.

Following his meeting with Will, Raffles moves on to Bulstrode. In an effort to bribe him, Raffles threatens to expose Bulstrode’s past. This, of course, has already taken place without Bulstrode’s knowledge. Bulstrode remembers “his first moments of shrinking . . . some of these taking the form of prayer”:

The business was established and had old roots; is it not one thing to set up a new gin-palace and another to accept an investment in an old one? The profits made out of lost souls — where can the line be drawn at which they begin in human transactions? Was it not even God’s way of saving his chosen people? (579)

Despite his feelings of conflict and betrayal, Bulstrode continues with the business. Even as Bulstrode finds a way to reconcile his guilt for engaging in such a business, we learn that it is the first in a chain of events that lead to his final downfall. His justification extends the comparison made by Mrs. Bulstrode earlier in the narrative when she compared her husband to Moses and Abraham. God excuses and saves his chosen people, Bulstrode reasons, so surely his own actions, like those of the Jews’, are redeemable. Thus, not only is Bulstrode an outsider in this town, and affiliated with the man who is falsely accused of being a “jew pawnbroker,” but Bulstrode is aligned here with Jewish historical figures. More precisely, his status as an outsider is produced by a discourse about both Moses and Abraham and God’s “chosen people.” Bulstrode wonders, rhetorically, can he not be redeemed like the Jews — is he not like the Jews?
Like Sarah Dunkirk, Bulstrode cannot run away from his past, and yet, his connection to Will Ladislaw, and his marriage to a Vincy (one of the preeminent Middlemarch families) undercuts the distinction between these classifications. As the delineations between insider and outsider continue to unravel, the certainty of English blood and money appear to have been mixed all along with outsiders, like Will Ladislaw and Nicholas Bulstrode whose “family money” furnished Middlemarch with a bank and a hospital. The Semitic discourse that constructs Bulstrode’s identity and position within Middlemarch underscores the fact that Semitic discourse is not about Jews. Bulstrode certainly obtained his money illicitly, and from an illicit source, but the “jew pawnbroker” is not a Jew. The subject of this discourse, and of Bulstrode’s indiscretions that align him with a “jew pawnbroker,” in fact represents the real subject of this discourse — the English people who imagine a “Jewish” past (which is not really Jewish). Bulstrode’s status as an outsider more accurately reflects the fear of Jews (especially those who threaten to pass as insiders) within this English town.

Bulstrode tries to make up for his past actions by confessing his sins to Will and offering him some of the inheritance that should have gone to Will. He explains,

You have a claim on me, Mr. Ladislaw... not a legal claim, but one which my conscience recognizes. I was enriched by that marriage — a result which would probably not have taken place — certainly to the same extent — if your grandmother could have discovered her daughter... It is my wish, Mr. Ladislaw, to make amends for the deprivation which befell your mother. I know that you are without fortune, and I wish to supply you adequately from a store which would have probably already been yours had your grandmother been certain of your mother’s existence and been able to find her. (584-5)

Will’s reaction to Bulstrode’s offer to include Will in his will follows the law of this
land: Will rejects the money, for fear that it will stain him. Alluding to the fact that Will is more of an insider than this town is willing to grant, Will uses the same logic of blood inheritance to take himself out of Bulstrode’s will. It is noteworthy that the very language Will uses to reject this money invokes the visibility of difference, of stains and blemishes, and a biological destiny implied by a blood line. Will asserts, “My unblemished honour is important to me. It is important to me to have no stain on my birth and connections. And now I find that there is a stain which I can’t help. My mother felt it, and tried to keep as clear of it as she could, and so will I’”(586). This last line, pun presumably intended, alerts us to the metaphorical and literal source of this problem — the problem of inheritance, which in this culture links blood or family with money. The narrator continues, “He was too strongly possessed with passionate rebellion against this inherited blot which had been thrust on his knowledge”(587). The blot that is inherited, or the blood that delineates who shall receive family money, stands for the problem of historicity in a culture intent upon severing connections with the past in an effort to control the future.

In *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance*, Bernard Semmel reminds us that inheritance and the rejection of wills in Eliot’s fiction are directly related to her criticism of national inheritance. He explains, “Eliot had become convinced that . . . values of individualism and cosmopolitanism that prevailed in British liberal circles would impair both family affection and social cohesion” (6). We see this point well illustrated in Featherstone’s will and the “needy exiles” who only alienate themselves from family claims and relations. In addition, Eliot challenges
Will’s refusal to accept Bulstrode’s offer, as well as his mother’s similar rejection of her past. Indeed, the individualistic attitude Sarah Dunkirk and her son Will Ladislaw exhibit is an extension of the racist logic that informs *Middlemarch*’s language of exclusion and inheritance. Semmel continues:

> Only a nation, a society that she saw as based on filial sentiment, perceived national kinship, and common historical traditions — one that linked past and future in the same way in which the transmission of property from parents to children linked the generations — could provide a realistic foundation for communal solidarity. These ties would make it possible for an individual to transcend selfish egoism and to feel a deep sympathetic concern, first toward his kin and then toward the extended family of the nation. (6)

Thus, when we read “family” in this novel, we might understand it to mean “nation.” The impulse to remain independent, separated from one’s past, prevents people from developing sympathy and responsibility toward their fellow family and nation. Nevertheless, even as Will is guilty of disassociating himself by his rejection of his family (nation), so is Casaubon, whose focus on Jewish antiquities and the origins of his national history prevents him from exhibiting any familial sympathy for his wife. Eliot suggests with this pairing that either extreme produces disaster.

By the time Eliot began writing *Middlemarch*, she was vocal about her belief in the relations and connections between people and about her desire to act on this fellowship toward others. Read within this context, the web imagery in *Middlemarch* suggests much about the relations people share even in a small town intent upon producing differences. Semmel adds, “The life of the individual could not be separated from that of the nation, whose past had shaped him and to whose traditions he was their
heir, regardless of his own wishes"(13). Perhaps it is telling that readers who are critical of Daniel Deronda and Impressions for Eliot’s failure to unite the Jewish and Christian parts neglect to notice how seamlessly interwoven they are in Middlemarch.

The End of the Beginnings

Taking up the anxiety produced by the fear that Jews might pass and be undetectable to Christians, Eliot’s novel illustrates what she later articulates in Impressions of Theophrastus Such — that the origins of Christianity lie in Jewish history. We see this view in Eliot’s choice of character names, not only in Will, which calls attention to the logic of inheritance, of what English Christian culture has inherited from its Jewish past, but also of Casaubon whose name alludes to yet another historical inheritance. The name “Casaubon” comes from Isaac Casaubon, the French scholar who edited and added marginal glosses and an Arabic glossary for David dePomis’s Ditionario Novo Hebraico Molto Copioso Dechirato in Tre Lingue od David de Pomis. Isaac Casaubon’s edition of this work which was published in 1587 with the title Zemah David is, according to Wilson, occasionally “described as a Talmudic dictionary and it contains sets of Rabbinic teachings. David describes himself as a Hebrew linguist, philosopher, and physician from the tribe of Juda — ‘one of the four distinguished Roman families which were brought by Titus from Erez Israel to Italy’” (27). If Eliot’s Edward Casaubon is concerned with Hebrew and Jewish history as the key to understanding the true duties of a Christian, then his name recalls that vision in
Isaac Casaubon, whose edition of dePomis's book serves as a source of European Christendom which, not coincidentally, originates with a Jew (Wilson 27).

Along similar lines, we follow the escalating rumours that delineate Will as an outsider. We may read him as merely a prefiguration of Daniel Deronda — as the Jew who didn't know he was a Jew — but his presence within a larger context of this novel's criticism of inheritance suggests that it is the very falsity of the accusation that matters most. When the word is out that Will is a Jew, Middlemarch residents are revealed to have been even more tanged and mingled. Farebrother observes of this rumor about Will's Jewish identity:

it is a strange story. So, our mercurial Ladislaw has a queer genealogy! A high-spirited young lady and a musical Polish patriot made a lively enough stock from him to spring from, but I should never have suspected a grafting of the Jew pawnbroker. However, there's no knowing what a mixture will turn out beforehand. Some sorts of dirt serve to clarify. (676)

Mr. Hawley replies to this with, "It's just what I should have expected . . . Any cursed alien blood, Jew, Corsican, or Gypsy" (676). The narrator adds, "Young Ladislaw the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker" was a phrase which had entered emphatically into the dialogues about the Bulstrode business at Lowick, Tipton, and Freshitt" (727). Even Mrs. Cadwallader, who harbored earlier suspicions about Will's heritage remarks in response to this news, "It must be admitted that his blood is a frightful mixture. . . The Casaubon cuttle-fish fluid to begin with, and then a rebellious Polish fiddler or, dancing-master, was it? — and then an old clo—" (768). She need not finish the sentence for us to ascertain the connection she makes between Will's family and Jewish old clothes dealers, of the sort depicted by Harrington's nurse, which remained a
powerful antisemitic image throughout the century. Eliot concludes with more sarcasm by her narrator, who explains that after Dorothea and Will marry and have children, they visit Tipton, the home where Celia and Sir James live with their children. The Ladislaw cousins, “visiting Tipton as much as if the blood of these cousins had been less dubiously mixed” (784).

It is logical to read Daniel Deronda with an eye toward Jewish assimilation into Christian English culture. In the process we learn much about Jewish survival, the evolution of Judaism in the west, and English antisemitism. Michael Ragussis’s Figures of Conversion examines a long history of discourse in which English Christian culture represents Jewish characters in various stages and manifestations of what he calls “conversion” which includes passing, assimilation, religions conversion and inter-faith or inter-racial marriages. My reading of Middlemarch runs parallel to Ragussis’s study. Rather than look at Jewish characters who are depicted in their efforts to appear English, my study focuses instead on Christian English characters whose identity is constructed by a Semitic discourse, as they attempt to delineate themselves as racially distinct from Jews. The use of this discourse does not mean that these characters are transformed into Jews. In the case of Will Ladislaw and Edward Casaubon, it serves to remind us of Eliot’s assertion that Jews and Christians have a shared history that has been forgotten by her culture. She goes on to show that in fact, those who are pegged as Jewish and who therefore have “Jewish blood” are the descendants of the very people who founded Christianity. These points of ambiguity, though, are representative of the slippage produced by a blood-based race discourse that asserts continuity and purity.
European culture has chosen to use this bodily liquid as a basis for determining moral, intellectual, and physical attributes. According to the logic of such a race discourse, identity is produced by biology and not by culture.

In a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, dated 1876, four years after completing *Middlemarch*, Eliot writes, “There is nothing I should care more to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs. But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity have a particular debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment” (*Letters* v6, 301-2). This letter is used and read today by readers of *Daniel Deronda*, when in fact it also resonates powerfully with Dorothea’s claim in *Middlemarch* that “It was true . . . that Mr. Casaubon had a debt to the Ladislaws — that he had to pay back what the Ladislaws had been wronged of. And now, she began to think of her husband’s will. . .” (349). The links between these two quotations illuminate the manner in which the racial question does not appear in this novel exclusively in the presence of Jewish characters. Rather, English characters’ presences in the British novel invoke English anxiety about the threat of the Jew, especially of Jewish assimilation. Eliot depicts, and in the process critiques, her culture’s use of a Semitic discourse to alienate outsiders, when in fact these outsiders are aligned with Jews turn out to have been English Christians.

Feminist scholars such as Laura Chrisman and Anne McClintock have argued rightly that the absence of women in a text does not imply that feminist concerns are
mute. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said has similarly argued that the absence or foreclosure of the colonial subject does not erase colonial presences in the novel. Building on this important scholarship, I have tried to show that the absence of Jewish characters does not mean the Jewish question is absent. Rather, the racial identity of the Jews in British fiction is primarily a concern among and about non-Jews. I offer this chapter, in part, as a corrective to the logic of thinking that Semitic discourse or the racial question is relevant only when the Jewish person enters the text. In fact, as I have tried to show, the ideological import of race in the nineteenth-century novel exists in the production of English identity that is constructed as stable and fixed and separable. When we continue with this line of thinking, of seeing Jewish issues only when a pure or purely discernible Jew enters the text, we reproduce Mrs. Cadwallader’s racism. My aim is to explore the cultural import of the framework within which a race discourse flourishes “undetected.” If ideology has the power to hide the points of contradiction and protest within “cultural truths,” the benefit of reading Semitic discourse is to expose these contradictions and ambiguities, and in the process, understand more about the production of English identity as a “cultural truth.” Seeing the Jewish question as separate from the English question is to reproduce the logic of the very typological thinking we laugh at in regard to Mrs. Cadwallader’s mention of the cuttle fish and in Casaubon’s linear search for origins.

Eliot traces a prominent Semitic discourses that flourishes in the absence of Jewish characters. Of course this makes sense, given that the subject of Semitic discourse is those who need to imagine and appropriate Jewish history and culture for
the maintenance of their own identity. As I have tried to show, this impulse comes from English anxiety in this period about preserving its own racial identity. A similar phenomenon appears in the next chapter in which I analyze the significance of King Solomon’s absence in a novel about British masculine identity. While Eliot seems to critique her culture’s efforts to delineate and categorize people along racial lines, Haggard instead follows a tradition more akin to Disraeli’s *Tancred* in which he fails to question how Semitic discourse produces English identity as racially superior to this imagined version of Jewish culture.
Endnotes


2. Eliot 59.


5. For a good discussion of nineteenth-century Polish history and the development of Will’s character see David Malcolm’s “What is a Pole Doing in Middlemarch?”

6. In Haight’s biography of Eliot, he describes an anonymous letter written to Eliot on June 4, 1872, which caused her to correct her error about the legal claims of two wills: "A barrister in the Temple wrote anonymously to George Eliot to say that by destroying his second will, as he tried to do in chapter 33, Featherstone could not have revives the earlier one. In the next book (chapter 52) George Eliot let Mr. Farebrother explain that fact to Mary Garth.” (446)

7. For more on this see Baker, chapter 5.

8. Despite the fact that Eliot came to regard Jews more liberally, her prejudice persisted. In 1856 Eliot praised Stowe’s *Dred*, as Haight summarizes in his biography, “for her invention of the Negro novel with its lofty religious fervour, reminiscent of the best parts of Old Mortality.” But she indicated the weakness of its idealization of the Negro [explaining] ‘If the negroes are really so very good, slavery has answered as moral discipline,’ and this one-sided view deprives Mrs. Stowe of ‘the most terribly tragic element in the relation of the two races — the Nemesis lurking in the vices of the oppressed.’” (Haight 185). Despite Eliot’s progress in seeing the humanity of the Jews throughout her lifetime, this is not a sign that Eliot ever became fully conscious of her own racism. In fact, it is tempting even to see her emphasis on Jews in her final three works of fiction as a sign of her need to present herself as a liberated liberal, tolerant of difference. In *Impressions*, after showing the importance of revering Hebrew culture, Eliot states “Let it be admitted that it is a calamity to the English, as to any other great historic people, to undergo a premature fusion with immigrants of alien blood . . . . To one who lives his native language, who would delight to keep our rich and harmonious English undefiled by foreign accent, foreign intonation, and those foreign tinctures of verbal meaning which tend to confuse all writing and discourse” (158-9). Quotes such as this one, written in the years following *Daniel Deronda*, suggests that for all of her
respect for Jews and criticism of scientific racism, Eliot is still a long way from fully examining her own racism.

9. See, for example, Mary Kay Temple.

10. See Barbara Hardy’s “Rome in *Middlemarch*: A need for Foreignness” for a good discussion of Eliot’s awareness of English xenophobia and her view of herself as an outsider in England.

KING SOLOMON'S MINES?:
AFRICAN JEWRY, BRITISH IMPERIALISM, AND H. RIDER HAGGARD'S DIAMONDS

To us... a diamond stood rather for crystalized romance than for a form of carbon worth so much per carat. It stood for the making of history, for Empire, and for unbounded wealth. We knew that wars had been waged for the possession of such gems, that neither blackest crime nor oceans of blood could dim their piercing lustre. We felt that every celebrated stone, whether shining on the breast of a lovely woman or blazing in the scepter of a king, was a symbol of power, a nucleus of tragedy, a focus of human passion.
— an unknown south African diamond digger

H. Rider Haggard’s identity as a writer of adventure fiction emerged rather quickly with the publication and subsequent reception of King Solomon’s Mines (1885). Two months after its publication, the novel had already sold five thousand copies (Days of My Life 233). In the first year alone the novel went to thirteen different U.S. editions and had sold over 650,000 copies worldwide by Haggard’s death in 1925 (Mintner 3). In fact, this adventure novel has never been out of print and has been turned into at least six different film versions and numerous parodies. William Mintner hardly exaggerates when he claims that “for millions of readers and moviegoers, before the advent of Tarzan, Africa was King Solomon’s Mines” (3).

This novel depicts the journey of three robust English men who successfully
penetrate a sexualized African landscape, depicted as both the body of the long dead Queen of Sheba and that of her contemporary, King Solomon. The three white English adventurers, led by the narrator Allan Quartermain, must climb Sheba’s breasts, traverse her torso, and arrive finally at the location where diamonds are stored inside her cavernous body, which Haggard names, “King Solomon’s Mines.” Narrative desire and historical mystery about the Jewish patriarch’s ancient empire propel these men though a series of male bonding adventures that lead to their arrival and conquest of the “famed” King Solomon’s mines where they pocket large diamonds, the size of “pigeon eggs,” and plot their escape from what they believe to be a sealed cave. Haggard’s reference to King Solomon is, in fact, part of a long history of writing about this subject, beginning with ancient religious texts by Jews, Egyptians, Muslims, Christians, and various Africans. Common to all of these disparate versions are depictions of the Jewish patriarch’s vast empire in the middle east and Africa, his seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and his gold Temple where he allegedly housed the ark of the covenant, or the Ten Commandments. Oddly, however, given the subject of Haggard’s text, none of the extant accounts of Solomon, which I will discuss in this chapter, suggest that he had access to or control over diamond mines. This fact alone invites us to question why Haggard sends three English men into Africa to take diamonds from a Jewish King who never owned any diamonds. By extension then, how do we read the English men’s escape from the Jewish mines with diamonds in their pockets?

In Imperial Leather Anne McClintock reads this escape as a symbolic birth of
three orders: “the male, reproductive order of patriarchal monogamy; the white economic order of mining capital; and the global political order of empire” none of which acknowledge a mother figure(4). Not only is the mother figure erased in this birthing ritual, but, as I will argue, she is replaced by the representation of King Solomon whose presence in this narrative ultimately engenders English masculinity. Daniel Boyarin’s assertion in *Unheroic Conduct* that “the very fact of being politically dominant, of having empires, produces mystification of the male body”(21) reminds us of the relationship between Solomon’s hidden diamond mines and this novel’s maintenance of British imperial identity. Haggard successfully reflects and produces mystification of a Jewish male body, in the form of male homosocial desire,3 which not only legitimizes empire, but also enables the three adventurers to prove themselves racially superior to Solomon and other Africans who fail to get “Solomon’s” diamonds. We shall see how this act not only disciplines Solomon for his acts of miscegenation with the Queen of Sheba, but also points to the white men’s sexually depicted desire to conquer the Jewish king, and in this process iterate their power over him. However, the object of this desire, both Solomon’s body and his remaining diamonds, vanish upon the Englishmen’s exit from the mines. Due to a rush of mud, caused by a rain storm, the cave’s orifices collapse. Thus, Haggard’s adventurers are born from a cave that “naturally” disappears, carrying diamonds that belong to a dead, and therefore absent, Jewish king. The diamonds are then transplanted back to England where they secure the class positions of the three adventurers. Haggard’s choice to bury Solomon’s mines, however, means that thereafter Solomon exists in the novel as a subject of the novel’s
discourse, as a Semitic discourse, rather than as an historical subject in Biblical or African history.

In the following chapter I will examine the causes and implications of the novel's use of a Jewish patriarch whose mines, and figurative body, serve as both a source of and a paradigm for English identity. By extension, I will interrogate the significance of the novel's depictions of English men rescuing diamonds from Jews who are then symbolically buried in the earth. I will focus on two historical events that shape and contextualize Haggard's depiction of Jewish diamonds, both of which allude to overlapping histories in this novel: the history of African Jewry and of European imperialism in Africa. The first important historical context is the much publicized "discovery" of the ruins of the Great Zimbabwe by the German Karl Mauch, and later by English and other German travelers curious about the origins of the ruins. In the nineteenth century Europeans mistakenly assumed that the ruins were the remains of King Solomon's Golden Ophir, built by Phoenicians and financed by the Queen of Sheba. As Patrick Brantlinger explains in Rule of Darkness, their logic was based on the belief in the racial inferiority of Africans: "[w]hen Karl Mauch discovered the ruins of Zimbabwe in 1871, no European was prepared to believe that they had been constructed by Africans. So arose the theory that they were the ruins of King Solomon's Golden Ophir — the work of a higher, fairer race — a myth that archaeologists only began to controvert in 1906; hence 'King Solomon's Mines'" (216-217). While Jewish history and people are invoked in this novel as higher and fairer than Africans (assuming, of course that Jews are not also African), they are not considered to be as
high or fair as the English (assuming, of course that the English are not also partly
Jewish, as was the case with Haggard). In this middle position, the reference to “white”
Jews in Africa legitimizes British imperialism there — in keeping with Solomon’s
empire tradition and in competition with it. When Haggard’s adventurers take
Solomon’s diamonds, the novel’s logic not only naturalizes British imperial theft, but
also affirms English racial superiority over both Africans and African Jews.

A second important historical event embedded in Haggard’s text is the 1867
discovery of diamonds in Kimberley. Many Europeans, Jewish and gentile alike,
flooded south Africa with hopes of making their fortunes in the diamond trade. In the
process, economic competition between the Jewish Barney Barnato and the English
imperialist Cecil Rhodes instigated a flood of anti-Jewish attitudes in the region. Their
efforts to succeed developed into what was perceived as a competition between Jews
and gentiles. As one letter to the colonial secretary states, “Diamonds are turning up
everyday and Jews are moving heaven and earth to keep the trade in their own
hands” (Kanfer 29). Stefan Kanfer notes in The Last Empire, in the face of competition
from Jews, Cecil Rhodes devised a strategy to assure that he would control his own
diamond empire by undercutting Jewish claims in the industry. His method entailed
“fighting Jews with Jews — the Rothschilds versus the Barnatos. Citizens of
Kimberley, the ultimate company town, sat back in the sun waiting to see who would
lose and who would be crowned King of Diamonds” (Kanfer 96). As history and
Haggard’s novel attest, the British win and succeed not only in “rescuing” diamonds
from Jewish kings, but also in placing those very diamonds firmly in the hands of
English gentiles — all in the name of empire.

In *King Solomon's Mines* Haggard constructs Englishness against these two specific African Jewish histories — both of which are rendered in the novel with a striking and loaded absence. Rather than acknowledge its contingency upon this Semitic discourse, Haggard manages to silence and erase King Solomon's self-constructed history. Solomon is only suggested in the novel, and in the novel's title, as a wealthy, diamond-hoarding king who died many years before the fictional events take place. Further, he includes only a smattering of references to the diamond boom in Kimberley. In the following chapter I examine this denial of Solomon's subjectivity whereby others, namely Haggard and his fictional narrator, must speak and think for Solomon, and ultimately imagine Solomon's space in the act of being overtaken by English men and then subsequently subsumed into the earth. The novel, then, imagines and constructs English identity not through African Jewish history, but through Haggard's representation of that history. Thus, the version of Solomon that appears in Haggard's novel is not only an appropriation of Jewish history (and a rather radical appropriation at that) but enables Haggard to articulate and imagine English racial purity.

Haggard's three English adventurers supplement (in the Derridean sense) his contemporary subjectivity — that of anxious European gentiles living in the 1880's who resented the success of Jewish men gaining control of a proliferating diamond industry. I will read this absent text through Haggard's fictionalization of a fabulous lost empire and his insecurity about an emerging new one. The reference to diamonds thus speaks
to both historical ends of this text as it fashions a British Empire contingently against, and in keeping with, Jewish empires in Africa. The subject of this text then is only apparently the Jewish patriarch. In fact, as I will argue, the real subject of the narrative is those who imagine, and need to imagine, King Solomon in absentia.

**Victorian Contexts**

In more ways than one, Haggard himself epitomized the struggles young aristocratic English men faced as they sought to maintain their elite status in a country that had run out of room for them. Born in 1856, the eighth out of ten children and the sixth son of Anglican parents, Haggard could not depend upon an inheritance to secure his class position. In a culture where the signs of racial degeneration were measured by class position, as well as profession, skin color, ear shape, place of birth, sexual orientation, and religious preference, falling from upper-class status had grave consequences for a man like Haggard. To complicate matters, Haggard’s father thought him unusually dim witted and refused to spend money on a public school education for his son. In consequence, Haggard was educated at home by private tutors. According to his daughter’s biography, Haggard was doubly anguished first, by his father’s opinion of his intelligence, and second by his fear that his enfeebled mind was the result of a blood flaw — due to his having a Russian Jewish great-grandmother on his mother’s side. McClintock adds that “[t]he female, Jewish ‘blood-flaw’ was betrayed in the tell-tale stigmata of long nose, high cheekbones and tilted eyes — the
inherited reminders of the debility that flowed in the family veins” (237). And, if Haggard foresaw his inadequacy to affirm his racial status by securing his class position in England, the British colonies in Africa provided him with an alternative — that of affirming his “elite” racial status as a white man in “a dark continent.”

After failing the army entrance examination in 1874, Haggard finally attained a position in south Africa the following year working with Henry Bulwer who was then lieutenant governor of Natal. While in the region, Haggard wrote for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and traveled with Sir Theophilus Shepstone on an expedition to the Transvaal region. Shepstone seems to have been a great influence over Haggard’s politics during this period. Having lived in south Africa from the age of three, Shepstone was fluent in Xhosa and Zulu and was what Peter Berresford Ellis describes as “violently anti-Boer and dedicated to the idea of British Empire and the belief of a ‘civilizing’ mission” (32). In his article entitled “The Transvaal” published in 1877 in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Rider Haggard stated that “it is our mission to conquer and hold in subjection, not from thirst of conquest but for the sake of law, justice and order.” (Ellis 58). On May 24, 1877 on Queen Victoria’s birthday and in a ceremony celebrating the British annexation of the Transvaal, Haggard was the one chosen to raise the British flag at Pretoria, an event he describes in a letter to his father with great pride, stating, that it was an “act without parallel... Twenty years hence it will be a great thing to have hoisted the Union Jack over the Transvaal for the first time” (Ellis 57). Later the same year, Haggard was appointed master of the court in the Transvaal. This begins Haggard’s long affiliation with colonial politics in southern Africa — a subject never far from his novel writing.
In 1879 Haggard returned to England, met Louisa Margitson and married the following year. After Haggard and his new wife moved back to southern Africa in 1880, Haggard grew frustrated and ashamed of the manner in which the British botched imperial politics there. He ultimately returned to England with the intention of studying law and, unbeknownst to him at that time, to begin his career as a popular novelist. The year in which he wrote and published *King Solomon's Mines* is the same in which he joined the bar.

*King Solomon's Mines* grows out of Haggard's experiences as a young man living in southern Africa and is distinctly Victorian in its preoccupation with affirming masculinity in imperial space. Haggard’s novel became a staple among young male readers, future leaders of Britain, who craved the adventurers of Allen Quartermain, so much so that Haggard went on to write several sequels about this fictional character and narrator. It is no coincidence that Haggard dedicates this novel “to all the big and little boys who read it.” His fascination with little boys or childhood romance is indicative of late Victorian culture. Stefan Kanfer notes that the subject of childhood innocence is part of a much larger trend in this period during which

Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin never consummated their marriages. Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear made much of childhood’s estate because they never could find its exit. Benjamin Disraeli... foppishly danced around his “Fairy Queen,” proffering countries like a juvenile seeking favor from his governess. Kipling, bard of imperialism, was at his happiest writing of prepubescent adventures like *Kim* and *Mowgli*. (Kanfer 61)

Haggard’s contemporary, and Cecil Rhodes’ good friend, Lord Baden Powell created the Boy Scouts within this same culture. From its inception, the Boy Scouts club was
designed to train little boys for “real” imperial adventures, like those Haggard describes in *King Solomon's Mines*. Africa became one of the most popular sites for little boys to imagine themselves becoming men. Patrick Brantlinger has argued convincingly that Africa was a setting where British boys could become men but also where British men could behave like boys with impunity, as do Haggard’s heroes. Africa was a great testing — or teething — ground for moral growth and moral regression; the two processes were often indistinguishable. . . . Much imperialist discourse was thus directed at a specifically adolescent audience, the future rulers of the world. (209)

Produced within this cultural moment, it is no surprise that Allen Quartermain, the fictional narrator of Haggard’s novel, confesses in his introduction that he is no writer, but since a lion has taken a bite out of his leg, he recounts this adventure, which he experienced a few years earlier, to fill his time. As the story goes, Sir Henry Curtis ventures to Africa to find a lost brother, George, (who has gone off in search of diamonds) to tell him that he has recently inherited a great sum of money from their father. Captain John Good accompanies Sir Henry, which turns out to be a good thing given that he is knowledgeable in ancient Hebrew writing, Biblical history, and map reading (he is a sailor after all). From the very beginning, the novel foregrounds the subject of patriarchal inheritance, not only in regard to the Curtis brothers’ inheritance, but also of Englishmen’s “claims” to African diamonds.

Upon his arrival in Africa, Sir Henry contacts Quartermain, whom he believes knows something of his brother’s location, with the hopes of enlisting him to go on a search for the lost brother. After consenting, Quartermain tells the story of Suliman’s berg (German for Solomon’s mountains) and “the far interior of a ruined city. . . .

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believed to be the Ophir of the Bible.” Quartermain explains that the story is of an
“ancient civilization and of the treasure which those old Jewish or Phoenician
adventurers used to extract from a country long since collapsed into the darkest
barbarism” (22). Two years prior to this meeting with Sir Henry and Good,
Quartermain met a Portuguese man by the name of Jose Silvestre, who dies a few
hours after they meet. Prior to his death though, Silvestre recounts the myth of King
Solomon’s mines. Quartermain includes Silvestre’s final words in his narrative:

Listen: my ancestor, a political refugee from Lisbon, and one of the first
Portuguese who landed on these shores, wrote that when he was dying on
these mountains which no white foot ever pressed before or since. His
name was Jose da Silvestra, and he lived three hundred years ago. His
slave, who waited for him on this side of the mountains, found him dead,
and brought the writing home to Delagoa. It was been in the family ever
since. (25)

This document, which Silvestre hands to Quartermain, is the treasure map that leads
these three men to the diamonds. While neither Portuguese man, Jose da Silvestre three
hundred years ago, nor his relative Jose Silvestre is able to find and return with the
diamonds, Quartermain and company finally do.

With the knowledge of this myth, Quartermain directs George’s African servant
to the nipple of Sheba’s left breast (as they are described on the map), but never hears
from George or his servant again. Thus, the men believe that they must go to the
diamonds to find Sir Henry’s brother. They travel with several servants, among them are
a “hottentot” named Ventvogel, a Zulu named Khiva, and a tall, handsome, light
skinned “kafir” named Umbopa. Eventually, after losing Khiva to a wild elephant, and
nearly dying themselves, the men reach Sheba’s breast. As they continue toward
Sheba’s nipple, they find the petrified remains of the three hundred year old de Silvestra, which confirms in their minds that Silvestre’s story is true — they suspect then that they are close to Solomon’s diamond mines. As the reality of this great discovery begins to sink in, they stumble upon an African tribe, the Kukuanas.

Fearful of these strange white men, Infadoos steps forward to introduce himself, as the son of Kafa who was once king of the Kukuana people. Scragga introduces himself next as the son of Twala, ruler of Kukuanaland. He then describes his father in a manner reminiscent of Solomon himself. Twala is the “husband of a thousand wives, chief and lord paramount of the Kukuanas, keeper of the great road [Solomon’s road], terror of his enemies, student of the Black arts, leader of a hundred thousand warriors, Twala the One-eyed, the Black, the Terrible” (98). The Kukuanas turn out to be the degenerated race of King Solomon’s people.

On their way to Kukuanaland, Infadoos tells the story of his people explaining that Twala is an evil ruler, placed there by the sinister witch Gagool and he rules with terror. As it turns out, though, Umbopa, Quartermain’s servant, is really the missing son of the legitimate ruler (justified of course, we presume, by the earlier reference to his light skin), and has returned to assume the throne under his birth name, Ignosi. Infadoos explains that they need the white men to restore order to their people, and to help usurp Twala. Ignosi is convinced of the need to overthrow Twala and his witch when he watches Gagool, who is described as crawling around on all fours like a monkey, the epitome of female degeneracy and African savagery, arbitrarily hand picks one hundred people to be killed on the spot. Ignosi promises to make Infadoos “the greatest man in
the kingdom after the king” (126) in exchange his help defeating Twala, and for the white men, Ignosi promises “white stones,” or diamonds.

At another dance, Twala asks the white men to identify the “fairest” woman, Quartermain points to Foulatta. Twala then sentences her to death. In protest, the three English men promise to bring about an eclipse if they don’t let her go (they knew about this beforehand because Good carries a calendar with him). With that, the moon begins to cover the sun and they are left in darkness. Believing that the white men have killed the moon, Twala and his men decide to kill the white men. The English men, Ignosi and Infadoos escape with Foulatta in the darkness, and prepare to defend themselves.

Once they have killed Twala, and restored Ignosi to the throne, the white men have Gagool lead them to Solomon’s mines. Quartermain’s knowledge of the Old Testament and Curtis’s degree in classics enable them to interpret the ancient artifacts in the cave as belonging to Jewish, Phoenician and Greek history — a line of ascendency that ultimately points to the Englishmen. As they make their way into the cave, the three men come upon gold pieces inscribed with Hebrew letters, and hoards of uncut diamonds. Before they have time to pocket the tremendous treasure and make their escape, Gagool has a trick door trap them, but she accidentally gets crushed by falling rock, and Foulatta is stabbed by Gagool as she attempts to protect the men. After over twenty-four hours of believing that have been buried alive with Solomon’s treasure, the men find a way out. They leave in a hurry, pocketing only a few diamonds (more than 180,000 pounds worth as we learn later, and too many to be sold at once, lest they flood the diamond market). In the following scene, Quartermain, Good and Sir Henry find
the lost brother George who has been injured, "[l]iving like a second Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, hoping against hope that some natives might come here and help us away" (253).

Clearly, this novel relies upon Victorian as well as earlier English discourses asserting white supremacy and English racial superiority, while also effecting a male bonding ritual in which white men prove themselves "masculine" by defeating African men in battle and in the skill of survival. Wendy Katz rightly points out in *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire* that "[t]o accuse Haggard, who probably knew more about and had more sympathy for African society than most of his contemporaries, of having been a racist is to grant that he was very much a man of his time and his class... . Seeing Haggard's racism in its entirety, then, means seeing it as a significant part of the British body politic" (149). And Haggard's racist attitudes, which were indeed a significant part of the British body politic, is a good place to begin interrogating the politics at work in his imagined histories of white men in Africa. Gail Ching-Liang Low rightly warns us of the dangers of seeing colonial representations, such as this one, as a mere justification for empire. Citing the importance of their myth-making power, she explains, "[i]f myth and fantasy touch on levels outside the conscious mind, then simply to point out the falsity of one's imagination leaves untouched the psychic investments which determine the formation of the fictions that sustain the world we live and act within" (2). Haggard's association of white English men in southern Africa in relation to his imagined history of white-skinned Biblical Jews and black-skinned Africans has grave consequences for the subsequent history of southern Africa and
Apartheid politics there. Haggard is not merely writing a “fantasy” novel, easily
disposable as boys’ adventure fiction and mediocre writing, but participating in a
system of signs, values, and power that enable him, and others like him, to write white
supremacy into perpetual being in the inseparable process of imagining Englishness as a
racial category that is not only distinct and distinguishable, but one that is constructed as
superior to all other constructed racial categories. As Paul Gilroy asserts in *The Black
Atlantic*, “the morbid celebration of England and Englishness” (10) erases the history of
violence and white supremacy out of which nationalism prospers. Thus, “England
ceaselessly gives birth to itself, seemingly from Britannia’s head” (14) in a narrative
celebration of its own making.

Recent Haggard criticism has been particularly attentive to the larger
implications of Haggard’s representations of Africa and the erasure of African
subjectivities. Although it would be wrong to suggest that Haggard’s perspective on
race is unmediated by the novel form in general or the adventure tale in particular,
critical discussions focus on the impact of his representations of empire as they intersect
with Victorian race, gender, and class ideologies. For example, in *Imperial Leather*,
Anne McClintock maintains that Haggard epitomized a generation of young upper-
middle class younger brothers who faced the burden of maintaining their class position
in a system of primogeniture that favored first sons.

Haggard’s family romance of fathers, sons and brothers regenerating each
other through the imperial adventure is premised on the reordering of
another family: the succession of the Kukuana royal family. This
reordering requires the death of the “witch mother” Gagool... The
‘legitimate’ king [is] restored... by the regenerated white “fathers,” who
will carry away the diamonds to restore the landed gentry in Britain. (241)

Thus the feminized landscape (Sheba’s breasts, for example) must not only be navigated and conquered, but women’s reproductive power in colonial space must be subsumed by white, western male power and finally fetishized as a function of this series of patriarchal restorations. McClintock explains that this act of killing off or conquering women’s bodies in the African landscape is hardly incidental. References in this novel to Twala’s and Solomon’s polygamy recalls the surprise English colonialists experienced when they discovered that several African tribes practiced polygamy. Certain that polygamy testified to the racial inferiority of blacks, and the need to civilize Africans, colonial administrators imposed a tax on husbands for each wife they married after the first. McClintock points out though, that this moral high ground was never really about protecting women or civilizing the natives, but rather, enabled colonialists to secure their own economic prosperity in the region. As Governor Pine wonders despondently, “How can an Englishman with one pair of hands compete with a native with five to twenty slave wives?” (McClintock 254). Thus, polygamy remained permissible “as long as white men and not black men benefitted from it” (McClintock 256). Representations of diamonds in the novel appear in isolation from African women’s labor and thus, women’s labor is fetishized. The diamonds appear to have dug up themselves. Money then, “breed[s] itself just as in Haggard’s tale the men give birth to themselves in the mine-womb” (257).

Laura Chrisman has taken up McClintock’s reading in “Gendering Imperial Culture: King Solomon’s Mines and Feminist Criticisms” in which she maintains that
"there is a tendency in McClintock's analysis to reinforce the very categories of power which she claims to be exposing" (293). Along these lines, Chrisman maintains that Haggard criticism is notorious for its conflation or erasure of distinctions between colonial and imperial subjectivities. Instead, Afrikaner (Boer) and Zulu subjectivities should be read not as emanations of imperial discourse, but as distinct concerns unto themselves. In her feminist reading, Chrisman explains that "Acquiring diamonds, Haggard tries to suggest, is as self-evidently 'natural' as male domination over women. . . Sexuality. . . functions as a means of resolving contradictions within the text’s political economy" and not, as McClintock has argued, of "constituting its economic 'essence'" (296). Yet, while both feminist analyses by McClintock and Chrisman expose this text’s disavowal of women, women’s work and women’s bodies, we might also consider the implications of the fact that these diamonds come from two places at once — Sheba’s womb and King Solomon’s temple remains.

Building on Chrisman’s point that African subjectivities must not be sublimated under an “unmediated transcript of colonial administrative activities” (294), we come to recognize one subjectivity invoked in King Solomon’s Mines and overlooked by most Haggard criticism — that of King Solomon’s “white” body into which the three English men enter, and from which they exit with diamonds in their trouser pockets. When we read the mines as African female space, these men perform a figurative rape of Sheba’s body, symbolized in part by the pigeon egg diamonds they carry out with them which effectively place female generative power into the hands of men. Christopher Lane argues, however, in The Ruling Passion that much Haggard criticism has been attentive
to what he sees as an “overdetermined” relationship between the landscape and imperial conquest, women’s bodies, and the role of women characters, pointing out, “[n]ot only are women domestic slaves in his fiction, but all non-Caucasian races are stereotypically feminized as weak, unruly, and in need of discipline” (57). He adds later, “it may not be enough to literalize colonization as a heterosexual act or to represent the landscape/object of this penetration as irremediably ‘other’” (64). If we see these men penetrating the body of King Solomon, then the maternal figure doesn’t disappear, but is transformed into the body of both a white man and an emasculated (because Jewish) man. Accordingly, their pocket protrusions refer rather to male sexual potency (as opposed to female reproductive power) which they enact through their conquest of King Solomon’s body. Solomon’s hyper-masculine identity, produced in Haggard’s novel by references to his seven hundred wives, three hundred concubines, and “relations” with the Queen of Sheba, flaunts the necessity of disciplining him in this way for the crimes of sexual exploitation and miscegenation. When Haggard imagines a line of white men in Africa taking, hoarding, and controlling diamonds in Africa, he legitimizes imperial theft by suggesting that white men have a responsibility to claim what is “theirs,” to perpetuate the line of great white rulers in Africa who are “entitled” to these white stones because of their white skin. Indeed, European racism and white supremacist culture endorses, and is naturalized by, the logic of Haggard’s fiction. Thus, Haggard’s Englishmen, like Solomon and like the Greeks (whom Haggard imagines in his descriptions of Solomon’s mines, thereby aligning Plato’s cave with Solomon’s) are manifestly destined, according to the text’s logic, to take what they want.
from the cave by virtue of their whiteness — a sign of their shared lineage with Jews and Greeks.

Solomon’s double identity in this text as other (because he is a Jew) and the same (because he is a white man) raises several important problems in this narrative about white male regeneration since it works to submerge African Jewish subjectivities and, in the process, asserts Englishness as a superior racial group against Haggard’s imagined version of a faded Jewish empire. Since he cannot speak for himself, the novel appropriates Solomon in two ways. First, by Haggard’s act of writing a story about Solomon as the source of British wealth, and second, by using Quartermain’s knowledge to invent Solomon’s identity based on Christian history. Indeed, Quartermain even masks the fictional quality of his narrative by calling it a “history,” adding that one of his reasons for writing is his “fierce devotion to the Old Testament and the Ingoldsby Legends” (11). We are reminded here of the manner in which Jewish history has already been overtaken by the Christian Old Testament — a text that enables Quartermain to interpret and recognize the artifacts he finds in Solomon’s cave. In the novel’s conclusion, when the three men escape from the mines, the orifices from which they entered and emerged disappear — as if the caves never existed at all. The only evidence left to attest to King Solomon’s identity are the diamonds in the Englishmen’s pockets, and Haggard’s narrative. Homi K. Bhabha’s point in “The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism” that “Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an ‘other’, and yet entirely knowable and visible” (93) is relevant in Haggard’s rendering of Jewish diamonds
which are imagined as entirely knowable, visible, and easily liberated by the English. They are all the property of a white man and yet at the same time as a site of difference because Solomon is a Jew, and therefore, according to the logic at work in this text, racially distinct from the English despite their shared white skin.

Solomon's ambivalent position then, of the effeminate man who must be overtaken, and as the powerful white man in Africa who serves as a paradigm for British imperialism, points to the political implications of Solomon’s absence in the text. Haggard needs to render Solomon's identity as a white man in order to legitimize the three adventurers' claims to African diamonds, and yet, paradoxically, he also needs to make Solomon racially different from the English men, which he accomplishes by representing him as unmasculine and absent. Gender competition is waged in the narrative production of King Solomon's femininely sexualized body which, in turn, renders Solomon racially distinct from the English men. Hinged upon Solomon's constructed whiteness, then, is the justification for white empires in Africa and the distinction between white empires in Africa. When we remember, however, that Solomon had gold mines, not diamonds mines, and that he would have had dark, middle-eastern or African colored skin, we begin to understand the necessity of, and anxiety about, constructing Solomon's whiteness in the assertion of Englishness as a racial category. Their identities are contingently linked by Haggard's competing images of Solomon as both a great white Empire builder in Africa, and as an effeminate Jew. Solomon's white skin is the very platform on which Haggard constructs a racial difference between the English and the Jews. As Gail Ching-Liang Low explains,
“racial discrimination depends on visible difference” (226), and since Solomon’s imagined white skin cannot distinguish him without undercutting English masculinity, his sexuality must be constructed as a site of difference. In the process, Solomon is narratively rendered absent, fetishized by his diamonds, and depicted by his hidden, cavernous body. In contrast, English masculine identity asserts itself by writing this history, not of Solomon, but of Solomon’s absence. Haggard’s representation of Jewish diamonds and Jewish patriarchal competition ultimately masks white English male anxiety about its own impotence in Africa and about its need to maintain classed and gendered positions in England using African resources.

In *King Solomon’s Mines* African diamonds are (re)contextualized as Jewish diamonds. The significance of this act has great consequences for Western Christian attitudes toward Jews, and the proliferation of stereotypes in which Jews are imagined as money grubbing, diamond hoarding cheats who take money from national economies, thereby preventing the Christian community from controlling money that would otherwise belong to them. We see this in early literary images like Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, but in fact the stereotype goes back much further, and extends into contemporary western history. The association between money and Jews is often complemented by depictions of Jewish sexuality, of exoticized women, and sexually delinquent Jewish men. In his reading of late Victorian representations of deviant Jews, which surged in the years following the publication of Haggard’s novel with the search for Jack the Ripper, Sander Gilman maintains in “‘I’m down on Whores’: Race and Gender in Victorian London” that
The perversion of the Jew... lies in his sexualized relationship to capital. This, of course, echoes the oldest and most basic calumny against the Jews, his avarice, an avarice for the possession of “things,” of “money” which signals his inability to understand (and produce) anything of transcended aesthetic value. (163)

Victorian culture’s reception of Solomon’s identity in Haggard’s text would certainly have evoked myths about his excessive sexuality, witnessed by his polygamy and his alleged sexual relations with Sheba, which inspired Sheba to give him the gold he needed to complete his temple. Within Victorian contexts then, Solomon would be interpreted as the Jewish king who prostitutes himself to a black matriarch in order to glorify his temple, which will in turn reflect his power in the future as a great leader. Haggard’s association of Solomon with excessive wealth, diamonds, gold temples, and sexual acts with a black woman would be read in this period as proof of anti-Jewish stereotypes like those Gilman describes. Thus, Haggard’s appropriation of the Jewish King Solomon affirms his perception that Jews are racially degenerate white people. In this process we see not only an appropriation of Solomonic history, but also a need to appropriate that history as part of the maintenance of “proving” that English identity is superior to other races.

In keeping with this logic, the fact that the mines and Solomon’s temple remains have crumbled in Haggard’s novel attests to the fact that Jewish interests in money prevent them from creating anything of transcendent value. Thus, their culture and empire will, according to this logic, inevitably fall from grace. Gilman continues, “The Jew takes money as does the prostitute, as a substitute for higher values, for love and beauty. And thus, the Jew becomes the representative of the deviant genitalia, the
genitalia not under the control of the moral, rational conscience”(163). But, we might also see Solomon’s absent genitalia as a symbol of his deviance, not only for Solomon’s licentiousness and greed, but for his power to seduce other men. Almost three thousand years after his death, Solomon’s body is resurrected narratively, so that he is contemporary with Haggard’s three Englishmen. Haggard’s act of criss-crossing African Jewish history with British imperialism is perhaps best understood with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s analysis of ideology in *Between Men*, where she explains that,

> in order for the reweaving of ideology to be truly invisible... narrative is necessarily chiasmic in structure: that is, that the subject of the beginning of the narrative is different from the subject at the end, and that the two subject cross each other in a rhetorical figure that conceals their discontinuity. (14-15)

In the case of *King Solomon’s Mines* ideology maintains its invisible status by erasing the rhetorical figure of the cave which is submerged “naturally” into the earth by the rain. English history traverses with anachronistically devised Jewish history in this “invisible” space, thereby transforming the three Englishmen into wealthy and powerful Englishmen. Their identities shift between the beginning and the end because they are able not only to take African diamonds and appear stronger than dark-skinned Africans, but because they can overpower a Jewish patriarch in this process. The submerged cave is necessary to conceal the discontinuity between Jewish and English men in Africa. Imperialism is therefore idealized and justified in the same act in which Jewish men are rendered impotent and absent.

Haggard’s depictions of King Solomon’s diamond mines thus serves at least two purposes in consolidating empire in this novel. First, it legitimizes a British empire in
the tradition of an ancient Jewish empire. Second, it imagines the transference of Jewish economic power into the pockets of English men through the figurative rape and conquest of an unruly Jewish man.\textsuperscript{17} Solomon’s immoral sexual practices help justify English claims to the diamonds, since they are inspired by the earnest and admirable quest for the lost brother. King Solomon’s empire thus gives birth to the British empire (as the three English men are born from his body with his diamonds in hand) and serves as the weaker vessel to be overtaken, not for its femininity, since King Solomon is, after all a powerful man, but for its racial degeneracy, since King Solomon was a Jew. Haggard represents King Solomon as, and as a result of, the British act of overtaking the fictional heritage of a “fallen” Jewish empire.

Wendy Katz reminds us that negative portrayals of Jews in Haggard’s fiction stem from his own anxiety about what he perceived to be a Jewish threat to the world, and more specifically to the British empire.\textsuperscript{18}

In the pre-war fiction, anti-semitism is a banal commonplace. Rapacious Jews exploit the misfortunes of bona fide gentlemen in The People of the Mist. Jews are hook-nosed, fierce eyed Christ killers in She and The World’s Desire. Their money cannot disguise their foulness: Jewish women may be drenched in diamonds but they betray themselves with their dirty fingernails in Dawn. The attention to unlovely detail is as important here as in the characterization of the African, and it is expressive of a deep-seated repugnance. (149)

Haggard’s prewar fiction may have alluded to his anxiety about Jews, but these fears became even more manifest after the war. His diaries indicate that he blamed the Russian Revolution and the terrible state of Germany on Jews. In 1923 he writes, “All Germans must undergo terrible suffering except for the “magnates” and the horrible

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Teutonic Jews who sit like spiders in Berlin, Vienna and elsewhere, and suck out the life-blood of the unhappy peoples that they have got into their net” (Katz 151).

Indeed, not only were Jews a threat in Germany and Russia, but Haggard writes in 1920 that “Jews are a significant threat to the [British] empire” (Katz 150), a concern that explains why Solomon’s diamonds are not only taken, but need to be taken from him in Haggard’s novel in order to maintain that empire. “Jewish” diamonds are not just a sign of economic prosperity in this novel, but Haggard’s gesture of depicting them represents the restoration of Englishness and domination of the British empire in Africa through the “noble” efforts of three English men who accomplish their task by overtaking and undercutting African Jewish economic power.

**African and Imperial Contexts**

While it is too easy to dismiss Haggard as a Jew hater and his fiction as “anti-Jewish,” it is important to consider how his anxiety about his own racial status and the logic of English whiteness operates in this text. Not only does Haggard imagine and construct Englishness through his central depiction of Solomon, but he also, curiously, revises the legend about Solomon’s gold mines by replacing them with diamond mines. This seemingly unimportant detail is hardly insignificant, however, when we consider the cultural contexts for this novel — namely Victorian anthropology and the diamond boom in southern Africa. Haggard depicts several histories in *King Solomon’s Mines*, and several discourses about those histories. As I will show, his information about
Solomon, African Jewry, Victorian archeology, and the south African diamond industry are woven together in *King Solomon's Mines* to reflect not only a justification for British imperialism, but also the contingently linked and racially distinct categories of English and Jewish.

The association between Solomon and the Ophir and the belief that African Jews had white skin were assumed facts in the Victorian period. Solomon’s extensive wealth was imagined by an industry of history-making about a great white man living in the heart of southern Africa whose buildings and gold remains lay dormant, waiting to be overtaken by the next wave of white empire-builders in Africa. The discovery of diamonds in south African in 1867 helped instigate this process by transforming its economy and political structure and by initiating a competition between European Jews and gentiles for control over the diamond market. My reading shows how the proliferation of Solomonic history by Victorian archeologists, journalists, missionaries, and fiction writers meant that Haggard’s choice to put diamonds into the hands of a Jewish king was, in fact, a politically charged move. Even though Haggard presents these histories of white Jews in Africa and English men who rescue diamonds from a Jewish king as “fantasy,” historical contexts remind us that there is much more at work in this tale than just the fantastic imagination of H. Rider Haggard.

Prior to the history the “discovery” of the ruins at Zimbabwe, Victorians had a cultural literacy about the legend of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, based on the Christian Bible. According to this history, Solomon is the child of Bathsheba and the Jewish King David who ruled the Israelites from around 976-936 B.C.E. In both
the Jewish and Christian Bibles, Solomon apparently overextended his government’s economy with his construction of elaborate buildings, many of which were even gold-plated.20 The greatest building he is said to have constructed is the Temple, which he designed for the purpose of housing the Ten Commandments. Haggard accurately alludes to the Temple’s Phoenician design in *King Solomon’s Mines*; for, as Anthony Kamm maintains in *The Israelites*, Solomon’s people were not skilled at this time in building techniques. Thus, they relied upon Phoenician builders, and hence Phoenician design, for the construction of the temple. Kamm suggests that the Israelites’ lack of building skills may have been a result of their “literal observance of the first part of the second commandment — ‘You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth, below, or in the waters under the earth’” (Exodus 20:4) (Kamm 62-3). Despite his own observance of this command, however, Solomon arranged to have Phoenicians build not only the Temple, but also various statues for his seven hundred wives. Solomon believed that even though the Jewish God forbid the worship of statues, his wives should still be able to practice their religions. When he used tax money which he collected from the Israelites to build these statues of other Gods, the Israelites understandably grew angry. Victorian audiences would certainly have been knowledgeable about Solomonic history which would have influenced their reading of Haggard’s Solomon, who was infamous for his greed and lust. In fact, *King Solomon’s Mines* was received by a culture not only knowledgeable of Solomonic history, but critical of the Jewish patriarch’s sexual and economic practices. Having been primed for this novel, Victorians would have read Solomon’s
extensive harem of wives as a sign of his racial degeneracy. Flemming James maintains, however, that such a large harem is part of Solomon's tendency for great display, explaining, "We miss the point when we look on his [wives and concubines] as evidence of his sensuality. Sensual he doubtless was, as his father had been before him; but hardly to the extent that these figures would indicate" (154). Jacob Lassner in *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba*, adds that Solomon's relations with Sheba and other women were part of a larger diplomatic agenda designed "to strengthen the king's position" (10). He adds, "Solomon's real strength was his capacity to manipulate events and rulers largely through clever diplomacy, including the skillful use of matrimonial alliances (Lassner 10). Most prominent among these stories and contested among the different ancient sources depicting Solomon's reign, is Solomon's liaison with the Queen of Sheba.

The most ancient source of the legend of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba is that which appears in the Hebrew text of the First Book of Kings (Pritchard 8). Despite the various renderings of this tale, the Hebrew version is based on an alleged visit a nameless Arabian queen made to King Solomon. James Pritchard, in *Solomon and Sheba*, summarizes the account from the First Book of Kings:

A queen from Sheba traveled by caravan laden with fabulously rich gifts to Jerusalem for the sole purpose of satisfying her curiosity about the famed wisdom and wealth of King Solomon. After the king had demonstrated his wisdom he proceeded to show his royal visitor the glories of his court. Its magnificence had been described to her. With a remark about the good fortune of those privileged to hear the wisdom of Solomon and a polite outburst of praise to Yahweh, Solomon's god, she made an incomparable present of gold, spices and precious stones. In return Solomon presented her with an unspecified gift and whatever she had asked besides. After

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this exchange the Queen of Sheba returned to her own land. (8)

Rumors about their sexual relations are based on ambiguous phrases such as “she came to Solomon’ or ‘all that she desired’”(Pritchard 9). Yet, Pritchard adds, “the scantiness of the evidence for a physical union between the two principles did not deter later story-tellers from elaborating on how the wise king managed to seduce the queen” (9). Jacob Lassner adds, that Sheba’s mission was

reshaped by later Jewish and Muslim writers to accommodate contemporary values. By the middle ages, the main focus of the queen’s visit had shifted from international to sexual politics and from diplomatic relations to the more complicated relations between men and women. That is, in its post Biblical and Islamic versions, the queen’s joust with Solomon was portrayed as a dangerous attempt to subvert time-honored rules of gender (1).

Despite the fact that the oldest source of the Solomon and Sheba myth comes from Jewish Biblical writers (written over a period of many years ), later writers and cultures inevitably appropriate this myth. For example, Pritchard notes that for European Christian communities, the Queen of Sheba story came to represent a certain type or as a prefiguration of the gentiles who accept Christianity or as the Christ. Eventually the connection was made between the visit of the queen to Solomon and the adoration of the Magi, who are also said to have come from a far country. . . . thus it was by allegory and typology that the story from the old testament was made to do service to the traditions of the new. (Prichard 15)

Indeed, this reading of the myth coincides with Christianity’s understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. For Jews, who don’t believe that Christ was the messiah, these legends are anchored in another history. But for Christians, who see the Old Testament in anticipation of the New Testament, Jewish
Biblical accounts are cast in relation to the fact of the messiah's arrival on earth. In the case of Haggard's novel, Jewish Biblical history not only anticipates Christianity, but also Englishness. The point here is not that the first Jewish source is any more or less historically accurate than subsequent accounts of this story, but rather that each culture and age, including Haggard's, appropriates this myth to do service to their own constructions of their identity and history. Clearly, though, Haggard was not the first to "fictionalize" the Solomon and Sheba myth. For one thing, the Bible itself, written by several writers over hundreds of years, is also comprised of many versions of fact and fiction. As Marc Zvi Brettler maintains in *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, the Bible is written and rewritten by those who exist in particular historical moments. Thus the Bible comes to us anachronistically, as each writer imposes his historical moment and evolving Jewish identities onto the shape of the text. The Bible reflects histories of the writers at least as much as it comments on the subject on which each writer extrapolates. The same is true of Haggard's rendering of Solomonic history whereby he imbricates his own position in a white supremacist culture at a moment when they were in the process of building an empire in southern Africa. Haggard was also participating in a surge of late nineteenth-century archeological writing about Solomonic history in southern Africa.

Before we can even broach the question of why Haggard replaces Solomon's gold with diamonds, it is helpful to understand nineteenth-century colonialist fascination with South African archeology. In this region nineteenth century travelers mistakenly conflated the real existence of ancient ruins in south east Africa with legends
of King Solomon’s golden city. As Joseph O. Vogel points out, “To scholars of the mid-nineteenth century, Ophir’s existence in antiquity went unquestioned”(20).

Although the Portuguese were the first Europeans to record descriptions and references to the ruins at the great Zimbabwe, by the middle of the nineteenth century geographer Karl Ritter and encyclopedist Conrad Malte-Brun had recorded the rumors about the ancient town were widespread and well accepted (Vogel 21). With knowledge of this burgeoning myth about an ancient city, other travelers, geographers and missionaries ventured into Africa to discover the mystery of their origin. The explorations of St. Vincent Erskine, Thomas Baines, and Alexander Merensky in the 1860's simultaneously spread rumors about Zambesia’s gold fields and about lost cities. Vogel warns us though that “the country described in anecdotes from the eighteen-sixties must be regarded as the cumulative product of hearsay and wishful invention rather than authentic eye-witness accounts” (22). For example, when the German missionaries Alexander Merensky and Sprediger A. Nachtigal ventured into southeast Africa to find the lost cities, they were ultimately forced to turn back due to fear of smallpox contamination. However, the fact that neither man actually made their way to the ruins failed to deter newspapers and journalists from recording their adventures there — complete with detailed descriptions of the ruins (which they never actually saw).

These stories were among others in which the Zimbabwe Ruins were depicted by people who had never witnessed them. Vogel continues, “At the same time a then well-known article in the Cape and Natal News was fanning the flames of speculation. While Merensky claimed only to have marched in the general direction of the ruins, and
Nachtigal is said to have seen the lost city from afar, the Cape and Natal News detailed the town, Egyptian antiquities, and burial caves" (24). By the late 1860's journalists' embellishments of the missionaries' journeys had influenced such works as H.M. Walmsley's novel The Ruined Cities of Zululand (1869) in which several missionaries embark on a journey to find the cities of gold in the interior of Africa in a market hungry for information about the "real" ruined cities. One of these fictional missionaries exclaims in the novel, "There be the gold fields of Solomon somewhere in that neighborhood" (Carroll 236). Stories such as these helped to "verify" the myth that the ruins at Zimbabwe were the same as Solomon's golden Ophir. Scott T. Carroll adds, "The glamour and fascination posed by the discovery of ancient ruins in southeast Africa captivated a sizable, contemporary literary audience in Europe. Living in a secure Victorian world, the British public experienced vicarious pleasure reading the latest exploits of adventurers in the African interior" (236). By the time Karl Mauch set out on his famous journey to "discover" the ruins at Zimbabwe in 1871, they had already been discovered in popular fiction and press. Victorian minds were ripe for Mauch's findings and for Haggard's novel. Carroll continues, "undaunted by the question of truth, the Victorians seemed the more eager to adopt Solomon as a precedent to attempt to justify their imperialistic designs in Africa, if not simply to assuage their conscience. Rhodes and company would exploit Africa after the legendary manner of the Hebrew king (and with twice his splendor)" (237). For example, even though Mauch didn't arrive at Zimbabwe until September 5, 1871, his presence there had already been recorded in 1867 by Dr. A Peterman who "affirmed" that the ruins Mauch
would discover (he obviously knew something of Mauch’s intended exploration) were “identical with the Ophir of the Bible” (Carroll 238).

Amazingly, Victorian archeology, journalism, and novels, such as Walmsley’s *The Ruined Cities of Zululand* and Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, were part of an industry of mythmaking about African Jewish history. Despite the proliferation of cultural images of King Solomon’s mines, Haggard maintains in his essay, “The Real King Solomon’s Mines”24 that Biblical archeology and popular journalism had absolutely nothing to do with his novel.

How I came to conclude that this people was Phoenician I have no idea. Nor to the best of my memory did I hear of the great ruins of Zimbabwe, or that an ancient civilization had carried on a vast gold mining enterprise in the part of Africa where it stands... Still less did I know that diamonds existed elsewhere than at Kimberley; that has only been discovered in the last year or so. I introduced them because they were more picturesque and easier to handle than gold... When I wrote of Solomon’s Road I never guessed that the Road of God, as I think it is called, would be discovered in the Matoppos; when I imagined “Sheba’s Breasts” I was ignorant that so named and shaped they stand... not far from the Tokwe River... All of these... were the fruit of the imagination, conceived I suppose, from chance words spoken long ago that lay dormant in the mind. (Haining 19-20)

Haggard’s claims of ignorance on the subject of Solomonic history and archeological mythmaking in the Victorian period makes sense given Mintner’s observation that “Haggard’s fantastic details fitted neither the legend of King Solomon, which referred to gold, not diamonds, nor the historical facts of African gold mining in Zimbabwe” (3).

However, can we really believe Haggard when he claims that he knew nothing of the ruins of Zimbabwe, or of the great road leading to them? Or that he was ignorant of the mining of Sheba’s gold and south African diamonds? It seems unwise to assume that
Haggard was lying. Rather, we might instead read his references to Solomonic history in southern Africa as a product of urban legend/colonial myth, imperial unconscious, and forgotten or, as Haggard put it, “dormant” knowledge. It is unlikely that Haggard would have been completely ignorant of the media coverage of the research conducted by missionaries and archeologists in Africa — indeed, such written accounts were not entirely unlike the adventure genre Haggard would later write. In fact, in a later commentary about his novel Haggard confesses that his version of the story came directly from talk of the ruins at Zimbabwe, or, as it was later renamed after Cecil Rhodes, Rhodesia. In his posthumously published autobiography Haggard writes,

> Rhodesia has been discovered, which is a land full of gems and gold, the same land, I believe, as that whence King Solomon did actually draw his wealth. Also Queen Sheba’s Breasts have been found, or something very like to them, and traces of the great road that I describe. Doubtless I heard faint rumours of these things during my sojourn in Africa, having made it my habit through life to keep my ears open; but at the best they were very faint. The remainder I imagined, and imagination has often proved to be the precursor to the truth. The mines of Kukuana land, alias Rhodesia, are destined to produce much more treasure than ever Solomon or the Phoenicians won out of them. (242)

Although Haggard is at least able to acknowledge that he had heard something of the ruins, he could not relinquish his own sense of responsibility in having “discovered” King Solomon’s Mines in his imagination and in the popular imaginations of his readers prior to their discovery by archeologists.

While Haggard’s novel takes up the mystery of Solomon and the legends about the Great Zimbabwe, it never directly accounts for Haggard’s choice to replace gold (which Solomon presumably had) with diamond mines (which he did not have). It is
likely that Haggard, as a colonial administrator in south Africa, knew about these European efforts to find gold and Solomon’s Golden Ophir. At the same time, Europeans, some of whom were Jewish, were also venturing into southern Africa to find diamonds and make their fortunes in the diamond industry. Thus two important histories (among many others) merge in *King Solomon’s Mines* — Victorian conflations of the ruins at Zimbabwe with King Solomon’s golden Ophir and the racial tension produced in southern Africa by the diamond rush between Jewish and gentile immigrants.

The diamond rush in southern Africa began officially with the discovery of diamonds in 1867, however, European imperialism has a long history in the region. Indeed, Haggard astutely recalls this history with his inclusion of the fictional characters of Silvestre and de Silvestre, who remind us of Portuguese presences in southern Africa. At the point when the British annexed the cape from the Dutch East India Company in 1806, European Jews living in south Africa were still officially denied settlement rights in the region, but nonetheless remained and continued to practice their religion. By 1841, having grown and prospered, this population of Jews successfully built their first temple in Cape Town. In *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa* Milton Shain explains that European gentiles’ views of Jews in this period were marked by a “tolerant and liberal ethos of Cape society” (10). The non-Jewish community helped Jews to build synagogues and gave charitable assistance to Russian immigrants fleeing pogroms. Despite the fact that European Jews were granted similar privileges as European gentiles, all things were not entirely equal. Colonial administrators were still
primarily non-Jewish and hints of anti-Jewish sentiment burbled beneath the surface of these apparently “calm” relations. 26

The Jewish immigrants living in this region came mostly from England or Germany, and were mostly affluent and culturally well assimilated. As Lady Duff Gordon observes on her visit to south Africa in 1860, the Jewish community had “abandoned the peculiarities of their tradition if not the features of their race” (Shain 12). Milton Shain adds, “The Jewish Community, in other words, reflected the lifestyle and communal patterns of their ‘enlightened’ coreligionists in western Europe.” (12). The quiet, well assimilated Jewish community changed drastically however, with an influx of Jewish immigrants from Russia (Shain 12). Shain explains that this group assumed that they would be welcomed into south Africa because of the existence of a well-established Jewish community. Importantly, however, “The new arrivals differed from the Anglo-German vanguard in speech, manner, religious customs, and even dress. A relatively homogeneous community was transformed into a motley combination of cultures bound by a common religious heritage” (Shain 12). The emergence of a poor white class presented certain logistical problems for the imperial agenda that was premised upon a belief in the innate superiority of white-skinned people. If white people, some of whom were Jewish, could be viewed by African natives as poor or degenerate, these Jews undercut the very logic of racial hierarchies on which Britain legitimized its presence in Africa. Although this is not the first time that anti-Jewish stereotypes promulgated among the British, a resurgence during this period is loosely tied to the combination of emerging class differences among Jews living in south

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Africa, and the contentious quest for control over the diamond industry. With these new immigrants, who fled Russia after 1881, came a wave of Jew hatred and a realignment of Jewish identity in the region. Inevitably, the Jewish community became more classed, more culturally divergent, more compartmentalized both within the Jewish community and in contrast with other European settlers. As the Jewish community diversified, it also gained attention for its economic success throughout the 1860's and 70's. By 1881 businesses in south Africa, whether they were owned by Jews or gentiles, shut down on major Jewish holidays such as Yom Kippur. In response to this fact, J.A. Hobson notes in his study *The War in South Africa* that “not Hamburg, not Vienna, not Frankfort, but Johannesburg is the New Jerusalem” (190). Yet, as Jewish immigration to south Africa grew, resentment toward Jews also grew among European gentile settlers. For example, as the general manager of the standard bank, Lewis Michell remarked,

*The departure of hordes of hook-nosed Polish and Lithuanian Jews whose evil countenances now peer from every little shanty and cigar divan would be a distinct gain to the community. Under cover of keeping a “winkel” [shop] they at present flock to Kimberley from afar, like avogels [vultures] to a dead ox, and their villainous faces enable one easily to understand the depth of hatred borne to them in Russia and elsewhere.* (Shain 13)

It seems like that south African Europeans’ anxiety about poor European Jewish immigration was in fact a projected of another concern — namely that of two powerful Jewish financiers gaining control of the diamond market, Alfred Beit and Barney Barnato.

Economic pressure mounted by 1874 when most of the upper layers of earth had
been sifted through, and now lying beneath was hard blue rock. Many feared that this signaled the end of diamonds, but not Barney Barnato. Raised in London, Barnato moved to Kimberley, like many others, in order to make his fortune in the diamond trade. Barnato was among the few people to suspect that the hard blue earth would yield stones. And his instinct proved to be accurate. Despite the growing despair among those who dug and found only dirt, Barnato imagined much more. But he was not the only one. The eighteen year old Cecil Rhodes also knew that there was more money to be made. Around this time, diamonds were flooding the market and diamond sellers, including Barnato and Rhodes, thought that the market needed to be regulated. After the stock market was established, Kimberley was run by more consolidated, bigger firms. As Kanfer explains, “The day of the little fish was over; Kimberley had entered the age of the sharks. It was only a question of which predator would remain alive at the end of the feeding frenzy” (87). Gradually it became clear that defeating the Jews in the quest to control the diamond industry was an opportunity not only to assert British economic power, but also a step in asserting colonial and racial superiority — a chance for the British man not only to rule over the mines, but by association, over those who tried and failed to control the diamond mines.

Barney Barnato and his brother Harry came to Kimberley from London’s Whitechapel. Raised in a poor, rough neighborhood, having dropped out of school by the age of fourteen, Barney gained small time fame by his stage performances in the east end of London. When their cousin David Harris convinced them that millions could be made on gambling, they took diamond mining as their game of choice (Kanfer 49).
After several unsuccessful attempts to make money in south Africa, the Barnato brothers pulled their resources together and bought claims to land that was (mistakenly) believed vacant of diamonds; for the top dirt had already been sifted (57). Barney suspected, however, that diamonds were hiding below the surface of the next layer of hard rock. Kanfer maintains, “this was pure guesswork on his part, and it was the making of his fortune. Before long, every cubic foot of blue ground would yield stones worth thousands of pounds of sterling”(57). In his biography, Cecil Rhodes, John Flint describes Barnato as

Quick witted in speech and action, he would sell anything, actually carrying with him in his baggage sixty boxes of bad cigars that were to be the foundation of his subsequent fortune. He was without manners or refinement, and could scarcely read and write; but he had sound nerves, a humorous charm, shrewdness, great patience and the ambition to make a million, or perhaps two, or ten. (47)

Although Rhodes also came from modest background in England, a clergyman’s son, and arrived in hopes of making a fortune, his dreams were not only about making money, but of spreading Englishness throughout the world. As he explained of his imperial designs, “Africa is still lying ready for us and it is our duty to take it. . . More territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human most honorable race the world possesses” (Flint 31). Despite his initial views that white Englishmen were superior to all other races, Barney Barnato was leading in the diamond race. As Flint explains, by 1855, “when Rhodes could boast an income of 50,000 pounds a year, Barnato’s was 200,000 pounds” (Flint 47). Barnato’s leading role in the newly emerging industry didn’t win him favors by Kimberley residents. One mining
engineer, Gardner Williams's comparison of Barney and Cecil reveals much about the racialized climate in Kimberley.

Externally... the two young men could scarcely be more unlike than the little, chunky, bullet-headed, near-sighted, mercurial Hebrew, taking a hand in current sport or traffic, and the tall, thoughtful, young overseer, sitting moodily on a bucket, deaf to the chatter and rattle about him, and fixing his blue eyes intently on his work, or on some fabric of his brain. (Kanfer 58)

This habit of sitting moodily on buckets may have inspired Rhodes to conclude that the only way to beat Barnato would be with an alternate source of Jewish money. His decision to work with Alfred Beit, the upper-middle class German Jew, enabled Rhodes to finally beat out Barnato and to become the king of diamonds. Clearly, Rhodes suspected that the only way to bypass the Jews was to use their own money to undermine their power. Rhodes' choice to collude with Beit proved to be economically and politically savvy. Flint explains of Beit, "Coming from a rich and sophisticated European Jewish family, he had an entree to important financial connections in Hamburg, Paris, Amsterdam and London, even to the great banking house of Rothschild" (48). With help from the Rothschilds, Rhodes not only began a legacy of diamond monopolies in southern Africa, backed by Jewish money, but did so in the name of British imperialism. Satisfying his lifelong goal, as Flint explains, "The triumph of the 'Anglo-Saxon race' could only be achieved through the expansion of the British empire" (29), and with Jewish money. It is worth quoting the entirety of the following passage from Rhodes's will, dated September 19, 1877, for the sheer megalomaniacal quality of Rhodes' imperial mission which was not only about
dominating the diamond market, but in doing so for the advancement of the Anglo-
Saxon race over other less evolved (and therefore less deserving) races. In this
document, Rhodes explains that upon his death, all of his money should go
to and for the establishment, promotion and development of a Secret
Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be the extension of British
rule throughout the world. . . and especially the occupation by British
settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the valley of the
Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America,
the islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the
whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the
ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the
British Empire, the inauguration of a system of Colonial Representation in
the Imperial Parliament which may tend to weld together the disjointed
members of the Empire, and finally the foundation of so great a power as
to hereafter render wars impossible and promote the best interests of
humanity. (Flint 32-33)

It is impossible to read any account of south African diamonds without connecting it to
Victorian political and economic aspirations like those expressed by Rhodes. The
extension of the British empire, which Rhodes believed could be accomplished with this
"secret society," was a mark of national excellence and white, Anglo-Saxon superiority
over all other people — including the rich Jews who unwittingly or not in the case of
Beit, enabled the proliferation of this ideology.

Throughout European history Jews have been perceived as an economic threat.
The use of these stereotypes in the 1880's is part of a long history of denigrating Jews
along the lines of their economic practices — and in turn, marks British insecurity
about the extent of Jewish economic power. South Africa in the 1880's was not much
different. The connection between King Solomon and diamonds, though fictional,
points to a long history of associating Jews with jewels. Such a connection, though is
not unfounded. As Kanfer notes, the relationship between Jews and diamonds tells two stories; one of anti-Jewish sentiment and the other of Jewish survival.

In medieval Europe, the Jewelers Guild was one of the very few organizations to admit Hebrew members and taught them the difficult trade of cutting and polishing. But diamonds played a far more important role in ghetto life. During the years of the Inquisition, Spanish Jews hastily fled across the Pyrenees to the low countries. It was impossible to travel with furniture or heavy valuables, and impractical to carry currency. Jewels, on the other hand, were precious and portable; a fortune could be concealed in the heel of a shoe. (Kanfer 47)

It is not surprising that anti-Jewish sentiments arose during the late 1870's and 1880's during an economic slump and drought (Shain 14) which apparently inspired a need for a scapegoat.

These instances of anti-Jewish sentiments increased in a manner proportionate to the diamond trade. But Jews were not the only ones to suffer. Kanfer assures that the first recorded death of a black diamond digger came about when a white "I.D.B.er" or illicit diamond buyer "'disgusted with the laziness' of his man, punished him with kicks. When a diamond dropped from the Zulu's loincloth, the digger tied him to a pole and left. Many hours later he found the laborer lying dead of heat prostration at the bottom of the claim [diamond mine]. There was no prosecution" (Kanfer 44). Afraid that blacks or mixed race people would find more diamonds, a group of claim holders devised a list of commands in 1872 including such things as "From here on, no 'Kafir or colored person' was to hold a digging licence. Those with licenses would lose them, unless they were supported by 50 white claim holders" which, Kanfer notes, "was as unlikely as finding a 500 carat stone" (Kanfer 42). Other demands included, "Any
'native or colored person' holding a diamond for which he could not 'satisfactorily
account' would be liable to at least fifty lashes. . . Anyone, other than claimholders,
convicted of purchasing a diamond from a 'native or colored servant' was to receive
fifty lashes in public, have his property confiscated, and be banished from the fields "
(Kanfer 42). Due to the fact that British law forbid a color bias in legal statements, all
of the references to "colored" or "Kaffirs" had to be changed to "servants" in order for
these laws to pass. Nonetheless, many blacks and whites continued to smuggle
diamonds out of the mines. Kanfer recounts, "Guards reported instances of natives
swallowing precious stones and disgorging them later. Inspectors found stones in the
natives' hair, ears, navels, eyelids, anuses. Every available orifice was used" (71). The
racial climate of the region worsened during this period in varying degrees (and for
different reasons) for anyone who was not English. 27 Kanfer explains that diamonds
"Escaped with an ease that suggested musical comedy. First the illicit diamonds were
stolen by laborers and sold to fences and middlemen. From there the rough stones were
peddled to dealers who were also claim holders. Finally the gems were conveyed back
to the fields, where they were 'discovered' all over again" (88). In fact, one enemy of
Bernato explained, "Kaffirs were bribed to swallow the 'booty' . . . a meeting place was
arranged, but in what circumstances they passed on the 'precious' stones to the
purchaser of stolen property history leaves us to conjecture. It would not be incorrect to
assume that many of the sparkling ornaments which at this moment adorn the neck of a
beauty have been subjected to this procedure. If they could speak!" (Kanfer 88-89).

In the end, Cecil Rhodes succeeded in controlling the diamond industry, but not
without financial backing from the Rothschilds. While Rhodes succeeded in beating Barney Barnato and in spreading imperialism and whiteness in the “dark continent,” all of this was possible because of his cleverly devised union with Beit and his ultimate financial backing from the Rothschilds. Like Haggard’s adventurers, Rhodes extends British power in Africa, and manages to control the political and economic aspects of south Africa not simply by superceding Jews, but by using “their” resources to further his power.

Given the extensive publicity of Rhodes’s regime and Barnato’s threatening power, it would have been impossible for Haggard to have known nothing of competition for control over the mines, or of the anti-Jewish climate of southern Africa during the very period in which he served as an imperial administrator in the region. More than likely, Haggard’s knowledge of the racial climate in Kimberley, coupled with his own insecurity about his Jewish heritage and his imperial ideas, which were very similar to Rhodes’s, are all embedded in the production and reception of *King Solomon’s Mines*. Haggard’s novel clearly draws from his contemporary history during which time Zimbabwe was “proved” (both literally and literarily) to be the site of the ruins of King Solomon’s Ophir and Cecil Rhodes, an Oxford educated Englishman, beats Jews in the quest to control diamonds by arranging financial backing from the Jewish Rothschild family. Indeed, *King Solomon’s Mines* might even be read as a fantastic allegory for British imperialism in southern Africa in the 1870’s in which British imperialism is engendered by Jewish money.
The narrative logic of *King Solomon’s Mines* rests upon a moral problem in one of the final scenes of the novel. The three English adventurers, after having traversed and entered Sheba’s cave, find themselves trapped in the space Haggard names “King Solomon’s mines” with African diamonds in their pockets. Haggard manages to inspire in his readers a desire for the success of the three imperial thieves, despite their greed and the obvious sexual implications of this narrative. With a little historical distance, and close attention to the political contexts for this novel, we wonder whose interests are served by such successes. Furthermore, how does Haggard manage to prevent his readers from wanting the three English men to die for their crimes of white supremacy, rape, and imperial theft? How does Haggard negotiate imperial guilt?

Some of this can be attributed, no doubt, to the frontier mentality and get-rich-quick stories that flourished throughout the 1870's and 80's in regard to the diamond boom. Haggard’s novel certainly plays off of these popular tales. Yet, historical context is only one factor in resolving this moral conundrum. Haggard also sets up the quest as only superficially about diamonds. We are told early in the tale that the men are in fact searching for a lost brother, and not for great wealth. Not greed, but brotherly love is the primary motivator. Haggard also converts imperial theft into a noble, heroic, adventure by setting up the story in the past tense. Therefore, there is never really any question about whether or not the three adventurers will survive because Quartermain’s introduction takes place after the events in the story have occurred. Thus, the narrator’s
position in the narrative effectively affirms a view that has already been absorbed as fact, raising little, if any, room for thoughts about the political implications of this novel.

As they enter the cave, led by Gagool, the three adventurers seem overconfident and excited about the prospect of finding this hidden and mysterious diamond mine. Tension builds as Gagool mumbles sinister comments under her breath and giggles quietly to herself, but the men seem not to notice or care. As they approach the opening of the cave, the adventurers find the statues of the three Silent Ones. Since rock cannot speak, the very title of the statues, “The Silent Ones” reminds us of the larger silence that results from Solomon’s constructed absence in this text. After admitting that he is “familiar with the Old Testament,” Quatermain recalls suddenly that “Solomon went astray after strange gods, the names of three of whom I remembered — ‘Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon’ — and I suggested to my companions that the three figures before us might represent these false divinities” (209). “The Silent Ones” are rendered as passive players here, when in fact, it is their constructed silence in the text that enables Quatermain to illustrate his own knowledge of, and thereby appropriate, Solomon’s history. His interpretation of Solomon’s allegiance to false divinities also explains why his Jewish empire faded in the first place. English identity, in this case, Quatermain’s identity as educated elephant hunter, emerges through a silent (and silenced) Jewish history which is unable to contest, and incontestable, arranged as fact. As we shall see, Quatermain’s “discovery” of Jewish diamonds and production of Jewish history are
the means by which he is transformed into a well educated and refined English
gentleman, worthy of the class position his newly-found wealth will secure.

Sir Henry, whom Quartermain describes as “a scholar, having taken a high
degree in classics at college” (209) adds to the description of the three statues by
describing them in relation to Biblical, Greek and finally English history: “Ashtoreth of
the Hebrews was the Astarte, who afterwards was the Aphrodite of the Greeks, was
represented with horns like the half moon, and there on the brow of the female figure
are distinct horns. Perhaps these colossi were designed by some Phoenician official
who managed the mines. Who can say?” (209). This echoing question is answered
even as it is asked; for the only ones who “can” say are the three Englishmen. And so,
they do. As the men move deeper into the cave toward the diamonds, they describe the
remains of previous empires in the shape of patriarchs whose bodies have been
preserved inside stalactites. To avoid the stigma of passing black African diamonds into
English hands, Haggard transforms this long line of African patriarchs into “the white
dead” (217). Once again we see how patriarchal whiteness is the condition on which
Haggard legitimizes imperial theft.

Prior to entering, Quartermain reminds us of his excitement in that moment,
“Would it prove a hoax after all, I wondered, or was old da Silvestra right? And were
there vast hoards of wealth stored in that dark place, hoards which would make us the
richest men in the whole world?”(219). Quartermain describes the contents of the
treasure chest, as “three parts full of uncut diamonds, most of them of considerable
size” (223), adding “I fairly gasped as I dropped them... ‘We are the richest men in the

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whole world... Monte Cristo is a fool to us’” (224). This scene reminds us that the quest for diamonds is not only about mining capital, but also about beating other men to the punch. The impressiveness of finding Solomon’s treasure chest, then, is inseparable from the excitement these men feel in comparison to other men, Monte Cristo in this case, whose wealth they have now surpassed. This initial excitement turns quickly, however, as Quartermain remarks, “And we stood, with pale faces and stared at each other, with the lantern in the middle, and the glimmering gems below, as though we were conspirators about to commit a crime, instead of being, as we thought, the three most fortunate men on earth” (224). Here, Quartermain sets up two positions — those who believe they are committing a crime or sinning, and those who believe, as do the adventurers, that they are fortunate in having discovered this large source of hidden diamonds. Recalling Matthew Arnold’s earlier comparison of “Hebraism and Hellenism” in *Culture and Anarchy*, Haggard eradicates imperial guilt by disassociating their theft from the Hebrew emphasis on “right conduct” and identifying instead with the symbolism of a Platonic cave, where the men can behave, to borrow Arnold’s description of Hellenism, with “spontaneity of consciousness” (478). The question of guilt and sin are quietly subsumed by the recognition that this cave space also has a symbolic Hellenic heritage. The Englishmen’s “pale” faces illuminated by the fire from their lantern which enables them to see the treasure they discover inside the cave, renders them not only innocent but as simply assuming their destiny in historical linearity, after the Greeks. The Hellenic context attempts to depoliticize this act of imperial theft, and in the process, links English white men, with pale faces, in the act of
stealing white stones and ivory, in alignment with the racialized whiteness of the Greeks and distinct from Solomon's Semitic racial heritage. Arnold continues, "Science has now made visible to everybody that great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race, and in how signal a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people. Hellenism is of Indo-European growth, Hebraism is of Semitic growth; and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism" (484). Jewish space is thus aligned with and separate from Hellenic, English space. The tension invoked by Quartermain's guilt, obviously inspired from this Hebraic history, dissipates when he imagines that the diamonds are not only there for the taking, in the tradition of Hellenism, but have been stored by ancient cultures who anticipated this moment when English men would liberate the diamonds. Quartermain explains,

There we stood and shrieked with laughter over the gems which were ours, which had been found for us thousands of years ago by the patient delvers in the great hole yonder, and stored for us by Solomon's long-dead overseer, whose name, perchance, was written in the characters stamped on the faded wax that yet adhered to the lids of the chest. Solomon never got them, nor David, nor da Silvestra nor anybody else. We had got them; there before us were millions of pounds' worth of gold and ivory, only waiting to be taken away. (225) (my emphasis)

This moment of resolution helps to submerge the real problem of imperial theft by suggesting that the Englishmen are supposed to take the diamonds since Solomon anticipated British imperialism. If this is true, though, we must wonder about the title of the novel — How can the diamonds or the mines belong to Solomon if he never got them? Further, King David was Solomon's father, and died before Solomon ascended
the throne. If these diamonds were, as Quartermain earlier described them, "hoards of wealth" stored in the mines by Solomon and his long dead overseer, how could David have desired them? It is telling that Quartermain never once mentions black African claims to these diamonds, and instead imagines only a line of white men who search for these now-English diamonds.

In their excitement, these men do not see the trap Gagool sets, or "the look of fearful male-violence that old Gagool favoured [as]... she crept, crept like a snake, out of the treasure chamber and down the passage towards the massive door of solid rock" (225). Transformed into a medusa-like witch, as a woman with phallic (snakelike) power, illustrates the real anxiety at the heart of this novel. These men are not afraid of Gagool the woman, until she takes the shape of a man. The masculine anxiety at the root of this quest, and of the fear of being caught desirous of entering the body of a man, and unable to escape. At the same time, though, it is their entrapment by Gagool that helps to justify their wealth at the novel's end. As Gail Ching-Liang Low explains, "the imprisonment of the white men also allows the reclamation of their moral status. For by confronting the possibility of death in the cave, and through the exhibition of great courage and fortitude, Haggard's heroes can emerge from the treasure quest with their moral integrity in tact" (79). Homosocial desire is therefore shrouded in the body of Sheba, and the androgynous, Gagool who has both female witch powers and male phallic authority. Low adds, "Gagool's critique [of the white men's theft] accurately mirrors the real effects of the diamond-rush at Kimberley [as]... Southern Africa was remoulded as exclusively a white man's domain" (79). The anxiety about her
"masculinity" is evident in her power to emasculate the three men, which we see after they discover they are trapped and Quartermain asserts, “All the manhood seemed to have gone out of us” (227). The only way to redeem themselves for having been duped by Gagool is to return the sentiment on Solomon. When they take his diamonds, Solomon is not only deflowered, but overtaken in the race to control African diamonds. The remaining story of Solomon’s history exists in the hands of those who steal the diamonds, and bury the cave. In this process, artifacts reflecting Solomon’s subjectivity are either buried, or transferred in the same process in which they are appropriated by English adventurers. Solomon’s identity is thereafter trapped in Haggard’s tale, and in Quartermain’s hands.

The Jewish subtext in Haggard’s novel is produced through a Semitic discourse, and Jews are essentialized by their associations with diamonds — a signifier Haggard’s readers surely have noted. Thus, even though Jews colonize Africa, and attempt to control the diamond industry, they are denied a subject position in the novel, and therefore must be produced epistemologically, and literarily, through the metonymic referent of diamonds. Jan Mohamed reminds us that

Just as imperialists “administer” the resources of the conquered country, so colonialist discourse “commodifies” the native subject into a stereotyped object and uses him as a “resource” for colonialist fiction. The European writer commodifies the native by relating his individuality, his subjectivity, so that he is now perceived as a generic being that can be exchanged for any other native (they all look alike, act alike, and so on). (83)

King Solomon exists only in the form of a temple that stands for his absence. And the diamonds and gold that represent him — supplement and fetishize him. They make him
present with African resources, objects to be traded that not only enable and sustain British colonial power in southern Africa, but serve as the very discourse out of which Haggard constructs English masculinity. Jewish history is imagined through a Christian perspective, in the act of being overtaken by English men.

While McClintock argues that “money breeds itself” because women’s mining labor is excluded from *King Solomon’s Mines*, and therefore the mother figure is erased in this novel’s birthing ritual, I would add that the same is true of Jewish and Phoenician mining capital and for King Solomon. When the three Englishmen emerge from the cave, they have stolen diamonds from a king whose body and identity are buried in African soil. This the diamonds have been dug up in a sense, by Englishmen. My reading of the political (un)conscious reflected in Haggard’s representations of Jewish space in Africa examines the implications of this space within a colonial economy of diamonds trading, history making, and empire building. Solomon’s representation as male or feminine, black or white is thus important insofar as it masks, or attempts to mask, colonial desires to submerge those anxieties about Jewish diamond trading and, more specifically for Haggard, Jewish whiteness. Bhabha warns us, “What does need to be questioned... is the *mode of representation of otherness* which depends crucially on how the ‘West’ is deployed within these discourses” (89). Thus, my reading has foregrounded not Solomon’s representation in and of itself, but a discourse in which Western subjectivity and in this case, western male subjectivity, is deployed in its rendering of a Jewish patriarchal body. The choice to render Solomon as absent, and the source of his power (diamonds) hidden and stored for the English, betrays much
about Haggard’s self-proclaimed relationship to that history. Reading this text as a Semitic discourse means examining how it reflects gentile English culture in its representation of Jewish history. All the more reason, then for emphasizing a separation, and for hiding King Solomon somewhere in Africa. Haggard’s own return to England to write this novel might then be read as an affirmation that the Jewish part of his own identity got left behind in Africa. And while Quartermain’s, Good’s, and Sir Henry’s Englishness is complete upon their newly found wealth from Jewish diamonds, so too is Haggard’s who made a name for himself and great riches from his narrative about Jewish diamonds. The return to England for all four men — Haggard, Quartermain, Good and Sir Henry — with diamonds in their hands, symbolizes the restoration not only of English masculinity, but a masculinity that is born by narrative depictions of a Jewish patriarch.

The question of whether or not Haggard hated or loved Jews is almost beside the point. Rather, what I have tried to show is that the whole system of representation from which imperial consciousness and its corresponding white supremacist ideology emerged was based not only on an anxiety between blackness and whiteness, but also between whiteness and whiteness. None of the characters in the Bible would have had white skin, yet Haggard chooses to depict Solomon in white skin, and in the process renders him as an absence from the text. As a Jew, though, Solomon’s constructed identity as white belies Victorian distinctions between Jews and gentiles, as well as Haggard’s own anxiety about his Jewish blood. The system of knowledge produced about Solomon and Jewish identity in relation to English identity is not an easily
dismissible antiquarian curiosity, but one that proliferates throughout the nineteenth century not coincidentally in both the novel form and in “real” imperial adventures. Solomon’s identity is, therefore, not recovered in this tale, but represented and constructed as a Semitic discourse. When read in this way, we begin to understand the political implications of this novel’s depiction of three white men who liberate African diamonds from a Jewish king, reflecting the need to make Solomon disappear in a history about white English empire building. Yet, Solomon never really disappears altogether, but instead appears as a subject of the novel’s discourse about Jews and African Jewish history. When Haggard imagines Solomon as a great white empire builder, as witnessed by diamonds as opposed to gold, he taps into a politically charged history of south Africa and the necessity of erasing that history in the maintenance of English racial identity. In the process, however, we begin to understand the work of Semitic discourse that simultaneously elides and separates Jewish history and English history. If, as this novel suggests, Solomonic history would remain undiscovered without the three English adventurers, then the same is true of the three English adventurers, whose history could not be told without Haggard’s diamonds.
Endnotes


2. Since the European establishment of the Union of South Africa did not take place until 1910, I will refer to this region as south Africa or southern Africa, so as not to confuse it with the country that emerged after 1910.

3. I borrow the term “homosocial desire” from Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick’s *Between Men*, where she explains “‘Homosocial desire’... is a kind of oxymoron. ‘Homosocial’ is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual.’ In fact, it is applied to such activities as ‘male bonding,’ which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of ‘desire,’ of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual — a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted.” (1-2)

4. By using the term “white” to describe Solomon’s skin color, I do not mean to suggest that he really was white-skinned. More than likely, Solomon would have had dark skin. As a result of nineteenth-century English anxiety about Jewish assimilation (which was complicated in part by the fact that some Jewish people have light skin), this novel covertly asserts that just because Jews are able to overtake African culture (presumably because they have white skin, according to this culture’s racial hierarchy) does not mean that they cannot themselves be overtaken by “whiter” people, such as the three British adventurers. My reading serves to expose the racial logic embedded in this text, and not to promote it as valid.

5. Although Jews are often viewed in western culture and western literary criticism as white, or having European ancestry, Jews did not originally come from Europe, nor did they have light colored skin in Biblical times. The problem with the term “the Jewish people” mistakenly suggests a unity among Jews. The original Hebrews as well as modern day Jews are culturally, ethnically and geographically heterogeneous. The notion that Jews are “racially pure” or biologically linked grows out of a western race discourse intent upon viewing racial identities as genetically determined. The original Jews were nomadic people from the area we now call the middle east and from northern Africa. For more on this see *The Bible Myth: The African Origins of the Jewish People* by Gary Greenberg and Jose V. Malcioln’s *The African Origins of Modern Judaism: From Hebrews to Jews*. Regardless of where or how Biblical Jewish history evolves, it is clear that Biblical Jews originated in the middle east and Africa, and therefore would have had skin color reflecting their geographic origins. Further, groups of Jews settled in Africa as far back as four thousand years ago. Many black Jews still reside in Africa, where they practice Judaism. These black Jews, however, are different from European
antisemitic depictions of Jews with “black features.” The important point is that Jews are black, white, and every shade in between. Victorian attempts to find white Jews living in Africa come from anxiety about their own origins in post-Darwinian world of evolutionary science. Since many Victorians didn’t want to believe that they had black blood in their ancestry, they devised the theory that white Jews living in Africa were the ancestors of the English.

6. For more on racial ideologies in the Victorian period, especially in relation to class issues see Sander Gilman’s *The Jew Body*, Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* and Patrick Brantlinger’s *Rule of Darkness*.

7. McClintock talks about this in chapter six of *Imperial Leather*. See also Haggard’s biography, written by his daughter Lilias Rider Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left* and biographical discussions in Wendy Katz’s *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire*.

8. I do not espouse the view of Africa this term connotes, but rather, my references to this expression reflect the European preoccupation with darkness in Africa as explained by Patrick Brantlinger in “The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent” in *Rule of Darkness*.

9. See for example, Peter Berresford Ellis’s *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite* and Haggard’s letters to his parents published in his autobiography, *The Days of My Life*.

10. Ellis maintains of Haggard that “Rider also displayed a strong anti-Boer prejudice, a prejudice which took him some years to grow out of, and which was probably a reflection of Shepstone’s own narrow prejudices…” (58).

11. For more on Haggard’s specific involvement with the British government during this time see the numerous chapters Haggard wrote on his experiences there in his autobiography *The Days of My Life*. Also noteworthy is Norman Etherington’s biography *Rider Haggard*, Peter Berresford Ellis’s *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite*. For specific information on Haggard’s role and attitudes toward British imperialism and the Boer War see Wendy Katz’s *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire* and William Mintner’s *King Solomon’s Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa*.

12. For more information on Haggard’s emerging skepticism and fear of more war (which eventually came true with the Boer War, see: *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours*, by H. Rider Haggard.

13. Stefan Kanfer explains one use of these terms in the nineteenth century: “The Dutch. . . thought the natives [the Khoikhoi people] sounded as if they were stammering and stuttering — *hateren en tateren*. The phrase was shortened to Hottentot. Another local people, the Bantu, were called Kaffirs. That was neither a black nor a European word; it
derived from the unflattering Arabic Qafir — infidel, unbeliever” (17).

14. In her reading of sixteenth century explorations of Africa and earlier representations of Solomon and Sheba myths in English literature, Kim Hall explains, “Solomon’s story and his song become a key part of the ‘typology of colonialism,’ . . . . He is both an exemplar of the sage colonial ruler and an example of the dangers of erotic entanglements with foreign women” (108).

15. I do not mean to elide all definitions of “masculinity” under white Western Christian masculinity. As Daniel Boyarin notes in Unheroic Conduct, the ideal Jewish male within Ashkenazi culture is defined very differently from the manner in which I see Haggard portraying of Jewish masculinity or of English masculinity. Boyarin explains that Jewish culture marks masculinity as “nonaggressive, not strong, [and] not physically active”(81). He adds later that the source of this identity comes from “The Talmud, as the canonical text of Ashkenazi culture — novel and philosophy all voiced into one — provided the cultural models and resources around which the self-representation of a gentle, recessive, nonviolent masculinity could crystalize under specific material and historical conditions”(82). I do not mean to suggest that Haggard’s rendering of the passive King Solomon is somehow “accurate” or warranted, for self-defined identity is a very different matter than culturally imposed/imagined stereotypes. The impulse to see Solomon as effeminate is therefore not about Jewish masculine identity, but about western gentile masculinity that revolves around male competition, physical strength and physical displays of superiority over other less masculine and therefore effeminate men.

16. Ann Pellegrini points out in “Whiteface Performances: ‘Race,’ Gender, and Jewish Bodies” that “The historical norms taken by anti-Semitic discourse in the nineteenth century were informed not only be emerging “racial sciences,” but also by developments in anthropology and ethnology. Jewish difference was charted across a geography of race. “Black” Africa was one region to which the “racial” difference of the Jew was frequently traced back. The putative blackness of the Jew was a sign of racial mixing and, so, racial degeneration” (111-112).

17. Haggard’s choice to discipline African men’s sexual practices may have played into the rape scare in Natal in the 1870’s. For more on this see Norman Etherington’s “Natal’s Rape Scare in the 1870’s.” Also, see William Tate’s “Solomon, Gender, and Empire in Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus” for more on the relationship between English literary depictions of Solomon and the rise of the British empire.

18. For more on Haggard’s fear of Jews see his Diaries and Katz chapter 6.

19. See Jacob Lassner for the history of Biblical, PostBiblical, Qur’anic, and later Muslim versions of the Solomon and Sheba legends.
20. Biblical passages on the subject of Solomon and Sheba come from chapter 10 of I Kings and chapter 9 of II Chronicles. As Jacob Lassner has explained, the themes in these passages are "directly treated in rabbinic and later Jewish lore as well as in the Qur’an and other Muslim sources" (9).

21. Pritchard adds that "Other translations differ slightly because of the nuances and ambiguities of certain Hebrew words and phrases, and because of variants in the readings of ancient manuscripts and versions" (9).

22. I use this reading to suggest not that it is the only interpretation of the Biblical account of Solomon, but that this was the one with which Haggard and his English audience would have been familiar. When Victorian audiences read King Solomon's Mines, their interpretation of the Jewish King would have informed their reading of Haggard's text. Of course, there are many versions of this tale, and many more interpretations of those various versions. All are important, but this reading would have been most important to Haggard's Victorian English audience.

23. For more on Portuguese and Muslim history in southern Africa see Scott T. Carroll.

24. Unlike previous archeologists, David Randall-Maclver claimed in 1906 that the ruins were originally built by Africans, supporting the theory that the work had been done by ancestors of the Bantu people who live nearby. See Scott Carroll for more on the contested legends about the origins of the ruins.

25. See for example, Kim Hall, Patrick Brantlinger, and D.M. Schreuder

26. See Milton Shain chapter one, especially sections on the Neptune Affair.

27. For more on this see Kanfer, chapters two, three, and four, which document a host of other crimes. Although whites were prosecuted for crimes (mostly diamond theft, and never for the crimes of instituting slavery or imperialism) but their trials were much more fair than those for blacks. Indeed, most blacks did not have trials at all. Also see Norman Etherington.
CONCLUSION

The lines that run through the depth of the picture...are not complete; they all lack a segment of their trajectories. This gap is caused by the absence of the king — an absence that is an artifice on the part of the painter. But this artifice both conceals and indicates another vacancy that is, on the contrary, immediate: that of the painter and the spectator when they are looking at or composing the picture...the manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing — despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits. — Michel Foucault

This dissertation has attempted to examine a prominent phenomenon in the nineteenth-century British novel — English authors' use of a Semitic discourse to imagine and construct English Christian racial identity. When we look back to the past, to read one race ideology which I have called Semitic discourse, we are confronted with a diverse range of discourses and cultural forms through which race is imbricated, articulated, verified, and naturalized. Intent upon affirming the racial superiority of white-skinned, Christian English people, nineteenth-century biology, philology, anthropology, and culture were all put into the service of perpetuating and proving that racial categories separated and defined groups of people. Those in power were able to sustain their power through these racializing acts. Therefore, race, or the formal grouping of people into perceived biological categories, did not exist outside of power structures, but rather, English Christian cultural dominance was sustained as a result of
the act of constructing and controlling the discourse on race. In her recent *Things of Darkness*, Kim Hall reminds us that our contemporary discussions on race create an easy association of race with modern science [which] ignores the fact that language itself creates differences within social organization and that race was then (as it is now) a social construct that is fundamentally more about power and culture than about biological difference. (6)

Science “proves” the existence of racial distinctions because it operates by and through the structure of power. Thus, a racial discourse in one form or another must be in place before science has the language to articulate claims about racial identity and hierarchies.

Images of Jewish characters, or otherwise racialized figures, are certainly a manifestation of a culture’s will to power, but as visible examples, they serve to distract us from seeing the invisible fabric out of which dominant, white, English culture maintains the upper hand in delineating and rating racial groups in relation to themselves. While other readers of nineteenth-century fiction have examined depictions of Jewish fictional characters, I have chosen to look instead at representations of Jewish history and culture as it is put into the service of maintaining English identity. The examples I examine work by distraction and obfuscation, and in the process attempt to shield us from seeing how race ideology is used to keep those in power *in power* by rendering them invisible. Of course characters like Daniel Deronda help this process along, but so too do characters such as Jane Eyre, Berenice Montenero, Lord Montecute, and Will Ladislaw — proclaimed Christian characters whose authors render them with a Semitic discourse which, I argue, not only serves to distinguish Jews from Christians, but keeps Christians in control of the discourse about Jews. Semitic discourse, as I have
tried to show, produces knowledge about Jewish history and culture from a Christian perspective, and thus, not only appropriates Jewish history and culture for the production of Christian perspectives, but also relegates Jews to being the subject of a discourse that is essentially about English identity. In chapter two I examine two novel depictions of the Gordon Riots which expose English anxiety about Jewish conversion and assimilation which Maria Edgeworth and Charles Dickens resolve by appropriating the Gordon Riots as “Jewish” riots. In chapter three I focus on the manner in which Zionism is coopted by Charlotte Tonna and Benjamin Disraeli to legitimize the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and/or British imperial expansion in the Holy Land. In chapter four I move on to Eliot’s depictions of an English town’s obtuseness about the Jewish origins of Christianity. Finally, in my reading of King Solomon’s Mines, I argue that English Christian anxiety about their perception of shared racial origins with Jews leads three adventurers on a quest to prove that English masculinity is far superior to Jewish masculinity. In each case we find that embedded in “secular” English novels an anxiety about the exposure of English Christian identity and the use of a Semitic discourse to secure the invisibility of English people as racialized entities themselves.

The novel, I argue, is one of the most powerful cultural forces to accomplish this, not only by making numerous references to Jewish history and culture, but by the novel’s very structure that reenacts the Christian Biblical appropriation of Hebrew culture. Thus, the origins of the story are contingent upon a past that is both subsumed and appropriated by the novel’s plot, just as the Christian Bible is subsumed and
appropriated the Jewish Bible. In order to keep reinventing English identity as
Christian, and racially distinct from its Jewish origins, the British novel repeatedly
constructs and images the "moment" when Jews and Christians parted ways. From that
point on, the ideology of dominant English culture maintains, Jews remained tied to the
vestiges of an antiquated past, and Christians, though born out of that same past,
imagined themselves as having evolved into enlightened, progressive, rational creatures.
It is from this perspective that Jewish history and culture is represented, imagined, and
constructed as racially distinct from English Christian identity.

Nineteenth-century literary depictions of Jewish people and culture are mediated
by a desire to remove Jews from the national sphere. Such images transform Jews from
real people into fantasies that can be washed away by closing a book or curtain. We see
how power infiltrates race discourse in such a way that renders "blackness" and
"whiteness" as much more than just a description of skin color or national identity. As
Terry Phillips explains,

The writer's real dependency on the rhetoric of "race" is not to be thought
of as simply a matter of theme and symbol; the ontology of character, the
phenomenology of setting, and the epistemology of a narrative point of
view all are heavily implicated in the racialization of literary language.
Conversely, the rhetoric of the literary text offers some insights into the
lived experience of "race" as a political taxonomy of the subject, a logic
of economic interests, and incitement of remarkable fantasies. (331)

Considering the small size of the Jewish population in the Victorian period, estimated at
somewhere between 20,000 and 60,000 in all of England, the proliferation of depictions
of Jews within the Victorian novel at first seems odd (Galchinsky 272). Yet, when
viewed as part of an episteme of whiteness, a logic emerges that explains not only the
source of fear about the Jews, but also to need to see (and thus construct) them this way in order to maintain white, English, Christian identity as racially superior. The texts I have chosen to study reveal that anxiety about Jews in the literature of the nineteenth-century has less to do with concern over Jewish degeneracy or blackness and much more to do with their shared history and possibly their shared physical features with English Christians. Without “marking” the Jews as deviant, as we see with Brockelhurst’s figurative act of marking Jane Eyre as deviant, despite the fact that she looks like all the other little girls, there is little ground on which to maintain the unmarked and invisible qualities of English whiteness.

While most of the literary texts under examination were not written as scathing attacks on Jews, they still reflect and produce an unconscious appropriation of a normalized anxiety about both Jewish assimilation in English culture and the Hebrew origins of Christianity. Hogarth’s engraving, for example, relies on the image of a monkey whose body parts literally take the place of (thereby erasing and rendering visible) the Merchant’s body. At the same time, the engraving draws our attention to other visual images of Jews within the frame which further reference Biblical Jews. Specifically, Hogarth includes a painting of Jonah at Nineva. In like fashion, Jewish history and culture does not appear in these novels, but we witness instead a series of projections and displacements that construct Jewish history and culture as part of the maintenance of English identity.

Nineteenth-century writers build on the ideology produced in and by Hogarth’s image of the Jewish merchant who tries and fails to appear “white” or English. The
lesson, of course, is that to *appear* English is not to be English at all since English whiteness is always marked by invisibility. The novels I have examined in my dissertation imply much about the ways in which English culture projected its fear of Anglo-Jewish assimilation and of the Hebrew origins of Christianity onto the image of the Jew in the Victorian period. The ideology of whiteness relies upon the Jew’s failure to pass in order to maintain the stability of a racially pure English identity. Such images are a reminder not only of a cultural desire to believe that imposters will be detected, but even more urgently, that the existence of a pure gentile culture depends upon it. Thus, regardless of all the talk of conversion, assimilation, and tolerance in nineteenth-century England, literary discourse from this period is intent upon constructing Jewish identity, history, and culture as visible, detectable, and racially distinct from English racial identity. The numerous examples of Jews’ failed attempts to pass as English represents a need to *see* and manage the Jews (thereby asserting the visibility of the Jews) not to convert them, but to secure the invisibility of whiteness. Thus, we find that Jewish white skin is both supplementary and antecedent to the issue of conversion or the question of assimilation.

Depictions of Jews thus constitute what Foucault calls, “incompatible visibilities.” In his reading of Velasquez’s *Las Meninas*, Foucault explains that the function of the mirror in the portrait is to “provide a metathesis of visibility that affects both the space represented in the picture and its nature as representation; it allows us to see, in the centre of the canvas, what in the painting is of necessity doubly invisible”(97). The same might be said of representational arts in nineteenth-century
English literature. While placing Semitic discourse (as opposed to representations of "real" Jewish people) in the center of the figurative canvas, the novels I have discussed both rely upon and cover the invisible forces by which they are produced. As Foucault so aptly puts it, "the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing — despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits." In fact, as I have tried to show, this dissertation is not about the visibility of the Jew, but about the invisibility of Christians, and the work of novels to manage and sustain English Christian invisibility.

Endnotes

1. "Las Meninas" (105).
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