

## **"Sticking up for Jews?"**

### **Anti-Semitic Stereotypes in the English Novel**

by Philip Jenkins  
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Anti-Semitism has a long and disreputable history in English literature. As George Orwell observed in 1945,

“There has been a perceptible anti-Semitic strain in English literature from Chaucer onwards, and without even getting up from this table to consult a book I can think of passages which if written now would be stigmatized as anti-Semitism, in the work of Shakespeare, Smollett, Thackeray, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, and various others. Offhand, the only English writers I can think of who before the days of Hitler made a definite effort to stick up for Jews are Dickens and Charles Reade. And however little the average intellectual may have agreed with the opinions of Belloc and Chesterton, he did not acutely disapprove of them.” (Orwell 1971, III, 385).

It would be laboring the obvious to demonstrate that anti-Semitic stereotypes and outright caricatures are found throughout English fiction, or that these images usually draw on the common international currency of bigotry: Jews are customarily seen as alien, rootless, sly, conspiratorial, exploitative, greedy, mendacious, and so on. Anthony Trollope was notoriously prone to presenting such stereotypes. In The Way We Live Now (1875), we have a notorious picture of the "fat, greasy" Mr. Brehert (II.93). In The Eustace Diamonds (1873), the "renegade Jew" Dr Emilius is portrayed as follows: “he was a greasy, fawning, pawing, black-browed rascal, who could not look her full in the face, and whose every word sounded like a lie. There was a twang in his voice which ought to have told her that he was utterly untrustworthy. There was an oily pretence of earnestness in his manner which ought to have told her that he was not fit to associate with gentlemen. There was a foulness of demeanor about him which ought to have given to her . . . . an abhorrence of his society.” Trollope (1873, 1973): 566).

Thus far, there is little to distinguish English literature from that of France, Germany or other nations. However, English literature of the nineteenth century often demonstrates a real peculiarity that deserves discussion. A number of books employ the familiar battery of images, often in a rather gross form, but in works where the overall theme was highly sympathetic to Jewish causes. We thus have a number of remarkable works filled with undesirable and frankly embarrassing portraits, where the net effect of the book as a whole is strongly and overtly pro-Jewish.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, it has been difficult to see anti-Semitism as a phenomenon that might occur in varying degrees of malevolence, or that there might be a tolerable or acceptable level of anti-Semitism. The modern trend has been to see the expression of anti-Semitic views as tainting an individual beyond redemption, an absolute evil that cannot be forgiven by (for example) sympathy for Zionist opinions. There are more than enough cases to show that sympathy for Zionism is quite compatible with outrageous anti-Semitism. On the other hand, seeing individual writers or artists in their historical context often permits a more flexible and sympathetic approach, as suggested by the perceptive remarks of Michael Coren on G. K. Chesterton. (In the article quoted above

Orwell himself described Chesterton as a master of "literary Jew-baiting . . . {of} an almost continental level of scurrility" (Orwell 1971, III, 385; Coren 1990).

This paper will focus on two best-selling writers who wrote strongly pro-Jewish novels, but which incorporated the imagery of vulgar anti-Semitism. These are Charles Reade, in *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) and M. P. Shiel, in *The Lord of the Sea* (1901), both hugely popular in their day, but now largely forgotten. Both authors were genuinely sympathetic to Jews and to Jewish causes, yet both wrote passages which, taken out of context, could readily be quoted as anti-Semitic tracts. In the case of Shiel, parts of the book read as near-prophecies of Nazi doctrine; yet we will see that this would be highly misleading. Such cases suggest the necessity of assessing a writer's work as a whole before dismissing him or her as anti-Semitic on the strength of particular passages; while often those individual passages can, taken in context, lend themselves to other more benevolent interpretations.

It is remarkable that writers with such a political agenda indulged in what today appears to be gutter imagery. It might be argued (implausibly) that the authors were using such stereotypes in order to confront and reject them; but a more likely explanation seems to be that such caricatures were so deeply embedded in the culture that even the most moderate and liberal of writers could scarcely avoid employing them. For modern readers, the consequence is that the novels under discussion create an uncomfortable and quite jarring disjunction between authorial intent and the effect of the work. In order to come to terms with this, it is important to understand the ambiguity of the English concept of Jews, where sinister images of greed and manipulation accompany nobler ideas derived from the Bible and from the Jewish experience in other historical eras.

#### Our Mutual Friend

These books raise important aesthetic questions about the use of ethnic stereotypes, a point that emerges when we compare a work like *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* to the much better-known work of Dickens, and specifically to the aggressively pro-Jewish apologia offered in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). Dickens creates a wholly benevolent Jewish image, in sharp contrast to the much harder-edged manipulator offered by Reade; but it is Reade's image that is not only more convincing, but perhaps a more desirable alternative to the standard anti-Semitic stereotypes of the age.

Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* presents what may be the most uncritical depiction of a Jewish character in English literature (Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, 1876, is highly favorable, but more realistic). The portrait of Riah was at least in part a deliberate attempt to make amends for the harm done by the character of Fagin. In 1863, Dickens had been criticized by Mrs Eliza Davis for the influence of *Oliver Twist*, which "has encouraged a vile prejudice against the despised Hebrew" (Cotsell 1986: 155). Dickens rejected the charge that his portrait was meant to represent Jews as such, but his concern at the charge was reflected in his next novel.

*Our Mutual Friend* is a novel of reversals and deceptions, in which every character to some extent masquerades in another role, often reflecting the opposite of their true nature. Riah is no exception. He appears to be a Jewish moneylender, and fits the role perfectly in terms of his racial origin, his oriental manners, and his alien dress and beard; but from his first appearance, it is made clear that he is a desperately poor man who has become the victim and slave of a Christian usurer named Fledgeby. He serves Fledgeby's interests by appearing in the role of a hard-hearted businessman, who buys up the debts of the nearly-ruined, and forces what payments are possible by the most ruthless expedients, including debtors' prison. In reality, it is Fledgeby who is the monster, but the suggestion is that the

clients are more prepared to believe in a total lack of reason and mercy when they are in the hands of a Jew.

For Dickens, the Jewish stereotype is thus not only inaccurate, it is a valuable screen for cynical exploiters who are both English and Gentile. This is brought out in a scene (Our Mutual Friend 635-9) when both Fledgeby and Riah confront a debtor, who is seeking mercy from the usurers. Fledgeby appears to beg Riah on behalf of his victim, to which Riah is forced to reply in the classic language of the moneylender: "There is no hope for you. You must expect no leniency here. You must pay in full, and you cannot pay too promptly, or you will be put to heavy charges. Trust nothing to me, sir. Money, money, money" (637).

Riah himself is in reality a perfect and indeed saintly figure, loving and generous, and exhibiting all the Christian virtues to a far greater extent than any of the Gentile characters. When his tormentor finally receives a severe beating, Riah is the only one who proposes going to offer him assistance. It is explicitly stated that if the true Riah is not fully typical of Jews, at least he is not unrepresentative. As the novel reiterates, most Jews are poor, Jews support each other through their charities, and in summary that there is no basis for the classic stereotype. The chief villain of the work is Fledgeby, who is linked to the English medieval anti-Semitic tradition: for example, he seeks an answer from Riah "looking at him as if he would like to try the effect of extracting a double tooth or so", recalling the persecutions of the days of King John.

With some minor exceptions, Our Mutual Friend represents a politically impeccable critique of the anti-Semitic stereotype, emphasizing that it is a standard image or stereotype, with little connection to reality. However, it is interesting that the picture has received so little critical favor, not least because Riah is simply so perfect, so unflawed. Orwell is fairly typical in remarking that the novel "makes a pious though not very convincing attempt to stand up for the Jews." (Orwell 1971, I 475).

#### It Is Never Too Late to Mend

Riah stands in sharp contrast to the character of Isaac Levi in Charles Reade's It Is Never Too Late to Mend, another book which ostensibly "stands up for Jews". But while Riah is flawless, Levi has a great deal in common with every manipulative and conspiratorial Jewish figure portrayed in anti-Semitic literature.

Reade's novel is a somewhat convoluted work which has as its foundation the conflicts in an English village, and the ambitions of a greedy Gentile landowner and moneylender named John Meadows. Another local resident is George Fielding, whose misfortunes form the vehicle for a series of adventures that include the uncovering of official brutality in an English prison, and the events of the Australian gold rush. As in so much of what he wrote, Reade's novels drew heavily on major contemporary news events; and this may explain the Jewish component of the novel. In 1847, the City of London had elected as its Member of Parliament Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, who was barred from taking his seat because he would not take the explicitly Christian oath of office. He was repeatedly re-elected, and refused seating, until the law was reformed in 1858. Jewish rights and disabilities in England were therefore much in the news in the mid-1850s (For Reade's use of contemporary news material, see Boyle 1989).

In the novel, Fielding's path crosses that of Meadows when the usurer is in the middle of a conflict with Isaac Levi, a powerful Jewish moneylender whom Meadows wishes to evict from the village. Fielding intervenes to prevent Meadows' assaulting the Jew, thus incurring a debt of gratitude which Levi pays by guarding Fielding's fortunes through the course of the book. The portrait of Levi is generally sympathetic, and he is introduced as a venerable and respectable individual whose chief aim is to retire near the grave of his much-

beloved wife. He is forced into enmity with Meadows, who grossly provokes him. Once enraged, he becomes the recurrent *deus ex machina* tying together the disparate strands of the plot. This culminates when Levi is able to prove that Meadows has robbed the hero of several thousand pounds, and so brings the events to the desired happy ending. In terms of the conventions of the novel, Levi is unquestionably on the side of virtue, defending the hero and heroine, and is instrumental in promoting the triumph of justice.

Levi, like Riah, is a "good" character, while the villains are enemies both to him and to Jews as such. In the novel, the anti-Semite is by definition a malefactor. It is Meadows the chief villain who refers to "Jewish dogs", who remarks that "a lie is not worth much to a Jew" (572). It is Meadows' henchmen who lead an attack against Levi under the slogan "Down with the Jew - the blood sucker! We do all the work and he gets all the profit". Once again, it is the solid English hero Fielding who defeats this attempt on Levi's life, and punishes those "cowards" who "attacked and abused an old man" (484-6).

The Jews are on the right side, the anti-Semites are the villains, and the depiction of Levi is on the whole sympathetic; but if this is "standing up for Jews" (in Orwell's phrase), it is doing so in a very different way from Dickens' creation of the rather bloodless Riah. Levi is a very paradoxical hero, and the language used by Reade to characterize him is often bizarre. He is everything that might be claimed of a Jew by a contemporary anti-Semitic agitator: he is quintessentially alien and unassimilable. He is a usurer, who owes his power both to his manipulation of money, and to the cryptic and somewhat sinister bonds that exist between Jews in England and other countries.

Levi is alien, rootless, cosmopolitan, "a subtle Oriental" (572). In the first description of him in the novel, he is portrayed as bearing "a dark swarthy complexion that did not belong to England" (6). His manners are shaped by "the Eastern habits of his youth" (7). He "towered . . . with a sudden eastern fury" (9). He forms a "certain subtle Eastern plan of vengeance" (80). When he greets George Fielding, "he held out his hand like the king of Asia; George grasped it like an Englishman" (12). Among these "oriental" qualities, he is represented as one who knows how to hate without forgiving or forgetting, who darts "long, lingering glances of demoniacal hatred" (12).

He fits the stereotype in terms of his alien nature, and also of the cupidity and materialism popularly associated with Jews. Levi the businessman is depicted as strictly ethical, giving an ignorant woman full value for a sample of platinum which she had brought to him for assay, although he could have obtained it for little or nothing. However, his adherence to commercial values make it impossible for him to give money freely, even to the best of his friends. When buying gold from his benefactor George Fielding in the Australian mines, Levi will not give him a particularly good price, or make an advance. "No! business was business; he could and would have given George a couple of hundred pounds in day of need, but in buying and selling, the habits of a life could not be shaken off" (466).

Reade's Jewish stereotype is a complex phenomenon, which does to some extent partake of anti-Semitic imagery: it is suggested that Jews are indeed an alien race, with fundamentally different values, un-English, un-European. On the other hand, this is not seen as necessarily negative, in that Reade represents the Jews as a noble people who epitomize all the austere virtues of the Old Testament.

Significantly, Levi is said to converse in Hebrew (7), and he "anathematized his adversaries in the Hebrew tongue" (550). With his small coterie of trusted Jewish followers, he speaks in this "Eastern dialect" (552), which Reade translates painfully into a form of Biblical English ("Verily, master, I am vexed for the Nazirite maiden . . ." and so on, 552). This might be thought to represent Reade's ignorance of Jewish matters, and perhaps an

assumption that Yiddish was in fact a variant of Hebrew; but this is unlikely in that Reade explicitly states that Levi's linguistic background set him apart from the majority of Jews. The aim is presumably to increase his alien character, and also, perhaps, to identify him with two stereotypical Jewish figures which are both hinted at repeatedly. One is the image of the Hebrew patriarch, suggested by the very name of Isaac Levi, who (for instance) offers Meadows a "covenant", and swears by "the tables of the law" (8).

The other figure suggested is the Wandering Jew. As Levi says, "I traveled in the east; I sojourned in Madras and Benares, in Baghdad, Ispahan, Mecca and Bassra, and found no rest. When my hair began to turn gray, I traded in Petersburg, and Rome, and Paris, Vienna and Lisbon, and other western cities, and found no rest" (7) On setting sail for the Australian goldfields, he explicitly states that "the old Jew is not to die till he has drifted to every part in the globe" (79).

Reade is thus exploiting a whole battery of Jewish stereotypes, which normally have highly undesirable connotations, and this tends to make large portions of the book embarrassing reading today; but the clichés are used in a wholly favorable context. The suggestion is certainly that Jews are alien and oriental, representatives of an ancient culture that long predated England; but it does not follow that they are therefore to be treated as enemies, to be excluded or persecuted. In fact, there is much here that is reminiscent of Disraeli's proud claims about Jewish antiquity.

Levi is deserving of healthy respect, and his "oriental" power plays a key role in securing the restoration and vindication of the hero. This is apparent in the climax of the novel, where the ethnic stereotypes reach a crescendo, and where Jewish images are presented in a context of clandestine plotting, surreptitious action, secret conspiracy. Yet the reader is meant to be relieved rather than fearful, and to greet this as an expression of right and justice. One passage particularly deserves quotation, from the description of the gathering of Levi's band of Jewish followers: "One of the men whistled, a man popped out of the churchyard and joined the two. He had a hooked nose. Another came through the gate from the lane; another from behind the house. The scene kept filling with hooked noses, till it seemed as if the ten tribes were reassembling from the four winds . . . the hooked nosed ones hemmed him {Meadows} in." (570-2)

This reads today like a passage from a Nazi fantasy, but the context is wholly different. After Levi and "the hooked nosed ones" expose Meadows' crimes, they restore Fielding to his proper place: "And Susan and George almost worshiped Isaac Levi; and Susan kissed him and called him her father, and hung upon his neck all gratitude. And he passed his hand over her chestnut hair and said "Go to, foolish child", but his deep rich voice trembled a little, and wonderful tenderness and benevolence glistened in that fiery eye." (574) It Is Never Too Late To Mend may include a host of conventional anti-Semitic images; but that can scarcely be called the climax of an anti-Semitic novel.

If we consider the overall effect of the novel, it can scarcely be denied that we are meant to believe that Jews are quite distinct racially and culturally, and their values and beliefs are quite distinct from those of contemporary England. They are certainly "Other". However, this "otherness" also involves qualities which the audience of the day would assuredly view as positive: values such as strength and cleverness, dignity under persecution, loyalty to friends and benefactors, strong family loyalties. While these are not exactly the conventional Christian values of mid-Victorian England, they have much in common with the "manly" "muscular Christianity" of the age, and Levi is a figure that is meant to inspire respect and awe. He is above all "manly", that ultimate accolade of contemporary literature, and this quality is enhanced by the fatherly sentiment that occasionally manifests itself (his

"wonderful tenderness and benevolence"). The conventional trappings of anti-Semitism thus appear in a context that is highly respectful of Jewish characters, and of Jews as such. From a modern perspective, this may well appear a more positive portrait than the well-intentioned Riah, who is above all a passive and exploited victim.

#### The Lord of the Sea

In ethnic terms, Reade's novel can be read in a quite benevolent way. It is much more difficult to justify the Jewish imagery in another novel which appeared in 1901, The Lord of the Sea, by Matthew Phipps Shiel; but again, the superficial anti-Semitism is misleading. Lord of the Sea is a book which requires a good deal of patience, partly because of its curious political theories. It is based on the common late-Victorian radical notion of wealth being derived from land, and a future socialist state being able to generate and control wealth by total land nationalization under a benevolent centralized state. However, as the title suggests, the book tells of a brilliant leader named Richard Hogarth, who adapts this Henry-Georgian theory to find the source of wealth in the control of the sea. By building a series of gigantic marine fortresses, he defeats the world's navies and establishes a stranglehold on international trade, which allows him to make his "nation of the sea" supreme throughout the world (Shiel's influence on the work of Ayn Rand will be apparent). Shiel uses this framework to express a series of ideas about social egalitarianism and the harm wrought by the notion of absolute property, whether in land or sea.

Thus far, Lord of the Sea belongs in the company of other turn of the century political/scientific romances, most notably in the work of H. G. Wells, but also in the writings of Edward Bellamy, Jack London, William Morris, Ignatius Donnelly and others. However, Shiel's work differs in one major aspect, in that it is intensely concerned with the fate of the Jewish people; and it is this which makes the book quite unpalatable to a modern audience.

At least from the opening chapters, it is easy to decide that this is a proto-Nazi tract, the closest modern parallel to which would be in the violent racist fantasy published in 1978, The Turner Diaries. Like Turner Diaries, Lord of the Sea opens with the assumption that a Western Christian country has fallen into Jewish hands, and that a resistance war must be fought. In the modern American work, a heroic band of guerrillas lead a ruthless struggle against the "Zionist Occupation Government" of contemporary America. In Lord of the Sea, the chief evildoers include the "Jew-Liberal Party" which is so strong a power in England.

It would not be difficult to assemble evidence of Shiel's gross anti-Semitism. As the novel opens, a debt-laden English nobleman is forced to sell his ancient English estate of Westring to the plutocrat, Baruch Frankl: who is, incidentally, "of the Cohanim, the priestly class - a Jew of Jews" (11). Frankl is one of many who now flee to England in the wake of anti-Semitic laws passed throughout Europe: "Austria during those days was a land of vengeful hearts: for the Jews had acquired half its land, and had mortgages on the other half: peasant therefore and nobleman flamed alike. And this fury was contagious: now Germany - now France had it - anti-Semite laws, like the old May laws - but harsher still; and streaming they came, from the Leopoldstadt, from Bukowina, from the Sixteen provinces, from all Galicia, from the Nicolas Colonies, from Lisbon, with wandering foot and weary breast - the Heines, Cohens, Oppenheimers - Sephardim, Ashkenazim. And Dover was the new Elim. With alarm Britain saw them come! but before she could do anything, the wave had overflowed it and by the time it was finished there was no desire to do anything; for within eight months such a tide of prosperity was floating England as had hardly been known in a

country". (5) The migration eventually brings ten million Jews into England, effectively the whole world population.

Such a passage obviously had contemporary relevance in 1901, at the time of the great English debates over Jewish immigration, which led to a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1902, and a restrictive immigration Act in 1905 (Holmes 1979). These years witnessed the growth of an anti-Semitic populism of the sort that had previously been rare in England, a hostility that arose in part from events in South Africa. The outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 focused attention on the "Randlords" whose machinations were said to be driving imperial policy. It was in 1901 that Joseph Banister wrote one of the most vituperative works of British anti-Semitism, significantly entitled England Under the Jews. The same year saw the foundation of the pioneering anti-Semitic organization known as the British Brothers' League (Holmes 1979: 39, 89). The first decade of the century was also the era of the attack on the Hofjuden allegedly surrounding Edward VII, and a series of political scandals which culminated in the Marconi affair of 1912-13, in which Jewish Liberals were prominently involved (Searle, 21-2, 68-9, 206-11, 244-6; Coren 1990: 195-217).

In such a context, Shiel's nightmare of a Jewish takeover of England and its ancient institutions appears to fit well into the politics of the radical Right. This picture is reinforced by the futile struggle of Hogarth to lead a resistance against Frankl. He is thwarted at every stage. The Jew-Liberals, under "Sir Moses Max", win the election; and Frankl uses the power of his wealth to destroy the bank in which Hogarth keeps his meager savings. Ultimately, Hogarth is framed for a murder actually carried out by one of Frankl's oriental minions.

But Hogarth pursues his destiny of becoming the Lord of the Sea, and when he has forced England into submission, he orders the expulsion of the Jews, "Pole and Hungarian, baron and coster, and the little child at the breast, ten millions". All would be resettled in a new Israel, a Jewish state to be created in the area covering broadly the modern states of Syria, Iraq and Jordan in addition to Israel and Lebanon.

Thus far, it seems futile to deny that Lord of the Sea is anti-Semitic in overall theme and in detail. A novel depicting the resistance of a "yeoman", (5), a "Saxon" (10) against a tyrannical Jewish plutocracy; the idea of mass expulsions, even to a Zionist state; English government and politics in the hands of the ruthless Jewish financier . . . can anything redeem such a farrago of bigotry? It would be easy to see this as the definitive novel of English anti-Semitism, written at the flood-tide of anti-immigrant hatred. The implications are made still more disturbing by Shiel's taste for Nietzschean speculations on the evolution of humanity towards a superior stage of racial existence.

There are several indications that it is not quite so stark a tract. Firstly, the "Saxon" hero Richard Hogarth is by no means as straightforward a figure as he appears. We learn early on that he is, unknown to himself, of noble Jewish blood, a son of the financier Sir Solomon Spinoza. Shiel suggests that it is perhaps to this heritage that he owes his titanic genius. However, it is in the last section of the book when the Jewish themes become most puzzling; for it is revealed that by exiling the Jews to the new Israel, Hogarth has created the world's most advanced and noble civilization. And in so doing, he has fulfilled not only the destiny of the Jewish people, but also of himself, for he is none other than the Jewish Messiah. He marries Rebekah, the daughter of Baruch Frankl, and they form the royal dynasty of the new Israel.

The work concludes with an astonishing portrait of the new state of Israel, which is portrayed in extravagant terms reminiscent of the most utopian of the early Zionist theorists. (Ironically, the contemporary English debate over alien immigration had also permitted Zionists like Theodore Herzl to publicize their views). Within a few years, great expanses of

desert are reclaimed, mighty cities rise, and Jerusalem becomes a new London. "Here was not merely progress, but progress at increasing speed, acceleration, finally resembling flight, as of eagle or phoenix, eye fixed on the sun. Tyre by the fiftieth year having grown into the biggest of ports ... while Jerusalem had grown into the recognized school of the wealthier youth of Europe, Asia and America ... the University of Jerusalem had become the chief nerve center of the world's research and upward effort." (293-5).

Israel, quite literally, redeems the world and leads it into a new messianic age, the account of which draws strongly on biblical imagery and thought: "the example of Israel, his suasive charm, proved compelling as sunshine to roots, so that the heart of Spinoza lived to see the spectacle of a whole world deserting the gory paths of Rome to go up into those uplands of mildness and gleefulness whither invites the smile of that lily Galilean. The mission of unbelieving Israel was to convert Christendom to Christianity; and this he did." (296)

As in the case of It Is Never Too Late To Mend, it is useful to consider what we might call the total effect of the depiction of Jews in The Lord of the Sea; and the answer is equivocal. In the context of England and, by extension, other European countries, the Jewish presence is seen as negative, and the language suggests a sinister infiltration (the "Jew-Liberal Party" and so on). Jews should be expelled or encouraged to return to a Zionist state, which after all was the original solution desired by the Nazis. However, this stark message is qualified enormously by the author's views of the inherent qualities of the Jewish people, and their enormous positive potential as the redeemers of the world. In the context of contemporary ideologies such as imperialism and evolutionary theory, the Jews are thus placed in the vanguard of civilization and human development, the role which nations like the British so often claimed for themselves. The portrayal of the Jews in the first half of the book is difficult to pardon; but this is scarcely a conventional anti-Semitic work.

#### The Duality of the Stereotype

How can we explain such positive, even heroic elements in a book that has presented so many malignant images of Jews? This paradox can best be explained in terms of the ambiguous stereotype of the Jew in English culture. In the later nineteenth century, it was widely accepted that Jews were associated with ruthless and often shady commercial activities, and the image of Jews suffered accordingly; yet the strong Biblical orientation of English culture always ensured that this would be accompanied by other, nobler ideas. This was reinforced by the memory of great figures from Jewish history, and we note that Richard Hogarth bears the auspicious name of Spinoza.

In other words, the Jewish stereotype might appear to be evil or sinister, but there was at least the potential for a far superior character to be revealed in the proper circumstances. In one revealing passage in It Is Never Too Late to Mend, it is said that Isaac Levi sometimes "forgot the money-lender for a moment, and felt and thought as one of a great nation, depressed, but waiting for a great deliverance. He was a man of authority and learning in his tribe" (7). He is "the descendant of Maimonides" (79). Beneath the figure of the Jew as money-lender, we find the Jew as patriarch, oriental prince, or hero.

This was not to say that Jews were not to be blamed for their commercial activities, and even Dickens makes a significant concession to anti-Semitism when Riah repents that he ever allowed himself to be seen as a usurer: "I was doing dishonor to my ancient faith and race . . . If, doing what I was content to do here, because I was grateful for the past and have small need of money now, I had been a Christian, I could have done it., compromising no one but my individual self. But doing it as a Jew, I could not choose but compromise the



Jews of all conditions and all countries. It is a little hard upon is, but it is the truth. I would that all our people remembered it". (795)

Dickens' suggestion seems to be that Jews have a duty to avoid professions like money-lending which earn the contempt of the Gentile world, and thus that, at least in part, they call popular hostility upon themselves.

This perception of the Jewish paradox is best expressed by Shiel, who describes the scientific and intellectual flowering of the new Israel: "The transformation was rapid for the reason that it was natural, seeing that it had been Europe only that like a Circe had bewitched them into bestial (*sic*) shapes, 'sharks' and 'bulls' and 'bears', medieval Jews for example having been debarred from every pursuit save commerce, so that Shylock was obliged to turn into a Venetian, and in ceasing to be a Hebrew, became more Venetian than the Venetians, for the reason that he had more brains, ready to beat them at any game they cared to mention; but the genuine self of Shylock was a vine-dresser or sandal maker, as Hillel was a wood-chopper, David a shepherd, Amos a fig-gatherer, Saul an ass-driver, Rabbi ben-Zakkai a sail-maker, Paul a tent-maker: so that the return to simplicity and honesty was quickly accomplished." (293-4) Once Jews return to their authentic nature, the "genuine self", their creative powers are unleashed in a torrent of scientific, medical and literary discoveries that literally transforms the world.

Both Lord of the Sea and It Is Never Too Late to Mend are anti-Semitic in presenting evils that are allegedly associated with the Jews of contemporary England. However, both also assume that these problems are incidental to a deeper Jewish reality which is seen as potentially noble, creative and intellectual. Shiel at least suggests that the bad elements were socially rather than racially determined, ills imposed by the dilemmas of attempting to compromise with a European Christian society. Both books - together with Our Mutual Friend - depict the potential Jewish reality as at least equal to Christian values or civilization. In summary, it would be difficult to describe any of the works under review here as anti-Semitic in their intent or their overall effect, even if all have profoundly troubling moments. All succeed in overcoming the stereotypes in which they persistently indulge.

#### Footnotes

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