

THE SOCIAL QUESTION AND THE JEWISH QUESTION
IN LATE VICTORIAN LONDON

THE FICTIONS AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM OF
MARGARET HARKNESS

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*Introduction*¹

In 1843, the young Karl Marx clearly saw that the Jewish Question in modern Europe could not be divorced from the Social Question. The case for the political emancipation of the Jew revealed the illusory freedoms of the liberal state while the Jew himself embodied the unbridled egotism driving capitalism and producing class conflict. Marx's rhetorical use of Judaism and Jewish history as abstract metaphors for the alienation inherent in a social system based upon private property is a suggestive starting point for analyzing the social question in Victorian London.² Much like the figure of the Jew in the 19th century imagination, the social question proved mobile and protean, able to disguise and attach itself to a wide range of causes, ideas, and issues.³

The social question and the Jewish question – and their representation – converged in the slums of late Victorian East London as each functioned as the doppelganger for the other. This convergence depended at least partly on the historical particularities of East London, which became a site of overlapping and competing 'conversion' efforts in the 1880s and 90s.⁴ While Jack the Ripper's murders in 1888 brought East London global notoriety as

¹ For comments and editorial suggestions on earlier drafts, I thank Pamela Walker, Deborah Nord and Jill Rappoport along with the editors.

² For a provocative reading of aspects of the erotics and politics of Marx's 'On the Jewish Question' in relation to Victorian culture and literature, see Dellamora, *Friendship's Bonds*, pp. 92-101.

³ In the preface to his 1885 handbook on the Jewish Question, the Jewish social statistician Joseph Jacobs characterized the 'Question' and the literature it had produced as 'protean' and 'multifarious'. See Jacobs, *The Jewish Question*, p. v.

⁴ Walter Besant defined East London as 'all that area which lies east of Bishopsgate Street Without and North of the River Thames'. See Besant, *East London*, p. 4 and chapt. 1, 'What East London Is'; see chapt. 7, 'The Alien' for a mostly favourable analysis of the geography, social and economic life of Jews in East London.

a space of poverty, sexual danger and violence, it was also the chief destination of poor Jewish immigrants, and the epicentre of social reform, social investigation, and class-bridging institutions.⁵ As thousands of impoverished Russo-Polish Jews fled pogroms in Eastern Europe and Imperial Russia for the safety and squalor of East London, Jewish benevolent agencies in London attempted to convert foreign-born Jews into English Jews and ‘proper’ English gentlemen and ladies.⁶ At the same time, Christian missionaries to the Jews, established in East London since the early nineteenth century, intensified their efforts to convert Jews into Christians or so-called Christian Hebrews.⁷ These efforts to mould the beliefs, practices and identities of newly arriving Russo-Polish Jews coincided with even more wide ranging endeavours aimed at uplifting, cleansing, and controlling impoverished native born populations in response to increasingly violent encounters between labour and capital in the metropolis.⁸ An army of mostly well-to-do men and women descended on East London in the 1880s determined to convert the fallen into the saved, the morally and sexually degraded into the respectable, the ignorant into the cultured, unbelieving heathens into godly communicants. They were duly accompanied by journalists, novelists, social investigators, artists and photographers intent to satisfy the hunger of a vast public anxious to participate directly or vicariously in the craze for slumming.⁹

The work of representing the ills of the metropolis largely shaped what contemporaries came to understand as social problems. Technologies of representation – the novel, the popular press, photography, parliamentary reports, social statistics, magic lanterns, exhibitions, public health inquiries and commissions, maps – transformed the ‘social’ and social life into ‘social problems’ – and by so doing gave them new form and meaning and enabled them to be exploited for political and social policy ends. Sober investigations into the dietary regimes of workhouse paupers and the health

⁵ On Jewish emigration to East London, see Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*. See also Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*; Garrard, *The English and Immigration*. On the cultural politics of Jewish East London, see Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, chapt. 7, and Gilman, ‘The Jewish Murderer: Jack the Ripper, Race and Gender’, in: *The Jew’s Body*.

⁶ See Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*.

⁷ Literary scholars who have examined issues of ‘conversion’ and representations of Jewishness include Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*; Cheyette, *Constructions of the Jew*; Cheyette, *Between ‘Race’ and Culture*. See also Nochlin and Garb, *The Jew in the Text*. On the history of attempt to convert Jews, see Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, chapt. 5; Smith, ‘The London Jews’.

⁸ On these struggles between labour and capital, see Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*.

⁹ I have explored this phenomenon in depth in *Slumming*.

effects of overcrowding published in distinguished medical journals like the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* turned into powerful engines of social, political and economic change when they were taken up by popular journalists and novelists and transformed into compelling human dramas that touched the minds and hearts of readers.¹⁰ Even as those avatars of rationality and efficiency, the leaders of the Charity Organisation Society, sought to differentiate scientific charity from mere sentiment, the two remained deeply entwined. Feelings mattered as much as facts when well-to-do Victorians faced the outcast poor among them.

At the very moment that philanthropic, educational, and missionary efforts converged on East London and made it the *locus classicus* for debates about English social questions, several East London districts were ceasing to be 'English'. Anthony Trollope's anti-Semitic novels of the 1870s decrying the Judaizing of English culture were no mere fictions in at least one part of London invested with inordinate importance in the eyes of the British public.¹¹ That district was Whitechapel, an impoverished area east of Bishopsgate and only a short stroll from the City and the Bank of England. The term Whitechapel came into usage in France and the United States – and no doubt elsewhere – to signify an emblematic space of poverty and vice. Writers on social questions in Britain and their readers knowingly conflated geographies of deprivation: pamphlets about the slums of south London could and were appropriated to serve local agendas of Whitechapel in east London, as if the spaces were interchangeable. As Whitechapel became the Jewish East End in the 1880s, the Social Question came to be ever more closely bound to the Jewish Question. Parliamentary inquiries about Jewish immigrants in East London masqueraded as investigations into the broader problem of sweated labour,¹² while debates about the metropolitan poor were haunted by the spectre of the alien Jew as both cause and symptom of pauperisation.

¹⁰ The *Lancet*, for example, published one of the first exposes of conditions in Jewish East London. See 'Report of the special sanitary commission'. The publication of this report spurred other investigations, including the blatantly anti-Jewish inquiry by Burnett, *Report to the Board of Trade*, which in turn provided the foundation for Lord Dunraven's demand for the House of Lords Committee on Sweated Labour. The *Lancet* offered careful critical reviews of 'social question' novels. See its critical review of the overdrawn and despairing message of John Law's *Captain Lobe* (discussed at length in this essay), *Lancet* (February 15, 1890), p. 354.

¹¹ See Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, chapt. 6.

¹² For a recent evaluation of the anti-sweating campaigns of the 1880s and 90s, see Blackburn, *A Fair Day's Wage*, esp. chaps. 2-3.

Scholars have written copiously and often brilliantly about each of these developments.¹³ While most historians of Victorian London necessarily acknowledge that these changes occurred simultaneously, fewer have analyzed the *reciprocal* impact of the Jewish Question and the Social Question in shaping representations of London and its social welfare and sexual politics.¹⁴ The separation of the historiography of social reform and the social question, class relations, and philanthropy in Victorian London from the scholarship produced by historians of Anglo-Jewry in the metropolis at least partly reflects the determined efforts of Anglo-Jewish elites in the late-nineteenth century. As a matter of collective policy, these well-to-do assimilated Jews sought to draw upon exclusively Jewish communal networks, resources and institutions in meeting the needs of Jewish newcomers. Anxious to preserve their own hard-won status as respected propertied members of British society, leaders of Anglo-Jewry sought to contain the Jewish Question and confront it on their own terms while sharply distinguishing themselves from their impoverished 'foreign' co-religionists from the *shtetl* world of Eastern Europe.

How did the convergence of the Social Question and the Jewish Question in East London shape the ways in which the late-Victorians conceptualised problems of urban poverty, religious and racial pluralism, urban sexuality, and Englishness? In what ways were debates about the metropolitan poor affected by the presence of poor Jews concentrated in one or two districts of London? And, conversely, how did preoccupations with 'Outcast London' influence debates about the status of Jews and the meanings of Jewishness? I approach these broad questions through the work and writings of a precariously middle-class, unmarried woman who lived in East London for the better part of the 1880s, Margaret Harkness.

¹³ On Jews and sweating in East London, see Morris, *Women Workers*; on Jews in Charles Booth's landmark social survey, see Englander and O'Day, *Retrieved Riches* and O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry*, esp. chaps. 8-9. See also Lipman, *A History of the Jews*. For a poignant study of the dynamics of a Jewish philanthropic housing estate in East London, see White, *Rothschild Buildings*; on poor Jewish mothers, see Marks, *Model Mothers*; see also the essays in Newman, *The Jewish East End*.

¹⁴ For example, the distinguished historian of the East End Jewish poor and Jewish radicalism, Bill Fishman, literally ghettoises his treatment of 'The Ghetto' in his compassionate and kaleidoscopic evocation of the East End in 1888. His discussion of Jewish East London is not integrated into his overall analysis of the social history of the area. See Fishman, *East End 1888*. Standish Meacham, one of the most perceptive historians of the late-Victorian metropolitan working class, virtually ignores the Jews of East London in both *A Life Apart* and *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform*.

Harkness's Social and Sexual Politics

Until quite recently, Harkness (1854-1923) was an unfamiliar figure even to many specialists in Victorian history. She was best known as the recipient of the famous letter by Friedrich Engels in which he developed his definition of literary realism as 'truth of detail' and 'the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances'. Engels warned that Harkness's depiction of a demoralised and passive underclass could impede class revolution by accentuating the inertness of the poor in the face of their oppression.¹⁵ In the past two decades, scholars of feminism and socialism have rediscovered Harkness as an astute observer and participant in many of the key social, literary, and political struggles in late-nineteenth century society.¹⁶ Harkness was part of a cohort of educated, independent New Women in the 1880s determined to make their own way in London without benefit of fathers or husbands. The child of a country rector perpetually strapped for money, Harkness confessed that she did not 'thoroughly understand' 'love or passion between the sexes' and loathed the 'idea of marriage' for herself.¹⁷ Wary of conjugal domesticity as a viable resolution for the plots of her novels and as an answer social questions, Harkness embraced the challenges and opportunities of 'glorified spinsterhood'.¹⁸

At a time when single bourgeois women claimed increasing authority to define and shape solutions to social problems through their work as social workers, friendly visitors, rent collectors, housing managers, settlement

¹⁵ See Engels to Margaret Harkness, April 1888, reprinted in Eagleton and Milne, *Marxist Literary Theory*, pp. 39-41. Engels acknowledged the pervasive passivity of the East London poor in his letter to Harkness. The reviewer for the London *Daily News* likewise emphasized the melancholy of Harkness's portrait with its focus on 'the misery which seems to keep all religion at bay' in the slums. See *Daily News* (August 17, 1889), p. 5.

¹⁶ For the most comprehensive study of Harkness, including her work at the *British Weekly*, see Kaspar, *Margaret Harkness*; see also Rosenberg, 'French Naturalism and the English Socialist Novel'; Goode, 'Margaret Harkness and the Socialist Novel'; Sypher, *Wisps of Violence*, chapt. 6; and Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, chapt. 6.

¹⁷ See Margaret Harkness to Beatrice Potter, December 10, 1875 and September, 1876, Passfield Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

¹⁸ The plot of *Captain Lobe* is set in motion by a bad marriage. The heroine's mother had an affair with her father's foreman. The novel ends not with marriage but the promise of marriage in the future. The heroine of *City Girl* is seduced by a married elite man. The term 'glorified spinsterhood' comes from an anonymous article in *MacMillans* (September, 1888) which Harkness's circle of single women discussed among themselves. The article highlighted the freedoms and transgression of educated single women's lives of social engagement.

house workers, and charity organizers, others like Harkness exploited their newly found freedom to support themselves through the work of representing social questions in literature and journalism. What began for Harkness as ‘cold blooded journalism’ in pursuit of copy and a livelihood came to inspire in her a profound sense of vocation.¹⁹ In 1890-1891, Harkness travelled the world comparing and contrasting social relations in Europe and the Antipodes with those she knew so intimately through first hand experience at home. She movingly acknowledged that ‘the filth and moral degradation of the English slums fill one with despair. Ink turns to blood when one writes about them, tears make words fall like lead from one’s pen, and despair stretches its gaunt hand over the paper when one sits down to describe the slums of England’.²⁰ Her work as both writer and social activist reveals a striking conjunction of imagination and commitment.

In the 1880s, Harkness knew, conversed and argued with the most original intellects, radicals, writers, and reformers of her generation. Her circle of female friends and co-workers included Beatrice Potter Webb, Olive Schreiner, Amy Levy, Eleanor Marx, and Annie Besant. Her male political allies and correspondents included John Burns, Keir Hardie, Cardinal Manning and Tom Mann. An active albeit often quite critical member of the fledgling socialist movement, especially the Social Democratic Federation, Harkness played small parts in the Matchgirl and Dockers’ Strikes that led to the emergence of the New Unionism and the first large scale organization of unskilled labourers in British history. While calling herself an agnostic, she grew more and more convinced in the late-1880s that the Salvation Army’s direct outreach to the poor with its absence of snobbish condescension and its surfeit of loving compassion was England’s best hope for solving the Social Question.²¹ But her most substantial achievement was describing, anatomizing and analyzing the many faces and forms of the social question in the metropolis.

Between 1887 and 1890, Harkness, under the pseudonym of the eighteenth century political economist John Law,²² published three searing nov-

¹⁹ See Beatrice Potter Webb, *Diary*, February 14, 1890.

²⁰ Law, ‘A Year in My Life’, p. 381.

²¹ On Harkness as agnostic and religious sceptic, see her account of meeting with General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, in Law, ‘Salvation vs. Socialism’, p. 2. She explained that ‘While I was visiting Captain Lobe, I often said to myself, “If any one can help the slummers, General Booth can do it.”’ It is no surprise Harkness published this in the *Pall Mall Gazette* since W.T. Stead, its crusading editor, served as Gen. Booth’s ghost writer for this famous reclamation project, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*.

²² While most reviewers initially believed that John Law was a man, a correspondent to the *Academy* in June 1889 revealed that John Law was the woman editor and

els about the religious, social, sexual and gender politics of London slum life – *City Girl* (1887), *Out of Work* (1888) and *Captain Lobe* (1889).²³ Reviewers of these novels hailed her intimate knowledge of life among the poor ‘whose melody is ever set in a minor key, and in which, even through their lighter movements, there is heard the discordant harmonic of present privation and of future pain’.²⁴ During this same burst of intellectual creativity, she edited hundreds of articles – at least some of which she certainly wrote – as ‘commissioner’ for in-depth investigations into social questions published by the Evangelical newspaper, the *British Weekly* under the provocative title ‘Tempted London’.²⁵ Harkness published her novel *Captain Lobe*, about the romance between a queerly androgynous Salvation army captain, David Lobe and the angelic heiress to a local factory in Whitechapel, Ruth, on the same pages as the ‘Tempted London’ investigation in the *British Weekly* in 1888. By so doing, Harkness invited her readers to see her novel writing and her documentary journalism as part of a single heterogeneous project of representing the social question in Victorian London. The two were certainly entangled in her recollection of the frenetic conditions under which she had produced *Captain Lobe*. ‘It was done week by week for the *British Weekly*,’ John Law explained to readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1891, ‘and I was so much occupied with other work at the time that when I began the work I had no idea how I should finish it’.²⁶

At a time when W.T. Stead’s ‘Maiden Tribute’ exposé of child prostitution in the *Pall Mall Gazette* offended respectable moralists, Harkness and

commissioner of the *British Weekly*’s ‘Tempted London’. See *The Academy* (June 1, 1889), p. 376. Apparently, the *British Weekly* issued a souvenir biographical and photographic portrait of Harkness. The August 1888 review of *Out of Work* in *To-Day* described John Law as ‘she’. See ‘Books of To-Day’, *To-Day* (August 1888), p. 63.

²³ In this essay, I cite the following editions of Harkness’s novels: *A City Girl, A Realistic Story* (London, 1887); *Out of Work* (repr. London, 1990); *In Darkest London: A New and Popular Edition of Captain Lobe, A Story of the Salvation Army* (London, 1891), hereafter cited as *Captain Lobe*.

²⁴ See the review of *City Girl* in Annie Besant’s *Our Corner* (August, 1887), p. 120.

²⁵ These articles were quickly reprinted as two volumes, *Tempted London, Young Men* (London, 1888); and Law, *Toilers in London*. At the same time, Hodder and Stoughton, Britain’s leading evangelical publishing house, also published *Captain Lobe* in the spring of 1889. No individual is credited with editing the first volume, whereas the editor of the second volume is identified as the author of ‘Out of Work’. The *British Weekly*, with understandable self-serving pride, reported the very substantial public debate generated by ‘Tempted London’ including sermons throughout Britain, favourable notices in rival papers and periodicals, and even discussion in the House of Commons.

²⁶ Law, ‘Princess Christian and “Captain Lobe,”’, p. 3.

the editors of the *British Weekly* were determined to prevent ‘knowledge’ of social facts from degenerating into ‘vulgar curiosity’. ‘Tempted London’ demonstrated the dangerous temptations of drink, gambling, and sexual vice awaiting young men and young women who left the English countryside in pursuit of work in the metropolis only to suffer the demoralising effects of unemployment.²⁷ Harkness and the editors of ‘Tempted London’ were acutely aware that impurity and its representation, once imprinted on the reader, leave the imagination ‘thoroughly polluted’ and obsessed with sin.²⁸ Differentiating themselves from Stead’s crusading New Journalism, they protested their determination to minimise sensation and merely ‘leave facts to speak for themselves’. But facts, of course, never speak for themselves. Harkness and the *British Weekly*’s decision to mingle fictional and non-fictional narratives about the Social Question only further exacerbated the difficulty of determining what was – and what was not ‘fact’.

The *British Weekly* articles on the emigration of young women from London to Australia constituted Harkness’s most transparent recasting of journalistic facts into novelistic fictions. She incorporated data, arguments, images and even some verbatim phrases and sentences from the ‘Tempted London’ newspaper articles into the final chapters of *Captain Lobe* less than three months after their original publication in the *British Weekly*.²⁹ Sitting atop an omnibus, the ‘commissioner’ transforms eavesdropping into social analysis as she reproduces a conversation she has supposedly overheard between a city-girl determined to emigrate to Queensland, Australia and her abashed boyfriend. Given the oversupply of working women in London – many of whom fall prey to drugs, unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, and despair – the commissioner sympathizes with schemes such as the Colonial Emigration Society, designed to facilitate the emigration of women. The commissioner did recognize one ominous drawback of female emigration: ‘It is a serious fact that while English girls hurry out of London, foreign girls of an inferior physique come in to take their places’. With undisguised bitterness, the commissioner concluded that ‘we get the refuse of the Continent in their stead’.³⁰ Harkness allows Jane Hardy, the man-hating labour mistress in *Captain Lobe*, to voice these same concerns: ‘To send away all these strong, healthy girls, and get in their place the scum of Europe, is a great mistake’.³¹

²⁷ ‘Tempted London’ was widely advertised in social purity papers and periodicals like *The Sentinel* as an appropriate ‘gift book’ for young men.

²⁸ See *British Weekly* (March 16, 1888).

²⁹ See *Ibidem* (December 7 and 14, 1888).

³⁰ See *Ibidem* (September 21, 1888).

³¹ See *Captain Lobe*, p. 275; see also pp. 109-110.

Such anti-alien rhetoric was widespread in Britain, thanks in part to the tireless propagandising of the radical Tory journalist Arnold White. White, like Harkness, understood only too well the power of 'representation' in shaping what passed for truths about social problems. He played a central role in debates about the social question and the Jewish question in Britain from the 1880s until the 1920s. He was an accomplished purveyor of anti-Semitic images and arguments, which he skilfully disguised in the name of seeking to protect the interests of the English working man and the elite Jewish establishment from contamination by their poor brethren.³²

Along with almost every other leader of the anti-alien movement in the 1880s, White stumbled onto the Jewish question through his study of social questions in London. Shocked by the revelations of squalor and vice revealed by the 1883 pamphlet, 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London', he trawled slum streets and alley ways to see for himself how the poor lived and discern the root causes of poverty. The central thesis of his little read 1886 book, *The Problems of a Great City* was that London magnetically attracted unskilled native labour from the countryside who found themselves crowded out of the workforce by poor Jews. Like many social reformers across the political spectrum, White championed eugenic sterilisation of the unfit, emigration and checks on improvident early marriage. He was particularly alarmed by the rising tide of Jewish immigrant labour who brought with them high rents and overcrowded tenements conducive of disease and immorality. Pauper Jews depressed wages by working exceptionally long hours at low pay in sweat shops. This in turn crowded the English poor out of the labour market and drove men to drink, women to prostitution and both into the reluctant and unloving arms of the Poor Law.³³

This was the gist of the argument that White put before two simultaneously convened parliamentary committees in the Spring of 1888: the House of Commons Select Committee on Emigration and Immigration of Foreigners and the House of Lords Select Committee on the Sweating System,

³² The most sustained analysis of White's work in London and in particular his anti-Jewish and anti-alien campaigns is Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*. White published an immense number of books and articles on the Jews and social problems including his first major work prompted by the controversies unleashed by publication of the 'Bitter Cry of Outcast London', *The Problems of a Great City*; followed by *The Destitute Alien in Great Britain*; and *The Modern Jew*. On White's work for a leading Jewish proponent of Jewish emigration to South America, see Perlmann, 'Arnold White'.

³³ Critics such as White thus argued that Jews did not directly strain public poor relief but caused widespread unemployment and low wages which drove their English neighbours into poor houses and thus increased public expenditure.

chaired by White's mentor and political patron, the Earl of Dunraven.³⁴ It also distilled the essence of the socio-economic argument Harkness advanced in her novel *Out of Work*.³⁵ The Christ-like carpenter Jos Cooney (whose initials 'J.C.' suggest his status as a sort of Christ come to Whitechapel) comes to London from the countryside with his mother's life's savings in his pocket and eager to work; but he cannot compete with low-waged Jewish labour. The virtuous Jos, through no fault of his own, is sucked into a vortex of unemployment and demoralisation that ultimately leads to his suicide in the church yard of his country village.

In their mutual distrust and abhorrence of the Jew as a sign of unchecked laissez-faire individualism, the reactionary radical White and the radical socialist Harkness found common ground. Harkness, like White, refused to see persecuted Jews, fleeing loss of livelihood and life, as part of a pan-European humanitarian crisis³⁶ but instead placed them at the heart of the social question in England.³⁷ They ignored two key conclusions revealed by statisticians and sociologists studying the impact of immigration on the labour market. First, Jewish sweated labour was highly concentrated in only a few districts in East London and thus was far from a truly 'national' problem; second, Jews tended to perform specific jobs in a few select industries which rarely competed with native labour.³⁸

³⁴ Dunraven was President of the Fair Trade League. See Blackburn, *A Fair Day's Wage*, pp. 47-48.

³⁵ I do not concur with Cheyette's view that Harkness 'staunchly defended' the rights of Jewish immigrants. See Cheyette, *Constructions of the Jew*, p. 98.

³⁶ Some East London socialist colleagues of Harkness including Keir Hardie did understand the status of Jewish immigrants in terms of political persecution and humanitarian need. Hardie decried the 'horrors' of Jewish persecution and felt certain that the English working class would never exclude people 'flying from this sort of persecution'. See Hardie's contribution to House of Commons debate on February 11, 1893 in *The Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Second Section of the Twenty Fifth Parliament*, Volume 8 (London, 1893), p. 1211.

³⁷ Harkness's last 'social question' novel, *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890) is her most explicit and virulent condemnation of Jews and Jewish characters for exploiting English workers. Like the rest of Harkness's fiction, this novel has been recently been reprinted. See Thomas, *A Manchester Shirtmaker*.

³⁸ Harkness was in close and frequent contact with her cousin, Beatrice Potter, whose own journalistic and sociological investigations of Jewish labour and the Jewish community in East London - undertaken for Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* - demonstrated the falseness of most of White's - and Harkness's - arguments. Potter's contribution to Booth's survey might be characterized as both racist and philosemitic in its mingling of admiration and popular stereotypes of Jews. Members of the Jewish community viewed Potter's contributions as a clear refutation of White's restrictionist, anti-alien stance. See Nord, *The Apprenticeship of Beatrice Webb*, p. 276.

The debate over Jewish immigration pitted two starkly different versions of Englishness against one another, each of which had profoundly different implications for conceptualising the Social Question and for social politics. Liberals championed a version of Englishness that identified the free movement of goods with the individual rights of workers and their freedom of mobility – what Arthur Venn Dicey famously called the ‘natural individualism’ of the rule of law.³⁹ They celebrated England’s internationalist tradition of granting asylum to victims of political and religious persecution on the continent. White and Harkness disdained such pronouncements as sloppy sentimentality. They preferred a nativist patriotism committed to bringing what they called justice to the English working class.

As if wishing to transcend the mere limits of representation and literally make his words into flesh, White dragooned before a testy Select Committee on Immigration and Emigration the social problem and the Jewish question embodied: fifty newly landed pauper Jews – so called Greeners. Here, White borrowed from a long tradition of didactic exhibitionary complexes from zoos and freak shows to *expositions universelles* in which ‘others’ were put on display to represent themselves to audiences. White initially claimed that these ‘specimens’ were a ‘representative’ sample, gathered by his agent from ships arriving within the previous four days. These men, so White hoped, would constitute the irrefutable truths about how and why the Social Question had become the Jewish Question.⁴⁰ A few weeks later, he went so far as to insist that ‘if the people whom I produced (...) are not substantially what they represented themselves to be there is no case against the immigration of foreign paupers; but [if they are], then there is a prima facie case for legislative interference’.⁴¹ Unfortunately for White’s credibility, cross examination revealed that many of these supposed Greeners had been

³⁹ See Dicey, *Lectures on the Relation*, pp. 297-298. Dicey explicitly viewed the decision to limit Alien immigration in 1904 as an example of the growing ‘indifference’ to ‘personal liberty’ that had heretofore been sacrosanct in Britain. See also David Feldman, ‘The Importance of Being English: Jewish Immigration and the Decay of Liberal England’, in: Feldman and Stedman Jones, *Metropolis London*, pp. 56-84.

⁴⁰ Throughout White’s testimony before both Committees, he used a series of physical props to support his claims including a stale crust of bread which he claimed was the entire dinner of a newly arrived immigrant. See White’s testimony from April 13, 1888 in the *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Sweating System, 1888* (361) Vol. XX (London, 1888), p. 38. On White’s use of Greeners and controversy surrounding his credibility, see Blackburn, *A Fair Day’s Wage*, pp. 50-54. See also Fishman, *East End 1888*, p. 136.

⁴¹ See White’s testimony of June 5, 1888 in the *Report from the Select Committee on Emigration and Immigration* (London, 1889), p. 76, hereafter cited as *Emigration and Immigration*.

living in Whitechapel for months and one man for as long as four years. They had all been paid handsomely by White's agents and confessed that they had agreed to come before the Committee in expectation of assistance in emigrating. Committee member Charles Bradlaugh, the freethinking champion of popular rights, was so appalled by White's duplicitous misrepresentation of the facts that he moved 'That the question and the answer from the Minutes of the Evidence (...) in each case be read verbatim where Mr. White contradicts or corrects such evidence'.⁴² The *Jewish Chronicle*, for its part, blasted White's 'stage effects'. White had 'self-evidently' and 'carefully' selected the men for their 'unfavourable appearance'. The *Chronicle* rhetorically repositioned these men, not as malign enemies of the English poor but as injured victims worthy of the compassion of the English public. 'Their abject misery and haggard appearance spoke volumes of the oppression to which they had been subjected before reaching England'.⁴³

White's most egregious rhetorical sleight of hand was to reinforce the uniquely Jewish qualities of the social problem while insisting that he was a disinterested party who refused 'to regard this as a Jewish question' at all and had not 'gone into the religions of these people'.⁴⁴ This assertion, like so much of his testimony before the parliamentary committees, was riddled with half truths and falsehoods. Lord Rothschild, for example, wondered why he had specifically noted 'Christian' by the names of some pauper immigrants if religion were not important to his case. Jewish members of the Committee debunked White's characterization of Jews as a dirty race by pointing out the Jewish community's scrupulous regard for washing and social hygiene.⁴⁵

Harkness was as disturbed as White by the dysgenic implications of the outflow of wholesome English girls to the colonies and the influx of thousands of impoverished immigrants, in particular, Russo-Polish Jews. The *British Weekly's* 'Tempted London' commissioners followed closely the House of Lords inquiry on sweating; a female commissioner – probably Harkness herself – empathically described the starving unemployed women and men she encountered. However, without condemnation, the commissioner reported the xenophobic threats of 'an intelligent working-man': 'If

⁴² See Bradlaugh's motion, which was defeated by a vote of four in favor (including Jewish members Rothschild and Montagu) to five opposed in Minutes, May 8, 1888 in *Emigration and Immigration*, p. v.

⁴³ See 'Stage Effects on the Immigration Committee', *The Jewish Chronicle* (May 11, 1888), p. 13.

⁴⁴ See White's testimony of May 8, 1888 in *Emigration and Immigration*, p. 66.

⁴⁵ The *Jewish Chronicle* reported verbatim Rothschild's exchange with White about White's decision to note the presence of 'two non-Jews'. See 'Stage Effects on the Immigration Committee', p. 13.

we broke the heads of fifty Jews down here in Whitechapel something would be done to prevent this immigration. While we content ourselves with singing “England for the English”, Government will say that these foreigners are a blessing to us’.⁴⁶ While Harkness never advocated anti-Jewish violence, she did believe that the structural flaws in the capitalist economy of London along with its myriad sinful “temptations” threatened either to cannibalize the young men and women attracted to it or compel them to emigrate. In Harkness’s grim vision of the city, the stakes in this global flow of exploited labour were immense: London, under assault from alien Jewish invaders, was ceasing to be English.⁴⁷ The external threat of Jewish invasion was compounded by internal threats posed by the imagined division of England into two warring nations of rich and poor and of London into two antagonistic halves, West and East.⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, readers connected Harkness’s fictional narratives with the real life stories recounted in the ‘Tempted London’ series. One appreciative slum worker from Glasgow insisted that *Captain Lobe* ‘is calculated to reach the hearts of people even in a greater degree than the revelations of “Tempted London.”’⁴⁹ The editors of the *British Weekly* emphasized that the power of the novelist in promoting social and political progress surpassed the work of ‘the economist [who] merely puts [the artist’s] suggestions into practice’.⁵⁰ For Harkness, a single woman writer inhabiting the social, economic, and sexual fringes of the metropolis, such words must have been immensely satisfying.

The Duplicity of Conversion in Harkness’s slum novels

Jews and Salvationists figure prominently in Harkness’s novels as problematic figures of conversion and sexual disorder. Despite their close affinities with one another, Jews and Salvationists play seemingly opposite roles in her analysis of the social question. Put quite simply, Harkness’s novels impose a heavy burden on Jews for exacerbating the sins of capitalism while praising the Salvation Army for its grassroots work and humane solutions to these problems.

Harkness was drawn to the work of the Salvation Army in the late-1880s just as General Booth and his ailing wife Catherine dramatically expanded the Army’s engagement with social problems.⁵¹ Her novels suggest

⁴⁶ See Law, *Toilers in London*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ I discuss this briefly in *Slumming*, p. 169.

⁴⁸ See *Captain Lobe*, p. 67.

⁴⁹ See *British Weekly* (June 1, 1888).

⁵⁰ See *Ibidem* (December 28, 1888).

⁵¹ On this transition, see Fairbank, *Booth’s Boots*; and Murdoch, *Origins of the Sal-*

that her attraction to the Salvation Army cannot be separated from her perception that it challenged prevailing sexual and gender norms by offering women extraordinary social and religious authority and allowing men to be femininely empathic. Her representation of the sexual and gender politics of the Salvation Army accurately reflected deep tensions between radical and conservative gender ideologies within the movement itself. On the one hand, William Booth's wife Catherine had pressed him to accept women as men's full spiritual, intellectual and organisational equals.⁵² The Army's 'slum lassies' or 'Hallelujah girls' were in the vanguard of its efforts to reach the poorest of the poor, a fact Harkness highlighted in *Captain Lobe* through flattering descriptions of their moral power, courage and efficiency.⁵³ Transgression and transformation went hand in hand at Booth's love feasts as men and women stepped forward to declare their former sinfulness, their repentance, and their acceptance of Jesus's saving love. As Pamela Walker argues, Salvationist theology of conversion entailed not only being made over spiritually, but, for men, denying themselves the bodily pleasures and prerogatives that were hallmarks of working-class masculinity: drink, gambling, wife beating and pugilism along with visits to gaffs and music halls.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Booth was acutely aware that his movement was vulnerable to damaging charges of moral, spiritual and sexual excess and he worked hard to minimise the appearance of condoning disorderly gender roles and sexuality. In 1872, Booth wrote to one of his assistants, William Stephenson Crow, that he wanted a '*man* for my best station Whitechapel', unencumbered by family and belongings, possessed with judgment, force of character and open air ability. But just as importantly, he needed him to be manly. One worker, Booth predicted, 'will not make his way amongst us. His manner makes very much against him, and he appears to me to be *effeminate*'.⁵⁵ Booth demanded his male followers avoid the taint of effeminacy; but he also expected them to express wom-

vation Army, parts 2 and 3. Harkness detailed her reasons for supporting the army: first, the slum poor loved and trusted the Army because 'the Salvationist comes to him on ten shilling a week, and does not hesitate to share with him this ten shillings'. Second, Salvationists are not influenced by press commentary and criticism. Third, Harkness agreed with Booth's scheme to create massive 'labour colonies' to employ, feed and shelter the poor. See Law, 'Salvation vs. Socialism', p. 2.

⁵² See Walker, 'A Chaste and Fervid Eloquence'.

⁵³ On the Salvation Army's slum sisters, see Rappoport, 'Sistering the Slums: Salvation Army Women in Late Nineteenth-Century London', in: Idem, 'Sisterhood's Appeal', pp. 183-227.

⁵⁴ See Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, chapt. 3.

⁵⁵ Letters from William Booth to William Stephenson Crow, Folder 1, Jan 11, 1872 and April 17, 1872, SA Heritage Center, London.

anly emotions and sympathy for others as essential components of their conversion and subsequent ministry among the poor.

These conflicting gender and sexual imperatives coalesced in Harkness's portrait of the 'nervous', 'hypersensitive' androgynous Captain Lobe, who first appeared in *City Girl* as the sole agent of a philanthropic or religious institution willing to befriend the pregnant, unmarried Nelly.⁵⁶ If, as Harkness's narrator insisted, the Salvation Army was made up of 'queer soldiers', Lobe was surely among the queerest.⁵⁷ Booth was so pleased with Harkness's depiction of Captain Lobe and the Army's work in East London that he allowed her to republish the novel in 1891 under the borrowed title *In Darkest England* and contributed a brief Introduction endorsing its contents. Booth enjoined readers of *Captain Lobe* to accept that "'the condition of the people question" is YOURS, as well as mine'. In his Introduction, Booth protected the identity of the novel's author and that of the Salvationist on whom Harkness had modelled her 'little captain'.⁵⁸

Harkness based her portrait of Captain Lobe on a young Salvation Army captain, David Leib. Booth assigned Leib to develop his social work programs in Whitechapel in 1887 and 1888 when he guided Harkness's investigation into the Army's methods.⁵⁹ Leib had attracted considerable attention among Salvationists from the outset of his career. The story of his conversion from a sneering 17 year old sceptic to ardent foot soldier in Christ's army diverged from the standard formula in one crucial respect. He was the son of a learned Jew, born in Palestine and partially trained to be a rabbi, who had been converted by the Church Missionary Society in Jerusalem and eventually fled to England seeking sanctuary from the wrath of his family and co-religionists. From the outset of his work in the Army, Leib specialized in saving fallen women – precisely the role he plays in *City Girl*.⁶⁰ The records of the Salvation Army suggest that Harkness, in developing the ambiguous persona of Captain Lobe through her observations of Captain Leib, combined characteristics of two sexually unstable male figures in the landscape of the London slums: the Salvationist and the Jew. Leib's Jewish ancestry was a point the Army was pleased to publicise because it conformed to its interpretation of the Jew within the Christian economy of conversion. As Michael Ragussis argues, 'the conversion of the

⁵⁶ *Captain Lobe*, p. 202.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 14. The General himself was fond of saying that 'The Booths are a queer lot'. See Lunn, *Salvation Dynasty*, p. 66.

⁵⁸ *Captain Lobe*, p. 92.

⁵⁹ See *The Officer* (September, 1918).

⁶⁰ 'Captain David Leib, of Tunbridge Wells', *The War Cry* (August 10, 1889), p. 3.

Other (heathen, infidel, or Jew) is the surest sign of the conversion of the self, so that the true convert proves himself by becoming a proselytizer'.⁶¹

The most complete account of Leib's life and work appeared as a four part series in a Salvation Army magazine, *All The World*. Its title, 'David Leib's Two-Fold Inheritance', emphasised Leib's mixed religious heritage as both Jew and Methodist: The articles quote extensively from Harkness's novels to recreate the young Leib for readers and thereby consolidate Leib's identity as Captain Lobe. Harkness's fictions, based on her observation of Leib/Lobe, provide the 'facts' by which the Salvation Army introduced readers to Leib.

If Lobe/Leib is the 'hidden Jew' in Harkness's text,⁶² many overtly Jewish characters and themes frame Harkness's representations of the hazards of cleansing and uplifting East London. Uncle Cohen, the prototypical wandering Jew and 'gay bachelor' in *Out of Work* literally occupies the seat of the paterfamilias at the dinner table of a pious English home while his widowed hostess, the middle-class Methodist Mrs. Elwin unsuccessfully attempts to convert him. In this way, Uncle Cohen as the Jew has insinuated himself into the very heart of an Englishwoman's domestic space. The racial and religious backgrounds of the lodgers in Mrs. Elwin's home further amplifies that even the private interiors of London have been colonized by outsiders: Jews, Mohammadens, and Africans jostle with one another not only on Commercial Street, the main highway of East London, but in Mrs. Elwin's corridors.⁶³

Even the golden-haired, angelic female protagonist of *Captain Lobe*, Ruth, is associated with Jewishness, albeit obliquely. Most obviously, she possesses a name which we are erroneously told means 'beauty' in Hebrew.⁶⁴ The cocoa-nut business she has inherited from her father was so closely identified with Jews in East London that Joseph Jacobs, in his statistical analysis of the 'Occupations of London Jews' in the early 1880s, concluded that it was the only one 'entirely monopolized by Jews'.⁶⁵ Ruth also functions as an emblematic figure of conversion within Harkness's narrative and within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Harkness makes explicit Ruth's relationship to the Biblical Book of Ruth in a highly sexualized dream sequence in which she is simultaneously Ruth, the Moabitess of Hebrew Scripture who converts to Judaism (and is the progenitor of David and hence Jesus), and his beloved Ruth who has become a Salvationist. Within

⁶¹ Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, p. 2.

⁶² On the 'hidden Jew' as a figure of modernity and sexual anarchy, see Garb, 'Introduction'.

⁶³ *Out of Work*, p. 147.

⁶⁴ Ruth actually means 'friend' in Hebrew.

⁶⁵ Jacobs, *Studies in Jewish Statistics*, p. 38.

the Christological framework Victorians imposed on Hebrew Scripture, the Biblical Ruth's conversion to Judaism adumbrates the ultimate conversion of Jews to Christianity.⁶⁶

Conversion, imposture, deviant sexuality and the conflation of the social and Jewish question all merge in Harkness's chapter of *Captain Lobe* entitled, 'A Confession', initially published in the *British Weekly* on September 21, 1888. Harkness must have hastily composed this chapter of *Captain Lobe* in response to the Ripper murders of August 31 and September 8 which had gripped all of Britain and some reviewers found it 'manifestly over-coloured' and repulsive.⁶⁷ Ever the keen observer of her Whitechapel neighbours, Harkness knit together various rumours about the Ripper's identity circulating in East London, in particular, the widespread belief that the perpetrator of these horrible crimes was a butcher and an alien Jew. In the height of the anti-Semitic rage unleashed by the Ripper mania, the *Jewish Chronicle* denounced the 'deliberate attempt to connect the Jews with the Whitechapel murders' and emphasized the paper's long-held position that Anglicisation, assimilation, and desegregation were the only way to 'socially and intellectually' raise the East End Jews. 'The lives ... [the Russo-Polish Jewish immigrants] lead must no longer be Russian, but English'.⁶⁸ In other words, one solution both to the 'social question' and the 'Jewish question' – thrust glaringly into public scrutiny by the Ripper murders – was to convert alien paupers into proper English gentlemen and ladies.

While the *British Weekly* announced on September 14 that 'even the most sensational newspaper has not given a full account' of the murders,⁶⁹ Harkness's narrator boldly put forward her own 'full account' of them one week later in the next instalment of *Captain Lobe*. The convoluted subplot begins with the arrival at Lobe's door of a Jewess, who asks Lobe to hear the confession of a dying man. Her 'dark eyes' and 'beaked nose' are the distinct and ineradicable marks of her race. The narrator takes readers on a journey through an entirely alien cityscape inhabited by a dark race of Jews: 'There was nothing English about the place'.⁷⁰ But certainties about religious and racial identity begin to dissolve as Lobe encounters the dying man whom we are led to believe is a Jew seeking solace and salvation in Jesus. Instead Harkness presents us with the Whitechapel Murderer himself: a butcher whose work slaughtering animals has incited bloodlust. Far from

⁶⁶ *Captain Lobe*, pp. 227-229.

⁶⁷ See 'Novels of the Week', *Athenaeum* (August 31, 1889), p. 285.

⁶⁸ *Jewish Chronicle* (Oct. 12, 1888); *Jewish Chronicle* (Sept. 28, 1888), p. 9. For an excellent study of the Jewish press, see Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, esp. chapt. 3.

⁶⁹ *British Weekly* (September 14, 1888), p. 325.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem* (September 21, 1888) pp. 347-348; see *Captain Lobe*, pp. 203 and 205.

lending credence to rumours that the murderer was a Jew, Harkness confounds them. The murderer is a Christian, masquerading as a Jew and hiding among them. Rejecting centuries of anti-Semitic rhetoric about Jewish crimes of blood and passion, he explains to Lobe that Jews ‘hate blood and never spill it’. The murderer’s confession of his heinous crime is less shocking than his revelation that ‘I’m not a Jew, I’m a Gentile’.⁷¹ It throws into disarray racial categories Harkness has purposefully mobilized by forcing readers to ask themselves who is – and who is not – Jewish. It foreshadows the novel’s provocative final sentence that encapsulates Harkness’ depiction of Lobe’s androgynous masculinity. Because Lobe combines feminine virtue and empathy for the sufferings of others with the manly capacity to lead and take action, Jane Hardy literally gets the last word in the novel by insisting that Captain Lobe is ‘not a man, he is a woman’. Ambiguities about religious and racial identity in Harkness’s representations of East London are compounded by the depiction of Lobe’s subversive gender identity.

The problem of distinguishing Jews and non-Jews in London was particularly acute in the 1880s and 90s. An editorial in the *Jewish Chronicle* queried, ‘who is to determine who are “the English?”’ In the very same issue of the *Chronicle*, a contributor to the debate over ‘The East End Problem’ explained that ‘we Jews are an imitative people, and the mimetic faculty has its advantages as well as drawbacks’. The writer, Morris Joseph, noted the delicious irony that he, a child of Russo-Polish Jewish immigrants, had been asked by the Young Men’s Christian Association to conduct an elocution class. ‘The curious spectacle was very nearly presented’, he continued, ‘of a number of English Christians being systematically taught to speak English by a Jew!’⁷² The Jewish social statistician Joseph Jacobs was so struck by the Jewish penchant for mimicry that he felt compelled to explain the concept in scientific terms. Mimicry, he noted, referred to the ‘devices’ used by insect and animals ‘to adopt colours and forms resembling their surroundings so as to escape the notice of their enemies’.⁷³

In *Children of the Ghetto*, the novelist Israel Zangwill pondered the inescapable duplicities of anglicized Jewish life in the East End of London. While some Jews appeared to ‘get grace’ and convert, one of Zangwill’s characters explained that ‘no Jew has ever apostatized except to fill his purse or his stomach or to avoid persecution’. Converts were represented as both victims of ‘barefaced bribery on the part of pious English Christians’

⁷¹ *Ibidem*; see *Captain Lobe*, p. 209.

⁷² *Jewish Chronicle* (July 31, 1891), pp. 7, 11.

⁷³ Jacobs, *Studies in Jewish Statistics*, p. 34. This essay, ‘Occupations of London Jews’, had originally been published in the *Jewish Chronicle* sometime between 1882-1885.

and as opportunistic imposters who dipped themselves in 'baptismal water' and wiped themselves 'with a Talith'. Few Jews actually converted to Christianity, and even fewer resorted to the ruse of false conversion.⁷⁴ The minuscule number of Jewish converts to Christianity in no way diminished their symbolic and imaginative importance. The craven duplicity of the false convert was merely an egregious example of the more general way in which all Jews in East London, according to Zangwill's brilliant girl-protagonist Esther Angell, led 'double lives'. Jews were, Esther mused, at once members of an ancient clannish race and desperately proud to be English, to claim for themselves the superiority of everything English.⁷⁵

Social reformers invoked the Jew's putative aptitude for mimicry to explain why poor Jews flocked to social and cultural institutions founded in East London in the 1880s and 90s with the specific goal of elevating and educating the native-born, non-Jewish poor. Jews did prove disproportionately more eager than their Cockney neighbours to take advantage of the classes, concerts, picture exhibitions, rambling clubs and other benefits provided by East London's most famous philanthropic schemes: the People's Palace in Mile End Road, and Toynbee Hall, the university Settlement in Commercial Street.⁷⁶ For Jews, membership in these cultural and recreational institutions served many purposes: they provided useful skills and knowledge, an outlet for entertainment and sociability while promoting their immersion in English culture. However, as Jews poured into the streets and neighbourhoods surrounding these illustrious institutions, Christian social reformers necessarily confronted the fact that serving their neighbours increasingly undercut their ability to reach out to non-Jewish East Londoners. In 1888, one year after its founding, the organ of the People's Palace, the *Palace Journal*, approvingly reported Arnold White's condemnation of the evils of sweating and the need to halt pauper immigration from Europe.⁷⁷ Only a small percentage of the students receiving recognition for their scholarly efforts in the *Palace Journal* had Jewish surnames. A decade later, one of Charles Booth's investigators reported that the Jews had nearly taken 'possession of the People's Palace'.⁷⁸ In the years ahead, the leaders of the People's Palace increasingly redirected their efforts away from serving their Jewish neighbours in Mile End and remade the institution into a constituent college of London University.

⁷⁴ See *Jewish Chronicle* (August 7, 1891), p. 5.

⁷⁵ Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto*, Book One, pp. 89-90, 103-104.

⁷⁶ Booth, *In Darkest England*, p. 87.

⁷⁷ *Palace Journal* (April 18, 1888), p. 350.

⁷⁸ Charles Booth Papers, A39, 1898, report on districts 7 and 8, fol. 7, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

The judaification of Whitechapel and Jews' appetite to absorb English culture similarly shaped the history of the world renowned university settlement in Whitechapel, Toynbee Hall. As thousands of newly arrived Jews populated the streets surrounding Toynbee Hall, the settlement looked beyond its immediate neighbourhood in defining itself as a laboratory for social science in the service not just of neighbours but of the metropolis and nation. Samuel Barnett, the rector of St. Jude's Whitechapel, and his wife Henrietta established the settlement along broadly pan-denominational lines and welcomed elite Jewish university graduates as associates and residents, foremost among them Harry Lewis. Lewis, as editor of the *Jewish Standard*, a liberal rabbi, and pioneering sociologist of Jewish East London, served as an effective bridge between the Barnetts' Christian-socialist inspired work at Toynbee Hall and the surrounding Jewish community.⁷⁹ It was through the offices of Toynbee Hall and the Toynbee Trust that Lewis and C. E. B. Russell undertook their pioneering social survey and mapping of Jewish London in their 1901 study *The Jew in London*. When the Barnetts' world renowned fine art exhibitions for the east London poor developed into the permanent Whitechapel Art Gallery, the gallery recognized the needs of its neighbours and quickly mounted a remarkable exhibition about Jewish life, art and culture. In his public and private writings, Samuel Barnett demonstrated deep respect and tolerance for his Jewish neighbours.⁸⁰ Upon returning from his world travels in 1891, he spoke out strongly against the kind of xenophobic views registered so keenly in Harkness's slum novels and Arnold White's diatribes. He insisted that Jews and Christians needed to work together to make the Jewish 'strangers' feel that 'we hold them as brothers'.⁸¹

Samuel's wife and equal partner, Henrietta, was markedly less tolerant than Samuel, despite her loving relationship with her Jewish brother-in-law, Ernest Hart, the crusading medical doctor and journalist. In the years after Samuel died, she attempted to limit the access of Jews to Toynbee Hall. Henrietta frankly admitted to Jane Addams that she 'loved them [Jews] not' because of their selfishness and seriously contemplated moving Toynbee

⁷⁹ Under the sponsorship of the Toynbee Trust and Samuel Barnett, Lewis and C. E. B. Russell undertook their pioneering social survey and mapping of Jewish East London, *The Jew in London*. See also Lewis's study, *Liberal Judaism and Social Reform*.

⁸⁰ See Samuel Barnett to Francis Barnett, Summer, 1885, F/Bar/28; and Feb. 18, 1899, F/Bar/192. Samuel Barnett Papers, Greater London Record Office. See also his extended views on Jews in his Introduction to *The Jew in London*.

⁸¹ Samuel Barnett, speech delivered at St. Judes, Whitechapel as reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* (August 21, 1891), p. 5.

Hall to a more thoroughly English part of East London.⁸² In the end, Toynbee Hall did not flee its Jewish neighbours and remained in Whitechapel. But Henrietta's and Samuel's very different responses to their Jewish neighbours underscore a more fundamental point about the reciprocal impact of the Jewish Question and the Social Question in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. Toynbee Hall was the institution which most fully reflected late-Victorian Britain's attempt to grapple with the Social Question. While it functioned as an important cultural centre for East London Jewry, its Jewish neighbours also affected Toynbee Hall's history. The *Toynbee Record* acknowledged a truth which, I have argued, also powerfully informed Harkness's depictions of the overlapping efforts to convert East London. 'The Jews are our near neighbours', the *Toynbee Record* explained, 'and nothing which affects them can be indifferent to ourselves'.⁸³

Conclusion

Harkness's fictional and non-fictional writings can usefully be read as conversion narratives preoccupied with representing the duplicities of urban life: the Jew who is a Gentile; the man who is a woman; the Salvationist who is Jewish; the male philanthropist who exploits poor women; the heart of the empire that is no longer English; the colonisers who have been colonised; the Social Question turning into the Jewish Question and the Jewish Question becoming the Social Question. When we measure Margaret Harkness against what she took to be her own life's work in the 1880s – observing and representing the social, sexual, racial, and political dynamics of the metropolis – her intellectual and literary achievements are important and impressive. In moving freely, perhaps even promiscuously, between fictional and non-fictional studies of London, she brilliantly articulated the complex webs of connections linking the political economy of London to its sexual economy and both to massive efforts undertaken by divergent groups to transform East London. Novels and popular journalism like Harkness's constitute two important genres as well as media which crucially helped to mould and recast social needs into social problems, and allowed them to be appropriated by a wide range of social and political actors to serve specific ideological agendas.

The intertwining of the Jewish Question and the Social Question in late-Victorian London had significant political consequences in the early

⁸² See E. F. Hitchcock to Lord Milner, October 19, 1917, A/Toy/6, Toynbee Hall Papers, London Metropolitan Archives, and Henrietta Barnett to Jane Addams, Sept. 13, 1924, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

⁸³ *Toynbee Record* (October, 1897), p. 30.

twentieth century. In the aftermath of the Boer War and widespread fears of race degeneration, Arnold White and the anti-alien lobby within the Conservative party finally convinced Parliament to pass the Aliens Act in 1905 and halt the influx of Jewish pauper immigrants. The Act created categories of immigrants deemed 'undesirable' who could be denied the right to land based on insanity, idiocy, or the inability to be self-supporting.⁸⁴ The rhetorical figuring of the Jew as the embodiment of the Social Problem in Britain from the 1880s onwards by social commentators including Harkness mobilised popular and parliamentary support for this radical break in British immigration policy. Britain had ceased to be a nation open to political and economic refugees feeling continental persecution. At the moment of triumph for White's agenda, the Social Question was untethered from the Jewish Question and seemed to lose all political traction. The Conservative government that passed the Aliens Act did not introduce a broad program of social reform but instead paired it with Protectionist policies intended to dismantle that cornerstone of Liberal England: free trade. It was, ironically, only the backlash against the Conservative government and the landslide victory of the Liberals in 1906 that ushered in a period of unprecedented and daring efforts to mobilize the resources of the state to serve the needs of the outcast poor.

⁸⁴ For a recent evaluation of the terms of the Act, see Wray, 'The Aliens Act of 1905'. On the political and bureaucratic context of its passage and an explanation for its administrative inefficacy, see Pellew, 'The Home Office and the Aliens Act, 1905'.