



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

**ISSUES OF ETHNICITY AND CLASS IN THE
PAINTINGS OF MARK GERTLER**

Trevor Richard Parker

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

May 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

TREVOR RICHARD PARKER, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ISSUES OF ETHNICITY AND CLASS IN THE PAINTINGS OF MARK GERTLER

SUMMARY

The thesis will undertake a revision of art historians' critical appraisal of the paintings of Mark Gertler, in particular the issues of ethnicity and class which historians have claimed to have largely determined the development of Gertler's art. In doing this I will present a number of methodologies that reflect a social psychological perspective, in particular the critiques of Sander Gilman and his use of the notion of 'the other' within a Jewish historical perspective. Reflective of the psychological insight is the issue of class which although the thesis recognises it as a formal hierarchy, I will look at its subjective interpretation by using the writings of Henri Tajfel and his perspective on social groups and Angela Lambert's work in the realm of social linguistics as well briefly discussing Basil Bernstein's perspective on social linguistics. The application of these methodologies will I feel render a greater understanding of the artist's difficulty in adapting to the social processes of the dynamics of the class system.

The thesis will highlight what I argue is a valuable insight that these methodologies present to understanding in particular the paintings prior to 1916 of Gertler's 'Jewish' themes. The methodologies will be underpinned by referencing them to the primary source of the artist's letters and Gilbert Cannan's novel *Mendel*, based on Gertler's life.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	3
Preface	6
Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	8
Chapter 1: A Jewish Family: Gertler's Paintings of Immediate Kinship	15
I. New English Art Club	23
II. <i>A Playful Scene</i>	25
Chapter 2: Hebrew Heritages: <i>Jephthah, Jews Arguing</i>	36
I. The Biblical Narrative of Jephthah	49
II. <i>Jews Arguing</i>	65
Chapter 3: Rural Idylls and Primitive Monuments	75
I. Influences: Artistic and Social	75
II. Augustus John	77
III. Friendship	78
IV. Gypsies: A Local Orientalism	78
V. Orientalism	81
VI. The Florentines	82
VII. Picasso	83
VIII. Distinctions Between the Paintings	84
IX. Rembrandt	88
X. Zionism	89
Chapter 4: The Mother Tongue: The Artist's Mother, 1913	96
I. Language	99

Chapter 5: A Family Transformed: <i>The Rabbi and His Grandchild, The Jewish Family, The Family Group</i>	114
I. <i>The Rabbi and His Grandchild</i>	118
II. <i>The Jewish Family</i>	132
III. <i>The Family Group</i>	136
Chapter 6: The Final Act: The Last Jewish Subjects	143
I. <i>The Fruit Sorters</i>	144
II. The Exhibition: Twentieth-Century Art	148
III. <i>Gilbert Cannan at His Mill</i>	152
IV. <i>The Merry-Go-Round</i>	167
Conclusion	191
Bibliography	196
Illustrations	207

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1. Mark Gertler, 'The Artist's Mother', 1911. Oil on Canvas, 66 x 55.9 cm. Tate Gallery
- Figure 2 Mark Gertler, 'A Playful Scene', 1910-11. Oil on Canvas, 76.2 x 101.6cm. Birmingham City Museums and Art Gallery
- Figure 3 Henry Tonks, 'The Hat Shop', 1897. Oil on Canvas, 677 x 927cm. Birmingham City Museums and Art Gallery
- Figure 4 Henry Tonks, 'The Bird Cage', 1907. Oil on Canvas, 140 x 112cm. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology
- Figure 5 Mark Gertler, 'The Artist's Parents', 1909-10. Oil on Canvas, 45 x 51cm. Luke Gertler
- Figure 6 Abraham Soloman, 'The Acolyte', 1842. Oil on Canvas, 64 x 35cm. Private Collection
- Figure 7 Mark Gertler, 'The Return of Jephthah', 1910-12. Oil on Canvas, 43.5 x 59.5 inch. Coll Edward Troy
- Figure 8 Abraham Solomon, 'First Class –The Meeting: And At First Meeting Loved', 1854. Oil on Canvas, 69.2 x 98.6cm.Ferrers Gallery London
- Figure 9 Abraham Solomon, 'First Class –The Meeting' (Revised Version), 1855.Oil on Canvas, 68.5 x 96.5cm.Southampton Art Gallery
- Figure 10 Solomon Joseph Solomon, RA, 'A Conversation Piece', 1884. Oil on Canvas, 101.6 x 127cm. Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council, Leighton House, London
- Figure 11 William Rothenstein, 'Reading the Book of Esther', 1907. Oil on Canvas, 85.6 x 105cm. Manchester City Art Galleries

- Figure 12 Mark Gertler, 'Jews Arguing', 1911. Oil on Canvas, 76 x 92.5cm. Private Collection
- Figure 13 Mark Gertler, 'Study of a Girl's Head in Profile', 1911. Pencil on Paper, 39.2 x 28cm. The Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester
- Figure 14 Mark Gertler, 'Old Man with Beard', 1913. Pencil on Paper, 29.5 x 21.5cm. Luke Gertler
- Figure 15 Mark Gertler, 'The Apple Woman and her Husband', 1912. Oil on Canvas, 61 x 56cm. Private Collection. A.M. Daniel
- Figure 16 Augustus John, 'The Mumpers', 1912. Tempera on Canvas, 274.5 x 578cm. The Hon. Kojiro Matsukata, The Detroit Institute of Arts
- Figure 17 Pablo Picasso, 'Les Demoiselle d'Avignon', 1907. Oil on Canvas, 99 x 99 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art
- Figure 18 Pablo Picasso, 'La Famille de Saltimbanques', 1905. Oil on Canvas, 212.8 x 229.6cm. The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Chester Dale Collection
- Figure 19 Rembrandt Van Rijn, 'A Young Jew', c.1648. Oil on Canvas, 330 x 400. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
- Figure 20 Mark Gertler, 'The Artist's Mother', 1913. Oil on Canvas, 45 x 42.5cm. Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Leisure Services Department, Swansea City Council
- Figure 21 Mark Gertler, 'The Rabbi and his Grandchild', 1913. Oil on Canvas, 50.8 x 45.9. Southampton City Art Gallery
- Figure 22 Mark Gertler, 'The Jewish Family', 1913. Oil on Canvas, 66 x 50.8cm. Tate Gallery
- Figure 23 Stanley Spencer, 'John Donne Arriving in Heaven', 1911. Oil on Canvas, 36.8 x 40.6cm. Private Collection

- Figure 24 Mark Gertler, 'The Family Group', 1913. Oil on Canvas, 92.4 x 61cm. Southampton City Art Gallery
- Figure 25 Mark Gertler, 'The Fruit Sorters', 1914. Oil on Canvas, 72 x 62.5cm. New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester City Museum Service
- Figure 26 Mark Gertler, 'Gilbert Cannan at his Mill', 1916.Oil on Canvas, 99 x 71 cm. The Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum
- Figure 27 Mark Gertler, 'The Merry-Go-Round', 1916. Oil on Canvas, 189.2 x 142.2 cm. Tate Gallery
- Figure 28 Mark Gertler, 'The Creation of Eve', 1914.Oil on Canvas, 75 x60cm. Private Collection

Preface

I began this work in 2002 having become interested in the work of Mark Gertler in the mid-1990s. This came about when I was on the Art History and Design post-graduate diploma. One of the tutors was my current supervisor Professor David Mellor. A fellow student on the course gave me a reproduction of a self-portrait by Mark Gertler. This created an interest in the artist which I nurtured and in 1998 I approached David Mellor at the University of Sussex with the view to undertake further post-graduate work on the artist. In conversations with David Mellor I identified issues of ethnicity and class which we felt would anchor my study on the artist.

I have endeavoured with the application of critiques and methodologies a revision of Mark Gertler's work up to 1916, highlighting issues of ethnicity and class, which others like Sarah MacDougall and more prominently Juliet Steyn have also undertaken. Through such a sustained analysis I hoped to deepen my understanding of his paintings and also brought to my attention were some paintings of Gertler's which up to this period I feel have suffered a paucity if not an absence of critical inquiry. I would like to pay tribute to Janet Woolf and her monograph 'The Failure of the Hard Sponge: Class Ethnicity and the Art of Mark Gertler', which has been helpful to me in highlighting the objective conditions of class at the macro level and the way in which this has impeded those who set about embarking on the process of assimilation. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Juliet Steyn who at the micro level has brought to readers' recognition the consequences of assimilation, what could be termed consequences at the subjective level. Both these and other authors have stressed the issues of ethnicity and class as being crucial as a means to understanding the development of the artist Mark Gertler, and have offered an insight into the nature and process of his working procedure.

However, the limits of assimilation that these authors highlight were clearly at a very early stage enunciated in the novel *Mendel* by Gilbert Cannan in 1916. The novel presents a strict demarcation in ethnic terms, e.g. – Christianity and Judaism as well as reflecting the spiritual and political climate of the times where anti-semitism became virulent within British society, becoming a political reality in its enshrinement in legislature. The thesis therefore uses the novel to shed light on some of the artist's attitudes towards himself and the attitude of his contemporaries towards him. The limits of assimilation are reflected in the character of Mendel who sees himself strictly in

Jewish terms, with no hint of Anglo-Jewish assimilation. He sees himself, first and foremost as a Jew. The attitude of Mendel is exclusively Jewish and one which clearly denounces the Christian world and the acknowledgement of ethnicity by the artist has a continuity throughout the novel.

Acknowledgements

I am most appreciative of the recollections, recommendations and hospitality offered to me by Mark Gertler's son Luke and I am grateful for the opportunity to view in his home some of the important works of art by his father. I also wish to express my gratitude to Rabbi Meyer and the insight that he has offered to me on the character of Jephthah, the minor Judge. Equally I would like to express my thanks to Rabbi Silverman, who further developed an insight into the character of Jephthah, for his recommendations of literature regarding the role of women within the Jewish family. I would also like to take the opportunity to extend my thanks to Jill Seddon of Brighton University and her invitation to have conversations on the nature of the emergence of folk art in British culture and her recommendations for further reading on this subject. The University of Sussex has played a vital part in the developing process of my research. The nature of the inter-contextuality of its courses has afforded me the opportunity to consult with academic staff in their specialist areas. I would like to thank Professor Maurice Howard for his advice and for recommending readership on the artist Rembrandt. Outside the parochial level I would like to pay thanks to Sandra Clark at the Board of Deputies of British Jews for taking the time to talk with me and for her recommendations for reading material on Jewish history. Thanks also to the staff at The Tate Gallery which has an extensive collection of the letters of Mark Gertler. Finally and most crucially I wish pay special thanks to my supervisor Professor David Mellor who has given me unswerving support in the development of my thesis.

Introduction

That unique visual language which has for many characterised the art of Mark Gertler, a Jew of Eastern European descent born in Spitalfields, London, in 1891, has been subject to inquiry within biographical narratives and monographs of the artist's work. The uniqueness referred to for many writers is that his *oeuvre* is marked by ambivalence, an uneasiness which has arisen in the artist's attempt to negotiate his ethnic identity within the assimilatory process. It is this field which will be explored. Within the context of biography, writers like John Woodeson and Sarah MacDougall have highlighted in their personal accounts of the artist's life issues concerning class and ethnicity, one of which revealed 'a singularity in tension with the universal',¹ a narrative which Juliet Steyn argues was ethnic and class-based. Woodeson in the biography of the painter's life, which was published in 1972, used citations from the personal and private letters from the artist to his close friends, highlighting the artist's anxiety surrounding the issue of class. MacDougall in her biographical account of Gertler that was published in 2002 acknowledges the factor of class as a pertinent force in the artist's relationship with his artistic colleagues and the wider society itself. What MacDougall also does is to raise the issue of the process of assimilation and his negotiation of ethnicity in terms of the ambivalence that arose in Gertler in his attempt to engage but never achieve complete assimilation. Writers like Juliet Steyn have sought further elaboration on the issue of assimilation to elucidate what they feel or what it might provide as 'clues'² in understanding the artist's work, and question where the limits of assimilation lie: Understanding perhaps as a sign of a struggle between identification with Jewish selfhood and alienation from it – described by Shumueli as '*the essence of the Jewish dilemma*'.³

I seek to further scrutinise the issue of assimilation and to understand Gertler's apparent self-hatred and ambivalence – what Zygmunt Bauman referred to as 'the dysfunctionality of the functionality of modernism'.⁴ It is a process which, Bauman argues innocently, 'lures, its victims into a state of chronic ambivalence with the bait of admission ticket to the world free from a stigma of otherness'.⁵ I claim that self-hatred

¹ Juliet Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity* (London: Cassell, 1999), p.115

² *Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Camden Art Centre, 1992, p.9

³ E. Shumueli *Seven Jewish Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.7

⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), p.9

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.102

and the disorder of ambivalence were crucial factors that shaped the narrative of Gertler's artistic practice particularly in the years before 1916. There were conditions that beset the artistic personality of the artist and so vexed him that they were far from being a marginal disturbance, and for writers like Juliet Steyn and Janet Wolff these conflicts over identity became foundational in the expression of the artist's earlier works, to such an extent that there is an acknowledgment that they were an expression of an incommensuality. What I seek to do is to further develop the explanation of his displaced condition. As such, I look at the writings of Sander L. Gilman, whose historiography of anti-Semitism explores these conditions. Although Steyn argues that Gertler was caught up in a system which gave a visual representation of his Jewish subjects in his paintings, this vocabulary of difference lacks the insight of Gilman's writings. The use of Gilman's critique will enable us to explain that Gertler's early work, particularly between the years 1910 and 1914, became a crucial site for the expression of Gertler's self-hatred. I further seek to intensify the claim that his paintings were an expression of self-hatred in that Gertler historicises an anti-Semitic rhetoric that had its antecedents in early Christianity and provided the basic model of the image of the Jew which found continuity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though here it was secularised by a neutral rational language of scientific discourse.

I suggest that Gertler's paintings represented what Gilman refers to as a construction of the Jewish body, that was a 'pathognomic'⁶ interpretation of the Jewish body, signifying Jewish difference, a set of assumptions that were presented as fact and which argued that this phenomena was firstly mutable and that it could be measured and was observable. What I suggest is that Gertler was a victim of what Gilman refers to as the double bind of the assimilation process, which interiorised the projection of the dominant culture as regards to stereotypes of Jewish difference that had been imparted from the 'advent of early Christianity',⁷ and which were validated by the hegemony of the biological sciences of the nineteenth century. In this respect I claim that his early paintings became icons of Jewish difference and became subject to a sense of his internalised Jewish particularism engendered by the claims made by Gilman's critique. What I further develop is what Gilman refers to as the genotype and the correspondence between Francis Galton's composite pictures, which I argue presented themselves in the pictorial language of Gertler's portrayal of the Eastern European Jew prior to 1916. The

⁶Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.76

⁷Ibid., p.5

language I may therefore discover inherent in Gertler's portrayal of his Jewish subjects established a racial inferiority and a set of Jewish stereotypes which were promoted and defined by the biological sciences of the nineteenth century.

Janet Wolff, in her article 'The Failure of a Hard Sponge: Class, Ethnicity, and the Art of Mark Gertler', has developed the reading and the sentiments of Steyn and MacDougall by conflating the narrative of biography with an analysis which has a sociological interpretation, a textual perspective which elicits an historical narrative at the macro level of the power structures that existed in the late nineteenth century. A system of institutions, patronage and brokerage is presented by Wolff, who considers him and his work in the context of class relations, 'ethnic identification and visual representation in early twentieth century England.'⁸ For example, Wolff refers to 'Noel Annan's classic 1955 study of what he calls 'the intellectual aristocracy'⁹ which makes the case of the importance of existing power structures and familiar interrelationships within educational institutions and government departments that were highly influential 'in intellectual periodicals'.¹⁰ More importantly, the inference made by this classic study is that society remains closed to those who are not linked by marriage or kinship. This contextualisation within Wolff's monograph makes a correspondence between aesthetic and social and political considerations which I claim characterised the prescriptive nature of assimilation and the conflicting issues of ethnicity and class which underscored Gertler's personal and artistic life. Within this framework Wolff pointed to a consequence on a wider level as to why the avant-garde failed in England.

For the purposes of this thesis I have critically embraced the work of these writers: firstly of the biographers in highlighting the issues of class and ethnicity and the development by Steyn of the nature of the assimilatory process, and then Wolff's monograph, which looks at the objective factors of the issue of class. I acknowledge that Wolff's study has explored topics which are more important to an understanding of the issues of class and ethnicity. However, what I do seek to do is further the analysis given by Wolff of Gertler's paintings and try to establish a more complex analysis of the factors of class and ethnicity. In this way I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and subjective tensions that I would claim played a part in the artist's collective works.

⁸ Janet Wolff, 'The Failure of the Hard Sponge: Class Ethnicity and the Art of Mark Gertler', *New Formations*, 28 (Spring 1996), p.64

⁹ Ibid., p.55

¹⁰ Ibid.

Therefore I focus on the subjective definitions of the objective conditions that Wolff raises in her monograph. By doing this I enter into the province of social psychology. In this zone the thesis employs psychological criteria and looks at the writing of Henry Tajfel and Basil Bernstein, whose analyses have explored the relationships between the mode of cognitive expression within and between certain social classes. This relationship was one which Bernstein suggested regulated internal order within groups and relationships between groups. I will examine the testimony of Gertler in his numerous correspondence, which he wrote throughout his life, in particular the letters written before 1916 to his first close friends and colleagues, particularly Dora Carrington. In these he clearly demonstrates that he is alert to the attitudes of members from other social groups which he encountered. The outcome was an incongruity which presented itself as a clear condition of the subjective interrelationships within and between social groups. It is a subjective criterion of the artist that was further supported by Gilbert Cannan's novel *Mendel*, written in 1916, a fictional account of the artist's life, but one which had a biographical basis.

This evidential basis will allow us to understand the conflicting aspects of Gertler's assimilatory journey, which, I suggest, can be contextualised within the framework of class and ethnicity, which I argue persisted to a lesser or greater extent throughout his life. I will demonstrate the incessant struggle that Gertler had within this process of assimilation in a constant negotiation of his ethnicity, which presented itself, I claim, in the first painting of his mother, *The Artist's Mother* (1911; Figure 1), and as such presents a metaphor as a site of resistance in his disavowal to the assimilatory process. The thesis will seek to highlight the relationship that Gertler had with Henry Tonks, his tutor at the Slade School of Art, and the aesthetic that, I argue, influenced Gertler's paintings in his early years at the Slade. For example, *A Playful Scene* (1910; Figure 2), I suggest, has suffered from a lack of critical appraisal and the correspondences that it has to Tonks's paintings. In this respect I am looking at the direct influence of Tonks and the N.E.A.C., the formation of which was basically a reaction against 'Victorian didacticism',¹¹ which laid great emphasis on fastidious workmanship and a preference for canvasses that were highly finished.

Already in *The Artists Mother* we can see the unease within the painting and the insecurity of the sitter, which I argue is pictorially expressed in an impressionistic manner. However, it is in the painting *The Return of Jephthah* (1911; Figure 7) that I

¹¹ Joseph Hone, *The Life of Henry Tonks*, (London and Toronto: William Heineman Ltd., 1937) p.42

claim Gertler's anti-assimilatory position is pictorially expressed. It is a painting where there has been an absence of critical appraisal in biographical material and also in critical artistic appraisal. This thesis seeks to rectify this and also to highlight the importance of this early painting, particularly in its allegorical nature, where Gertler clearly sees himself as a parallel to, or self-identification with in this minor biblical judge. That is, I suggest that *Jephthah* was a metaphor for Gertler's reunion with an authentic Jewish tradition and a specific Jewish identity. However, perhaps more pertinent to Gertler was the moral of the biblical story, and this ecclesiastical significance had a correspondence with his own situation and the pledge he undertook to the enlightenment process. Like Jephthah, Gertler did not appreciate the gravity of his vow to the Enlightenment vision, while simultaneously the painting testifies to his rejection of the assimilatory process.

The subsequent painting, *Jews Arguing* (1910; Figure 12), I claim reinforces the artist's position, which is intensified in the painting's pictorial language. The visual language is in outright opposition to secularisation, while promoting values which are anti-Christian. In this respect *Jews Arguing* can be interpreted as a space where a certain dialectic is played, out and, it incarnates a visibility which is ideologically in conflict with Anglo-Jewry and modernity. What is also significant is that the visual language of the painting denotes the externalisation of otherness. However, Gertler at this time was working on *The Apple Woman and Her Husband*, (1912; Figure 15) which I argue presents a site of resistance but was cautionary in nature in as much as it was promoting the acceptable face of otherness and the romanticism that was associated with this, namely orientalism, in particular the gypsy fad which gripped the imagination of the English bourgeoisie in the very late nineteenth century. The primitivism of orientalism, according to a narrative of a spatial and racial discourse, the thesis claims, was an axiom of the inequality of modernity. The project seeks to make a correspondence between the primitivism of *The Apple Woman* and an orientalism whose mythology related to the structured spatial division that underpinned a racial narrative of semitic otherness. In this respect, the thesis highlights an absence from past critical appraisals of *The Apple Woman*, in that there is a failure to highlight the painting's political dimensions and class narrative, the residing orthodoxy and its redemptive interest in Zionism. In this respect the subtext of the painting and the subversive tendencies that the thesis advances have largely been overlooked. I will seek to clarify what has not been highlighted previously: that Gertler, as a victim of a double bind,

became a participant with the racial discourse of modernity, which reinforced an otherness embodied within objects and produced a vilifying mark of difference. *Jews Arguing* therefore reflects the strict dichotomy which Gertler, in his younger years, became a victim of. It was a painting which reflected subsequent representations of Jewish subjects made before to 1916 (for example, *The Rabbi and His Grandchild*, *The Jewish Family*, etc.), until the arrival of *The Family Group* which signalled, I claim, explored the expression of the incongruities of issues surrounding class and ethnicity. I claim that this series of Jewish subjects was a product of Gertler's self-hatred and has distinct connotations which were partly contingent on the science of race and an image of the Jew that has prevailed since the emergence of Christianity. The thesis contextualises these early Jewish paintings, so that the negotiation of identity, reveals the protean nature of the construction of racial difference. It seeks to highlight the negative connotations that have constantly influenced Western thought towards the Jews; therefore the claim is made that Gertler's early Jewish paintings, prior to 1916, are portraits, which cannot be read or be seen to exist in isolation. These visual references, I suggest, agree with a vocabulary of difference legitimised by the hegemony of the scientific culture of the nineteenth century. They expressed a set of assumptions about racial identity and an inherent disposition that no amount of assimilation or religious conversion, I claim, could wash away or efface.

The year 1916 and the period of the First World War marked a juncture in the artist's development and a clear break with the visual language prior to it in his portrayal of Jewish subjects. *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill* and *The Merry-Go-Round* were paintings of this period and reflected a change in his aesthetic outlook. During this period, he had contact with the upper-class world of the Bloomsbury Group. The difference in aesthetic outlook became a further cause of conflict for Gertler as his letters show. As regards the painting *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill*, the thesis has sought to widen the suggestion made by Rothenstein and by other commentators of the influence of folk art. I acknowledge this linkage and seek to deepen and broaden the influence that folk art played in this painting, particularly noted by Avram Kampf, and the renaissance of folk art in Eastern Europe and the way in which Jewish artists used this source to develop secular art as a means to express the modern Jewish condition. It was an art which had constructivist tendencies and cubist styles, and which was anti-naturalistic. This, as well as the stage sets of the Yiddish theatre that Gertler arguably came into contact with, lends itself to a deeper analysis of this picture. The thesis also

looks at the painting *The Creation of Eve* (1914), which I argue has been overlooked by art historians, and inquiries into the aptness of Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On the Marionette* as a metaphor for the expression of cosmic gloom. Equally, as regards the painting *The Merry-Go-Round*, the thesis looks at the use of the figure of the mannequin and make a correspondence with ventriloquism and its practice, particularly emphasised by the open mouths of the dummies which ride on the carousel in *The Merry-Go-Round*. I will also look at *The Merry-Go-Round* in terms of it being an inversion of an aesthetic that was valorised by the government in the promotion of contemporary military mobilisation and patriotic zeal. More importantly, as regards the issue of ethnicity, I will look at the racial overtones and interpretation of *The Merry-Go-Round* by D.H. Lawrence.

The thesis, by focusing on the issues of ethnicity and class within the development outlined, will underpin the examination of the *oeuvre* of the artist and the protocols of his work and procedure, method and aesthetics.

Chapter 1

A Jewish Family:

Gertler's Paintings of Immediate Kinship

I will be examining early paintings by Gertler which are specifically Jewish in context and subject matter. I will seek to understand these paintings within the context of an Anglo-Jewish historiography and the social dimension which reflected the sharp distinction between a hard-pressed, working-class immigrant group and a comfortable native bourgeoisie. I shall discuss a clash of cultures and a social distinction which separated the established Anglo-Jewish from the immigrant newcomer. The argument which will be put forward, therefore, is the extent to which these paintings can be seen as part of a tradition of Victorian Jewish art or one which can be seen as a transgression: an Orthodoxy which rejected the pressure of anglicisation and a communal leadership. The painting *The Return of Jephthah* (1910; Figure 7), it will be suggested, was predicated on the rejection of a modernity which sought to establish a fine distinction between the private and public sphere, 'one where the "other" could be made into "same"',¹² i.e. an effacement of cultural and ethnic differences. In order to analyse Gertler's paintings within this historical context, it is necessary to understand the nature of Anglo-Jewish identity at this time: its traditionalism and the rationale behind the implicit confrontation between East and West, which, although conservative, allowed the individual to assimilate socially. This was a refashioned orthodoxy, a transformed religion that was shaped into an English mode, a secular rationalism.

The history of Anglo-Jewry in the eighteenth century had its antecedents in the Norman Conquest of 1066, and there was a period between 1290 and their readmission in 1656 when there was a ban on Jewish settlement in England. Lloyd Gartner states that 'from 1290 to the mid 1650s, Jews were barred by royal edict from visiting or settling in England; in practice, this was not the case'¹³ as there was a trickle of Jews who were physicians and merchants, although conversion from Judaism to Christianity by baptism after arrival was a prerequisite for settlement.¹⁴ During this period Menasseh Ben Israel formally applied to the Lord Protector for the readmission of Jews to

¹²Victor Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), p.9

¹³ Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant In England* (London: Simon Press, 1960), p.14

¹⁴ Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.9

England. Because of the favourable circumstances that presented themselves during this period, their readmission found favour. This was because, as Howard Brotz indicates, England found itself at the beginning of constitutional government, and Cromwell, at the time, regarded the readmission of Jews as being advantageous to national business interests.¹⁵ Harold Pollins expands on this commercial perspective in as much as it underpinned and determined the primary consideration given to Jewish readmission.¹⁶ This reflected Lucien Wolf's point of view, who wrote extensively on the subject in 1901, and commented that during this period it was felt that Jews were important primarily as traders and financiers, and in this sense their readmission to Britain and London would help the country's economic development.¹⁷

Christopher Hill, however, points out that perhaps this is overemphasised, for Cromwell at the time, he argues, would have lost out financially more due to the opposition of London merchants.¹⁸ In this sense perhaps, as Pollins suggests, a sounder argument would be one that had several explanations, 'for no student of Cromwell nowadays denies that his policies were an amalgam of politics, economics and religion'.¹⁹ Cromwell was also widely known as a philosemite. It is also stressed by Brotz that because of Puritanism there was a sympathetic response to the religious petition forwarded by Menasseh Ben Israel. As W.D. Rubenstein suggests, 'many Puritans saw themselves as literally the re-embodiment of the old Testament Hebrews and thus felt a special affinity to the Jewish remnants of God's chosen race'.²⁰ Pollins points out that those who saw themselves as Puritans even went so far as to adopt Judaic practices in their religious rituals: for example, this was reflected by keeping Saturday 'holy'.²¹ By the time of readmission most of the Jews living in London were Sephardim. These were descendants of Jews who had fled Spain and Portugal a generation or two earlier, 'and had settled in cities such as Venice or Amsterdam, where they could live openly as Jews'.²² It was the very nature of the Sephardim which formed and underpinned the basis of modern Anglo-Jewry. The Sephardim's peculiar historical

¹⁵ Howard Brotz, 'The Position of the Jews in English Society', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 1:1 (1959), p.100

¹⁶ Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), p.35

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964), p.204

¹⁹ Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, p.31

²⁰ W.D. Rubenstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), p.44

²¹ Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, p.30

²² Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.10

experience had inadvertently prepared its smooth transition into mainstream English culture. They presented a constellation of forces that did not clash culturally with the host nation. Fears of the inquisition and poverty had been the motivation behind their emigration. They lived ostensibly as Catholics in Catholic countries, and as such the drive to assimilate within the host country was not impeded by an identity which had its basis in a communal collective. As such, the Jewish community failed to grow in England; in fact there was a shrinkage of the population, as Endelman points out:

Between 1740 and 1800 the annual number of marriages celebrated at the Synagogue in Bevis Marks fell by 43 percent. Much if not most of the shrinkage in the size of the community was due to assimilation into the mainstream of English society and the severance of communities.²³

Unlike the Eastern European Jew, the Sephardim did not live prior to their emigration in cultural isolation from the larger society. They were exposed to the secular culture of the West and subsequently this facilitated a smooth transition into English society. Robert Huttenback argues that as a ‘consequence of the comparative liberalism of the era and the resulting lack of persecution they increasingly anglicized.’²⁴ The Sephardim were open to non-Jewish learning, unlike the closed separatism of the Eastern European Jew. The Sephardim ‘in matters of language, costume, deportment and taste’²⁵ in early modern Europe were not unlike their gentile neighbours. Their entry into English society did not face a crisis of acculturation and readjustment to English habits of thought. There was no cultural clash which characterised the Sephardic drive for assimilation because they were a product of a particular historical experience. From the outset this had advantaged the Sephardic psychologically and culturally prior to their entry into the host nation. There was no mismatch within the social setting or in the religious sphere: ‘as former Marranos or the descendants of Marranos, they or their parents lived as Christians within Christian society’.²⁶ They were in Yosef Yerushalmis’s words ‘the first considerable group of European Jews to have had their most extensive and direct personal experiences completely outside the organic Jewish community and the spiritual universe of

²³ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.11

²⁴ Robert A. Huttenback, ‘The Patrician Jew and the British Ethos in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 40:1 (1978, Winter), p.50

²⁵ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.11

²⁶ Ibid.

normative Jewish tradition'.²⁷ Historical circumstances had predisposed the Sephardim to accommodate the central values within an assimilationist culture, and as such they had long learnt unconsciously through their historical experiences not to be visible as Jews. The Enlightenment project was one which they had embraced within the native historical experience, facilitating a smooth integration into British liberal culture. Unlike their Eastern European co-religionists, they entered English mainstream society with relative ease: 'Many were former graduates of French and Iberian Universities and in Spain and Portugal as nominal Catholics had full access to the mainspring of Western theological, philosophic and scientific learning.'²⁸

The assimilatory nature of the Sephardim presented them with success within mainstream Britain that was evident by the first decades of the eighteenth century. As Israel Zangwill states:

English Jews in the upper sections at least had been subjected lately, in common with the whole civilised world, to a scientific Renaissance in which the evolution doctrine has been only one of a host of dissolvent influences. There has been a great shaking up of the old bones, much movement in sects and circles.²⁹

They copied the habits of Englishmen of property and found success in international trade and finance. This financial success was invested in country estates which were seen as a benchmark of social respectability: 'the ideal of the English gentleman at this time was tied to the ownership of land and the cultivation of country pursuits'.³⁰ The Sephardim gradually intermarried with their property-owning neighbours and non-mercantile circles, the implication of which was that their interrelationship with the Jewish community of the City of London ceased.³¹ What is significant is the conscious decision to live outside a Jewish community setting, divorced from an environment with access to a synagogue or institution which imparted theological observance. In this sense, Anglo-Jewry lent itself to an English way of life that reflected the Gentile counterpart. As such, the seduction of English gentrification eroded Jewish loyalties and impacted on group solidarity. Their British experience was

²⁷Yosef Hayim Yerushalmis, 'From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto', in Isaac Cardoso (ed.) *A Study in Seventeenth Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p.44 as quoted by Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.11

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Israel Zangwill, 'English Judaism: A Criticism and a Classification', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1: 4, (1889), p.379

³⁰ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.11

³¹ Ibid.

a forsaken visibility of their professional Jewishness. However, what is significant is that the Sephardim maintained an ethnic identity which was reflected in their social intercourse and association with individuals who had similar backgrounds to their own. Although they sought total integration into the dominant culture, they still mixed with those whose ethnicity reflected their own: 'ethnic identity, then, rather than religious practice bound them to other former Marranos'.³² What developed was the character of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, an oligarchy which was highly structured and closely knit by the intermarriage of groups of families and cousins. It was a structure which was intimate and one which was mutually reinforcing. It became one large family whose complexities reflected a network of marriages and alliances.³³ What occurred in British society was an integration which was predicated on the experience of their native countries of origin. The effacement of the Jewish identity of the Sephardim had long been erased in their native origins. The logic of modernity and its demarcations of private and public space therefore presented few problems for the Sephardim within British culture.

Norman Bentwich argues that 'The liberal trend of the nineteenth century in the politically emancipated communities was to reduce the intense Judaism of the ghetto, and convert it into a matter of religious belief and practices, which was treated as a private affair.'³⁴ The authenticity of Sephardim ethnic difference had ceased to be visible in Spain and Portugal; it was an escape from oppressive restrictions rather than the abandonment of Judaism, which was their reason for gaining access to the new world. The integration of the Sephardim was predicated on the continuity of a process of acculturation which occurred within their former countries of residence, and as such this advantaged them to be in a position to integrate and placed them on the road to English gentrification. They lived as Englishmen outside the framework of Jewish society. It was a mode of modernisation which embraced continental modes of thought and behaviour which were no longer defined in exclusively Jewish terms: 'It was a rearrangement of personal priorities in such a manner that their Jewishness came to occupy only a segment of their personal identity.'³⁵

³²Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.14

³³ Ibid., p.12

³⁴ Norman Bentwich, 'The Social Transformation of Anglo-Jewry 1883-1960', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 2:1 (1960), p.23

³⁵ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p.119

This internalisation of non-Jewish values was essentially class-based. Again, there was no irreconcilability within socioeconomic terms, for many Jews shared the same background, particularly in the 'more developed cities of Amsterdam, Berlin and the Rhineland'.³⁶ For the Sephardim religious values had long been displaced by class values, and as such they were naturally placed in the drive for assimilation and the unarticulated ideal that was upper-class gentrification. Gentrification equated with upper-class values, 'the values of the English ruling class'.³⁷ They refashioned their lives to reflect these values, which found continuity with their class-based aspiration in their countries of origin.

The acculturation of the established Anglo-Jewry did not represent a dramatic break with the past. The manners of British bourgeois society reflected their own. They naturally owned them and as such became indistinguishable from their non-Jewish counterparts. In fact, the richest and most cultivated Jews totally identified with upper-class society and the dominant national culture. Unbaptised Jews were allowed into Gentile aristocratic circles provided they had fulfilled the criteria of upper-class society – that of being sufficiently wealthy and genteel: 'The willingness of the English upper class to mix with prosperous Jews created the preconditions for the radical assimilation of the Sephardim elite.'³⁸ However, it must be stressed that although there was this level of toleration within the upper-middle-class and aristocratic circles in England, for radical assimilation within this context to take effect the Sephardim historical experience prior to entry into the host country became the overwhelming precondition. The ground was prepared early, for 'no amount of toleration will induce members of a minority to renounce their group solidarity until there has been some prior erosion of traditional loyalties'.³⁹

What eventually happened was that the two groups started to intermarry, characterising the Anglo-Jewish establishment as a tight knit, intermarried group of families. Chaim Bermant described the Anglo-Jewish establishment as 'the Cousinhood',⁴⁰ whose members were involved 'in almost every segment of British society, involved in good works as much as in making money'.⁴¹ What emerged from within the Anglo-Jewish establishment was a number of artists such as Solomon J.

³⁶ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p.120

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p.22

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Stephen Aris, *The Jews in Business* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p.28

⁴¹ Ibid.

Solomon, Abraham Solomon and William Rothenstein, who would become a significant cultural force within the Victorian period. The relationship between Gertler and these artists is first and foremost ethnic, and in the artist's earlier years he was at variance with their artistic practice and painterly approach which was primarily concerned with a representation of the highest finish. Rothenstein and Solomon shared a love of mimesis, which served to construct a bourgeois reality underpinned by a philosophy which reflected bourgeois values, hard work, persistence and deferred gratification.

Gertler departed from his predecessors over the precondition of assimilation and the construction of otherness according to the tenets of the modernist project. Gertler portrayed a Jewishness which did not conform to the enlightened vision. I will argue that Gertler's portrayal of Jewish subjects became a site of resistance, an inversion which represented the conscious decision of the artist not to comply to a silent identity and a disavowal of particularism. The specificity of Gertler's Jewish subjects did not reflect the English vision of a reformed Judaism, a neo-orthodoxy where religion became a matter of individual belief localised within the private domain. Within British Victorian society, a secular culture, Judaism was ordained to be marginal and practiced within the private sphere. Jewish visibility was not wholly tolerated in the public sphere and the logic of modernisation effaced ethnic and religious difference. In this sense it represented the bankruptcy of Judaism in a society where liberal freedom and equality 'worked to weaken Jews' relationship with their tradition and history'.⁴² It represented a modernisation of Jewish life through a reformed Judaism which subsumed aspects of Jewish difference.

Unlike painters such as Solomon J. Solomon and William Rothenstein, who were prominent members of the Anglo-Jewish elite by birth right, i.e. Sephardim and Ashkenazim, Gertler's East End tradition of Jewish identity had largely been insulated from radical assimilation prior to entry into the host country. In this respect paintings like Gertler's *The Return of Jephthah* can be seen as an inversion of the Enlightenment project, a discontinuity of participation in the assimilation process. As previously stated, the heritage of painters like Solomon J. Solomon and Rothenstein predisposed them to an unchallenged acceptance in the belief of acculturation and anglicisation. This communal disaffiliation was opposed to that which typified the Jewishness of Gertler,

⁴² Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.8

an immigrant on the periphery of Gentile society whose community had a strong communal structure.

However, although Victorian art was configured on class lines it provided a trickle-down theory of culture. This and the shift in patronage to a capitalist emergent middle class were to play a significant role in the early success of Gertler. Victorian philanthropy and patronage did not only ensure survival of the artist in his humblest beginnings, as pointed out by Woodeson: 'insecurity was tempered by the thought of the various charities and institutions they could turn to in case of desperation: the Jewish Board of Guardians, the Sabbath Meals Society'.⁴³ It also ensured the facility to become socially mobile as patronage by individuals such as Edward Marsh and Ottoline Morrell realised the financial and social expectations of the young artist. The key elements of this social philosophy, which was all-pervasive and underpinned by the mentalities of philanthropy and patronage, and was to resonate in Gertler's existence, were characterised by four great trends: 'Work, thrift, respectability and self-help'.⁴⁴

The working classes' embrace of the ideology of the middle class was reflected in the self-help organisations such as the Friendly society, trade unions, mechanics institutes and the Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; many of them were sponsored by middle-class patronage. These organisations confirmed a working-class belief in self-help and self-improvement: 'Self-education was a prime example of self-help and considerably reduced middle-class fears about the disaffection of working men.'⁴⁵ The participation of the working class reflected a subscription to a middle-class ethos and a concern to get the best deal from capitalism. It was an ethos and social ambition which Gertler clearly subscribed to, epitomised by his fascination with the artistic and economic success which was encapsulated by the painter William Powell Frith. The notion of the self-made man, as exemplified by Frith, became a tangible reality for Gertler when he read about the life of this painter in a book he purchased from a second-hand bookshop, 'which showed that a poor man with talent could become immensely rich and end by painting for the Royal family'.⁴⁶

Gertler's commitment to painting and social emulation was based on the story of Frith and started him on the road to becoming a painter. The embourgeoisement of Frith

⁴³ John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler: Biography of a Painter, 1891-1939* (London: Sigwick and Jackson, 1972), p.18

⁴⁴ Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.124.

⁴⁵ Fraser, *Evolution of the Welfare State*, p.129

⁴⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.36

and his embrace of the self-help gospel were clearly consequential to the belief of the ethos of bourgeois ideology. However, Gertler's art, particularly his Georgian paintings finished at the Slade, are arguably antithetic to the tight, formalised examples of Victorian paintings which reflected mimesis that agreed with a relationship with the middle-class ideology. Gertler's early paintings, such as the portrait of his mother, *The Artist's Mother* (1911; Figure 1), reflect a finish and a working procedure where there is a sense freedom in the handling of the paint, which we can discern is registered in the painting's surface. In this respect, I suggest, it is quite noticeable that there is a spontaneity implicit within his brushwork which did not accord with aesthetic and the social valorisation of the bourgeois middle class. In this sense the first impression the artist recorded on the canvas did not reflect, or was not consistent with, the ideology of the middle class.

The New English Art Club

I would argue that the very late phases of the New English Art Club (NEAC) was highly influential to Gertler, and the impact of the aesthetic form which the Club embraced can be seen in the painterly qualities in Gertler's paintings, for example *The Artist's Mother* and *A Playful Scene* (1910; Figure 2). Particularly significant was the freeing up of the handling of paint. The aim of the club was to foster a progressiveness in English painting, and it became a 'rallying point of a new generation of artists'.⁴⁷ It became purposeful in its opposition to the exhibition shows of the Royal Academy and thus was seen as an alternative. It was established and founded in 1886 by a 'society of painters who rejected the standards both of the Royal Academy and of the successors of the Pre-Raphaelites'.⁴⁸ These painters studied in Paris, and to this extent the early influence that underwrote the club was French. Indeed, it was felt that the influence was so marked that the club should have been called 'the Society of Anglo-French painters'. Its earliest members were mainly under Barbizon influence,⁴⁹ but in 1889 the more progressive among them held a separate exhibition under the title *The London*

⁴⁷ John Rothenstein, *An Introduction to English Painting* (London: Tauris Parke, 2001), p.130

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Shearer West (ed.), *A Guide to Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p.250. The name given to a group of French landscape artists working in the mid-nineteenth century and based around the village of Barbizon on the edge of the Fontainebleau Forest. The artists opposed academic traditions of landscape, still strong in France through the influence of Valenciennes and Corot

Impressionists.⁵⁰ The Club's membership included Tonks (Gertler's principle tutor), Professor Frederick Brown and Philip Wilson Steer: 'Professor Brown met Philip Wilson Steer at the NEAC's first exhibition that year and was so impressed by the latter's impressionistic technique that he proposed him for membership.'⁵¹ In fact they were seen as being the pivotal members of the Club and prime motivators, who had built up a 'circle of buyers and gained a platform for its views in the press.'⁵² Gertler found entrance into the club when Brown wrote a congratulatory letter inviting him to be put forward for election as a member of the NEAC.⁵³ The Club, I suggest, became a stepping stone for Gertler by which exposure for his early paintings could be given, and Gertler 'was delighted'⁵⁴ when his portrait of Golda was hung among the many works of the most famous artists of the time, such as Sargent and Sickert. 'For the Summer exhibition of the NEAC he painted his parents Louis and Golda as *The Apple Woman and Her Husband*, which was accepted.'⁵⁵

The critics of the time began to take notice of the new-comer, and praise and acclaim started to resonate through the London Press, for example the *Westminster Gazette* and *The Sunday Times*; even newspapers as far away as *The Glasgow Herald* were presenting detailed discussions of his work. Instead of a passing mention that had previously existed, 'Mark's name appeared in print at the majestic columns of *The Morning Post* in the list of "admirable young artists trained by Tonks".⁵⁶ 'Tonks made it clear that Sickert was his main source of knowledge about Whistler, when he was invited to write a centenary tribute to the painter in the Times.'⁵⁷ I would suggest that the impressionist approach of Whistler and his freeing up of the handling of paint, registered in the formal application of brushwork resonated not only in Tonks's canvases but made its presence felt in the early work of Gertler, in particular *Playful Scene* and *The Artist's Mother*.

Despite the underlying French influence on the NEAC, Tonks connected himself with the tradition of English paintings more than with French Impressionism. Tonks

⁵⁰ Rothenstein, *Introduction to English Painting*, p.130

⁵¹ Julian Freeman, *Made at the Slade* exhibition catalogue, Brighton Polytechnic Faculty of Art & Design, 1979, p.2

⁵² Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.52

⁵³ Ibid., p.79

⁵⁴ Sarah MacDougall, *Mark Gertler* (London: John Murray, 2002), p.56

⁵⁵ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.79

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.67

⁵⁷ Lynda Morris (ed.), *Henry Tonks and the 'Art of Pure Drawing'* exhibition catalogue (Arts Council of Great Britain), p.23

commented on the British temperament and his belief that it did not fit with French Art. He stated: 'there is a certain quality and feeling about works by the best British painters – Constable and Turner are examples – that it is something entirely National and different from anything known on the continent. By adopting an essentially foreign style the British painter loses this extremely important racial feeling, while he lacks other qualities, which the French possess.'⁵⁸

A Playful Scene

Although Clive Bell was correct in identifying *Playful Scene* with the whimsical aspect of a genre of British painting of the previous decade, he did not give due attention to the new stylistic tendencies and aesthetic that freed up the handling of paint which, I argue, influenced the style of this painting as well as that of *The Artist's Mother*. *A Playful Scene* is not a depiction of a middle-class domestic interior but of a room in a tenement block. I suggest that Gertler has mapped the structured narrative of the bourgeoisie onto his own metropolitan working-class, Jewish social space. In this respect, Gertler has wrested away the ownership of moral propriety which was perceived to be exclusive to the bourgeois middle class. Despite the poaching of this genre by Gertler, it does reflect the kind of picture that Tonks himself was painting, which is why the tutors at the Slade were enthusiastic about it without fully understanding it. Clive Bell commented: 'if I remember rightly, the teachers at the Slade were enthusiastic –if that is not too strong a word – over our nineteenth-century anecdotists – Wilkie, Leslie and for I know, Egg'.⁵⁹ Bell contends that this was the reason why they were keen on Gertler's *Playful Scene*, and I suggest that painters like Wilkie and Leslie were 'the prime motive of this absurd but lively composition'.⁶⁰ And it is suggested by Bell that they must have been jealous of their pupil 'who could establish with unerring address in 3 dimensions, a ridiculous yet telling row of vulgarity expressed by these figures'.⁶¹ Woodeson comments, in 'both theme and style'⁶² *Playful Scene* was 'the kind of picture that Tonks and Steer were doing'.⁶³

Gertler's paintings at this time, particularly *Playful Scene*, reflect the delicacy of touch, the whimsical spirit and the foolish anecdote that pervaded Tonks's paintings.

⁵⁸Cybil Vincent, 'In the Studio of Professor Henry Tonks', *The Studio*, 113(1937), p.86

⁵⁹Clive Bell, 'Gertler', *New Statesman and Nation*, 24 May 1941, p.528

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.78

⁶³Ibid.

One can observe in the narrative of *Playful Scene* a lightheaded silliness in this domestic setting, where Golda is asleep and ‘Sophie, egged on by Harry and Jack’,⁶⁴ is tickling her ear. This kind of representation of burlesque comedy was unlike the French genre *intimiste*.⁶⁵ With a play of high pitched tones and colour, *Playful Scene* did, however, like the French genre, replicate a strict delineation of the family scene and the accompanying intimate indoor narrative. The painting also mimics the style of Tonks’s paintings for example, *The Hat Shop* (1897; Figure 3), which has a diffused light, or a distribution of the lighting that gives a single impression, as if seen at first glance. Likewise, Tonks’s *The Bird Cage* (1907; Figure 4) is a painting of ‘wistful reveries’⁶⁶ that has a subtlety of tone and a light which is atmospheric in a domestic interior. Like *Lady in a Garden* and *Chestnut Roasters*, the painting depicts a young woman caught in wistful reverie, which is translated by the intricate subtleties of tone within an atmospherically lit interior. *Playful Scene*, I argue, reflected or was part of the genre of domestic scenes which had a delicacy of feeling and an ambience of moral propriety and decorativeness. It is expressive of the genre⁶⁷ of ‘conversation piece’ whose narrative was far from dramatic but was part of a tradition that celebrated triviality. Arguably *Playful Scene*, like Tonks’s paintings, reflects a tradition that goes back to Hogarth, a modern moralist who found success through his skill ‘as a satirist’⁶⁸ and whose satirical narratives in the cycle of paintings that he produced brought him artistic success.

Frith who first influenced Gertler to become an artist, (as has been acknowledged) was part of the tradition of anecdotalists. Frith celebrated the variety of everyday life, for example the paintings *Derby Day* and *The Railway Station*, which depicted comic turns. Frith had a predilection for accurate detail and a high finish. These elements are reminiscent of paintings whose idealised genre subjects were produced for the mainstream market and whose self-centred ideology reflected a superior social space and provided models for imitation.

A Playful Scene can be interpreted as a pretence of bourgeois narrative and the visual dialogue of bourgeois appearance. I argue that despite the painting appearing to

⁶⁴Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.78

⁶⁵‘The name given to indoor scenes often without a narrative content’, (West, *A Guide To Art*, p.527).

⁶⁶C.H. Collins Baker, ‘The Paintings of Prof. Henry Tonks’, *The Studio*, February 1910, p.4

⁶⁷It is a feature of the genre painting that the focus should be on the personal and domestic to the exclusion of any wider social or political commentary. Far from pointing to social divisiveness, it appealed, as the *Art Journal* noted, to the universal feeling and experience which unites prince and peasant, palace and cottage (*Art Journal*, June 1863, p.110).

⁶⁸William Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), p.26

be in the tradition of Victorian and Georgian genre paintings that served to idealise a reality of utopian bourgeois classicism, we can discern that Gertler has purposely inverted this genre. As I have suggested, outwardly the painting can be seen to be mimicking an art which is a carrier of ideology intended to have a moral effect. It is an illusion of a genteel society with its drawing rooms, soft furnishings and lights, where good manners, good conduct and character become synonymous with a noble disposition and ethical classicism. *Playful Scene*, is ironic in that it mimics the paradigm of bourgeois ideology: family, marriage and the importance of family life.

The painting, has adopted the embodiment of these virtues, depicting moral restraint and the denial of social ills. It is a construction of reality where Jewish working-class respectability has replaced that of the Gentile upper middle class. Both in theme and style it was, as previously asserted, 'the kind of picture that Tonks and Steer were doing'.⁶⁹ However, Woodeson also suggests that Gertler either could not or consciously declined to replicate his tutors' examples of atmospheric interior scenes of elegance and gentility that portrayed women who were either at play or caught in moments of daydreaming. This was obviously apparent in a student report quoted by Woodeson where the scene is more anecdotal: 'The interior of Gertler's comfortable bourgeois kitchen with his family cook sitting dozing by the table on which was a glass of diluted tea meant to represent wine, and...Gertler's brothers mocking at her intemperance'.⁷⁰ Although Gertler's painting references Tonks's canvasses by depicting everyday scenes of bourgeois domesticity, the reception of the painting by some of his colleagues was that it was felt that there was a certain vulgarity about it. As Clive Bell stated, it was 'a ridiculous yet telling row of vulgarly expressive figures.' Also, Darsie Japp has commented that *Playful Scene* was 'vulgar in spirit'.⁷¹ Gertler can be seen in the context of ironic Victorian painters like Augustus Egg who disrupted 'the parlour' of the middle-class home.

In many respects *Playful Scene* belongs to and embellishes mythologies of Victorian and Georgian morality, where social relations within the family are not equitable. They are within the context of an art which insists on 'the production and reproduction of power and domination'.⁷² The painting is subtly reflective of this bourgeois ideology of a family ideal. It has a class coherence based on the organisation

⁶⁹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.78

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Lynda Nead, *The Myths of Sexuality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p.4

of sexuality and a shared notion of morality and respectability, a class hegemony where there is a clear demarcation of gender roles in a domestic ideology that characterises a process of class definition where family life mirrored a codified morality, re-inscribed in its own image. Gertler's painting can be seen as part of this narrative tradition in respect to the 'terms of the processes involved in creating a cohesive middle-class identity and maintaining a cohesive consensus among numbers of competing tendencies'.⁷³

Gertler's painting was part of this cohesiveness, which was gender-specific. Although not apparent in this 1911 painting, it represents a tradition whose narrative is characterised by a split between the active and passive, the male being the active, the female the passive. Arguably Gertler's *Playful Scene* reflects some aspects of the Edwardian feminine ideal: woman as mother, woman as wife, woman as daughter. The painting is characterised by the woman's mission, which describes the variety of roles of the feminine ideal and 'activated all the values of duty, fulfilment and moral purity which were commonly femininity'.⁷⁴ In the painting a woman's respectability is signified through the motif of the feminine ideal and through her appearance. For example, Sophie's and Golda's hair is carefully arranged and they are both modestly dressed. It is in the portrait of Gertler's parents, *The Artist's Parents* (1909/10; Figure 5), that the repeated metaphor of embodied male strength and feminine dependence can be seen, exemplifying a polarisation of gender roles, and norms of masculinity and femininity. This can be compared to a symptomatic 19th Century painting, George Hicks's *Companion of Manhood*, part of the triptych *Woman's Mission* (1863) which allocated bodies of meaning in this fashion:

he is the oak and she is the ivy. Just as the ivy needs the support of the tree in order to grow, so the wife depended on her husband and in the same way that the ivy may hold up the tree when it is weakened, so the wife was able to assist her husband when he was afflicted.⁷⁵

Gertler's painting exhibits patriarchal authority, refracted through Yiddish family roles and structures all of which constituted the ideal of the man as strong and the woman as dependant. It shows Golda, the artist's mother, occupying a subordinate role to her husband. She merges into the background behind her husband, whose face is sharply lit in the front. Golda is seen as offering support by her hand, sharply lit, resting on the far

⁷³Lynda Nead, *The Myths of Sexuality*, p.5

⁷⁴Ibid., p.12

⁷⁵Ibid., p.13

side of her husband's shoulder. As the ivy, Golda gives support to the oak, her husband, who appears to be slightly weakened. However, there does not seem to be any hint of a shift in dependency. The artist's father seems to be fully in control of his feelings. Golda is offering support, but at the same time conforms to her subordination: 'All the visual signs in the disposition of these two figures constitute the man as strong but temporarily weakened and the woman as supportive, comforting and responsive.'⁷⁶ Golda can be seen as being defined through her husband, a man who is dependent on her strength and support to develop.

The Slade tradition of painting which Gertler was part of reflected this English School tradition of domestic genre paintings. These paintings preached the sanctuary of the home, and in the strictest sense a sort of respectability that idealised love to a point of religiosity. As Peter Cominos states, 'ideal love was a kind of absolute religious sublimation',⁷⁷ within Jewish life, as in Gentile bourgeois society, there was a sex-role differentiation that was strict and crucial to institutional Judaism. The woman was seen to be central to the family and her importance was exclusively in raising children and taking prime responsibility for their education. She was therefore pivotal within the private sphere of the family, but like her bourgeois Gentile counterpart was seen to be excluded from the public sphere. Elizabeth Koltun argues that women's 'biology and responsibility for the family were used to justify the virtual exclusion from communal responsibility beyond the family'.⁷⁸ Women in Judaic life, which was patriarchal and as such predicated on sex-role differentiation, were excluded from participation in public worship in the synagogue and only 'relegated to observer status'.⁷⁹ I can argue therefore that within the context of traditional Judaism the morality that underpinned the Jewish family paralleled that of its bourgeois Gentile counterpart, where in both cases the fulfilment of the potential of women was confined to that of the home and the family. Like the native bourgeois upper-middle-class family, the Jewish home would become synonymous with the position of women allocated to traditional roles.

Within the context of the Slade, Gertler was not only subject to the ideology inherent in its processes but the patriarchal authority inherent within English middle-

⁷⁶ Lynda Nead, *The Myths of Sexuality*, p.13

⁷⁷ Peter Cominos, 'Late Victorian Sexual Respectability: The Social System' *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 8 Part 1(1963), p.18

⁷⁸ Martha Ackelsberg, Introduction in Elizabeth Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), XV

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Koltun, 'The Life Cycle and New Rituals', in Elizabeth Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) p.19

class society. What is revealing is his attitude towards Dora Carrington. Within the sphere of consignment of gender roles, it is expressive of bourgeois ideology. Jane Hill in her study of Carrington points to Gertler's interest in Carrington fulfilling a certain role of domesticity within the private sphere, that is, the role of the wife in the home and the domestic duties that she naturally fulfils in accordance to her nature: 'Gertler fell in love with an artist but what he wanted was a wife, and he wrote to Carrington: "You certainly ought to learn something about cooking. I should always prefer girlfriends to be better cooks than artists".'⁸⁰ Gertler reflected, I argue, within his attitude an inequality of power relationships that was embodied within his early paintings, expressed a codified message of patriarchal authority.

As regards aesthetic criteria, the style of *The Artist's Parents* involved a transformation of a technique derived from a study of the antique. Gertler's formative training in the study of the antique is clearly written on the surface of his 1910 portrait, where the style of the painting exemplifies the graduation of light and shade. The emphasis on the *demi-teinte* reflects a strong interest in the subtle graduation of tonal values and a handling of paint which became a traditional practice. It was a tradition which modernists like Manet opposed, and they 'persistently sought ways of eliminating demi-teintes, and achieving an immediate transition from dark to light'.⁸¹ The style sought to eliminate painstaking labour in achieving the graduation of light. At this point in his development, Gertler's representation of physical relief did not concur with the modernist credo:

The cast presented to the neophyte a strictly 'white' appearance, and the master then stressed the existence of light-to-dark graduation even on a colourless surface. Indoctrinated in this way, the pupil continued to grade his tones intellectually later in his career, even where certain of these tones were not immediately apparent to the eye.⁸²

However, *The Artist's Mother*, painted in 1910, dissented from the classical style. Although Golda's face stares out directly from the canvas, as would be expected from a classical painting, but, I would suggest, departs here from the influence of the antique by not using the concept of *effet*, where the distribution of light and shade is less apparent in the modelling of her face. The tonal values of the portrait reflect less the tradition of the old masters and more the influence of Post-Impressionism. Gertler

⁸⁰Jane Hill, *The Art of Dora Carrington* (London: The Herbert Press, 2000), p.20

⁸¹Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1971)

p.29

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.30

always wanted to keep ahead with what was going on as regards new ideas, particularly from the continent. While, as Woodeson points out, he was quite 'cautionary'⁸³ about embracing new ideas from France, yet he was keen to keep abreast generally with what was going on with latest movement. In fact, the portrait is suggestive of Gauguin's own particular pictorial method. In *The Artist's Mother* we can perceive a stylisation and boldness inherent in the portrait's outline and it 'established an enduring characteristic of his art, his interest in clear, solid form'.⁸⁴

I suggest that the impact of Fry's 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition can perhaps be seen as influencing this early portrait of Golda and that Gertler took on the symbolic value of Gauguin's paintings by representing Golda as a single form which is 'silhouetted against the light'.⁸⁵ Like Gauguin, Gertler through this painting rejected a naturalism and began 'to conceive of his art as a stylised re-interpretation of visual appearance based on the emotive value of line and wild colour'.⁸⁶ It can be perceived that in the portrait of his mother Golda, Gertler has moved away from the re-negotiated Tonks-ian impressionistic tendencies that underlie *A Playful Scene*. Like Gauguin, Gertler can be seen to have a desire to go beyond the limitations of an impressionistic technique in order to portray 'his agonies, his dreams and his ideals',⁸⁷ to adopt a style of painting that 'addressed the heart as well as the eyes',⁸⁸ one that reinstated a humanity back to the painter, which had been previously deleted by Impressionism. *The Artist's Mother* as a motif became a receptacle for the outpouring of his emotional life, and to this extent he used the influence of the cloissonist style to construct a pictorial language that would serve as an antidote to the incongruities of his life, the conflict of class and ethnicity that was to underpin his artistic and personal life.

The Artist's Mother is seemingly also a portrait of bourgeois respectability, 'signified through her appearance, her hair is carefully arranged'.⁸⁹ Golda's dress is neat and modest, with all the accoutrements of a bourgeois lady, such as pearl earrings, etc., all characteristic of the portrayal of the feminine ideal. Nevertheless it can be seen that Gertler was constructing a painting which covertly rejected bourgeois tastes. This is registered in its style and in particular in the finish. In reading the painting we can

⁸³ John Woodeson, *The Minorities*, exhibition catalogue (Colchester: Cullingford, 1971), p.12

⁸⁴ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.117

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.90

⁸⁶ Daniel Wildenstein and Raymond Cogniat, *Gauguin* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p.41

⁸⁷ Georges Boudaille, *Gauguin* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), p.67

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Nead, *The Myth of Sexuality*, p.13

discern a dissonance in its freedom of handling, registered in the paint's surface, which does not accord with the accurate detail that characterised mimesis. In this respect, the thesis argues that the interpretation of *The Artist's Mother* conflicts with that of Juliet Steyn, for whom the portrait exhibits a tangible representation of Edwardian painting and its traditions:

The first picture can be read as a competent Edwardian portrait. Its language owes a debt to Slade School painting. The woman is depicted wearing fine clothes. Her hair is neatly dressed. She has pearls in her ears and rings on her fingers. Her appearance is that of a city woman, middle-class and civilised.⁹⁰

Although the portrait of Golda can be seen as conforming to the protocols of the institutional process of the Slade, there is a contravention of the bourgeois feminine ideal, since Gertler overturns the notion of dependency, a de-sexualisation that became prominent firstly in Victorian painting, stretching to Edwardian and Georgian representations. This interpretation was class specific, propagating the idea that the middle-class woman was predisposed to ill health and that her nature was delicate and weak. What was far-reaching was that 'although the respectable woman was represented in terms of physical and moral soundness'⁹¹ there was a dichotomy which was espoused within the representations of working-class women. They were defined as healthy, robust and hardy, yet morally defective and posing a threat to the social fabric of society. Golda can be seen to be provocative and challenging, as opposed to being frail and delicate, and as such she is not yet middle class.

I argue that the painting of Golda testifies to a latent consciousness facilitated within the process of anglicisation. It is a painting which acknowledges the coexistence of class and ethnicity. As such, it reflects a site of resistance to Gertler's previous acceptance of the Slade's institutional processes and his own embourgeoisement. The thesis puts forward the proposition that the painting of Golda reflects an interface where the coexistence of the issues of class and ethnicity creates tension and disquiet within the painting and can be read as a conflict in which the motif of mother became a vehicle for Gertler's own personal and artistic catharsis.

Gertler's portrait of Golda was painted when his mother was forty years old; however, 'the lines on her face and the quite watchful tension of the eyes make her look

⁹⁰Juliet Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity* (London: Cassell, 1999), p.117

⁹¹Nead, *The Myths of Sexuality*, p.30

much older'.⁹² Although she was relatively young in years, Woodeson suggests that Golda's history had taken its toll, which was directly recorded by her physiognomy and was responsible for the tense introspective nature of the portrait. For Steyn, the image of his mother was for Gertler an image of a matriarch, a sanctuary, which historically, had provided emotional support when the artist had felt threatened. This, I argue, implies that the motif of mother became a metaphor for the artist's own insecurity. Further to this, Steyn suggests that the motif of the mother had a duplicity of meaning. Not only did the artist's own insecurity reside in the painting, but it was reflective of the sitter.

In *The Artist's Mother* it is the twin pools of the eyes which become the portals by which the insecurity is apparent. The eyes mirror the psyche of an individual who lacks self-assurance and feels uncertainty because of being constantly under threat. Their survival is dependent on being ever-watchful and on the need to be constantly vigilant. As Steyn states, 'her eyes, bright and alert, avoid our gaze'.⁹³ Perhaps she is suggesting that, because of her race and its historic tribulations, it was very difficult for her to be comfortable and at ease with herself, that she was there because she had been displaced from elsewhere. Uncertainty within this context becomes all-pervasive, the legacy of an historicism which has been underwritten by persecution and political expulsion. Golda's specific ethnicity, which had incurred a lifelong experience of hardship, poverty and insecurity, mirrored not only in her past pogroms but her present, that of being a foreign Jew in British society, with its stigmatisation. Her demeanour reflects not only her past but her current situation, which her son shared.

The portrait of 1910 mirrors not only the sitter's palpable insecurity but the psychological investment of the artist. It denotes a commonality of shared fear due to ethnicity and can be seen as a means by which the artist could project his own insecurities. Therefore I argue that the sheer force and weight of both the mother's and the son's cultural roots underwrite this portrait. For Steyn the disquiet and uncertainty within the portrait reflect a negotiation of different identities on behalf of both the artist and others. Highlighting the significance of the eye in the language of the painting, she says:

⁹² Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.2

⁹³ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.117

They are looking at something outside, beyond the picture frame. Her lively expression masks a tense, haughty mien. Her body, which fills the picture, takes possession of it. Body and face appear at odds with each other. The image connotes, perhaps, a person who is struggling to establish a place – in order to belong—and looking elsewhere. This suggests someone who resents this conflict.⁹⁴

I suggest that it reflects the insecurity of a mother whose Jewishness has been a source for her continued displacement, and as such the pictorial language speaks of an individual who is forced by society to be constantly at odds with her race and its historicity. Her flight from the past and the present discomfort of being a foreign Jew in British society causes her again to look elsewhere for reconciliations, but which are nowhere to be found.

While Gertler's anglicisation and assimilation proved difficult in his attempts to come to terms with its value system, the motif became a metaphor for a re-identification with the ethnicity and values of his past. Thus it was an image which provided a constant source of security. For Woodeson, as with Steyn, the language of the painting suggests a reaffirmation of the artist's racial origins. This is, as Woodeson suggests, reflected by Golda, who has an enclosed look, one which characterised the separatist nature of this subject and the artist. Outwardly, although the painting exhibits stylistically a continuation of the bourgeois ideology implicit within the tradition of Edwardian painting, it is essentially dissenting and is a reconnection with the artist's ethnicity, its habit and his mother. The painting becomes a site of resistance as regards his growing unease around the issue of class. The artist's physical removal from his enclosed world of the Jewish East End did not prepare him for the culture shock he received at the Slade. One student, Paul Nash, commented that the Slade was 'like a typical public school seen in a nightmare'.⁹⁵ Indeed, the excursion into the middle-class world of the Slade confronted the artist with an awareness not previously realised, i.e. the criterion of a social distinction which was class-based. As Woodeson suggests:

When Gertler started his training at the Slade, his removal at least during the day from a mean, hot, stuffy, smelly little street, as one visitor described it later to the world of the Slade school presented him the first of many extremely difficult problems of readjustment.⁹⁶

Stating further: 'Though the Slade students were not particularly snobbish, most of them came from a middle-class world so different from Gertler's that contact was

⁹⁴ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.117

⁹⁵ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.51

⁹⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minorities Gallery, p.8

difficult.⁹⁷ What can be seen is that Gertler had a rude awakening as to the criteria of social distinction which underpinned Gentile society. Social distinctions became all too apparent, obvious and naked, socially differentiating Gertler from his newly acquired colleagues. The social demarcation of the Slade was worlds away from the social acceptance dictated by the Judaic culture of the East End. Gertler felt isolated and was unable to relate to his fellow students. The realism of *The Artist's Mother*, rather than being a vehicle for a gender-specific purpose, may be a marker of his troubled emotions conflicted around and about the artist's growing consciousness of class. His later paintings of his mother were to intensify this concern.

⁹⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minories Gallery, p.8

Chapter 2

Hebrew Heritages:

The Return of Jephthah and Jews Arguing

Before examining two of Gertler's specifically Jewish paintings from his earlier period, the thesis shall focus on the paintings of his predecessors and contemporaries to discern to what extent he could arguably be part of their tradition and how he inverted an artistic language in which Jews 'proclaimed its virtues and achievements of assimilation'.⁹⁸ Painters like Solomon J. Solomon were fully assimilated Jews, Englishmen of Jewish extraction. Prominent members of the Anglo-Jewish establishment like Solomon had a long, inarguable disavowal mode of authentic Jewishness. The Anglo-Jewish establishment displayed a double consciousness, inscribed by modernity, of a split between private and public. It was a dichotomy where ethnic difference was only acknowledged and tolerated within the private sphere of the family: this was opposed to behaviour and codes in the public space, where Jews were to be like 'everyone else'.⁹⁹ British liberal society held out the promise of emancipation to Jews if they embraced the rationale of modernity, which demanded that the visibility of ethnic and cultural differences be erased. Adherence to these dictates promised equality of opportunity and full acceptance of citizenship. Invisibility within the public sphere was deemed to be essential for such acceptance as well as the acknowledgement of the values of civic life central to secular society. Modernity established a firm demarcation of the public and private sphere, and with it the public sphere of citizenship, where individuals exist as their 'free and equal rational selves'.¹⁰⁰

The historiography of Anglo-Jewry has shown that they had no difficulty in making the switch to assume different identities within these distinct spheres. The communal collective authority of traditional Judaism had long been broken, and it could be argued that Solomon J. Solomon and William Rothenstein found no impediment to assimilation. They could assume different identities with ease; in fact, the switch was automatic and they learnt to police these boundaries: 'we learned to identify and suppress aspects of a Jewish difference that might draw attention and so prove that we

⁹⁸ Juliet Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.79

⁹⁹ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.7

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

were ‘other’ than what they were presenting ourselves to be’.¹⁰¹ Radical assimilation meant anglicisation, the modernisation of the authentic Jew to one who was English. The bargain of freedom and the acceptance which emancipation promised amounted to a kind of social contract which painters like Rothenstein and Solomon readily accepted. Their full compliance to this pact with the dominant culture seemed to ensure they would become citizens of worth.

This social contract is evident in the discourse and pictorial language of a painting by Abraham Solomon entitled, *The Acolyte* (1842; Figure 6). I propose that the painting can be construed as having connotations of a dialogue between Anglo-Jewry and British liberal culture. Abraham, like Solomon J. Solomon, was a prominent member of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, and the painting can be seen to reflect the demands of modernity for the relinquishment of the visibility of Jewishness. The painting could be seen to be Judaic without content, a reduced self-enunciation. In many respects it is symptomatic of the dilemma of English Jews in modernity. Abraham oscillated between roles of identity and non-identity and the painting is a work of Jewish inspiration without any cultural specificity of its own:

Although the boy in this picture is clearly semitic in type, there are no specifically Jewish details and the presence of the thurible would, in fact, argue against the present title, since incense is not used in Jewish ritual. The subject may therefore be an acolyte of one of the Christian Churches.¹⁰²

The subject is overtly Christian rather than Judaic, an anglicised image of a reformed Judaism which has shed its orthodoxy and been modernised. Abraham, of Ashkenazim descent, portrays the inheritance of acculturation and its extinguishment of ethnic difference. The painting clearly exhibits the removal of its orthodoxy and its visible Jewishness, whose moral authority is no longer appropriate to the modern secular culture of British Victorian society. As an English Jew, Abraham has policed the ethnic identity of the subject and has ensured that he operates within the boundaries set by modernity. The artist portrays an otherness which is in the parameters of the moral authority of his secular society. It is the acceptable face of otherness tolerated in the public world of British liberal culture. Stripped of all its rabbinic authority, it is no

¹⁰¹ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.9

¹⁰² Jeffery Daniels, ‘Abraham Solomon’, *Solomon: A Family of Painters* (London: Inner London Education Authority, 8 Nov-31 Dec 1985), p.36

longer confrontational but appeals to the emotions of a lost past; is purely sentimental and rendered harmless.

Abraham depicts a synagogue which has undergone thorough modernisation. In the style of worship, neo-orthodoxy started to replicate Catholic rites:

The synagogue modernized itself by following the Christian lead. Hence the organ was introduced to services; the rabbis, true Jewish priests, acquired the habit of attending sick at their deathbed and wore a costume almost identical to a priest's; baptism became widespread; the bar mitzvah, a ceremony of religious initiation for thirteen year old boys looked more and more like Catholic first communion.¹⁰³

This reformism, however, could be seen as gratitude rather than a calculation on behalf of the descendants of Moses that determined their behaviour in modern society. The Anglo-Jewish experience in the host country and the new world of opportunities and emancipation was of an unambiguous benefit and the community lacked the authenticity of Jewish life, of a Judaic theocracy whose spiritual core has been ripped out. Abraham's painting, unlike Gertler's *The Return of Jephthah*, (1910-12; Figure 7) did not give testament to the covenanted bond to the divine, a history and pact which is deemed sacred and whose literature lies at the very heart of Jewish consciousness. The painting evacuates the dissonance of custom, of physical objects like the use of tefillin, which confronts the onlooker as a visual device, a social marker, one that serves to remind society of their 'linguistic otherness'.¹⁰⁴ It serves to remind the onlooker of the radical split between Christianity and Judaism, and becomes a site, a location of the fundamental theological differences. The painting, shaped by the assimilationist demand to centre experience within a single space, reflects modernity's vision of a shared literary humanity, rather than the exclusivity of a unique people whose literary text and Jewish sources no longer played a crucial role. It clearly demonstrates Abraham's eagerness to find acceptance outside the Jewish society. It thus played 'down his Jewishness in the public arena, and it seems to have succeeded'.¹⁰⁵

Abraham's painting effaced the identity of the Jewish nation and satisfied a dialogue between a Jewish and non-Jewish audience. For Abraham to be an English Jew, a good Jew within British bourgeois society, meant that his preservation of

¹⁰³ Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p.62

¹⁰⁴ Nancy A. Harrowitz, *Antisemitism, Mysogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p.45

¹⁰⁵ Monica Bohm-Duchen, 'The Jewish Background', in *Solomon: A Family of Painters*, Exhibition Catalogue (London: Inner London Education Authority, 1985), p.8

Judaism was no longer defined in religious terms; rather, the assimilationist demand transformed it into a psychological quality. The assimilation made the fact of one's Jewishness into something of trivial significance: "we're a religion," the liberals would declare, meaning a private faith like Catholicism'.¹⁰⁶ Assimilation created the need for a double consciousness which the Jew had to adapt to. This was commented on by Moses Mendelsohn who implied that the condition of Jewish existence in liberal Europe meant that one had to be a Jew on the inside and a man on the outside.¹⁰⁷ God became a private affair, a family matter and as long as it remained private artists like Abraham were accepted by English society. Therefore, within the public arena, Abraham, like so many artists, Jews as well as non-Jews, tailored his work to producing paintings that pleased and satisfied the Victorian bourgeoisie. Like Gertler in his early days at the Slade, Abraham produced paintings which reflected an ethical classicism, a style which had evolved as a consequence of the embourgeoisement of society. Art became a carrier of ideology, and Abraham, working in the Victorian tradition, became one of its leading exponents. This was highlighted by the two paintings entitled *First Class* (1854; Figure 8 and 1855; Figure 9).

As part of the bourgeoisie, Abraham tailored his working procedures to reflect the tenets of Victorian social philosophy. In discussing the two versions of *First Class*, a contemporary critic of Abraham did not have the hindsight of revisionism. James Dafforne argued that the paintings had an originality which was not present in their predecessors: 'he was now thinking of himself instead of trusting the thoughts of others'.¹⁰⁸ Lionel Lambourne states that the second version of the painting (Figure 9) was in fact a consequence of the first. This was because it struck a chord in the contemporary thought of moral indignation. In this respect Abraham felt it necessary to re-represent the first. In the second painting 'the young gentleman is seen deep in conversation with the captivating young lady, under the benevolent eye of the Pickwickian old gentleman'.¹⁰⁹ In the first version of this painting the old gentleman was asleep. This caused scandal amongst contemporary critics and as such Abraham was obliged to wake him up in the several replicas of the subject. Jeannie Chapel

¹⁰⁶ Annie Kriegel, *Les Juifs et le Monde Moderne* (Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1970), p.127, as quoted by Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.166

¹⁰⁷ Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.59

¹⁰⁸ James Dafforne, 'British Artists, Their Style and Character', *Art Journal* (London, 3, 1862: March), p.74

¹⁰⁹ Lionel Lambourne, 'Abraham Solomon, Painter of Fashion and Simeon Solomon, Decadent Artist', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, (1968 21), p.276

emphasises this impropriety in her analysis of the paintings and states that the repainting of the first version reflected the objections that a young lady should not be talking to a young man while her father was asleep and therefore not a chaperone.¹¹⁰ These paintings testify to a technical mastery of the medium and were executed in late 1853 and early 1854:

What Solomon did in these two works was a simple yet touching story, with which the public could identify, point a comforting moral that endorsed the virtues of hard work and self-help and set it in a context which epitomized the economic and industrial development of the richest country in the world, the railway.¹¹¹

As an assimilated invisible English Jew, Abraham found full absorption into Gentile society. His characters in his paintings can be seen to celebrate the liberal culture of the West. Like Gertler's painting *A Playful Scene*, they depict a construction of bourgeois life and its moral virtues. Gertler's early Edwardian paintings were part of the continuum of that same dialogue used by Abraham within the public arena where pictorial representation represents a tradition of painting which was ideologically class-based. Firmly grounded within Gentile bourgeois society, Abraham, like other Victorian painters, projected a surface behaviour which equated with decency and bourgeois family life, depicting moral conduct to which all of society should subscribe. Abraham's creativity celebrated his invisibility within the public arena, sharing the preoccupation of his Gentile counterparts in producing paintings of modern morality, for example, by tackling fundamental issues like the position of women in society, as the Victorian artist Augustus Egg did.

Secularisation weakened the traditional authority of the Jewish community. The secular outlook and the adoption of genteel fashion by English Jews endorsed manners and customs which was the outward expression of cultural assimilation. And no one courted this as much as Solomon J. Solomon. He became 'a prominent figure in Anglo-Jewry, and was only the second Jew to be elected as a member of the Royal Academy. He involved himself in many charitable concerns and was a dedicated teacher at the Academy Schools.'¹¹² Solomon, like many of the Anglo-Jewry, became entirely British in mode of thought and aspiration. He adopted the cultural mores of English society and

¹¹⁰ Jeannie Chapel, *Victorian Taste: The Complete Catalogue of Painting at the Royal Holloway College* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1982), p.133

¹¹¹ Daniels, 'Abraham Solomon', p.15

¹¹² Jenny Perry, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, Exhibition Catalogue (London: Ben Uri Art Gallery, 28 Oct – 18 Nov 1990), p.4

embraced the social and cultural conventions of bourgeois society. As with Abraham Solomon, Solomon J. Solomon actively engaged in the transmission of the value system of the dominant order. He created paintings which espoused bourgeois values and social virtues, reflective of his desire to become an authentic native bourgeois Englishman. Like so many artists, he was keen to play the cultural field, and like Abraham used his artistic gifts as an instrument to record a tradition and blend into the dominant group in society. In this sense he achieved a means of effacing his Jewish distinction, in this sense it allowed him to escape the stigma of difference. Success was ardently sought within Gentile society, and he fully subscribed to the modernist vision and its promise of success. He sought to achieve a name for himself amid English painters; it 'was therefore inevitable that he should seek to do so in the Royal Academy'.¹¹³

From 1881 the Academy became a space in which Solomon continued to exhibit for the next forty years. In fact it became known as 'Solomon corner'.¹¹⁴ His subject matter was an acceptable mixture of classicism and biblical motifs mixed with numerous portraits. As such, his art reached beyond the artist's origins. Solomon as a British Jew typified the approach of those who wanted to be fully accepted, that is conforming to 'the official taste of the nation',¹¹⁵ and the style and tradition which was the embodiment of the Royal Academy. It can be argued, therefore, that this artistic tradition and available working procedure allowed the artists to assimilate themselves visually without any conscious reference to the ethnic identity.

Solomon J. Solomon, like Abraham and Rebecca, recognised that his survival within English bourgeois society was predicated on imitating 'the other' (the English) in the attempt to become alike. A new ideal was established by denying an old one. Christopher Wood suggests that Solomon's picture *A Conversation Piece*, (1884; Figure 10) depicts bourgeois individuals coming together in their sacred space, i.e. the drawing room, where they became engaged 'in after dinner occupations looking through photograph albums'¹¹⁶ and enjoying singing together around the established instrument of that space: the piano. Wood also states that Solomon constructed this space on established decor, i.e. 'the room is heavily padded bourgeois and full of art and potted

¹¹³ Perry, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, p.5

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panoramic Paintings of Victorian Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p.38

palms'.¹¹⁷ Like Abraham, Solomon J. Solomon's radical assimilation was complicit with the historical circumstances of his ethnicity and the aesthetic in visual culture of a genre which codified bourgeois morality. This art was a construction of a reality representing the tastes and values in a structured narrative. It was an ethical position which was based on middle-class ideology and which everybody was expected to abide by.

As an English Jew, Solomon J. Solomon naturally embraces this code of behaviour of the dominant group, which underpinned the visual language of his paintings. Any exposure of Jewishness within the public arena of secular British culture would immediately militate against social success and aspirations. Figure 10 exemplifies Solomon working within a tradition where space is conceptualised on the values of industry and whose stylistic expression, mimesis, is denoted by crisp detail and a high degree of finish. It belongs to the tradition of ethical classicism whose representation of the highest degree reflects a superior social space to which citizens should aspire. This space was consciously constructed to realise the façade of middle-class Gentile society: 'stage-like spaces where genteel, and with a very particular description of contemporary dress, interior decoration, and gestural expression was relieved'.¹¹⁸ *A Conversation Piece* was within an aesthetic criterion and illustrated a reality which was utopian: 'The interior, displayed like a well-caparisoned stage set, shows a typical late Victorian upper-middle class soiree with potted palms (then considered arty) and a mass of ornamentation.'¹¹⁹ It was a construction of a space which had self-centred bourgeois ideas, whose utopia reflected a genteel society where good manners, good conduct and good character became synonymous with a noble disposition and ethical classicism. To fulfil the criteria of a good Jew, Solomon coalesced with this vision of reality prescribed by modernity and its clear demarcation of public and private, where Jewishness and religious difference were compartmentalised within the private sphere.

At the turn of the century William Rothenstein gave visual expressions to the accepted face of Judaism, a visibility whose Jewishness was one which was cleansed of its orthodoxy. In *Reading the Book of Esther* (1907; Figure 11) he depicts the Westernised Jew, the secular English Jew, solely in terms of religious life. Frank Rutter

¹¹⁷ Wood, *Victorian Panoramic Paintings of Victorian Life*, p.36

¹¹⁸ Malcolm Warner, 'Victorian Paintings at the Tate Gallery. Recent Acquisitions', *Apollo* (April 1986), p.260

¹¹⁹ Perry, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, p.6

pointed out that Solomon ‘gave evidence of this in 1906 when he exhibited his *Jews Mourning* and began a fine series of paintings of Jewish life which he revealed in both the decorative aspect of the ritual of the synagogue, and also the penetration of his psychological insight’.¹²⁰ This insight was secular and as such was not engaged with the precepts of Jewish ritual. This is hardly surprising because Solomon had no knowledge of Judaic orthodox ritual. This Jewishness was in the context of modernity, which was perceived as non-threatening and parochial, and which confirmed bourgeois family life. Religion and the family, located within the private sphere, assumed a marginality within the modernist project. *Reading the Book of Esther* reflects a reformed Judaism and a religious law, and ‘was at one and the same time contrasted with the link to the home. The law was characterized as the foundation head of spiritual consolation.’¹²¹ Within British liberal culture ‘a man’s affection for domesticity was combined with “reverence for his faith”’.¹²² The painting was a Jewishness which was compatible within Englishness, a sanctification of the family. Religious law within English bourgeois society became identified with the law of the family. The painting reflects the intersection of ethnicity and class which had been mediated through the social processes of secularisation. Religious law as depicted by Rothenstein was sentimental, solemn and emptied of its spirituality, a neo-orthodoxy whose mantle of moral authority had been passed to one practiced within secularisation.

Rothenstein’s painting depicts a religious law practiced by English bourgeois Jews whose religious values were transcended by class values. It was a class-based assimilation and meant that they no longer saw the ‘world through religious tinted spectacles’.¹²³ Rothenstein depicted a religion which had become private and which was no longer a crucial element in the individual life. Jewishness became a matter of individual personal belief, adapted to the English condition, one which reflected ‘the sanctification of the family’.¹²⁴ The family, located within the private sphere, was crucial in the bourgeois body politic:

¹²⁰ Frank Rutter, ‘Sir William Rothenstein’, *The Studio*, No 451, Vol. 10 (March 1931), p.240

¹²¹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.87

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1740-1830* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p.141

¹²⁴ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.120

Through the family sexuality and social relations were regulated. The successful integration of Jews into English life was dependent upon the fitting in with the evolving values of the bourgeois order. To this end the centrality and importance of the family in Jewish culture was installed both for themselves and by them in the imagination of Jews and others.¹²⁵

Gertler was brought up as a professing Jew, 'a good Jew',¹²⁶ by his family. This was underpinned by his attendance at the Jewish school of religious instruction, a Chaida, which was located in the same square as his house in Zion Square, Whitechapel. The strength of the family orthodoxy was symbolised on the right-hand door post of the family home by a mezuzah, a container which contained 'the first two sections of Deuteronomy', known as the 'shema'.¹²⁷ To the outside world it demonstrated a clear expression of pious devotion of the Gertler household and their monotheistic faith. It was a legacy which was bequeathed to Gertler by his family and realised in his early childhood experience through the instruction of rabbinic learning in the Chaida. The Chaida and his home were for the artist an environment which arguably shaped and nourished the development of his art throughout his career. And as such, his work illustrated a concern with ethnicity, which became of feature in his painting during the period 1910 to 1914, where, I will argue, he reclaimed a Jewish cultural identity that was not deemed appropriate in British liberal culture. I will also argue that he tried to construct a Jewishness and representation that was denied visibility and valorisation within the public space of British secular culture, and whose orthodoxy violated the rules of liberal emancipation and went against the demands of progress to shed its Jewishness.

I shall use the paintings *The Return of Jephthah* and *Jews Arguing* (1911; Figure 12) to illustrate these sites of resistance by the artist, which make a conscious reinstatement of orthodoxy within the public domain of secular society. It could be perceived as a painting that heralded the beginning of his ethnic preoccupation and championed the visibility and moral authority central to the values of the Eastern European Jew.

Gertler's paintings of the period were invested with such difference associated with the East European immigrant whose Jewishness was so visible that it caused apprehension among their co-religionists, assimilated Jews who rejected their Eastern

¹²⁵ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.120

¹²⁶ John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.28

¹²⁷ N. Solomon, *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*, p.83, as quoted by Sarah MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.3

European counterparts because their ‘vulgarity betrayed their origins’.¹²⁸ They were antithetical to the invisible Westernised Jews, with their clean-shaven look, which was contrary to those celebrated by the artist. These were Jews from ‘the olden days, picturesque throwbacks and medieval remnants, recognisable by their black caftans and side curls’,¹²⁹ who did not disavow their relationship with their Jewishness, what might be called their singularity, their ‘customs and practices that make them distinctive from the rest of Christian society’.¹³⁰ They were an aberration, maintaining an old tradition which was subversive to the English Jew and their Judaism of liberal England. Gertler in his paintings, particularly *Jews Arguing* gave visual representation of this celebration of otherness in secular society by making visible the full regime of its orthodoxy. It was a traditional Jewish society, comprising those who, rather than speaking the majority language with exemplary correctness, ‘expressed themselves in Yiddish’,¹³¹ unlike their assimilated counterparts, whose invisibility was unable to claim any specific kind of cultural difference. The pariah which Gertler chose to represent in their otherness was a particularism which refuted British secular culture and its promise of emancipation.

I suggest that Gertler’s representations of Jewishness between 1910 and 1914 stood against the enforcement of difference and revoked the demands of the social processes of his host country to modernise and ‘dissolve a culture that no longer reflects them’.¹³² The artist’s depiction of the biblical story can be viewed as an inversion of the ideology underpinning the tradition of English Victorian artists, Jew and non-Jew. *The Return of Jephthah* can be seen as a challenge to the communal authority and authoritative power of the Anglo-Jewish establishment. The painting can thus be seen as an assault on the elite whose central precept was ‘assimilationist’.¹³³

The Slade School of Art was an environment which was quintessentially upper middle class and was for Gertler a rude awakening. John Woodeson suggests that Gertler felt isolated due the marked social differences and cultural divide, which presented difficulties for Gertler in relating to his peers. Even before his student days at the Slade the unease and cynicism of the Enlightenment utopian dream had begun for the artist, as he realised that it gave a ‘false sense of security’.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.41

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.40

¹³⁰ Harrowitz, *Antisemitism, Mysogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference*, p.45

¹³¹ Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.46

¹³² Ibid., p.107

¹³³ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.8

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.114

The thesis will focus on two of these paintings, which, I will argue, reclaimed a Jewishness that was not deemed appropriate in British liberal culture. It was a Jewishness whose specificity was denied visibility within the public space of secular culture, an orthodoxy which violated the rules of emancipation and went against the demands of progress to allow its Jewish uniqueness to disappear. I shall use *Jephthah* as a representation of the way in which Gertler consciously reinstated this orthodoxy within the public domain of secular culture. As such, he championed its visibility, moral authority and centrality to the Eastern European Jew. This flagrantly breached the dichotomy of enlightenment spaces which demanded the sacrifice of Jewish national identity and confined it to the depths of private life. Gertler's paintings gave back orthodoxy its moral authority and valorisation, which fused the disparate spaces of modernity into a single separate space. It overturned the central values of an assimilationist culture where 'we learnt unconsciously that we were not to be "visible" as Jews'.¹³⁵

According to the precepts of British assimilationist culture, the only good Jew was invisible, while the visible Jew was an aberration. Gertler celebrated this observation, this pariah, the image of the Eastern European Jew which was so subversive. As such, it is an acknowledgement of an anti-assimilationist position taken by the artist and a refutation of the dream held out by modernity. It can also be seen as a denunciation of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, which subscribed to the aspirations promised by the modernist project in making everybody 'the same'.¹³⁶ The artist clearly stands against the modernist machine which effaces cultural and ethnic differences, and where 'they wanted it to be normal to "fit-in" with the English culture in which they had found refuge'.¹³⁷

Jephthah can be viewed as an inversion of the ideology underpinning the tradition of English Victorian artists, both Jew and non-Jew. It was a challenge to the communal authority and authoritative power of the Anglo-Jewish establishment and can be interpreted as an assault on the elite who can be seen as 'assimilationist'.¹³⁸ The resistance on behalf of Gertler may have been the result of an accumulative experience, i.e. the process of anglicisation and his association with his Anglo-Jewish co-religionists. As MacDougall states, Gertler, like many others from immigrant families,

¹³⁵ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.8

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.9

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.25

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.8

subscribed to assimilation: 'the Anglicisation of his name was the first step on the ladder of Mark's difficult assimilation'.¹³⁹ To conform to the process of assimilation Gertler changed his original name, Mux, to the anglicised name Mark. This name change occurred within specific circumstances. When Gertler's mother took him to his *chaida* and where he was asked for his Christian name, 'of course my mother could make nothing of it, until a woman at the back came to the rescue. "Mux!" said the man. "Never heard such a name; no such name in *this* country. We'll call him *Mark* Gertler." And nodding to a woman nearby and pointing his pen at me he said "Next!".¹⁴⁰

At his school in Deal Street, where he remained for six years, Gertler learnt English. MacDougall refers to a statement by the headmaster: 'Jewish boys soon become Anglicized and cease to be foreign.'¹⁴¹ In his earliest years Gertler realised the *raison d'être* of acceptance gained within the assimilation process. What his experience gradually confirmed was that this passport to Englishness did not guarantee acceptance and safety. Steyn argues that while a student at the Slade, Gertler revealed a great deal of 'anger and deep ambivalence in relation to his experiences of assimilation. He expressed his unease and disquiet with these middle-class values, often indeed in class terms.'¹⁴² As we have seen, the Slade for Gertler was a rude awakening. Woodeson comments that because of the marked social differences and cultural divide, Gertler felt isolated. He was unable to relate to his fellow students, and even before his student days at the Slade the unease and cynicism of the Enlightenment utopian dream had begun for the artist. What it offered was a false sense of security. MacDougall comments that it was when Gertler entered the Poly, which was noted as being Christian, he first encountered anti-semitism. In *Mendel* (1916) his teacher Mr Sivwright assumed that Gertler was Polish. Gertler's protestations to this were disregarded by Sivwright who stated that 'the Jews don't stand for anything but money and there's no swing about being a Jew.'¹⁴³ As MacDougall argues, there is no way to authenticate this incident, but it seems odd that Gertler did not keep any contact with Gaskell when he left the Poly:

¹³⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.12

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ V.D. Lipman, *Jewish Chronicle*, (5 February 1982), as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.14

¹⁴² Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.116

¹⁴³ Gilbert Cannan, *Mendel*, p.3, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.22

‘certainly he grew up with a lasting sense of grievance at being made to feel a foreigner in England’.¹⁴⁴

Jephthah is arguably the result of the realisation by the artist of the empty promises of the Enlightenment vision. It can be seen as a metaphor of his disillusionment, reflecting not only the failures of the assimilation process but his rejection of the Anglo-Jewish establishment. Gertler found the English bourgeois Jews of the Anglo-Jewish establishment patronising and was ill at ease in their company. Their relationship to him was based on patronage and he found this testing and full of tension. Gertler came to distrust Rothenstein, who championed the artist in his early years, which is recorded in *Mendel*: ‘Mendel scented in Mr. Froitzheim the Jew turned Englishman and prosperous gentleman.’¹⁴⁵ Froitzheim was Rothenstein, an English Jew, fully assimilated into bourgeois society. Gertler’s class consciousness was awakened when he visited the artist, whose son, argues MacDougall, was taken aback by the obvious social distinction between them. Rothenstein’s son John immediately ‘took him as a barrow boy’.¹⁴⁶ The liberalism of British society which Gertler in his former years thought might protect him was not realised. The significance of *Jephthah* is that it is a metaphor for the false assumptions that Gertler made about the nature of assimilation. The painting was an outcome of the disappointment the artist felt with assimilation and a rejection of anglicisation to deliver the promise of being accepted.

It therefore maintains an older Judaic tradition which was a direct affront to the Christianised society of the artist’s host country. One could claim that *Jephthah* reflects a correspondence with individual elements of the artist’s life experience up to around 1910 and therefore summarises what the artist imagined his situation to be. I will endeavour to tease out such correspondences in order to clarify the attractions that such a story had for the young artist and why it became a metaphor for his life. As such, I will examine the biblical episode and its context to develop an understanding of such correspondences.

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert Cannan, *Mendel*, p.3, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.22.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.26

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

The Biblical Narrative of Jephthah

The book of Judges presents a sweep of history where anarchy and chaos prevailed, characterised by accounts of cycles of apostasy, divine punishment and deliverance. The textual emphasis is therefore clearly on the divine and denotes a theological interpretation of historical fact. It is a perspective which is deterministic and can be fully seen as shaping the central narrative of the story of *Jephthah*. To understand the story it is necessary to identify the purpose of the book, its structure and its relationship to the other books in its chronology.

The seventh book of the Old Testament, Judges, follows Joshua, the biblical figure who delivered the Jewish people into Canaan, the land promised to them by Yahweh. Judges belongs to the pre-monarchic period in Israel, where the ‘Judges’ were ‘local leaders and rulers functioning against the changing social and political background of the times’,¹⁴⁷ between the period of Joshua and Samuel, which was equivalent to about four hundred years: ‘The main body of the book consists of a series of stories about individual heroes called “Judges” who delivered their people from oppression by various neighbouring foreign powers.’¹⁴⁸ Essentially it is characterised by a series of narratives, of conflicts internal to Israel during the difficult process of Israelite settlement of Palestine. This external pressure materialised into cyclical periods of strife, oppression and deliverance, and was a consequence of the incomplete conquest of Canaan by the Israelites along with their repeated unfaithfulness to Yahweh. In many respects, the book of Judges can be seen as a bridge, a transitional stage in the formation of Israel, representing a historical gap between Joshua and Israel’s unification under a king. In terms of biblical history, it can be viewed as one of the darkest eras of the Jewish people, reflecting the dangers posed by apostasy.

Here was a social, as well as religious, assimilation where the Israelites adopted the same settled agricultural way of life as their Canaanite counterparts. The implication of this was that they fell prey to the sway of the local fertility gods and goddesses and were obliged to worship them if they too were to have harvests which were successful. The religion of the Canaanites was overtly sexual in nature, based on fertility, and their sexual practices were designed to propagate harvests by assisting the gods in granting fertility to achieve such an outcome. Cullic prostitution was central to these rites; in fact, ‘in a real sense, then, the worship of the Gods of Canaan could be described as

¹⁴⁷ James D. Martin, *The Book of Judges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.13

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

prostitution'.¹⁴⁹ This reflected a framework, a history which was cyclical: the Jew, committing apostasy, turns to the worship of the gods, an apostasy which is subsequently followed by divine punishment, subjection and oppression by their foreign neighbours. The people would then call out for help and deliverance: 'then the Lord raised up Judges who save them out of the power of those who plundered them'.¹⁵⁰ There were thirteen such Judges in the book, who were raised up to deliver the people of Israel, a deliverance which lasted for a period of forty years and then the occurrence of renewed apostasy after the death of each Judge: 'But whenever the Judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them.'¹⁵¹ Judges can therefore be characterised as a history of cultural transgression, and was the continued breach of the covenant between the Israelites and Yahweh. As such, 'Israel the bride becomes Israel the prostitute.'¹⁵²

Within this context the activities of Jephthah are presented in the cyclical scheme of history, which allows us to have a clearer understanding of Jephthah's life and purpose. Briefly, the story behind Jephthah was that Jephthah was the eighth Judge of Israel and was the son of a woman who was a harlot. He was driven from his home and refused any inheritance by his brothers because he was illegitimate. He fled to Tob and gathered about him a band of men and made a name for himself by going out raiding. Israel had been for many years under the bondage to the Amoniks, a territory east of the Jordan River. The elders of Gilead offered their leadership to anyone willing to captain their forces against the Ammonites. No one volunteered, so they went to Jephthah and persuaded him. Solemn vows were made before God. Jephthah tried to get the cooperation of the tribe of Ephraim, west of the Jordan River, but was refused. He tried to reason with the King of the Ammonites, but he would not listen. Jephthah went to battle after vowing that he would sacrifice to God whatever came out of his house when he returned if he won. Jephthah defeated the Ammonites and recovered twenty cities.¹⁵³

It is possible that the young Gertler may have deliberately chosen this biblical episode because he perceived that it had parallels with his own life. He may have felt a

¹⁴⁹ Martin, *The Book of Judges*, p.37

¹⁵⁰ *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, (London, Sydney, Auckland and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p.277

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.278

¹⁵² Martin, *The Book of Judges*, p.38

¹⁵³ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keys Publishing House, 1978), p.1341

personal identification with the character of the 'Judge', one of whom was Jephthah and the particular morality evident in the story of Jephthah.

The very name of Jephthah indicated 'he opens',¹⁵⁴ and this may have been seen as very appropriate for a young artist in his drive for assimilation, opening doors to other social worlds and to patronage to fulfil his artistic ambitions. In biblical scriptures a person becomes a 'Judge' when the spirit of Yahweh falls upon them: 'The title is not applied to these heroes in the sense usual in English. In Hebrew, particularly in early Hebrew, the Judge is not the dispenser of justice but the defender of one's rights.'¹⁵⁵ Gertler may have felt that this in some way paralleled his own condition. Gertler, metaphorically speaking, becomes a Judge. He becomes delivered from his pariah status as the alien Jew to one whose status is more inclusive in society, the English Jew, from one who is marginal to one on whom is bestowed citizenship and rights which he now feels he can legitimately defend. Within the biblical context, the character of the spirit of a Judge is one who works through boldness and wit to overcome situations that are outside their normal capacity. If we look at the many recollections of Gertler's associates, they all point to the artist's spirit and drive. For example, Adrian Allinson stated that Gertler possessed 'exceptional powers of mimicry and burlesque, he would enchant us with his rendering of turns seen at the Bedford or Middlesex. His humour was a continual delight.'¹⁵⁶ And for C.R.W. Nevinson, Gertler stood out among the other students: 'His combination of high spirits, shrewd Jewish sense and brilliant conversation are unmatched anywhere.'¹⁵⁷ There are other accounts which testified to his uniqueness of humour, aiding the negotiation and acceptance of the artist in his new social world. The spirit became a motivating force in the story of Jephthah when he was conferred with the spirit at the time when he made his solemn vow to Yahweh: 'the spirit moves them to deeds above and beyond their normal capacity, but it works through their boldness and wit'.¹⁵⁸

For Gertler, we could say that he had made an identification with Jephthah's cause when the vow was taken in which was to deliver his people from the Ammonites. For Gertler, that existential leap was also one of self-actualisation, and although he was inspired by the success of William Powell Frith, the use of Jephthah supplemented the

¹⁵⁴ Martin, *The Book of Judges*, p.137

¹⁵⁵ Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institutional Building*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p.52

¹⁵⁶ Adrian Allinson, *A Painter's Pilgrimage*, p. 18, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.64

¹⁵⁷ C.R.W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice* (London: Methuen, 1937) p.26, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.64

¹⁵⁸ John L.McKenzie, *The World of the Judges* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), p.16

declared model of Frith and was a more powerful motor which was generated from Hebrew scripture. The spirit which motivated Jephthah was a divine impulse: 'in some instances its effect is aggressiveness and boldness, in others the sudden exhibition of extraordinary strength'.¹⁵⁹ In Gertler's case there was little doubt as to the strength of the personality of the artist, expressed by his rapid rise to fame and the obstacles that he had to overcome, both personal and institutional. It was an expression of an inner strength and a tenacity 'unshakeable in the face of all opposition'.¹⁶⁰ He had a personal belief which was tenacious, which overcame all adversity presented to it by the intersection of class and ethnicity. Initially it was immediate, localised within the family and the cultural enclave of its community. From the beginning, the young Gertler was denied the emotional support of his parents for his aspirations, which are pointed out by Woodeson and MacDougall. In particular there was a lack of support from his father, Louis, whose only concern for his son was 'to start him as an apprentice in a timber firm'.¹⁶¹ All the indications are that Gertler was expected to fit into one of the manual occupations of the community to earn a living as soon as possible: 'Louis didn't understand what an artist was', one member of the family wrote; 'To him a Jew could not be an artist; he thought everyone should learn a trade.'¹⁶² The family simply did not understand or have any conception of their son's artistic ambition: 'they had never heard of such a thing as a professional artist'.¹⁶³

Gertler was a pariah at a very young age, clashing with his family, his class and ethnic expectations and values. However, despite this antipathy, Gertler maintained a firm grip on his ambition, and like Jephthah's divine impulse, the spirit of assimilation would propel him beyond the confines of his separatist community, beyond the limitations of class and ethnicity of his family and his Jewish counterparts where 'such a profession was virtually unknown among their community and class'.¹⁶⁴

Both Jephthah and Gertler were possessed by an impulse which moved individuals to achieve extraordinary deeds above and beyond their normal capacity. The artist was the embodiment of the immigrant Jew, possessed by the spirit of modernity and the dream of inclusion within Gentile society. The parallels between Jephthah and Gertler are striking, for both men had a cause, a mission, driven by the spirit, one of

¹⁵⁹ McKenzie, *The World of the Judges*, p.16

¹⁶⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.18

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.36

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.18

which was characterised by divine intervention, while the other was social and ideological. Both shared an unmitigated drive, one which propelled Gertler from his early educational experience at Deal Street in 1900 to his arrival at the London Polytechnic in 1907, and finally to his entry at the Slade in October 1908. Gertler's meteoric rise to fame testified to the nature of the spirit which united both men, where they achieve miraculous outcomes and overcome obstacles. He could identify with the cause of Jephthah. This, we could say, gave rise to a fantasy.

Gertler might have also felt an affinity with the pariah status of the biblical figure who was driven from his homeland in Gilead to the land of Tob. Gertler's own family misfortunes can be viewed as a version of this: emigrating from Prussia as a result of the pogroms and the hostility of the Russian Government towards 5 million Jews. It was an expulsion which was political in nature, as Jephthah's was. J.A. Soggin states: 'this came about through a basically political act, which involved the responsible elements of the community'.¹⁶⁵ Along with this outcast image, both the personage of Gertler and Jephthah inspired sympathy, for both were 'descended from parents who are considered doubtful or downright inadequate, both do not enjoy a high reputation from a political point of view'.¹⁶⁶

Both Jephthah and Gertler were placed in societies which predisposed them to stigmatisation: Jephthah because he was the son of a harlot, Gertler because he was classified as an alien and seen for his otherness in the host country. I further argue that Gertler's self-identification with Jephthah may have been strengthened by the correspondence he made with Jephthah's socioeconomic background, i.e. both were attributed a low status in their respective countries which ultimately led to their incompatibility with the structure of society. Gertler was a working-class Jew in Victorian England, while Jephthah can be classified as a debt slave in the Israel of the Old Testament. The latter reflected a social differentiation which had persisted since antiquity and was maintained in Israelite cities in the Old Testament, which was expressed by 'the ancient class distinction between the urban patrician as creditor and the peasant outside the city as debtor'.¹⁶⁷ In many respects there was a confluence, as both can be seen as oppressed persons, individuals who lacked status in the society in which they lived. Jephthah as a debt slave in society was excluded from legal office,

¹⁶⁵ J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p.207

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.208

¹⁶⁷ Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), p.21

had no legal standing or political rights, and was in an economic relationship which bewailed the social structure of the Old Testament, that is, one where social and economic power was concentrated in the hands of the patrician, the city class which used this power to oppress the peasantry, 'to exploit him usuriously, to reduce him to debt slavery, to bend the law and overpower the peasant demos'.¹⁶⁸ The nature of this concentrated power meant that the urban patrician had power over the countryside, both political and economic, and as such was in a position to subjugate those living outside the city: 'they lived off the rents of their lands, which were cultivated by slaves subject to forced labour or tax payments'.¹⁶⁹ The peasants in Israel suffered the same fate, and as with Jephthah, a debt slave was a typical phenomenon. Weber states: 'they are found in the tradition as the soldiers of fortune following all charismatic leaders from Jephthah'.¹⁷⁰ They were charismatic in the sense that there was a distinctiveness that differentiated Jephthah from those around him, a quality acquired by the divine intervention of Yahweh when he made his vow and conferred upon him 'a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary man and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional qualities'.¹⁷¹ These qualities reflect the intense and personal nature of charisma, regarded as one of divine origin, and as such, the individual is treated as a leader.

The validation of charisma, as Weber states, is not in any way dependent on the masses, or the expression of the wishes of the followers, but is autonomous in nature. It obliges them to follow this inner motivation and in a sense predisposes them to an anti-institutional position and exhibit 'strong tendencies towards the destruction and decomposition of institutions'.¹⁷² In this respect, Weber argues, it is an antithesis of the maintenance of structure, and only the internal mission of the individual is in fact revolutionary. In this sense it repudiates the past and its legitimacy on the person on whom it is bestowed. The self-recognition of the individual's special qualities leads them to actions that call them to a 'charismatic mission'.¹⁷³ This duty or mission does not reflect the attitude of the masses and is totally independent of society as a whole. It is an authority which is thus specifically outside the realm of everyday routine and the

¹⁶⁸ Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p.27

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.21

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.27

¹⁷¹ Weber, *On Charisma and Institutional Building*, XVIII

¹⁷² Ibid., XIX

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.49

profane sphere. In this respect it is sharply opposed both to rational and particularly bureaucratic authority and to traditional authority whether it is patriarchal, patrimonial or any form.’¹⁷⁴ It is an authority which is opposed to anything traditional or rational and to the appropriation of power structures handed down from the past. Its only legitimacy is the personal charisma of the individual ‘as long as it receives recognition and it is able to satisfy the followers or disciples’.¹⁷⁵

Jephthah dissociated himself from the structure of society and was disinherited due to the accident of birth that he was the son of Gilead by a prostitute. The implication was that he had no legal status, whereas ‘The sons of Gilead’s legal wife alone ha[d] the right of inheritance.’¹⁷⁶ This internal strife within Jephthah’s family was realised by his brothers ejecting him from the home, saying to him ‘You have no inheritance in our father’s house; you are another woman’s son.’¹⁷⁷ Consequently Jephthah was pushed out of his familiar environment and fled to the land of Tob, where he became an outlaw. He was a pariah, despised because of the type of woman his mother was and consequently abused by his siblings: ‘Modern psychology would predict that Jephthah’s early years would make him the kind of person he grew up to be.’¹⁷⁸ Not only does he treat his daughter as an object that can be disposed of, but his extreme sense of duty makes him regard a vow as more important than human life. Gunther Plaut comments that he committed great acts of cruelty towards the people in his own country, permitting the slaughter of 42,000 Ephraimites. Rabbi Meyer comments: ‘it was only that the Israelites were suffering such low self esteem that they chose such a man’.¹⁷⁹ It was desperation that led the Gileadites to ‘fetch Jephthah from the land of Tob’.¹⁸⁰

Rabbi Silverman states that the appointment of Jephthah to the office of Judge meant that he ‘became the Keeper of tradition’.¹⁸¹ However, as Plaut states, it ‘did not transform him into a different person’.¹⁸² The rabbis concluded that Jephthah was an ignorant man who made an imprudent vow: ‘He is classed with the fools who do not

¹⁷⁴ Weber, *On Charisma and Institutional Building*, p.51

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.52

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *The Book of Judges*, p.137

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.136

¹⁷⁸ W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press), p.383

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Rabbi Meyer of The Brighton and Hove Reformed Synagogue, Palmeira Avenue, Hove, 2004

¹⁸⁰ Martin, *The Book of Judges*, p.136

¹⁸¹ Interview with Rabbi Silverman of The Hove Hebrew Congregation, Holland Road, Hove, 2004

¹⁸² Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary*, p.383

distinguish between vows.’¹⁸³ Rabbi Meyer argues the vow central to the narrative of the story represents the expectations and disillusionment that both Jephthah and Gertler experienced;¹⁸⁴ in Gertler’s case the vow to Enlightened British liberal culture and his disillusionment expressed by non-acceptance reflect the characteristic cycle of the book of Judges. That is, Gertler is seduced by a false god – enlightenment; he commits apostasy, becomes Christianised and is delivered by reclaiming his past as depicted in *The Return of Jephthah*. The painting indicated that he now had become the keeper of his tradition, a Judge. Jephthah hastily made a vow at the moment of exaltation, which, argues Rabbi Meyer, reflects a bad prioritisation which led to such fatal consequences for his daughter:

The sages did not hesitate to condemn Jephthah for his act. They blamed him for the hasty and imprecise way in which he made his vow and went on to emphasise that such a vow was in any case illegal and could have been annulled by the regnant priestly authority.¹⁸⁵

The fact that technically the vow could have been annulled is what makes the story so disturbing. What it reflects is the flawed character of Jephthah: ‘his sinful act of immolating his daughter was due both to his ignorance and his false pride’.¹⁸⁶

Rabbi Meyer commented that both Jephthah and Gertler were individuals who seemed to be lost and that neither of them could find compatibility with the structure of their respective societies.¹⁸⁷ Perhaps this was the quality which inexorably drew the artist to the biblical figure. Metaphorically they were strangers in a land whose language they never became fully conversant with, nor were they accepted by any given religious structure, by which both were disinherited either by choice or by design.

The painting depicts the scene as it is described in the bible: Jephthah amid his soldiers in Mizpah, when ‘who should come out to meet him but his daughter dancing to the sound of the tambourines’.¹⁸⁸ The painting is a faithful rendition of this moment in time. The figure of his daughter, on the left is physically displaying a woman in dance. To the right of the painting is Jephthah amongst his soldiers. His daughter is being pointed out by one of his soldiers, and he is cowering at the consequences of his vow.

¹⁸³ *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1906, p.95

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Rabbi Meyer

¹⁸⁵ Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary*, p.384

¹⁸⁶ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.1342

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Rabbi Meyer

¹⁸⁸ *The Holy Bible*, p.37

As stated, the thesis hypothesises that this obscure story may have been deliberately chosen by Gertler in a state of abjection to illustrate the foolishness of his belief in the dreams of Enlightenment and his pursuit of it by negotiating his ethnicity. Painted in 1910, the picture can be seen as a metaphor for the empty promise of emancipation held out by the enlightenment project, a promise where the artist would find full acceptance and integration into British liberal culture. However, this was conditional, for it required the artist to disavow his Jewish specificity in the public sphere and accept the moral culture of British society. Within the terms of Enlightenment universalism, Jews forfeited their Jewishness as part of the ‘price of emancipation, to be treated as “free and equal” citizens’.¹⁸⁹

Unfortunately for Gertler, his experience within the social processes of assimilation did not bring the degree of equality he desired. MacDougall and Woodeson in their biographies of Gertler register the disappointment that the artist had felt, particularly at the time when *Jephthah* was conceived. For both writers, Gertler’s non-acceptance by others was poignant within the educational institutions of assimilation, i.e. the London Polytechnic and the Slade School of Art. In particular, MacDougall points to the social relations between Gertler and established Anglo-Jewry. Ultimately the painting of 1910 can be viewed as an acknowledgement by the artist of the foolishness of his pledge to subscribe to the Enlightenment project. Like Jephthah, his commitment corresponds to vows taken by the biblical figure to a higher moral authority that both had cause to regret. MacDougall in particular highlights the encounters that caused Gertler’s early disappointment in his commitment, particularly his Jewish co-religionists. She points to the unwillingness of society to allow Gertler to fulfil his aspirations of being ‘like everybody else’.¹⁹⁰ This was despite the take-up by the young artist of every opportunity offered by British liberal culture and his faithful fulfilment of the criteria of Enlightenment.

However, by 1910, MacDougall argues, the credibility of the Enlightenment dreams had evaporated. Gertler, despondent, gravitated back to his origins, and *Jephthah* can be viewed as symptomatic of his psychological condition. The painting realises a moment in time for the artist and may explain why he chose this particular episode in biblical scripture, a time which reflects ‘the acute dilemma of celebrating and

¹⁸⁹ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.34

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.26

rejecting his heritage'.¹⁹¹ In reaction to this the artist returned to his roots, communicated by the celebration of orthodoxy in the painting, the Jewish specificity of Mosaic Law. The moral of the story therefore corresponds to the predicament that Gertler found himself in. From the moment in 1897 when he changed his name from Mux to Mark for immediate self-protection, the artist courted the basic tenet of the Enlightenment to disavow his Jewish specificity, 'where religion becomes a matter of individual perfection'.¹⁹² A Christian name, he thought, would allow him to be seen as English. As such, he abided by the Enlightenment criteria and like Jephthah entered into an agreement with the dominant authority. As with the biblical figure, the shallowness of the agreement would surface, as recollected by Woodeson, Lisa Tickner and MacDougall, by the displays of anti-Semitism within the institutional processes of assimilation. What needs to be underlined in these writers accounts is that the dream of emancipation, was soon found by the artist to be deeply flawed. Gilbert Cannan's account of Gertler's life in the novel *Mendel* refers to the accumulative anger that the artist felt, particularly at the London Polytechnic, and as MacDougall comments, Gertler grew up with a 'lasting sense of grievance at being made to feel like a foreigner in England'.¹⁹³

The claim made for *The Return of Jephthah* corresponds to the realisation of the foolishness of the artist's trust in assimilation. The Enlightenment did not present Jews with 'a meaningful vision of freedom that allows them a sense of belonging'.¹⁹⁴ Since assimilation had failed dismally, his only hope was that "His wonderful work" will allow everybody to forget that he is a Jew, and allow him to move freely and easily in this wonderful England he had begun to perceive at the school.'¹⁹⁵ *Jephthah*, which appeared in 1910, corresponds to the despondency over these aspirations, but also represents a renewal in his commitment to an orthodoxy which he was obliged to shed in his drive for assimilation. The painting can be seen as a distillation of the failure of assimilation to deliver the equality which it promised. It arguably marks a turning point in Gertler's negotiation of identity up to 1910, as underlined by Cannan in *Mendel* where he described the artist's early days at the 'Detmold' (the novel's name for the Slade), which he stated provided a clue to the feelings of exclusion he felt in his career:

¹⁹¹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.44

¹⁹² Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.34

¹⁹³ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.22

¹⁹⁴ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.34

¹⁹⁵ Gilbert Cannan, *Mendel*, p.89, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.44

He went there everyday and never spoke to a soul, because he realised that his speech was different from that of the others and he would not open his mouth until he could speak without betraying himself. He listened carefully to their pronunciation and intonation and practised to himself in bed and as he walked through the streets.¹⁹⁶

The dilemma was not only within the Gentile world but in the significant social relations with the Anglo-Jewish patronage on the Jewish Educational Aid Society patrons, like the Wertheimers, Birbaum and Walter Samuel. *Jephthah* can be seen as evolving from this collective dissatisfaction of the artist's experience. Macdougall emphasises the damage incurred through anti-Semitism, class consciousness and the related psychological stress caused by Anglo-Jewish patronage. One can only speculate about the appeal and attractiveness that the story of Jephthah held for the young artist. Certainly it can be said that an analogy can be made between the plight of Jephthah and the actuality of the artist's experience up to and around the year 1910. The misplaced trust that Gertler placed in the model of English liberal culture and its Enlightenment dream and its dominant authority is analogous to the solemn vow made by Jephthah to the authoritative power of Jehovah. Both proved foolish in their outcomes, and Gertler, for one, realised that his Jewishness could never be reconciled within the cultural structures of this English Enlightenment vision.

The issue was not about the toleration of the Jew and what they were, i.e. Judaism for its own sake; rather, it was about a reformed Judaism, a neo-orthodox privatised religion. It was a *quid pro quo* by modernity for Jewish emancipation and its transcendence within the strictures of a Christian discourse. However, implicit in this was an ambivalence labelled by Homi Bhabha as

the 'double vision' of racial discourse which constructs a 'subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite... in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English'. That is, behind an idealized Jewish self – which represented the potentialities for liberal progress – is a particularist Other which, by its very presence, contradicts the promise of 'emancipation'.¹⁹⁷

The artist's pledge to cultural liberalism, as Bhabha suggests, was misplaced, that is, 'the *quid pro quo* of Jewish "emancipation" - the idea that Jews would eventually adopt

¹⁹⁶ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.34

¹⁹⁷ Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October* 28 (1984), pp.126-8

the dominant values of society after they had become citizens'¹⁹⁸ was misunderstood. It was, as Bhabha argues, an illusion of reality that emphatically did not erase cultural and ethnical difference in the eyes of the dominant group. It was a mirage internalised by the recipient, the Jew. Bhabha shares this perspective with Sander Gilman, who suggests that such a double vision within a racial discourse, was embraced by Jews, and we would claim that this was not understood by the artist. Like many Jews, he may have believed that an idealised Jewish emancipated self would emerge from a fully assimilated state.

What Gilman argues is that assimilation was a false promise but that the Jewish minority readily accepted the images of otherness that were projected on to them by the dominant culture. This was labelled by Gilman as a double bind and was the unintended consequence of Gertler's experience within assimilation. Gilman states:

The first definition of racial difference he has called the 'liberal fantasy' where anyone is welcome to share the power of the majority culture if he abides by the rules that define that culture. The second contradicted definition of racial difference, however, excludes participation in the dominant culture.¹⁹⁹

Gilman has called this the 'conservative curse',²⁰⁰ and Gertler discovered it at work in his passage through the assimilation process, resulting, as Gilman writes, in a 'self-hatred'. This was a definition of the self accepting the identification with the group image of the other, which had an inherent ambivalence which Gilman describes as a fantasy implicit in the Enlightenment promise held by bourgeois secular culture. What it actually was, as Gilman elaborates, was a world based on non-acceptance, a conservative curse, for 'the more you are like me, the more I know the true value of my power, which you wish to share, and the more I am aware that you are but a shoddy counterfeit, an outsider'.²⁰¹ Such a contradiction was played out within the outsider and one which the outsider believes is inherent to them. Difference becomes internalised for 'since the wish to become cannot be flawed'.²⁰² The idealised Jewish self-centred on the promise of the enlightenment vision was therefore fleeting, elusive, beyond the

¹⁹⁸Bryan Cheyette, 'The Other Self: Anglo-Jewish Fiction and the Representation of Jews in England, 1875-1905', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo Jewry*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.98

¹⁹⁹Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred; Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p.99

²⁰⁰Ibid., p.2

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid.

grasp of the individual. To this extent, Gertler did not fully appreciate the gravity of the vow, the pledge that he made to the Enlightenment vision from which he could not extricate himself. This is clarified by Gilman: 'In subconsciously integrating their rejection into their definition of themselves, they too proceed to project their sense of the unresolvable dichotomy of the double bind, but they project it on to an extension of themselves.'²⁰³ *The Return of Jephthah* can be seen as the result of an anti-assimilationist position taken by the artist and the conventional reunion with his authentic Jewish tradition. Gertler, through his early passage within acculturation, realised that to de-Jewify did not make you the same. Despite his best efforts to become 'invisible',²⁰⁴ he could not shed his Jewish particularism. The painting is arguably the result of this realisation by the artist and the inherent duplicity of the assimilation process. It was an illusion that the artist appeared to, through the expression of his painting, disown, finding solace in a re-identification with his specific ethnicity. It is, I claim, a testament to his rejection of the Enlightenment utopian dream and the cessation of identification with the dominant group.

Arguably, Gertler did not fully appreciate the internal process with which he was engaged. That is, unlike Jephthah, he could not break from the vow he made because of its implications – the double-bind. It was a legacy which produces self-hatred, which Gilman points to. It was this dichotomy that may be seen as a source of conflict which Gertler could have anticipated when he embarked on his drive to assimilate, a realisation that all attempts at identification had become pointless, since internalisation suggests that what they say must be true, and therefore difference is true, innate. It may be said that Gertler inadvertently fell victim to the myth of assimilation, like many other of his Jewish counterparts. Like others, he became part of the mechanism of stereotyping the projections of otherness of what is or is not acceptable to the relevant gap. Within this context, Gertler is 'accepted by the outsiders as to the definition of both what they should not be and what they should become'.²⁰⁵

The painting *Jephthah* (1910) departs from a convention in Victorian painting where a smooth finish is achieved from the use of a fine sable brush and 'where no visible brush work be allowed to mar the contours of the illusion or to fracture its planar

²⁰³ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.3

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.4

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p.3

surface'.²⁰⁶ This performed an effortless surface and polish which pleased so much a certain Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian audience, and Diane Sachko Macleod suggests, valorised a work ethic implicit in the ideology of the middle class, and thus codified an affirmation of middle class identity, and a way of life to the ideology of the Smile-ion creed, which among other things propagated a work ethic that expressed the worthiness of hard work. This underpinned a middle class aesthetic taste in the observation of a working procedure in an artistic practice that served to socially construct a reality that reflected economic life. The consequence of this Sachko-Macleod suggests, obviated any expressive handling of paint by the artist. The painting, then, breaks away from a bourgeois ideology and an aesthetic taste which typified other Jewish artists like Solomon J. Solomon who aligned their creativity to reflect the dominant culture in a style that presented itself through naturalistic observation in modelling and linearity, denoting a high degree of finish. However, in Gertler's painting there is a materiality about the paint's surface, where he has made no attempt to hide the mark of the brush which is energetic and contrasts dramatically with the convention of mimesis, the slow purposeful handling of the brush to obtain a smooth high finish. In this respect, his working procedure is far from deliberate or timid, for there is a freedom and vivacity of the brush, exhibited by clear scumbling. This goes beyond the fine light touch and whimsical spirit that pervaded Tonks's domestic genre which indeed was reflected in Gertler's comparable domestic scene *Playful Scene* and also the portrait *The Artist's Mother* (1911). These paintings were characterised by a technique that was typified by an impressionistic handling of paint, and the painting of *Jephthah* anticipates *Jews Arguing* in the freedom of its handling and the implicit use of oriental draperies that were lent to Gertler by the JEAS (The Jewish Educational Aid Society),²⁰⁷ 'The JEAS minutes for 29 June 1910 record Gertler applying for rather an ambitious figure subject competition for which he required oriental draperies'.²⁰⁸

I suggest the symbolic use of the oriental robes of the Eastern European Jew clearly presented a more traditional Jewish society and as such made visible the full regime of its inherent orthodoxy. Gertler, in this sense, gave expression to an otherness whose particularism refuted British secular culture and its promise of emancipation. The

²⁰⁶ Diane Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.16

²⁰⁷ The JEAS had been established in 1896 and was still only in the tenth year when Gertler made his first application, MacDougal, *Mark Gertler*, p.25

²⁰⁸ JEAS minutes, 29 June 1910, University of Southampton, MS135/AJ35

painting therefore, I would argue, becomes a space where a dialectic is played out and whose visibility becomes an ideological confrontation between East and West. *Jephthah* therefore is not a theological compromise but clearly reflects the strict dichotomy of theology. In this sense, *Jephthah* can be seen as an anti-Christian image. Opposed to secularisation it promotes values which are anti-Christian, which dismiss the moral precepts which underwrite and promote British bourgeois society. The painting as an image of orthodoxy is distilled in the oriental draperies, reproduced by the fragmented brushwork and dashes of colour. The loose brush strokes give a scintillating shimmer and pick out through flecks of paint the pattern of the oriental robes which Gertler was to go on and paint more elaborately in his painting *Jews Arguing*. I can imagine *Jephthah* was an initial statement by Gertler affirming his anti-assimilationist position, resistance to established Anglo Jewry and the drive to convert the foreign Jew to Christianity. This handling of paint by Gertler was re-stated in *Jews Arguing* as a more visible and tangible statement by the dexterity and the expressive purpose of his brushwork. In *Jephthah* we sense the enjoyment with which he dragged, swirled and scumbled his colour and where the thickest paint has been applied to a surface in a loose, direct manner, which creates a crusty surface caked in paint. In this respect the brushwork has an almost independent existence to the form that it represents. The painting's texture gives a sense of physical presence in the real world and as such gives broad definition of form and tone that build up the painting as a coherent whole. There is a monumental presence radiating from the flickering light and pigment across the canvas in the facture that raises the mood of pathos to a grandeur which is almost solemn.

The scene represented in *Jephthah* depicts a specific moment in time and is divided in to two parts on the right side of the painting is a multi-figured composition of the images of military men who are inert and stand immobile. They are an effective counterpoint to the dramatic unfolding of the story which is central to the picture and the explicit narrative that underpins the interpretation of the picture. Gertler has been faithful to biblical narrative in the rendition of this moralising anecdote of the scripture, a representation of an outer expression of an inner response. This is played out by the central figure of *Jephthah* and his accompanying soldier. Gertler in his representation of this biblical judge portrays him according to the biblical narrative and depicts *Jephthah*

caught in a split second of time where he ‘rents his clothing’²⁰⁹ at the sight of ‘his daughter who came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances’.²¹⁰ This is more than a mundane disaster; since Jephthah has piously vowed to sacrifice the first living being he encounters after his victory. Gertler, in his authentic rendition of this calamity, produces a visual metaphor, a pictorial expression of, I suggest, his realisation of the mendacity of British Liberal culture where the promise of assimilation, of acceptance which was held out turned out to be a false promise, a fantasy within bourgeois secular culture. The subtext of the painting, can therefore be seen as a visual statement about the falsehood Gertler found implicit in the quid pro quo of his negotiation of ethnic and class identity within the assimilatory process. The painting *Jephthah* might, one could argue, be the result of a certain scepticism in the progress offered by enlightenment and the Judao-English symbiosis. The rendition of this scene makes no concessions with reference to the overall materiality of the paint and has a physicality and roughness of facture. This gives the painting, I suggest, a certain dynamism and movement, the embodiment of a physical spiritual force.

Concluding, *Jephthah* is heavily invested and signifies a withdrawal by the artist from the process of assimilation and a re-identification with a specific Jewishness despised by modernity. The implication of the painting is that the conventional bond between God and the Jewish people, is unbreakable. A vow is therefore a serious matter, as it is a pact, a contract. The painting therefore reflects their uniqueness as regards the relationship and the orthodoxy of their tradition. By depicting this story, Gertler is making a declaration of his desire to feel pride for an ethnic culture that he himself shared. Gertler regained his pride after making a foolish contract with a kind of vow to the Enlightenment project. This is in line with the moral of the story behind *Jephthah*: it is an issue of regaining self-worth and dignity, celebrating a particularist, living Jewish tradition: ‘It can be seen as part of a process of coming out as a Jew.’²¹¹ Gertler was coming out as an authentic Jew, as a foreign Jew, and declaring his ethnic and cultural difference. A Jew would not ‘fit in’ and accommodate ‘English ways’,²¹² and was therefore separatist by nature.

²⁰⁹ *The Holy Bible*, 11.21, p.240

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.18

²¹² Ibid., p.4

Jews Arguing

As already stated, one could hypothesise that this obscure story was deliberately chosen by Gertler to illustrate the foolishness of his belief in the dreams of enlightenment and his pursuit by negotiation his ethnicity. The artist's experience led him to see the foolishness of his agreement with assimilation, as did Jephthah. The significance of vows within the context of the Old Testament is that they cannot be broken and there is 'no way to annul a rash or foolish promise'.²¹³ Gertler realised that there was no possibility of fulfilling the metamorphosis into the idealised Jewish self presented by British liberal culture. The artist's withdrawal from assimilation and his return to authenticity in *Jephthah* became more vociferous in *Jews Arguing*. In the earlier painting, his acceptance of otherness is trying to get out; in the later painting the 'other' is out.

Jews Arguing is a representation of a religiosity that was perceived to be an aberration to reformed orthodoxy of the Anglo-Jewish establishment. In many respects the physical presence of the painting made tangible the confrontation between East and West: 'On the one side, whether Spanish or German by origin, stood the denominational, self-repressed Judaism of liberal Europe. Standing opposite was the vulgarly obvious – vulgar because it was obvious – culture of Yiddishkeit.'²¹⁴ It reflects oppositions both socially and culturally, between Orthodox and Reform Jews, those who inhabited cosmopolitan cities and the inhabitants of the ghetto. This constituted an opposition of values: secular and Christianised universal values whose precepts underpinned Anglo-Jewish assimilation, as opposed to the working-class Eastern European Jew, whose values and orthodoxy were perceived to be irreconcilable. The painting reflects confrontation by depicting the Eastern European Jew, who was perceived as a pariah, archaic and a medieval product. Their Judaism was a fundamental challenge to the English vision of modernity.

For Anglo-Jewry, the immigrant newcomers of the East were perceived to undermine the social positions which they had achieved in British liberal culture: 'it also threatened to undermine their hard won social position by reviving the Englishman's latent belief that under an English veneer, which Anglo-Jewry had acquired, there lurked an essentially "different", altogether foreign being'.²¹⁵ As such,

²¹³ Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *A Popular Dictionary of Judaism*, (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995), p.183

²¹⁴ Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.45

²¹⁵ Stephen Aris, *The Jews in Business*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p.31

the painting was a defiant stand made by the artist, an unqualified affront to civil society. Opposed to secularisation, it promoted values which were anti-Christian, dismissing the moral precepts which underwrote Gentile British society. *Jews Arguing* can be seen as an anti-Christian image whose orthodoxy is starkly reproduced by the artist. The artist can be seen to construct an image whose communalist values were an antithesis to modern secular culture, an antithesis which is in opposition to the Christianised Judaism of Anglo-Jewry and its shedding of its Jewish particularism.

Gertler's painting confronts the West with a representation of the pariah people, whose visibility is boldly reproduced. It was translated from a scene in the Machzika Hadiss synagogue:

Where these magnificent old men with their long silver beards and curly hair, looking like princes in their rugs and praying shawls – swaying, bending, moaning at their prayers, passionate, ecstatic, yet casual and mechanical. Some would shut out the world by facing the wall, or by drawing their shawls right over their heads, while others sat in an inner room poring over enormous books.²¹⁶

The painting presents the latter, Eastern European Jews with their large scriptural books, replicated by the artist not in the Synagogue, but in his studio. He persuaded Russian and Polish Jews to sit for him. It is one of the many Orthodox paintings, ie.: *Jews Arguing* (1911), *The Jewish Family* (1913; Figure 22), *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* (1913; Figure 21), which Gertler produced between 1911 and 1913. It was a subject matter whose visibility and moral authority was not reconciled with the public arena of British society. However, for Gertler, it was one which he could empathise with, capturing the essence of the characters and their everyday existence. The subject matter and its separatist environment was something that the artist was a part of, unlike the English Jew Rothenstein, who embarked on a series of paintings, translated from the same synagogue, where as a fully assimilated Jew he was, as it were, looking from the outside.

Gertler, through his negative experience of assimilation, became deeply sceptical about the concept of an open society. As Steyn implies, the artist realised that it was a myth and that the enlightenment dream was inherently prescriptive. *Jews Arguing*, however, may also be the externalisation of the artist's self-hatred. The painting becomes a matter of self-reproach, and the failure to assimilate becomes his own, not being able to realise being made the same. Gilman states:

²¹⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.75

While the unconscious sense of rejection is present, this rejection is projected by the outsider onto the world. Now the mechanism of stereotyping is brought full circle, for the group defining the Other has projected its own insecurities concerning its potential loss of power onto the world in the shape of that Other through which it imagines itself threatened.²¹⁷

In this light, I would argue that the painting can be seen as the expression of an embodiment of self-hatred, brought to its logical conclusion. A definition of the artist's self and rejection synthesised produces an image of an irresolvable dichotomy of the double bind. The classic double bind situation is one which invites people to 'be like us, and you will become one of us'.²¹⁸ This, as Gilman argues, has the implication of 'accepting one's own difference'. However, this is problematic, for as Gilman explains, 'the more one attempts to identify with those who have labelled one as different, the more one accepts the values, social structures, and attitudes of this determining group, the further away from true acceptability one seems to be.' In this sense it is suggested that if one defines oneself as being accepted in relation to the definition of acceptability, the reality is that you are still not accepted. In other words, for Gertler the idealised Jewish selfhood was based on the promise of acceptance, however, he found that this could never be achieved. The projection by the dominant group of an otherness can be seen in the painting to have a validity for the artist in his self-definition and therefore a reality: 'then there truly must be something within them that is inherently different'.²¹⁹

In *Jews Arguing*, Gertler emphasised the physical nature of the faith through the external markers of the alien, but true, Orthodox Jew. In the painting Gertler projected an otherness which is strange, archaic, primitive, wholly different from the visibility of Rothenstein's modernised Jew. The Jew in the painting expresses the materiality of religious belief and exemplifies difference as a social marker, i.e. the Eastern European Jew portrayed in the painting is 'wearing embroidery on his prayer shawl, left-overs from the real quippu or mnemonic knots of thread which primitive man had'.²²⁰ However, the representation of the physicality of Jewish men in the painting is not in itself a specification of marked difference. It is the physical object which serves a 'visual mnemonic device that represents linguistic otherness'.²²¹ It is the linguistic otherness which marks difference, the language and the tongue of the Eastern European

²¹⁷ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.3

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.2

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.3

²²⁰ Harrowitz, *Antisemitism, Mysogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference*, p.44

²²¹ Ibid., p.45

Jew. The painting signals a clear demarcation of the radical split between Christianity and Judaism, and a confrontation between East and West. The assimilation process, we can say, was one whose sole purpose was to transform the Yiddish-speaking immigrant into the English-speaking Jew. This painting is a rejection of such a synthesis, which is implicit in the secularisation of the Jewish world. The visual language of the painting reflects a suspended, frozen world which resists metamorphosis, and in this sense the painting can be perceived as a site of fundamental theological difference between two opposing moral authorities and languages – Yiddish and English. Gertler consciously constructed a painting where the sheer physicality of the large scriptural books not only reflect visual difference but serve to underline their linguistic content: ‘the writings are contained within a physical object that is seen’.²²² The large scriptural books, a product of the self-hatred of the artist, are targeted specifically as objects of linguistics and which signifies theology as racial difference. It is clearly the intention of the artist to reveal to Christian and Gentile society the expression of that which is hidden from it. It becomes, in Harrowitz’s words, a public statement of ‘the hidden language of the Jews as signifiers of specific difference’.²²³

This self-hatred, which Gilman suggests is engendered by the internal process of accumulation, was, I claim, poignantly expressed in his painting *Jews Arguing*. This was in contrast to his Jewish counterpart William Rothenstein, who gave visual expression to the accepted face of Judaism, a visibility whose Jewishness was one which was cleansed of its orthodoxy. Rothenstein’s *Reading the Book of Esther* (1907; Figure 11) depicts the Westernised Jew, the secular English Jew solely in their privatised religious life. The contrasts between the two paintings are stark, reflected in positions both socially and culturally: Reform Jews who inhabited cosmopolitan cities and Orthodox Jews who inhabited the ghetto. The latter represent an opposition as regards values, secular – Christianised universal values whose precepts underpinned Anglo-Jewry assimilation as opposed to the working-class Eastern European Jew, whose values and orthodoxy was perceived to be irreconcilable. Rothenstein’s *Esther* confirms a Jewishness within the context of modernity which was perceived as non-threatening and parochial, and confirmed bourgeois family life.

²²² Harrowitz, *Antisemitism, Mysogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference*, p.45

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.41

Within British liberal culture, ‘man’s affairs for domesticity was combined into reverence for his faith’,²²⁴ which reflected a construction of a space that had self-centred bourgeois ideas. It was a utopia whose genteel society, good manners and good conduct and character became synonymous with a noble disposition and ethical classicism. To fulfil the criterion of a good Jew, Rothenstein presented a vision of reality prescribed by modernity, with its clear demarcation of public and private space, that is, where Jewishness and religious difference was compartmentalised within the private sphere. The painting, arguably, was mapped onto this construct, with its noble disposition, a Jewishness which was compatible within Englishness and its consecration of the family, where religious law within English bourgeois society became identified with the law of the family. Unlike *Jews Arguing*, Rothenstein’s *Esther* reflects a reconciled, pacified intersection of ethnicity and class which had been mediated through the social processes of secularisation. Religious law, as depicted by Rothenstein, was sentimental, solemn, emptied of spirituality and the existential trauma of Jephthah. *Esther* depicts a religious law practised by English bourgeois Jews whose religious values were transcended by class values. Jewishness became a matter of individual personal belief, adapted to the English condition, one which reflected ‘the sanctification of the family’,²²⁵ was located within the private sphere and was crucial to the bourgeois body politic:

through the family sexuality and social relations were regulated. The successful integration of Jews into English life was dependant upon the fitting in with the evolving values of the bourgeois order. To this end the centrality and importance of the family in Jewish culture was installed both for themselves and by them in the imagination of the Jew and others.²²⁶

Jews Arguing, in contrast, revokes the sanitised representations of Jewishness constructed in *Esther*. In its otherness it rejects modernity and its precepts and is as such antithetical to *Esther*. Its confrontation extolls the virtues of the Eastern European Jew, who was perceived as a pariah, as archaic and as a medieval product. This was in direct opposition to the construct of Jewishness portrayed in *Esther*. It can be speculated that, like other members of Anglo-Jewry, the immigrant newcomer of the East, reflected in *Jews Arguing*, was perceived to undermine the social positions which they had achieved in British liberal culture. As such, within this context, *Jews Arguing* can be seen as a

²²⁴ Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, p.12

²²⁵ Juliet Steyn, ‘Mythical Edges of Assimilation’ in *Mark Gertler Paintings and Drawings*, Exhibition Catalogue (London: Camden Art Centre, 1992), p.15

²²⁶ Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, p.120

defiant stand made by the artist, an unqualified affront to civil society and the ideological position of *Esther*.

In its execution and style *Esther*'s high finish exhibits this concern and the preferred taste of the middle class whose social philosophy, as mentioned previously, encoded artistic practice with virtues like 'work, thrift, respectability and self-help'.²²⁷ Within this aesthetic context, Rothenstein has worked within a formalised style which avoids spontaneity and quickness of finish. The working procedure realised in *Esther* is evidence of his persistence to achieve a high finish and representation, a procedure which reflects a faithfulness to nature and an exactitude of representation which compelled the artist to repaint and rework the surface over and over again. This was an achievement in painterly terms which suggested a great deal of painstaking labour invested in it and an 'espousal of encoded ideology'.²²⁸ Dianne Macleod elaborates further that 'Finish as an aesthetic element signals a tangible evidence of painstaking labour, pride in the work ethic and corroboration of money well spent.'²²⁹ Rothenstein, like many other British Jews who assimilated themselves, worked 'within the available artistic traditions',²³⁰ and as a good Jew, identified 'entirely' with the 'adopted country', its culture and an artistic style whose aesthetic language codified bourgeois morality. The thesis claims that registered in the picture plane of *Esther* is an ethical activity whose surface representation accorded with the social valorisation of the middle class and its bourgeois ideology.

In contrast, *Jews Arguing* represents an approach to painting which was quite opposite. It has a free handling of paint and spontaneity which is contrary to the rational application of paint in *Esther*. Large areas of its surface are thinly applied and show the record of a manual dexterity of the part of the artist, highlighted by a free handling of the brush marks, which is a crucial factor in the facture of the painting. These areas co-exist with others where paint has been thickly applied. Thick and thin areas of paint exist side by side, a working procedure inconsistent in surface appearance which was so visible and tangible it may be said that it shouted the emotional investment by the artist, embodied in the paint facture, unlike the contrived, rational and un-emotional calm paint surfaces of *Esther*.

²²⁷Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, Fourth Edition, 2009), p.124

²²⁸Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p.16

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.92

It could be said that, according to the racial discourse of British liberal culture, Gertler's otherness was symptomatic of the essentiality embodied in the facture of the paint, which I argue captured the essential nature of the artist's otherness, whose Jewish specificity was emotional and primitive:

An Enlightenment of vision of modernity gave a secular form to a Christian disdain for the body and emotional life. Where spirit was to be 'pure' if it remained untainted by the sexual and the 'animal', so reason could be 'pure' if it was untouched by emotion and desire. This created a fear of women's emotions and feelings, of women's bodies and sexualities, which were deemed to be a threat to dominant male identities.²³¹

Within the dominant rationalist tradition of Victorian society, men could not admit to their emotions, and those who did were viewed as feminine. In fact, emotions and feeling were not only viewed as feminine but linked to an 'animal nature'.²³² In this respect 'Reason was set in categorical distinction to nature, and women, Jews and the people of colour were deemed to be "closer to nature". They were deemed in different ways to be less rational, so that they could not take their "humanity" for granted.'²³³ By inference, difference was viewed or 'considered to be "essential", that is to say, differences of "nature" or kind'.²³⁴ Underscoring this categorisation was its legitimisation by science. Scientific investigation and its techniques of defining difference between races produced empirical and descriptive evidence which posited that intellectual, biological and physical attributes were the central determinants of racial identity. Along with the scientific perspective, contemporary writers like T. H. Huxley compared East Londoners with primitive tribes, and for many contemporary observers the 'East End of London meant the Jewish East End'.²³⁵ Racial discourse implicit within British secular society was underwritten by such scientific discourse and literary writings, which accordingly stressed that essentialist Jewish subjects were emotional and were by implication synonymous with nature and femininity.²³⁶

I would argue that *Jews Arguing* is a version of Jewishness which represents an essentialist projection by virtue of not only its pictorial representation but the racial passion imbued in Gertler's working procedure. Ironically both paintings were translated from the same synagogue, the Machzika Hadiss. The synagogue was located

²³¹ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.35

²³² Ibid., p.13

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid., p.91

²³⁵ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.83

²³⁶ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.35

in the area of Whitechapel, 'situated on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street about two hundred yards from the Gertlers'.²³⁷ Gertler's painting represents the Eastern European Jew depicted with their large scriptural books, who Gertler could empathise with, capturing the essence of the characters and their everyday existence. The subject matter and its separatist environment was something that the artist was a part of:

In this, his personal experience and empathy were an incalculable advantage and when he wrote to Lightfoot that he intended carrying out a composition of Jewish figures for the Slade Summer Competition, Lightfoot approved it as 'an excellent idea for you who understand the people'.²³⁸

Linguistically the painting can be viewed as reclaiming Yiddish, and consigning the Messiah to the Old Testament and its Mosaic law, with its own specific language. This movement represents a clear-cut division between a Jewish Christ who sounds Jewish and a Christ who speaks English. Gertler's self-hatred violates the central tenets of the host doctrine, presenting a linguistic otherness which conformed to 'the rhetoric of European anti-semitism'.²³⁹ This is starkly represented in the painting by the concrete nature of the religious books of the Jews, written in Hebrew, 'the "hidden" language of the Jews'.²⁴⁰ Gertler's self-hatred also translates linguistic difference into a social sign that mirrors the corrupt nature of their discourse as absolute, a corrupt hidden language that in *Jews Arguing* is expressed in their physiognomy. The physiognomic quality that Gilman refers to was something that captured the imagination of nineteenth-century science and the belief about the pathology of the Jew, particularly in the gaze that resonated from the eye of the Jew. The image of the Jewish eye became, for Francis Galton, a valid source that articulated the authentic essence and image of the Jewish nature. Galton believed that the Jewish gaze could be pathologised and that this physiognomy was one which found a parallel with 'the Jewish voice',²⁴¹ at a time when Jews in England became subject to a culturalisation. Within the European tradition that annunciate Jewish difference there became for many a correlation of the Jew's language as being a mark of the corrupt nature of being a Jew. In this respect language played a vital role as a marker of Jewish difference, and it reflected the essence or the inherent difference of the Jew. It became hidden in the later gospels when Christ addressed a

²³⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.74

²³⁸ Letter from M.G. Lightfoot to Mark Gertler, 20 July 1910, 9217.14, Tate Gallery Archive

²³⁹ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.18

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.12. Gilman discusses the voice's relationship with what was believed to be the inner perversity of the Jew.

Christian audience. In canonical order it went from one where speaking to Jews required translation to one where no translation was required, particularly in John, the last of the gospels: 'The later gospels provided a verbal sign of the difference between the image of Jews and that of the early Christian representation in the text.'²⁴²

Jews Arguing expresses the essence of the Jew through their physiognomy, a visibility, an otherness that becomes in the eyes of the dominant culture an obscene creature. The flawed moral, particularly of the Jew, is one expressed within the painting by the gestures of the Jews: 'A Jew expresses himself as much with his fingers as with his tongue.'²⁴³ Gertler depicts Jews talking 'with their hands',²⁴⁴ and his use of physiognomy becomes a canvas upon which the inherently corrupt language and nature of the Jew is written. The hidden language, its corruption, becomes registered externally. It reflects and becomes a sign of their inherent constitutional weakness, and is 'also to be found as a sign of male hysterics'.²⁴⁵ Edward Shorter's paper focuses on the condition of hysteria, whose historicity ascribed a very epistemological status to two specific groups: women and Jews. Shorter argues that the male medical profession in the 'second half of the nineteenth century'²⁴⁶ viewed both women and Jews as having a predisposition to hysteria. Shorter explores and tries to find a satisfactory explanation for this belief. Gilman, like Shorter, argues that this belief by the medical profession stressed that both women and Jews had the same pathology, and in this respect the male Jew became feminised.²⁴⁷ It was also believed during this period that both groups not only had a predisposition to hysteria but shared a condition of diathesis, an innate predisposition to various diseases, which was claimed to be posited within the central nervous system.

In *Jews Arguing* Gertler's self-hatred relates body and mind; the psychology of the Jew is reflected in physiognomy. The depiction in the painting confirmed Gertler's self-hatred and his internalisation of stereotypes projected onto him by the dominant culture. Physiognomy becomes a sign of divine displeasure, where external references as gestures etc. confirmed the stereotype of Jews as emotional and feminine. They were deemed closer to nature, for they did not have the facility for reason. As less rational,

²⁴² Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.15

²⁴³ Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, p.66

²⁴⁴ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.26

²⁴⁵ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.56

²⁴⁶ Edward Shorter, 'Women and Jews in a Private Nervous Clinic in Late Nineteenth Century Vienna', *Medical History*, 33 (1989), p.150

²⁴⁷ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.63

primitive, they could not 'fit in'²⁴⁸ within a dominant rationalist tradition where body and sexuality were part of an 'animal nature has been superseded'.²⁴⁹

I suggest that the two paintings focused on here reflect a re-identification with the artist's authenticised past. They also seem to expose an anti-assimilationist position taken by the artist. Gertler, like his contemporaries and predecessors, embraced the Enlightenment vision of utopia and its representations. This vision promised safety, acceptance and equality within British liberal culture. This was conditional, as it was predicated on the disavowal of Jewish specificity and the acceptance of the vision which specified an illusionary, idealised Jewish selfhood. However, Gertler, through his accumulative experiences within the anglicisation process, realised the mendacity of the vision propagated by the dominant group. The artist sought a kind of closure by inverting the disavowal of authentic Jewish orthodoxy, which was made visible and reclaimed back what had been marginalised by modernity to the private sphere of society.

²⁴⁸ Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.4

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p.13

Chapter 3

Rural Idylls and Primitive Monuments

Influences: Artistic and social

Perhaps the seminal influence on Gertler – and the person who catered to his need for professional guidance at the Slade was Professor Henry Tonks.²⁵⁰ Sybil Vincent stresses how important Tonks was for successive generations.²⁵¹ Woodeson refers to Tonks possessing a ‘raking surgical eye’,²⁵² and Gertler, under his tutelage, went on to achieve success as a ‘draughtsman to equal that of John’.²⁵³ It was with drawings like *Study of a Girl’s Head* (1911; Figure 13) and *Old Man with Beard* (1913; Figure 14) that Gertler gained his reputation as a genius.²⁵⁴ Both reflected the rule of fine drawing taught at the Slade ‘where each line placed reflected a courageous statement’.²⁵⁵ The use of tone was discouraged as it was felt that it was a cover for bad draughtsmanship.²⁵⁶ It was Tonks’s adherence to Florentine drawing that lay the foundation for Gertler’s ‘lifelong fascination with the mystery of the human being (particularly the female form)’.²⁵⁷ The techniques of Florentine drawing were instructed by Tonks, whose own surgical training fashioned the precision that informed the mastery that a student should acquire in the direction of the bones. By mastering this ‘the student mastered the direction of a contour’²⁵⁸ and the student learnt to keep the drawing open until he was ‘tolerably sure when the contour had to go’.²⁵⁹ The word *outline* was banned. Instead, using light strokes of charcoal or pencil, he would fill in the basic skeleton with egg-like shapes

²⁵⁰ Sarah MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.32. Tonks had begun his career as a surgeon and demonstrator of anatomy at the London Hospital, attending art classes part-time at the South Kennington schools under Frederick Brown.

²⁵¹ Sybil Vincent, ‘In the Studio of Professor Henry Tonks’, *The Studio*, 113 (Jan - June 1937), p.8. She states that ‘the quality for which he is best known and for which he himself would probably prefer to be remembered, is the leader of that great revival of the art of drawing which has made British art of the last 35 or 40 years something entirely distinctive.’

²⁵² Paul Nash *Outline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p.89, as quoted by John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), p. 52

²⁵³ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.37

²⁵⁴ *Mark Gertler: A New Perspective*, Exhibition Catalogue (Ben Uri Gallery, London: The London Jewish Museum of Art, 2002), p.9

²⁵⁵ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.56

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.34

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

rounding the limbs, later shading in the form of light longitudinal slashes to set up the drawing.²⁶⁰ Tonks emphasised the importance given to drawing as the essential preliminary stage in the planning of the work of art but elevated it to the position of an abstract principle, known as *disegno*.²⁶¹ Other tutors were a formative influence in Gertler's achievement of early success at the Slade, for example William Rothenstein.²⁶²

Although professional guidance was forthcoming, social inclusion was initially to prove more problematic for the artist. Woodeson and MacDougall comment on the distinct loneliness Gertler felt among his upper-middle-class peers in his first term at the Slade in 1908. To be specific, he was so conscious of the barrier of class between himself and the other students.²⁶³ However, this loneliness was dissolved by C.R.W. Nevinson, his first companion outside his home in the Jewish East End. This friendship proved instrumental in opening many doors socially for Gertler, gaining him access to upper-middle-class circles. Nevinson in a sense adopted Gertler and brought him into contact with other students.²⁶⁴ He provided an entrée into the wider student life at the Slade, allowing him to begin to integrate himself with his middle-class peers. In many respects Nevinson provided a rite-of-passage for Gertler, who in turn endeared himself to Nevinson with his naïveté and solemnity²⁶⁵ to the extent that even his working-class blue collar had become acceptable, even romantic²⁶⁶. He became, according to Allinson, 'the charmer of our little circle',²⁶⁷ which included Adrian Allinson, Edward Wadsworth, John Currie and Maxwell Lightfoot. While Gertler's social network blossomed, artistically he was establishing himself as a 'new rising star of realism'.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.34

²⁶¹ A term used in Italy to denote the design of a painting conceived above all in terms of drawing. West, *Guide to Art*, p. 388

²⁶² MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.49

²⁶³ Adrian Allinson, *Memoirs* (unpublished), as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.51

²⁶⁴ Paul Nash, *Outline* (London: Columbus Books, 1988), p.90, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.90

²⁶⁵ Adrian Allinson, 'A Painters Pilgrimage', MS, (McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, Oklahoma), p.18, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.44

²⁶⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.69

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

Augustus John

The claim has been made that one of the most formative alliances of Gertler's Slade years was his friendship with Augustus John.²⁶⁹ John became a student at the Slade School in 1894. Rutter suggests that his entry quickly received attention through his innate ability for drawing and its expressive power of line while still a youthful student. He states that John when he was only twenty 'won a prize for his *Moses and Serpent*'. MacDougall points out that Gertler, by his own admission in *Mendel*, clearly acknowledged the influence of John on himself and his contemporaries. He 'Draws a striking picture of John as the artist Calthrope, a man of genius',²⁷⁰ who captured the imagination of Gertler and the 'Quintet', so much so that, as MacDougall points out, what Calthrope did Gertler and his contemporaries copied behaviourally and artistically.²⁷¹ John paved the way, simplifying his figures and 'employing a brilliant Palette'.²⁷² It was this, MacDougall claims, and not post-impressionism, that helped Gertler navigate his way through painting. Above all, John, for Gertler and many of his Slade contemporaries, represented 'democratic and revolutionary ideals of the most uncompromising kind'.²⁷³ It also, as the thesis shall later explore, facilitated the drama of Gertler's attempt to assimilate 'becoming English'.²⁷⁴

This attempt fractured and was subsequently expressed pictorially in the painting *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* (1912; Figure 15). As MacDougall construes it, John's influence was rather like a talisman, providing the way forward to make the transition from the rather staunch academic Edwardian portrait *The Artist's Mother* in 1911 to *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* in 1912. The former followed the dictates of a strict Edwardian academic procedure while the latter was a more self-reflective and self-appraising effort which led, as will be illustrated later on, to Gertler's 'disavowal of the central values within an assimilationist culture',²⁷⁵ a culture whose values stipulated the invisibility of being Jewish, and that as a Jew he was not to be visible. The painting of 1912 can be seen as a significant attempt to illustrate an

²⁶⁹ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, (Newhaven and New York: Yale University, 2000), p.49, Augustus John was briefly the rising star of British painting. He was a prodigy at the Slade School and his reputation as a draughtsman is undiminished.

²⁷⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.52

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ James Bone, 'The Tendencies of Modern Art', *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1913), pp.20-34 cited in Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John: The New Biography*, (London: Chatto & Windus,), p.329, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.52

²⁷⁴ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.4

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p.8

uneasiness that had been fermenting within him during his early student years. The thesis will later show how John influenced Gertler's stylistic development through the codes of a complex but domesticated variant of 'orientalism', which provided a vehicle for Gertler's self-expression. Before making this proposition it would be useful to examine the extent of John's influence on Gertler.

Friendship

John was a former student of Tonks and had become artistically a role model for many students. Woodeson states: 'Mark sometimes found it difficult not to be overcome by the influence of John in his work. Occasionally, as in the portrait of his sister Sophie (painted in February 1912) that influence almost swamped his own personality.'²⁷⁶ Woodeson uses the expression 'swamped', which may be considered strong; however, the deference and high esteem that the impressionable young Gertler and his generation had for John cannot be underestimated. Gertler first met John at the Café Royal, a favourite haunt for art students, in 1911, and John's reputation was such that when he made an entrance at the Café a silence fell on those seated at the tables.²⁷⁷ Gertler was no exception and was transfixed and speechless on his first meeting with John.²⁷⁸ During the meeting John went on to take Gertler out for dinner, which Gerzina believes was 'a mark of great honour'.²⁷⁹ Apparently the conversation got quite intimate, with John declaring 'his love for his wife' and getting 'quite tearful'.²⁸⁰ Gertler in return told John of his love and admiration for Dora Carrington. The level of intimacy suggests they became good friends, and Gertler felt 'pride that John now treated him as his equal'.²⁸¹

Gypsies: A Local Orientalism

However, the visual legacy which was part of the terrain of interchange between the two artists was to be found in John's fascination with the culture of gypsies. Tickner

²⁷⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.81

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Carrington: A Life*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1995), p.41

²⁸⁰ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.81

²⁸¹ Ibid.

has referred to this as a 'local Orientalism'.²⁸² Endemic in Orientalism²⁸³ were structures of difference and otherness, which formed a narrative that Edward Said and Rana Kabbani suggest was created by imperialism. Orientalism stood for wanton abandonment in sexuality and gratuitous violence, reflecting a narrative that suggested that Eastern people were preoccupied with sex, inherently violent and lazy, and as such incapable of self-governance. These perceptions were more densely encoded. The legendary indolence of the East was found on the roof tops, where Arab servants would play the lute or gimbri, occasionally danced, pray towards Mecca and sleep under the stars.²⁸⁴ This served, I argue, as a justification for imperialist intervention, whose purpose was to restore stability and to the general populous out of their lethargy.

Katie Trumpener argues that the Gypsies were outside definitions found in Western discourse, and as such, defied notions of civilisation and national culture,²⁸⁵ or as Arthur Symmons writes, 'they are changeless: the world has no power over them'.²⁸⁶ *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* and John's *The Mumpers* (1912; Figure 16) display the picturesqueness of Orientalism, a social construction of a colonialist identity which was legitimated by the notion that 'the encounter between familiar and the other was the essence of Orientalism'.²⁸⁷ Both paintings, I propose, are products of a cultural filtering, a discourse of difference structured by geographical space. Both John's *Mumpers* and Gertler's paintings are part of this encounter. John's representation of gypsy culture and society at large inspired Gertler to safely express an irreconcilable conflict experienced by the artist in his process of assimilating the conceptual framework of Orientalism, using it to denote a social acceptance of an exotic ethnicity implicit in the enthusiasm for local Orientalism. Gertler's 1912 painting and John's *Mumpers* accorded with the contemporary taste of upper- middle-class society and were not an affront to cultural taste. They were openly displaying pronounced ethnicity which

²⁸² Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.53

²⁸³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (Penguin Books, 1999) 'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and most of the time "the Occident"'. Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and Imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social description and political accounts concerning the orient, its people, customs, "mind", destiny and so on.', p.2

²⁸⁴ Kenneth McConkey, 'A Thousand Miles Towards the Sun: British Artists Travelling to Spain and Morocco at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in Ysanne Holt (ed.) *Visual Culture in Britain: Volume 4* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.37

²⁸⁵ Katie Trumpener, 'A People Without History in the Narratives of the West', *Critical Inquiry*, 18:4, (1992), p.853

²⁸⁶ Arthur Symons, 'In Praise of the Gypsies', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, (April 1908), p.295

²⁸⁷ Christine Peltre, *Orientalism*, (Paris: Editions Terrail/Edigroup, 2004), p.12

some of the contemporary audiences, including Gertler, were trying to live out. Like many, Gertler and John were like-minded gypsophiles, complicit with upper- middle-class culture.

Gertler's and John's paintings must be viewed within this context, with society's fascination with the gypsy and an Orientalism which became a bohemian fad.²⁸⁸ Tickner states that 'Bohemian came to refer to the socially relaxed nature of student and artistic life, and the bohemian artist came to be seen as 'not among us (but) a gypsy ipso facto'.²⁸⁹ John not only internalised the language of Romany, but also their attire, parading around in a large black hat and wearing gigantic earrings and britches. Gertler, for his part, emulated John's clothes, dressing the part of the famous artist. John even said of himself: 'I have not encountered a sounder gypsy than myself.'²⁹⁰ As Rothenstein states, John exhibited the expression of the spirit of the time that incited individuals to reject safety and seek adventure in the nomadic freedom that was to be found among gypsies. John's idealisation of gypsy life could be viewed as one which was likened, according to Trumpener, to the urban bourgeoisie who wanted to share in the gypsy sense of historylessness, 'the longing dream for historical oblivion'²⁹¹ and, one could argue, that like his bourgeois counterparts John wanted the same sense of oblivion – an erasure of history from existence.²⁹² In this sense, what these writers point to is that embodied in their existence was a freedom where time stood still or was lost, and as such could not be constrained by Western civilisation or culture. So, like many others who were part of the caravan craze, John owned a caravan as a prop for a fashionable, leisurely pursuit of upper-middle-class culture commonly known as 'tramping'.²⁹³ At the time, when he was not teaching at Liverpool, he would make expeditions to his native Wales, 'roving with gypsies and bringing back with him on his return little pictures of the raggle-tagged life of the caravans'.²⁹⁴ The caravan pursuit of the middle class is one that Jane Bilton comments on, stating that 'Caravaning with a gypsy style horse and van was a popular holiday for the middle classes in the Edwardian period and fully equipped vans could be hired by the week for use in the New Forest.'²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.62

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Trumpener, 'A People Without History in the Narratives of the West', p.853

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.53

²⁹⁴ Frank Rutter, 'Augustus John', *Studio*, Vol C1, Number 455 (Feb 1931), p.88

²⁹⁵ Jane Bilton, 'Edwardian Gypsy Idyll', *Fan* 21 (1990, Vol 3), p.21

Orientalism

The thesis proposes that both John's *The Mumpers* and Gertler's *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* are predicated on a 'local Orientalism' and its discourse. For centuries Orientalism conjured up a primitiveness which was complicit with eroticism, a primitiveness that was characterised by individuals who showed their feelings more openly and whose sexuality was unrestrained. Primitivism and Orientalism were inextricably linked in a sexualised manner. Such behaviour from the Western perspective was archaic, created by historical processes and steeped in strange habits and customs. It was this historical discourse which underlay John's and Gertler's paintings of 1912, informing and characterising the primitivism, a discourse which lends to both paintings a tradition and a sense of gravitas.

Gertler's *Apple Woman* mobilises the primitive and archaic. Golda presents herself as a steady-eyed, large-bodied woman whose Orientalism ascribes her with a tribal primitiveness. By implication, the gendered discourse assigns her to service the fertility of the tribe. Her role as such reflects a woman of inordinate sexuality and eroticism who is dangerous but also fascinating. Like John's organic community in *The Mumpers*, Golda, as the apple woman, shares the same primordial life, conjuring up in the contemporary imagination a primitivism and otherness. Golda in this sense represents a sexualised body synonymous with nature. Her deep-breasted posture conjures up the seductiveness of native existence. As premised by oriental discourse, the embodiment of nature and the tribe are oppositional to a civilised way of life: 'It was their natural bodies that characterised them, not history or culture, a body social or a body politic.'²⁹⁶ From the Western perspective of an oriental discourse, we could say that Golda represents a non-Western people; she is a gypsy, and a local, uncivilised oriental – a savage saturated with sexuality.

The social construction of space through oriental discourse had, it is argued, encoded the otherness and societal narrative which underwrites John's and Gertler's work, a primitivism which was commensurate with the stylistic reference of pre-Renaissance art. Both John and Gertler appreciated early Florentine art and artists, such as Cimabue and Giotto, and had adopted the technique of the pre-Renaissance working procedure of tempera. As early as 1908 John professed to being 'fired with a desire to

²⁹⁶Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Erotic Margin* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p.171

revive that art'.²⁹⁷ Its actual revival had been going on for the past century; the Pre-Raphaelite movement, for example, advanced the style and spirit of Italian painting before Raphael. Indeed, when we compare John's and Gertler's paintings we can see the distinct alignment of both paintings, the clear demonstration of the quattrocento lingering line, characterised by a dark outline, finely denoted. Both paintings share an appreciation of an Italianate style of fifteenth-century art, viewed from the perspective of a near-orientalist discourse, and are conspicuous for their encoded 'otherness'.

The Florentines

Both artists made a 'close study of the early Florentines',²⁹⁸ especially at that key Slade School resource, the National Gallery. This was translated in *The Mumpers* by the execution and the use of the medium of the early Florentines, the technique of tempera. As John stressed, 'I suddenly took and painted my cartoon of the Mumpers – in tempera, finished it in 4½ days and sent it in.'²⁹⁹ Conversely, Gertler employed the quattrocento line, which denoted the clear contours of Golda's face and as such accounts for her profile being clearly defined. However, like John, Gertler shared the enthusiasm for the Florentine medium; although it is not present in *The Apple Woman*, he was so enthralled by the primitivism of its style that he 'kept reproductions of frescoes by Fra Angelico'.³⁰⁰ Gertler became so much of a devotee that he purchased 'a special tempera palette for authenticity'.³⁰¹ This primitive style was one that John passed on to Gertler, in what MacDougall refers to as 'some very useful tips on tempera'.³⁰² Their new working procedure mirrored the enthusiasm for the medium among art students during 1912 at the Slade. In fact, Gertler was part of an eclectic group of student artists, called the 'Slade Quintet',³⁰³ Stanley Spencer, Mark Gertler, William Roberts, Edward Wadworth, Charles Nevinson adopted an Italianate style which was 'known among its followers as Neo-Primitivism'.³⁰⁴ The origin of neo-primitivism was a result partly of the Quintet encountering the primitive room at the

²⁹⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.73

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p.64

²⁹⁹ John Malcolm Easton and Michael Holroyd, *The Art of Augustus John* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974), p.154

³⁰⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.73

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.74

³⁰² MacDougall makes this comment in the light of Gertler's letter to Dora Carrington, August 1912, 9217.19, Tate Gallery Archive

³⁰³ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.41

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.64

Louvre, partly the creed from the 'Slade technique', which shared 'sincerity of purpose with the Pre-Raphaelites and technique with the early Italians',³⁰⁵ and partly of the National Gallery visits which were incorporated into Slade teaching from the time of Le Gros in the 1880s, with the link to Ingres' 'primitivism'.³⁰⁶

Picasso

The Mumpers can be seen as a celebration of this revival and an appropriate style which underwrites the primitivism of the painting. However, although the paint surface can be ascribed to the 'Italianate style', the crucial influence was, according to Easton, Picasso.³⁰⁷ The significance of Picasso was the influence he played in determining the construction and design of *The Mumpers*. It also arguably accounted for the sea change that took place in John's work after his initial contact with Picasso. This influence determined the painting's construction, characterised by the angularity and severity of the inhabitants present in John's rudimentary landscape. The hard-edged, simplified dreamscape of *The Mumpers* was mirrored in *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907; Figure 17), the year which 'witnessed a meeting between the two men'.³⁰⁸ This assertion by Easton that *Les Femmes d'Alger* influenced John's *Mumpers*, I would argue, is misplaced; rather, it is the paintings of Picasso's pink period, for example *La Famille de Saltimbanques* (1905; Figure 18) depicting Saltimbanques, or strolling players and circus performers, that informed John's *Mumpers*. Like John's *Mumpers* the strolling players and circus performers were outcasts and at odds with conventional society, 'their wives, their children, their trained pets, monkeys, goats and white ponies squatted among the props necessary for their acts. Detached from their everyday business of the great city they lived absorbed in rehearsing and giving display of their agility'.³⁰⁹ The Saltimbanques of Picasso's pink period were marginalised people, East European migrants, just like John's *Mumpers*, displaced from the land.

Like *Saltimbanques*, the figures in *The Mumpers* are conceived in shallow depth, and as such share the unique properties of Picasso's painting, i.e. its flatness and stylisation. Both paintings, I suggest, form a composition that is ordered in its classical

³⁰⁵ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.64

³⁰⁶ George Charlton, 'The Slade School of Fine Art', *Studio*, October 1946, p.114.

³⁰⁷ Easton and Holroyd, *The Art of Augustus John*, p.14

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) p.114.

simplicity. The characters are in a sense in a frieze, ethereal and detached. You almost get the feeling that the figures in both Picasso's and John's paintings are waiting in anticipation for something to happen; both groups of people are placed in a composition where there is 'no message or allegory'³¹⁰ and where there is an aura of detachment which is characterised by their listlessness .

Distinctions between the paintings

Up to now we have emphasised the complimentary nature between the two paintings: the claim made for their shared historical roots, and the inscribed primitivism of their work. However, their work diverges. That is, Gertler's *Apple Woman* has an existential quality which John's work does not possess. The painting can be viewed as the first outward expression of the tension and conflict created by the artist's self-expression of the social and cultural distinctions of his new world. It was a self-consciousness which became blatantly obvious in a letter he wrote to Dora Carrington in December 1912: 'I feel that I am *far* too vulgar and rough for you. But I am hoping through my work to reach to your level.'³¹¹ The irreconcilability of his otherness in a Christian secular culture became localised in the painting. It becomes a personal site for this conflict and the feelings that he was experiencing at the time. *The Apple Woman* evolved out of these strong sentiments, his sense of difference and the perception of the artist within the eyes of the dominant culture. John, however, did not have this struggle. He did not have an issue with assimilation; he was fully assimilated, and as such his 'otherness' was not complicit with being part of an authentic ethnic minority group. As defined by Morris (1968), 'Ethnic group is "a distinct category of the population in a large society whose culture is visually different from its own".'³¹² He added that members of ethnic groups 'are or feel themselves, or are thought to be bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture'.³¹³ John was part of the majority, the dominant culture which was responsible for the conditions of the minority group in their coexistence, i.e. their material existence, access to opportunities such as jobs and education, and the 'treatment they receive from those who wield power'.³¹⁴

³¹⁰Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, p.115.

³¹¹Carrington (ed.) *MGSL*, p.57

³¹²Henri Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Minorities*, (London: Minority Rights Group, 1978), p.2

³¹³Ibid.

³¹⁴Ibid.

Unlike Gertler, John did not have the personal experience of being a member of a minority group, or its history or sense of social/cultural difference from the majority. John's 'otherness' did not conform to these criteria and therefore did not reflect a struggle in social and economic terms. His 'otherness', unlike Gertler's, was sentimental and reflected contemporary taste and myth. As such, his personal experience was not that of an outsider in a low-status minority group who were 'self-conscious units of people who have in common certain similarities and certain social disadvantages'.³¹⁵ John's otherness was not of this nature; rather, it reflected a predilection on behalf of bourgeois society to identify with the 'otherness' of a minority group.³¹⁶ The aim was to replicate a life and a freedom lived by the outsiders, and to rekindle a Golden Age, an arcadia, a place which epitomised rustic contentment and simplicity, a simple pastoral life lived by the gypsy which John willingly participated in.

As Holroyd comments, 'more than half of Augustus' life at this time was fantasy'.³¹⁷ For Holroyd there appears to be in John's character 'a drive to be someone else', and to 'hover on the threshold of other worlds'.³¹⁸ This continued well into his adult life with an identification and kinship with gypsies and their itinerate lifestyle. John became so self-absorbed in identification that 'many people actually took him to be a gypsy'.³¹⁹ One cannot doubt his sincerity and heart-felt affinity with these people; however, as Tickner points out, John was, like many others in contemporary bourgeois society, taking up as a leisure pursuit the fantasised lifestyle of 'natives who became like foreigners'.³²⁰

Hence, it was at best a masqueraded 'otherness' whose origins lay in the leisure pursuits of the upper class. It is this masquerade upon which *The Mumpers* is predicated, and one which clearly orchestrated the stage-set of the painting, a painting which does not depict genuine gypsies – far from it – but rather members of John's immediate family. It is his family that play the lead characters in the canvas's imaginary life. Therefore, *The Mumpers* neither represents, nor is it the result of the encounter with, gypsies; rather, it is the spectacle of natives posing as foreigners. Although some of John's contemporaries mistook him for an actual gypsy, through the eyes of the

³¹⁵ Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Minorities*, p.2

³¹⁶ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.56. W. Gordon Stables was a self-described 'gentleman gypsy', a retired naval officer, doctor, 'literary man' and advocate of the open road.

³¹⁷ Holroyd, *Augustus John*, p.17

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p.31

³²⁰ Tickner, *Modern Life*, p.63

authentic gypsy John's inauthenticity was all too apparent. As Tickner stresses, natives who became foreigners stuck out like a sore thumb in a rural community and as 'a *gaujo* or "gentile" in the vicinity of gypsies'.³²¹ This became problematic regarding his relationships with authentic gypsies, which is why his paintings do not portray them: 'He complained in his letters, that he could not really paint the gypsies. They did not want to pose and when they did the life went out of them.'³²² As such, *The Mumpers*, like John's other gypsy paintings, was the result, as Tickner points out, of the artist's 'willed identification',³²³ whose characters were reductive stereotypes. John was not a pioneer or an eccentric among his generation, but like so many of them he shared a thirst and appetite for the romanticism and idealism of the itinerant outsiders. Compared to *The Apple Woman*, *The Mumpers* is a superficial product, created by an artist who courted public taste and whose 'otherness' was of his own making. As such, it had no tangible hold on reality and fabricated an authentic 'otherness'. It diverges from *The Apple Woman* because the latter is an authentic expression of 'otherness' and has an air of disquiet not present in John's painting.

I would suggest that this disquiet results from the oppositional force created by the lack of mutual co-existence between Golda, the apple woman, and Louis, her husband. Oppositional in nature, this painting prefigures the subtext of the sequential family portraits that were to follow, using primarily the motif of Golda. In *The Apple Woman*, Gertler depicts Louis as the unacceptable outsider, the East End Orthodox Jew, the inhabitant and citizen of the ghetto, whose life lived at variance with English secular society and whose Jewish orthodoxy is one which is overarching communal law. Within modernist criteria, Louis can be perceived as a throwback, a reminder of the uncivilised and the primitives who cannot be valorised within the dominant Anglicising tradition. There is no hint of the civilising influence of Anglo-Jewry³²⁴ and its great dislike of Yiddish, nor of the partnership with the Enlightenment vision and choice that would mean an exit from 'the restriction of the ghetto to become free and equal citizens'.³²⁵ Louis had little appetite to aspire to assimilation and to be no longer regarded as a Jew. He was everything that is un-English and foreign; he is the living

³²¹ Tickner, *Modern Life*, p.63

³²² *Ibid.*, p.62

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ Rosalyn Livshin, 'The Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester, 1890-1930' in David Cesarani, (ed.) *The Making of Anglo-Jewry*, pp.81-2 The Manchester Jews' school aimed to do this by adopting the methods of the schools in the wider society. Learning the English language was an important first step towards Anglicisation. It was the key to English life and culture.

³²⁵ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.7

antithesis to the conformity of the established Jewish community to the Hebrew instruction, a view of Judaism that was anglicised. Louis reflects a community experience which was far removed from its anglicised co-religionists and was perceived as primitive: 'The lives and experience of East-enders were deemed to be direct, immediate. According to the *Morning Post*, they could be expected to find an environment which was bright, emotional and closer to nature.'³²⁶ Gertler presents an otherness in Louis that his process of assimilation demands he should take flight from. However, at this time Gertler was suffering an acute dilemma within this process, one which was becoming problematic. The oppositional nature of Golda and Louis suggest this conflict, and hence introduces a dialectic in the painting that is being played out. Golda, who is proudly presented in the forefront of the painting, fulfils her historic role in Gertler's life, one of a safe haven and sanctuary. For Steyn, the image of mother was for Gertler a matriarchal image, a sanctuary which had historically provided emotional support when the artist had felt threatened. As such, Steyn infers that the motif of mother becomes a metaphor for the artist's own insecurity.³²⁷

Golda in her oriental guise as the gypsy woman presents a safe expression for the artist's Jewishness. Being part of the bohemian fashion, Gertler's pictorial expression, realised in *The Apple Woman*, subscribed to the acceptable face of otherness. Here was a racial image, one which resonated with cultural interchange, and its social construction of identity within Victorian and Edwardian societies. The painting was arguably a beneficiary of this historicism, which was socially sanctioned and legitimated. Within this context, Gertler can be seen as reinstating his otherness, which was mindful of the standards of contemporary bourgeois taste.

In many respects, *The Apple Woman* was used as a conduit by Gertler to present an acceptable face of Orientalism, of the gypsy. As such, Gertler's otherness was expressed in a benign way, and was not yet iconoclastic. He had not got to the point where he ceased to believe in anything. The artist was therefore observing the protocols of artistic expression of contemporary aesthetic taste. It is clear that the contrived encoded oppositional nature of the painting becomes a metaphor for the artist's portability of his domicile. That is, what it might suggest is that the painting was conceived at a juncture in time, when the artist was questioning his process of assimilation, its values and difficulties. As MacDougall points out, the artist admitted

³²⁶ *Morning Post*, 11 May 1914, as quoted by Steyn, *The Jew Assumptions of Identity*, p.108

³²⁷ Steyn, *The Jew Assumptions of Identity*, p.18

his predicaments: 'By my ambitions I am cut off from my own family and class and by them I have been raised to be equal to a class I hate! They do not understand me, nor I them. So I am an outcast.'³²⁸ Class and ethnicity did not coexist in a way which was comfortable for the artist; rather, a tension and a conflict was becoming evident with his increasing awareness of the social and cultural distinctions of his new world. For Gertler it was becoming a very difficult human situation, and one which was readily perceived by his social contemporaries, in particular D.H. Lawrence and Lady Ottoline Morrell. To this extent *The Apple Woman* could be said to present this displacement, crystallised in the oppositional nature between Golda and Louis. However, the social contention of the artist did not result in a combative representation of his parents; rather, Golda assumes dominance over Louis. Gertler clearly uses the discourse of Orientalism to present Golda as the acceptable face of the other, the gypsy, whereas Louis is positioned by his son as cowering behind Golda as the face of the unacceptable Other, the urban Orthodox Jew, 'the one who failed to see the salvational truth of the Christian faith'.³²⁹

Rembrandt

Both Gertler's and Rembrandt's subject share an urban existence as urban dwellers, and Gertler's depiction of his father reflects the style and demeanour of *A Young Jew* (c.1648; Figure 19). It is hardly surprising that Louis and the young Jew have the same look, one which is down trodden, a world weariness, particularly around the portals of their eyes. They ask for our sympathy because of their expression of inescapable plight, creating pathos, a solemn expression which is dignified. Their attire accords with their economic status, the clothes of the urban worker of the Jewish East End or the Ashkenazim of Amsterdam, who both inhabit the twilight world of inferior occupation, i.e. crafts and low-wage sweated labour. Gertler's father shared the same economic hardships as Rembrandt's Ashkenazim, displaying the same social marker, 'their shabby shtetl-like clothes'.³³⁰ However, it is the poignant expression in their eyes where they share the most direct commonality. The eyes of Louis mirror in many respects those of the young Jew. They either do not meet the gaze of the onlooker or they

³²⁸ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, December 1912, 9217.9, Tate Gallery Archive

³²⁹ Steven Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.19

³³⁰ Ibid., p.55

hesitate. Both share the fact that they have ‘the look of patient victims of persecution’,³³¹ weary of the strains and vicissitudes of the urban experience. There can be detected a strong measure of acceptance in their eyes of the world weariness. In the presence of Rembrandt, Gertler’s portrait of Louis has the same picturesque quality of the Dutch master’s sitter; his portrayal is characterised by ‘the long dark coats, untrimmed beards and misshapen hats’,³³² and ‘To an audience familiar with Rembrandt but not with Mile End Road, they seemed comparable, timeless, exotic and rabbinical.’³³³ Such a comparison conjures up images of an old world and memories of a ‘majestic religion’,³³⁴ as opposed to the actuality of the slums of the artist’s East End.

Zionism

While Tickner and Woodeson make slight observations of the influence of Rembrandt on Gertler’s early work, they fail to acknowledge the pre-existing sentiments of the Jewish collectivity in London in the first two decades of the twentieth Century, and its growing actualisation in the ascendancy of the Zionist movement. Tickner and Steyn do not take into account this influence when assessing Gertler’s art. Zionism, historically, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was composed of a consciousness and a movement of Jewish people who wanted to return from their Diaspora to Palestine. This amounted to a re-establishment of a Jewish national homeland. The advance of Zionism and its stream of consciousness presented a way of life outside Western urbanisation and a utopian ideal. Lucien Wolf postulates that the new Zionism stressed that Judaism and its embrace of emancipation was a fraud and that assimilation an ‘ethnic impossibility’.³³⁵ Gideon Shimoni states that the Zionists ‘were guilty of a breach of moral contract in their quest to be restored to their own land rather than being integrated as Englishmen’.³³⁶ They were in complete opposition to any moral social contract or ‘contract theory of emancipation’.³³⁷ In this respect the notion of emancipation was central to the polemics and ideological clash within Zionism. As

³³¹ Nadler, *Rembrandt’s Jews*, p.44

³³² *Ibid.*, p.32

³³³ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.18

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ Lucien Wolf, ‘The Zionist Peril’, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 17, (October, 1904), p.6

³³⁶ Gideon Shimoni, ‘From Anti-Zionism to Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry, 1917-1937’, *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, (1986), p.19

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

such, the thesis proposes that its ideology was a determining factor in the conception of *The Apple Woman*.

One might put the premise forward that Golda cannot only be seen as a gypsy but also as one who works the land. Her life as an agricultural worker would be in alignment with the palatable solution put forward by Zionist ideology and its analysis of the 'Jewish problem',³³⁸ that is, to end the idea of the 'Wandering Jew',³³⁹ and two thousand years of homelessness in a return to Palestinian soil. *The Apple Woman* would reflect the Zionist aspiration to be domiciled in Palestine, cultivating and harvesting its sacred soil. This was realised by 1914, when the Zionist movement³⁴⁰ had established new agricultural settlements inhabited by twelve thousand people in Palestine. It could be argued that the utopian ideal was essentially always a part of Jewish consciousness, and therefore innate to Golda. It was part of the destiny of Golda's East End Jewish community, 'bound up with its own understanding of a unique shared past'.³⁴¹ The implication of this is that, as Parks points out, it was not a case of a 'Jewish return to a land they had left two thousand years ago',³⁴² because as a collective 'they had never left either physically or spiritually'.³⁴³ In this sense Gertler's pictorial fantasy might have been that Zionism merely actualised the consciousness of Golda; it did not create it, as it was always there, as if it was only natural to be domiciled in Palestine and to be buried in its sacred soil.

In this sense, Golda's specificity and psyche becomes a problematic candidate for assimilation. Golda's reverie does not, then, emulate John's Arcadia; rather, it is political in nature, a gaze which dreams of emancipation and the security of a Jewish political state, which only Zionism can offer. It is a gaze which yearns for 'Zionism Triumphant'.³⁴⁴ The inception and arrival of Zionism met the psychological requirement of the immigrant Jew; that is, 'Zionism became the major idealism and rallying point of the Jew dispersed throughout the world'.³⁴⁵ Tickner and Steyn have failed to appreciate this contemporary aspect of Jewish consciousness and the impact that Zionism as a

³³⁸ Norman Bentwich, *The Jews in our Time*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p.45

³³⁹ Ibid., p.51

³⁴⁰ David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo Jewry*, p.117 The Zionist Federation was dominated by middle-class Jews, many of whom were well established in Britain.

³⁴¹ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.7

³⁴² James Parkes, *A History of the Jewish People* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967) p.182

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.116

³⁴⁵ Norman Bentwich, *The Social Transformation of Anglo-Jewry 1883-1960*, p.23

movement had on the established Anglo-Jewish community.³⁴⁶ Bentwich suggests that through the centuries Jews ‘had to be satisfied with a portable fatherland in the way of life, the tradition of the bible and the Rabbis, the culture and history through the ages’.³⁴⁷ The gradual progress of Zionism brought about significant structural change in the institutional ideology of Anglo-Jewry, facilitating a distinct form of immigrant political expression. As Stephen Aris comments:

The Rothschilds, as paradigms of Anglo-Jewish achievement are still enormously respected, but they no longer lead the Jewish community in the old, authoritarian, nineteenth-century manner. Their influence is altogether subtler and less overt. Their leading place has been taken by a new generation of self-made entrepreneurs of Russian and Polish origin for whom Judaism and Zionism are inextricably linked.³⁴⁸

As such, to be a Jew was to identify oneself with Israel and to support it wholeheartedly. As argued by Sir Isaac Wolfson of Great Universal Stores, ‘it was the only way to be a good Jew’.³⁴⁹ What is significant is the arrival of Theodor Herzl in London in 1902. He was asked to attend and give evidence before a Royal Commission inquiry. This was due to the ‘trouble caused by the alien immigrants in East London’.³⁵⁰ Geographically this address by Herzl placed Zionism within the experiential realm of the Jewish East End. One can only speculate about the effect that such a political engagement had around the area. Herzl, who laid down the programme of Zionism, viewed England as the ‘Archimedean point’ upon ‘which the level could be applied’.³⁵¹ At the enquiry he provided his radical solution to the ‘Jewish problem’,³⁵² the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Shimoni states that ‘the Jewish problem ought to be treated as a national problem’.³⁵³ What Shimoni argues is that civic emancipation exacerbated Jewish material and spiritual life, and that the rise of Zionism became one which elevated it. According to Herzl, ‘the core defeat of this was a lack of a territorial national homeland’, and the solution he envisaged involved the return of Jews to Zion and the ultimate restoration of Zion to the Jews as a national state.³⁵⁴ This idea was catapulted into the high echelons of political life, firing the imagination of Joseph

³⁴⁶ Bentwich, *The Social Transformation of Anglo-Jewry*, p.23

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Aris, *The Jews in Business*, p.55

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p.56

³⁵⁰ Bentwich, *The Jews in our Time*, p.48

³⁵¹ Ibid., p.45

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Shimoni, ‘From Anti-Zionism to Non-Zionism’, p.19

Chamberlain, who became responsible for bringing ‘the Zionist movement into the orbit of British policy in the near East’.³⁵⁵ As Shimoni states, it was ‘diplomatic means that achieved the solution of the Jewish problem, harnessing the support internationally in the agreement for the programme of “settlement in Zion”’.³⁵⁶

However, perhaps more significant was that the Zionist movement was started in Manchester in late 1888 and 1890 by the Alrightniks, a sectional group of middle-class nouveau riche entrepreneurs. In the painting Gertler’s mother is portrayed as an agricultural worker, when in fact she and her husband were furriers who owned their own business. They could be seen as part of the ambitious parvenu, Alrightniks who furthered Jewish traditionalism. This social element is another strand of the dialectic of the painting, whose subtext is one which celebrates the visibility of orthodoxy. Golda by her demeanour could be construed as proudly acknowledging her entrepreneurial position. She reflects a social group whose philanthropy fueled the maintenance of the community’s orthodoxy. They acted as ‘the patrons and financial backers of an immigrant religious organization. More often than not it was they who enabled a struggling chevra – one of the many bedroom chevrans as they were slightly called by the elite.’³⁵⁷

Golda can be seen not only as a product of the artist’s projection, but as a representative of a social group who actively championed the hidden language of the Jews. The nouveau riche perpetuated the growth of Judaic orthodoxy by financing premises for Judaic worship, even paying for the passage and salaries ‘of the suitable learned Rabbis from Eastern Europe’.³⁵⁸ Within this context, *The Apple Woman* is potentially subversive in promoting a consciousness which ran counter to the central value of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, assimilation. In the face of the social bias of Anglo-Jewry they furthered the cause of a living working-class environment by promoting a Jewish precept, a secret charity which was more generous than traditional Judaism, which was Talmudic and contrary to the preconditions of English middle-class society, which could be perceived as mean-minded. The painting can be registered as a site of resistance, a confrontation to the Anglo-Jewish establishment in its abject refusal to subscribe to the official social values of assimilation. What the painting and Golda

³⁵⁵ Shimoni, ‘From Anti-Zionism to Non-Zionism’, p.19

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.20

³⁵⁷ Bill Williams, ‘East and West in Manchester Jewry, 1880-1914’ in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.23

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

represent is a distinctly ethnic and Zionist social force. This is what Woodeson and MacDougall fail to consider, restricting themselves to an assessment of style and artistic influence.

Arguably Golda's gaze in *The Apple Woman* reflects the consciousness of Zionism, one which has progressively given shape to distinctive immigrant values and the maintenance of its hidden language. It consolidated immigrant separatism, its religious style and the standards of the East End in an English setting. Golda stares out of the painting triumphantly as part of the ambitions and ethos of a social group which stemmed the erosion of Jewish specificity. In this respect Gertler's portrayal of his parents reflects the subtext of communality, and an intersection of class and ethnicity 'showing how cultural links could unite well-off immigrants with the poor Brethren in opposition to the Anglicization policy'³⁵⁹ of the London native Jewish elite. We might suppose the painting to be an oppositional force, one which invited the contempt of the anglicisation policy of a Jewish secular society. Rather, it represents an assertion of the growth of orthodoxy by furthering the proliferation of the feval Chevrotts.³⁶⁰ This in turn propagated the Chevrott's evolution and created fear at the same time within the Anglo-Jewish establishment. This growth of the Chevrotts was reflected in the 'expansion and amalgamation into major synagogues under Alrightnik control'.³⁶¹ It can be argued that *The Apple Woman* is in this sense highly politicised, reflecting the subversive empowerment of the immigrant masses, encouraging them to throw off their shackles from the influence of the native Jewish elite. Instead of social improvement necessitated by social intercourse with their comfortable well-off co-religionists, the Alrightniks shared the cultural inclinations of the immigrant masses. They opposed the subscription to the objectives of anglicisation and provided an alternative religious and philanthropic network, one whose new communal bodies reflected the religious practices of the immigrant community. The social relevance of *The Apple Woman*, gave the East End European Jew social support which did not necessitate compliance with the dictates of Anglo-Jewish philanthropy. What the social element in the painting represents is an agenda to maintain orthodoxy, its hidden language and a visibility that Anglo-Jewry wanted to efface. Overarching this is the identification with Jewish

³⁵⁹ Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.6

³⁶⁰ Williams, 'East and West in Manchester Jewry', p.23 'Chevras', Jewish Chronicle 3 April 1896, as they were slightly called by the elite. A place of worship which was held in vacant premises, i.e. a shop or a Christian church rendered redundant by the northward advance of the Jewish settlement. P.23

³⁶¹ Ibid.

nationalism and the consciousness of the Zionist ideal, the reconnection of the immigrant Jew with his ancestral home.

The Apple Woman was conceived at a juncture in the artist's life when his accumulated experience within the anglicisation process was becoming problematic. This engagement realised a deep ambivalence and a growing sense of frustration regarding an idealised Jewish selfhood, one which was predicated on the disfavour of Jewish specificity. However, Gertler's sense of awareness of the prescriptive nature of assimilation did not facilitate the artist's decision to reject the protocols of bourgeois artistic taste. That stage of overt dissociation in pictorial expression had not yet been reached. Rather, he appropriated the vehicle of Orientalism to produce an image which was covert in meaning and whose subtext reclaimed Jewish orthodoxy, which had been marginalised by modernisation to the private sphere of society.

The clandestine nature of the painting was realised primarily through the motif of Golda, whose appearance suggests an occupation which was factually incorrect. The artist may have introduced a duplicity constituting a benign 'otherness', in alignment with the bohemian taste and the contemporary Edwardian obsession with the gypsy. As I have argued, in Edwardian society this ethnic group became a metaphor for freedom and 'an idealised representation of rural life',³⁶² which had been supposedly lost by the indigenous urban British populous. This was reflected in Golda's reverie and John's 'organic community',³⁶³ where there was a romance of a lost Arcadia, a pastoral society with its shared values and histories. This was opposed to the city, where the unity between individuals had disappeared. However, the romance that enlivens Golda may well be more political in nature, a reverie which in this sense is different from John's. Golda's reverie can be seen as reflecting a nationalistic cause, framed by civil law, which was an antithesis to John's pastoralism.

By her demeanour, Golda has the look of somebody in a stage of siege, defiantly refuting the attempt by the assimilation process of imposing an idealised Jewish selfhood. The past experience and the Diaspora had taught her that there can be no tolerance or symbiosis between the Orthodox Jew and the Christian. Because of this and the emergence of Zionism, Golda, like many other Orthodox Jews, may have been seduced by its ideologue and its utopian ideal. Golda's gaze could be reflecting this new consciousness, a spiritual awakening which promises the 'fulfillment of two thousand

³⁶² Williams, 'East and West in Manchester Jewry', p.56

³⁶³ Ibid., p.65

years of Jewish history'.³⁶⁴ This renaissance would be one where Golda would take her place, given her spiritual and historical relationship and the 'messianic idea of the Jewish return'.³⁶⁵ As such, the portrayal of her in agricultural attire is appropriate. Golda's fantasy role in this programme of natural redemption would be of a farmer, cultivating the pastoral land of Israel. This chapter proposes that Gertler's projection of the self in *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* is answering the call of the historic Jewish destiny, and is the clear acknowledgement that the traditional Jew has no place in English society.

³⁶⁴ Bentwich, *The Jews in Our Time*, p.47

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 4

The Mother Tongue: The Artist's Mother, 1913

For this thesis, Gertler's mother, Golda, becomes the vehicle by which we might trace Gertler's stylistic development. However, to understand this process, the existence of his social context should be taken into account. *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* of 1912 expressed the experience of Gertler in the midst of what has been called the assimilation process, but the portrait *The Artist's Mother* (1913; Figure 20) was forged in his clear contempt for bourgeois English society.

Gertler's first forays into English upper-middle-class life were initiated by C.R.W. Nevinson and Dorothy Brett, whose houses he visited during early years at the Slade School of Art. This social trajectory was hastened when his world blossomed through his association with Edward Marsh in 1913. Marsh gave the artist an 'entree to all kinds of world',³⁶⁶ particularly into Edwardian high society: 'you were in or out of society: Marsh was definitely in'.³⁶⁷ Through his friendship with Nevinson and Brett, Gertler began 'to have some idea of how the middle-class lived',³⁶⁸ whereas through Marsh he gained a more intimate knowledge of the opulence and extravagance of the new Georgian elites. Woodeson points out this significant social connection, which began in the summer of 1913, when Gertler 'found himself suddenly an object of interest to a man who moved with ease in the dazzling world of Edwardian aristocracy'.³⁶⁹ Marsh, I propose, was pivotal in introducing Gertler into Edwardian Society, allowing him to sample the delights that the rich and titled had to offer. Gertler was later to become highly critical of this culture because of its superficiality and hedonistic attitude. As one such comment by Gertler reveals, 'they lead such soft and uselessly happy lives, that they know nothing about life'.³⁷⁰ The thesis argues that both

³⁶⁶ John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.109

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.106

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.112

Woodeson and MacDougall in their biographies of Gertler only scratch the surface of the impact this society had on him.

Lambert understands this period of Edwardian society in the early part of the twentieth century as ‘the myth of a Golden Age, and Indian summer’, which revolved around the visiting of the country house, primarily at weekends.³⁷¹ In Edwardian society the country house was a symbol of power, expressing the extravagance of its high elite.³⁷² The country house was proof of possession and your membership of a specific social class: it was this social milieu that Gertler now graced. As Lambert stresses, ‘they were all known to one another, to be left out was an unthinkable misfortune’.³⁷³ Gertler was now numbered as one who participated by being part of Marsh’s coterie, who reflected ‘the meaningless tyranny of the social round’³⁷⁴ of a weekend visit to the country house. A weekend social event which many found boring and were contemptuous of was played out by people who were ‘like puppets against a set of gorgeous backdrops’.³⁷⁵ This was one of the many worlds that Gertler found *entrée* into through his association with Marsh, a man who was adept in social graces and mores, and was at ease circulating ‘politely and wittily in the great country houses of the rich and titled, where one glittering weekend party followed another’.³⁷⁶ Marsh was erudite, well connected and ‘familiar with the practical realities of government and the world of politics’,³⁷⁷ and, according to Woodeson, ‘became a central figure in the cultural, social and political scene for several decades’.³⁷⁸

Marsh had been conversant with the political scene and its corridors of power for decades; after all, he had been Assistant Private Secretary to Sir (Joseph) Austin Neville Chamberlain and then later to Sir Winston Churchill (Leonard Spencer). However, it was not for these political activities that he gained his reputation but rather for his support ‘for striving artists and poets of the Edwardian bohemian world’.³⁷⁹ Due to this active support in the art world, he became a discerning art connoisseur of modern British art. Ysanne Holt states that ‘late in his life he happily confessed to an easy malleability’, always ‘infectible with the tastes and fads of my friends’, and to ‘an

³⁷¹Lambert, *Unquiet Souls*, p.147

³⁷²Ibid., p.136

³⁷³Ibid., p.7

³⁷⁴Ibid., p.147

³⁷⁵Ibid.

³⁷⁶Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.109

³⁷⁷Ibid.

³⁷⁸Ibid., p.106

³⁷⁹Sarah MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.87

inordinate desire to please'.³⁸⁰ Effectively, he proved to be an invaluable support to any aspiring poet or artist, and as such much of bohemia had good reason to be grateful to him. Marsh, as Holt points out, acted as a conduit of mediation between patrons and artists, bringing sections of aristocracy and Edwardian bohemia together. He purchased works by Gertler, for example *The Artist's Mother* and *The Jewish Family* (1913), as well as works by the Nash brothers and Stanley Spencer. Marsh became the patron saint of all struggling young artists and poets at the time. Like many other members of the elite class in Edwardian society, he was a product of 'Cambridge in the nineties' and a fine scholar of Latin and Greek.³⁸¹ Additionally he was a member of the Apostles society, whose membership included Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore.

Gertler first met Marsh when he was invited to his apartment in Raymond Buildings, Grays Inn. 'In his chambers in Grays Inn Marsh possessed a 'remarkable collection of paintings of the English School in which, besides the classic masters, the younger, artists of today are amply represented.'³⁸² From this initial meeting, Marsh exerted a considerable influence over Gertler and broadened Gertler's aesthetic horizons, as well as being invaluable to his entrée into Edwardian bourgeois society and to the artist's material existence. Conversely the two years that followed were ones in which Gertler and his friend Curry, who visited Marsh at his home, were responsible for 'forming Marsh's taste in contemporary art'.³⁸³ Marsh financed the artist by purchasing his work over a period of time, which was to make a huge difference to Gertler's life. Marsh even provided the artist with a residence at Raymond Buildings, giving Gertler his own key, so he could come and go. His patronage removed the insecurities for the artist, and as such Gertler no longer had to worry about his material conditions such as bed and board nor did he have to concern himself with making a living from his painting i.e. 'the "utility" of art, he could just paint what he wanted'.³⁸⁴ It allowed the artist aesthetic freedom and independence. He could paint what he wanted, rather than pandering to popular contemporary taste. It could also be said that Marsh was significant in presenting the opportunities to realise Mark's childhood ambition, the social and economic success of his role model, the artist William Powell Frith.

³⁸⁰ Ysanne Holt, 'Eddie Marsh: A Picture Collector's Lust for Possession', in *Visual Culture in Britain* 2005, 6 2, p.200

³⁸¹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.109

³⁸² T.W. Earp, 'The Edward Marsh Collection', *Apollo*, (Vol 56, No. 432), p.177

³⁸³ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.86

³⁸⁴ Holbrook Gerzina, *Carrington*, p.49

From the outset Gertler had difficulties in embracing the opportunities afforded by Marsh. Marsh found that Gertler was not an easy protégé, and as Woodeson states, from the beginning, Gertler experienced difficulties in being ‘taken up’ by Marsh.³⁸⁵ There was no complete entry by Gertler into Marsh’s social clique; rather, he found himself at odds with Marsh’s world, a world he did not understand or was unable to relate to. Gertler was plunged into uncharted territory in his quest for assimilation, and in so doing highlighted the prescriptive nature of its processes. This realisation on the part of the artist did not translate itself into politics. It can be seen from Gertler’s correspondence that there was an absence of any political position or posture on the part of the artist. His objections surrounding the issue of class were not its structural conditions, i.e. ‘the economic, political, social circumstances which had led to and often still determine the differences between the groups in their standard of living, access to opportunities such as jobs and education’.³⁸⁶ That is, not crisp definitions between social classes that concerned him; rather, it was subjective conditions within the assimilation process which characterised its prescriptive nature,

where human social behaviour can only be properly understood if we are able to get to know something about the subjective ‘representations of social reality’, which intervene between conditions in which social groups live and the effects of these conditions on individual and collective behaviour.³⁸⁷

What Tajfel is suggesting is that the phantasmic vision of the collective group was shaped according to their social and economic imperatives. This, he argues, becomes a crucial element in forming the perspective of a social group and the general pattern of the relationship between different social groups. In this respect Tajfel argues that a world view is formed as a consequence of this, a criterion of value judgments that shapes the group’s attitudes towards groups that are outside of itself and in this sense governs their behaviour towards them. Thus social differentiation becomes a reality.

Language

The social reality which Gertler experienced was discernable at an everyday level, i.e. represented by conversation, attitude and behaviour. It may partly explain why

³⁸⁵ Mark Gertler to Edward Marsh, 13 November 1913, Berl New York Public Library, as quoted in Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.107

³⁸⁶ Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Minorities*, p.3

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Gertler found such subjective representations as epitomised in the codes of the upper middle class ‘baffling’.³⁸⁸ Woodeson and MacDougall do not explore this issue beyond merely quoting Gertler. Lambert, however, does so by offering an analysis of why outsiders like Gertler found social integration difficult due to its pre-existing codes. Lambert stresses that the language of upper-middle-class existence was particularised and esoteric, known only to the membership of that specific class. As Lambert states, ‘The language of any society, especially the language of an elite circle within the society, deliberately expresses the attitudes of its members.’³⁸⁹ Language, argues Lambert, becomes a criterion for recognising difference, and, more importantly, a means of creating differences while simultaneously maintaining them. Language, it is suggested is a subtle and elusive representation of difference, which, like dress code, becomes for Lambert an instrument of social distinction. What Lambert seems to suggest is that language acts as a barrier allowing the protection of social class, that is, it disallows entry for the outsider who seeks membership in the collective. She argues that the ownership of a distinct language by the Edwardian upper class was characterised by its being transmitted from one generation to another. It was known only by them and was in a sense inherited, preserved in an unchanged manner known only to the members. It was impervious to the interloper who sought to assimilate himself into the behaviour of the membership of the in-group.

Language within the context of Edwardian society was constructed, argues Lambert, so as to have a distinctive tradition that was divisive, as Gertler soon became aware. Gertler’s awareness is reflected in a letter of July 1913: ‘one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, but some touches put miles of space between us’.³⁹⁰ The artist’s remark was symptomatic of some of the unfolding differences, expressed by language and attitude, which he was encountering around 1913. She discusses the value of language within elite circles in Georgian society: ‘The British upper classes have always understood the value of language and the necessity to decode it. They stakeout their territory with a vocabulary that could only be acquired after years of inside knowledge’.³⁹¹ It was a code which, Lambert suggests, maintained the status quo and its cultural difference. It therefore actively promoted the tradition of separation and perpetuated internal cohesion and persistence. Those outside their class found their

³⁸⁸ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.71.

³⁸⁹ Lambert, *Unquiet Souls*, p.94

³⁹⁰ Gertler to Marsh, July 1913, as quoted in Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.113

³⁹¹ Lambert, *Unquiet Souls*, p.94

vocabulary incomprehensible, while at the same time their language lent itself to being intimidatory. They not only distorted semantics but used terms and references to the educational experience that was indicative of that class, for example 'items of tribal folklore like the names of classrooms or the nicknames of masters at Eton and Harrow and only by those who attended these schools'.³⁹² In doing so this confirmed membership of the group, and effectively it was a closed world to those outside this realm of experience. The influence, as Lambert infers, is one where it is inherently indisposed to change. They were symbols and traditions of a representation of reality whose separate identity remained constant in an ever-changing world. They were 'used as passwords, as were surnames, estates, material history, family motto and heraldic quartering of the aristocracy'.³⁹³

This closed system of language, as Lambert defines it, describes the language specific to upper-class Georgian society. However, to substantiate the claim that language contributed to the social exclusion which dogged Gertler within the assimilation process it would be useful to consider this within an interpretative theoretical framework. Such a framework was developed by Basil Bernstein,³⁹⁴ whose studies within the field of sociolinguistics can be translated as a sociology of language. They extrapolate the relationships between social class, patterns of language and the primary socialisation of the child. Central to this theoretical framework is the concept of the sociolinguistic code which, according to Bernstein, consists of two modes of speech, the elaborated and the restricted codes. Both, claims Bernstein, have a strong correlation between social class and educational attainment. They are also functions 'of different forms of social relationships'.³⁹⁵ The working class, he maintains, is limited to a restricted code: 'Primarily because of the subculture and the role systems of the family, community and work, we can expect a major problem of educability whose source lays not so much in the genetic code but in the culturally determined communication code'.³⁹⁶ Because of the inter-familial relations within the socialising agencies, the family and the school, argues Bernstein, the central value system of these institutions

³⁹² Lambert, *Unquiet Souls*, p.94

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Basil Bernstein, Professor in the Sociology of Education, head of the Sociological Research Unit, University of London Institute of Education

³⁹⁵ Basil Bernstein and Dorothy Henderson, 'Social Class, Linguistic Codes and Grammatical Elements', *Language and Speech*, 5 4 (1962), p.221

³⁹⁶ Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, Vol. 1, *Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p.151

will affect the linguistic code of the child, which functions to regulate the social relationships within the child's specific social structure.

I propose that Gertler's language suffered from a social and cultural deficit, which contributed to the experience of his student years inside and outside the Slade. He suffered from a constant feeling of exclusion and class inferiority, as Gilbert Cannan inferred, manifested in a self-consciousness about language difference.³⁹⁷ Cannan wrote a novel, using Gertler's life as its basis, which was published in 1916 under the title *Mendel*, a Yiddish name which Gertler's family had often used for him.³⁹⁸ Cannan describes Mendel's early days at the Slade, or the Detmold, as it appears in the novel. The book provides us with some real insight as to how Gertler experienced his marginalisation and isolation, for, as the artist revealed, in 'later years, his words were used almost verbatim'.³⁹⁹ It highlights the extent to which language use determined difference.

Gertler's experience illustrates the divisive phenomenon of language, where intonation and mode of speech become formative in a sociocultural confrontation, and where the artist's student memoirs acknowledge the impact of linguistic differences and the way it determined his behaviour. This division in the modes of speech explains Gertler's unresponsiveness to linguistic expression in an environment characterised by the dominant speech mode and his attempt at parodying the upper-class mode of speech. Clearly, this reminiscence reflects the artist's awareness that linguistic difference interfered with his equal participation in class. It is not surprising, given the implications of Bernstein's hypothesis, that he faced a serious practical dilemma as to how to orally respond in class. He therefore preferred to remain mute and avoid the risk of disparagement and likely ridicule by his cultural peers. Gertler, as he described his experience to Cannan, suffered from linguistic alienation caused by his lower-class background. After all, 'he was the first working-class Jewish student of his generation',⁴⁰⁰ to enter the Slade in the twentieth century.

These were the episodes which, according to the artist, expressed communication differences that were all too apparent. I propose that Bernstein's

³⁹⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.34

³⁹⁸ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.118

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ J.R. Taylor, *Bernard Meninsky* (Bristol: Redcliff Press, 1990), p.12, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.34

sociolinguistic framework provides a means by which one can interpret the prescriptive nature of Gertler's assimilation process. Gertler could not escape from the feeling of alienation, nowhere more so than when the artist was in the company of Cambridge intelligentsia through his association with Edward Marsh. In the presence of such people he became acutely aware of language as a reflective process and as a communication phenomenon which was based on and affected by class. This became evident to the artist when he tried to compete on a sophisticated level within discourse where the complexity and elaborated process of language could not be negotiated by the restricted simple language structure of his own class. On occasions like this, the divisive nature of language and its process became a means of asserting differences. As Gertler remarked, 'I was born from a working man. I haven't had a grand education and I don't understand all this abstract intellectual nonsense!'⁴⁰¹ His social commentary exemplifies his awareness of the linguistic differences attached to status groups 'distinguished by a form of speech'.⁴⁰² The artist clearly recognised language as a speaking practice which identifies group membership. As he commented, 'they talk well, argue masterly'.⁴⁰³ The upper classes epitomised one dominant mode of language use, an elaborate code, which not only reinforced the social group sharedness, but was attributed to the clear function of the social class. As the artist commented, there seems to be 'a bridge of tremendous length between such people and myself', and went on to say 'perhaps it's merely a difference of class'.⁴⁰⁴ This representation of reality, although prohibitive to Gertler, was applicable to the conservative, religious and assimilated membership of Anglo-Jewry.

Gertler's relationship to his prosperous patrons and Jewish family the Wertheimers started to decline in 1911, and as McDougall states, that year was characterised by Gertler's 'testy relations with the family' and culminated 'in his explosive rejection of their interference at the close of the year'.⁴⁰⁵ Before this episode Gertler in his relationship to this Jewish patronage was marked by feelings of humiliation and the patronising attitude that he was subjected to by his patrons: 'this treatment made him feel utterly and crushingly foreign'⁴⁰⁶ and who was regarded with

⁴⁰¹ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, December 1913, in Noel Carrington (ed.) *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965), p.60

⁴⁰² Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, p.61

⁴⁰³ Letter from Mark Gertler to Edward Marsh, October 1913, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.57.

⁴⁰⁴ Letter, From Mark Gertler to Edward Marsh, October 1913, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.9

⁴⁰⁵ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.53

⁴⁰⁶ Cannan, *Mendel*, p.124, as quoted by McDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.58

‘cold disdain.’⁴⁰⁷ In this respect he was made acutely aware by his patrons of where he came from and his origins. His extreme sensitivity engendered by the attitude he received from the Birnstein and Wertheimer families evoked the artist’s harsh criticism of them, and he later became dismissive of the rich Anglo-Jewry, of whom he later referred to a friend as ‘patronizing horrors’.⁴⁰⁸

Other families figured highly in Anglo-Jewry, such as the Montagues and the Sassoons. However, within upper-middle-class and aristocratic circles, it was the Rothschilds that first found favour with the Prince of Wales, who later became Edward VII. From his earliest years ‘the Prince discovered a special affinity with Jews’.⁴⁰⁹ He stayed with members of the Rothschild family, whose ornate palaces, replete with superb paintings and furniture, arose to dominate the Buckinghamshire landscape’.⁴¹⁰ Kathleen Adler refers to Edward VII’s disposition to wealthy Jews, which she refers to as the ‘Jewish court’,⁴¹¹ and William Rubenstein characterises this historical epoch between 1870 and 1914 as a ‘Golden Age’ of Jewish pre-eminence in British history. Rubenstein states that this preponderance of Jews in social positions was unprecedented and came to make up the Jewish court of friendship and patronage that surrounded King Edward VII. The Rothschilds became loyal confidantes to the Prince, for example Anthony de Rothschild, who was the ‘Prince’s earliest independent financial confidante’.⁴¹² The intimacy of his friendship was perhaps most expressed when ‘On 14 January 1881, the Prince of Wales delighted the Jewish community of London by attending a synagogue and signing the register at the wedding of Leopold de Rothschild.’⁴¹³

The permeability of upper-class culture for Anglo-Jewry in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era is quite striking. Its members, like Nathaniel Rothschild, went to Oxford and therefore shared what Lambert has described as the separateness of the elitism of Edwardian society and its identity. Lambert suggests that the historical reality of the tradition stresses the distinctive and social differentiation of the group and denotes the similarities of educational background. A criterion that people must be and

⁴⁰⁷ Cannan, *Mendel*, p.124, as quoted by McDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.58

⁴⁰⁸ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dorothy Brett, July 1913 in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.61

⁴⁰⁹ Philip Magnus, *King Edward The Seventh* (London: John Murray, 1964), p.106

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Kathleen Adler, ‘John Singer Sargent’s Portraits of the Wertheimer Family’ in Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the Text*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.85

⁴¹² William D. Rubenstein, ‘Jews Among Top British Wealth Holders, 1887-1969 Decline of the Golden Age’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 34:1 (1972), p.73

⁴¹³ Magnus, *King Edward The Seventh*, p.106

feel themselves as being similar to each other, and distinct from others in certain ways, is represented, as Lambert suggests, as a fossilised language which conjures up a world of nostalgia and an old-fashioned historical past.⁴¹⁴

Gertler's initial engagement with Marsh's coterie highlights the self-awareness of the members of this group and their social personality, where the use of language agreed with the subjective character of their social category. As Tajfel suggests, it was a consensus which created clear-cut group boundaries and, more pertinently for Gertler, an awareness that the nature of language was brutally class-conscious. Gertler found that the language responsiveness of the upper middle class had social consequences, i.e. they socially validated their minority membership, and drew inferences that Gertler did not belong to their group.⁴¹⁵ Gerard Lemaire explores whether the variable of social categorisation per se is sufficient to create discrimination and the role of social categorisation in inter-group behaviour 'with the significance that such membership assumes for the subject'.⁴¹⁶ Lemaire argues that categorisation establishes or is closely interrelated with social identity, and this means of differentiation 'splits the social universe up into us and them'.⁴¹⁷ It is this categorisation that determines for a group their difference to other groups.

Recent studies by Tajfel draw the conclusions that under certain conditions the mere classification of subjects into in- and out-groups is a sufficient as well as a necessary condition to induce forms of in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out- group. For Tajfel this process of mutual differentiation strongly correlates with the membership of the group. It was realised by negative attitudes which reinforced the psychological reality for the individual or made him feel a member of a minority. As Woodeson points out, the attitudes projected onto Gertler by Marsh's coterie caused him to 'storm out of the room', because they tried to 'argue him down about painting'.⁴¹⁸ The artist's feelings were expressed in diatribes through many bitter letters which denounced the upper echelons of Edwardian society, so much so that it invoked a fantasy of violent class retribution in his imagination. This was particularly relevant when he went to Shaw's play *The Doctor's Dilemma*. The after-effects he expressed in a letter: 'Last night I couldn't sleep, and I wanted to weep so it upset me. I feel that I

⁴¹⁴ Lambert, *Unquiet Souls*, p.94

⁴¹⁵ Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Minorities*, p.6

⁴¹⁶ Gerard Lemaire, 'Social Differentiation and Social Originality', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 4(1), p25

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Letter from Mark Gertler to Edward Marsh, *MGSL*, p.57 as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.115

should like to excite all the working-class to, one night, break into these theatres and destroy all these pleasure seekers.’⁴¹⁹ This was one of many letters written in 1913 which demonstrated a class hatred and ‘anger and deep ambivalence in relation to his experience of assimilation’.⁴²⁰

Gertler’s attempt to assimilate into the social world of Marsh became an unpalatable experience, invoking great unease and contempt. Gerzina observed that because of his lack of education he would ‘sit mute as the learned Cambridge people argued’.⁴²¹ We can only imagine how culturally excluding this must have been for the young artist, and this initial diffidence, as Gerzina stated, also led to Gertler’s increasing hostility. The linguistics and aesthetics of the members of this social group proved incomprehensible and antipathetic to the young artist. The aesthetics promoted by dominant Bloomsbury culture was considered by Gertler to be too cerebral. The painters of Bloomsbury, Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, what Richard Shrone called ‘The Holy Trinity of Formalism’,⁴²² reflected this outlook. Their approach was represented by a homogeneity of style and a commonality of aesthetic evaluation, and it circumscribed the Bloomsbury critique whose practice was based on the formal considerations that a work exhibited in terms of the qualities of line, colour, mass and volume. It was an aesthetic whose analysis did not give an indication of its social context, or divulge elements of ideological significance to the subject matter.

For Fry, it represented a doctrine where form in itself was considered pure and uncorrupted by the associations of existence and human history.⁴²³ In this respect, for Fry, it represented itself as being ‘more profound and more significant spiritually than any of the emotions which had to do with life’.⁴²⁴ As such, it was a critical language that rejected all that was superfluous - descriptive detail, incident psychology, all things human except those which served a pretext merely for the expression of form’.⁴²⁵ It avoided any references to that which was beyond the picture plane. It was an aesthetic that was self-contained, representing an artistic construction which is independent and is

⁴¹⁹ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, Christmas 1913, pp.58-9, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.89

⁴²⁰ Letters, Gertler to his friends Dora Carrington, Edward Marsh and the Hon. Dorothy Brett, *MGS* as quoted by Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.116

⁴²¹ Holbrook Gerzina, *Carrington*, p.49

⁴²² Richard Shrone, *The Art of Bloomsbury*, (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1999), p.11

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p.88

⁴²⁴ William Gaunt, *The Aesthetic Adventure*, (London: Cardinal, 1975), p.207

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

serving a simple human need for 'abstract beauty'.⁴²⁶ This was achieved according to the Bloomsbury aesthetics by the 'right distribution of elements in the found structure', resulting in 'a well constructed, intelligently organized sense of forms, which are also a direct result of some powerful feeling of the part of the artist'.⁴²⁷ The onlooker, it was hoped, would be open to 'an uplifting experience'.⁴²⁸ By contrast, Gertler's aesthetic was the subjectivised expression of the heart rather than the head; the latter characterising Bloomsbury aesthetics: In MacDougall's words 'Through his life he advocated that painting should not come from the head but from the heart, the view that brought him into conflicts with the 'dominant Bloomsbury aesthetic'.⁴²⁹ The artist's aesthetic and artistic sensibility emphasised a personal expression and vision predicated on moral sentiments and virtues of honesty and integrity, and a realism which expressed the hardness and harshness of existence.

I would argue that Gertler's creation of the 1913 painting of Golda might reflect a central act of expiation, an expression of anger and frustration in class and ethic terms. The motif of Golda in the 1913 painting, like its subsequent portrayal, became a means of negotiating these tensions, while simultaneously sustaining a personal position, a moral rectitude and a deposition of faith, where truth and integrity were symbolised in a painted image. The 1913 portrait of Golda can be seen as the summation of a moral imperative and a radical departure in style which reflected his experience in the turmoils of the assimilation process. Whereas the feelings of the young artist were understated in *The Apple Woman* of 1912, the 1913 portrait becomes a locus of expression and combativeness, bursting forth due to the continuous strain of assimilation upon a young mind and body. It reflects a metaphor by which his identity was negotiated. It was a realism invested in an image which for Gertler was inseparable from the nature of life on earth as a matter of observable fact. The painting can be seen as a portrait with gravitas, a painting of the heart, of the 'profundity of the soul', and a manifesto of the artist's aesthetics which also expressed an indignation.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, the image might be read as a renunciation of the soulless expression of an aesthetics monopolised by privileged people whose shallow pleasure-seeking lives mirrored their views on contemporary art. Gertler suggested that the painting was partly a sublimation of his

⁴²⁶ Jacqueline V. Falkenheim, *Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism*, (Michigan University Research Press, 1980), p.89

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.88

⁴²⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.89

⁴³⁰ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.115

intellectual prowess in discursive debate, where he felt lacking, and which put him at an immediate disadvantage when he was in the company of Marsh's upper-middle-class peers. The sheer weight of reality invested in *The Artist's Mother* would be a testament of the truthfulness of life, which was absent in the 'pretty decorativeness' of the Cambridge aesthetics, whose soulless expression reflected 'their watered down view of art'.⁴³¹ As such, Gertler proclaimed that through his art he would triumph 'over those learned Cambridge youths'.⁴³²

Like many of his contemporaries, Gertler embraced Romantic bohemianism, whose spiritual roots lay in the gypsy tradition. It fundamentally challenges the basis of society, that of the family and the role of women: 'It amounted to a domestic revolution' and was expressed in the daily lives of those who sought alternatives.⁴³³ Essentially, to embrace its ideal meant a 'collision of values with the older generation' which openly shocked the bourgeoisie.⁴³⁴ It was an attractive proposition for fugitives from social convention who sought refuge in a bohemia. This was realised in the display of attitudes, behaviour and dress codes. Gertler's *Apple Woman* of 1912 was symptomatic of the fascination which Tickner labels 'local orientation'.⁴³⁵ Nicholson states: 'We now translate the French word "Bohemian" as "Gypsy"',⁴³⁶ as does Wilson, who argues:

In France, 'bohemian' had been the traditional term for Gypsies, because they were thought to have come from Bohemia in Central Europe. Early nineteenth-century researches traced the Gypsies' language, Romany, back to Sanskrit, which suggested that the wandering tribes had actually originated in India, but the name with its multiple derivations persisted.⁴³⁷

Both Wilson and Tickner have realised the contextual importance of the emergence of the bohemian. Both place the bohemian on the 'urban stage'.⁴³⁸ Wilson focused on the myth which sought to reconcile art with individual capitalism and its commodification, which were incompatible. Bohemia became a cultural myth about

⁴³¹ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dorothy Brett, (early) January 1914, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, pp.63-4, as quoted in Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.115

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Letter from Mark Gertler to Edward Marsh, Oct 13, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL* p.87

⁴³⁴ Virginia Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians* (London: Viking, 2002), p.7

⁴³⁵ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.56

⁴³⁶ Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians*, p.xvi

⁴³⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts*, (London and New York: IB Taurus, 2002), p.21

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p.56

art and its relationship in modernity, an ‘imaginary solution to the problem of art in industrial Western societies’.⁴³⁹

From this ideological position we may well understand Gertler’s attitude towards the civilising force of the bourgeoisie. Whatever the nature of the differences expressed by the artist, there is an argument that there was a marked correspondence in his artistic style. Steyn recognises that in 1913 his work reflected a big change, and MacDougall is more specific in identifying this change: ‘Gertler began to develop this “primitive”, simplified language in his art at the same time as he began to acquire greater social sophistication, chiefly through his friendship with Marsh.’⁴⁴⁰ *The Artist’s Mother*, I propose, constitutes an intense response engendered by his social encounters during assimilation, which realised a significant change in style. It is a painting which could be said to have been forged in social battle, where a maelstrom of feelings of social inferiority were concretised in his working procedure. Therefore this perhaps explains why the portrait of Golda has a combative and confrontational presence, compared to its predecessor, the *Apple Woman* of 1912.

The 1913 portrait reflects an evident sharpening up in Gertler’s artistic style, best described as harsh and primitive. This is translated by a direct forthright overall application of the paint which ‘lies heavy and inert’.⁴⁴¹ In the portrait, the artist’s mother as subject and motif mirrors the life that he and his family knew, a reality which was full of hardship and privations and conveyed the idea of truth and sincerity as a formal means of authentic expression through the language of paint. The artist hoped that the embodiment of this moral imperative would be directly translated through his delivery of painting on the canvas. As Steyn points out, ‘The paint is applied thickly, as heavy as the objects in the material world which the artist seeks to transcribe.’⁴⁴² Realism is concerned with creating a balance between truth and visual experience and its imaginative transformation via the medium paint.⁴⁴³ The portrait depicts his mother Golda as the peasant, a worker, who is a subject worthy of painting. It is an earthy image which suggests a dignity of labour and, as Steyn suggests, a ‘moral imperative’. This is emphasised by ‘her rough hands that dominate the image’.⁴⁴⁴ They are the hands of a worker, a provider, and can be seen as a metaphor for tools, symbolic of work. This

⁴³⁹ Wilson, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts*, p.3

⁴⁴⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.58

⁴⁴¹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.118

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p.120

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.118

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.117

is given credence because 'they appear larger than life'.⁴⁴⁵ In the painting the environment Golda inhabits is domestic, the kitchen, which again underlines the fact that she is the provider of food in the family. This relationship is symbolically translated by the kitchen implements being connected to the body, particularly by the spoon in the bowl behind her.

The body, in turn, particularly the physicality of the hands, replicates the material implements behind her. As such they both take on the same materiality by the sheer application of paint. Paint is brutally applied and expressed in terms of its physicality. It is so thickly applied that the sitter's body and the objects possess the same materiality and physical weight: 'paint is applied thickly, consonant with the weight of the body, a basin, fruit'.⁴⁴⁶ Gertler's preoccupation with his moral imperative was denoted by an authenticity of expression, and the idea of truth and sincerity is pushed further in this painting. By virtue of its intense primitiveness, the painting takes on a 'barbaric and symbolic'⁴⁴⁷ quality in the artist's quest to elevate his painting and to express the sorrow of mankind, the painting 'suggests suffering and a life that has known hardship'.⁴⁴⁸

For Steyn, the portrait of 1913 entered into this category, which was defined in the discourse of the time as being protean in nature. That is, it shifted, and in doing so it was perceived to breach the parameters of Edwardian femininity. As such, it could cut across the line and moved 'from the acceptable mother (civilized and middle-class) to the unacceptable (uncivilized and barbaric)'.⁴⁴⁹

Everything in *The Artist's Mother* has been simplified to reinforce a certain barbarism. The application of the paint parallels the formal design, and as such there is no discrimination. Overall the picture has been treated in the same painterly way. The woman, Golda, is monumental; body and objects are immobile, and her eyes have a fixed stare. It reinforces her statuesque appearance, while her large hands rest wearily on her lap. It is a step beyond the subtle realism of *The Apple Woman and Her Husband* in its formal artistic language and the crude direct application of paint. For Steyn, the projection of the artist's ambivalence is all too clear. It is implicit in the artist's

⁴⁴⁵ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.117

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p.118

⁴⁴⁷ Letter from Gertler to the Honourable Dorothy Brett, July 1913, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, pp. 54-5

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.118

deliberate use of the primitive, and the social significance and interpretation placed on it by society:

In the art discourses of the time, the idea of the primitive oscillated in its meanings. It is used either to connote closeness to nature, truth and sincerity or to signify the barbaric and uncivilized. Hence the term could be used for abuse. These tensions meet in the archaic forms of the matriarch imaged by Gertler.⁴⁵⁰

Gertler, via his use of the primitive, can be seen as being provocative, creating an image which directly conflicted with the notion of motherhood and civilisation. The painting promotes an image which attempts to undermine the value system of bourgeois culture. The image is at odds with contemporary visual construction of domesticity and patriarchy. This is expressed by a monumentality in its painterly treatment and design. Golda is magnified, her portrayal is pressed against the picture plane and thrust out towards the spectator, creating a disquiet and uncertainty that

The images vacillate between comfort and power, love and terror, beauty and ugliness, sensuality and denial. As a whole perhaps these “matriarchaic” incarnations can stand in all their ambivalence as a metaphor for assimilation, which was for Gertler an experience marked by feelings of deep ambiguity, tension and contradiction.⁴⁵¹

Multiple meanings implicit in this peasant ethnic image reflected the fluid emotional currents that the artist was experiencing at this stage in his life. In depicting Golda as a peasant ethnic image, the artist can be seen as directly attacking middle-class values and its notion of the family and the reverence that it gave to domesticity. The conflict arising through class exists with the promotion of an ethnic image which opposes the civilised notion of gentility. As Steyn suggests, it illustrated his confusion with the value system within his process of assimilation.

Correspondence by the artist reveals deep antagonism, and an awareness of his new social existence in class terms. However, class was served by the use of the primitive. In the painting the mother is portrayed as a peasant and a member of an ethnic minority, and presents a construct of Jewishness which was other than that which was accepted by British middle-class society. The picture can be translated as the image of the foreign Jew, the alien, and of a Jewishness that Gertler re-identifies with himself. He portrayed an ethnicity which the process of assimilation tried to eradicate. In this

⁴⁵⁰ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.119

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. p.118

respect, the artist is repudiating the embodiment of values which assimilation promoted by flagrantly flouting an orthodoxy as a measure of self-worth. His portrayal of Golda personalised his depiction of people of everyday life within the separatist Jewish community. Yet, despite this, the vocabulary of difference inherent within Christian secular culture is stressed, for ultimately Jews within the cultural world of Christianity get 'caught up in a system of representation'.⁴⁵² Gertler was no exception in perceiving himself through the eyes of the dominant culture, with a sense of difference which impacted on him, who through his self-hatred projected a stereotype onto his parent. The painting becomes a personal site for the authenticity of his Jewishness, while reflecting an even stronger anti-assimilative position.

The artist's projection of otherness transforms Golda into the peasant, the primitive that is closer to nature. She is wearing a headscarf which he used as a motif in his earlier paintings of her. The artist conforms to a discourse that is racialised. It is argued that he is perceiving himself through the eyes of the dominant culture and its discourse that firmly places the Jew closer to nature and in opposition to reason. Within this criterion the artist's self-hatred essentialised the Jewish specificity as primitive. It is an otherness whose essence cannot share the same reality as prescribed by reason. It was a perception of the self, projected into the world, which assigned a difference which the artist accepted, and his difference becomes her.

The motif of the painting became a metaphor for a re-identification with the ethnic values of the past. Gertler's accumulated experiences within the anglicisation process realised the mendacity of this vision, propagated by bourgeois society. Within this painting we can see Gertler redeeming the disavowal of his authentic Jewishness. By doing so, he reclaimed the central space that had been marginalised by modernity to the private sphere of society. That is, the requirement for a Jew to become English meant the effacement of the outward expression of Jewish identity that, according to modernity, should be hidden and not be publicly displayed. What the artist did not discern was the psychological nature of assimilation and the doublebind, a self-hatred, which emanates from the 'outsider's acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group – that group in society which they see as defining them – as a reality'.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵²Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.236

⁴⁵³Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.2

However, it was not a reality; it was an illusionary identity created by the reference group. It was a myth which contained an inherent polar opposition: 'On the one hand is the liberal fantasy that anyone is welcome to share in the power of the reference group if he abides by the rules that define that group. But these rules are the 'very definition of the other'.⁴⁵⁴ To the outsider it was irresistible, a rallying cry, a means of recruitment and of turning difference into 'the same'.⁴⁵⁵ It was an invitation by the dominant group to allow the outsider to abandon the flawed particularity of his or her difference. In this culture of assimilation set by the dominant group, argues Gilman, there is 'the hidden qualification of the internalized reference group, the conservation curse'.⁴⁵⁶ The very fact that the outsider wants to share the power of the dominant group reflects the recognition that there is an awareness of the outsider being unauthentic, a 'shoddy counterfeit'; 'all of this plays itself within the outsider'.⁴⁵⁷ To an outsider like Gertler it represented a double bind which created conflicts and irreconcilabilities. However, such contradictions are internalised by the outsider as part of their flawed particularity. They are individualised rather than being seen as a result of the structure and attitudes of the dominant group. The irreconcilability of the double bind becomes an 'extension of themselves', a notion which is interiorised, and one which encourages the outsider to think to themselves 'perhaps I am truly different'.⁴⁵⁸

The internalisation of assigned difference by racial discourse engendered a self-hatred which transformed the understanding of Jewish essence and shaped the artist's mind. The system of the representation of difference, of an otherness, became his, and one which he externalised onto the outside world in *The Artist's Mother*. He perceived himself through the eyes of the dominant group, where, although trying to be invisible, his physical being is marked and made invisible. The painting therefore displays attributes which subscribe to a racialised discourse of modernity which uses categorisation to confirm stereotypes of ethnic and cultural difference.

⁴⁵⁴ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.2

⁴⁵⁵ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.9

⁴⁵⁶ Bryan Cheyette, 'The Other Self: Anglo-Jewish Fiction and the Representation of Jews in England, 1875-1905', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.99

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.2

Chapter 5

A Family Transformed: *The Rabbi and his Grandchild,* *The Jewish Family, The Family Group*

The 'primitivism' of *The Artist's Mother* of 1913 reflected a simplification of form which was to characterise the paintings of Gertler's Jewish subjects during this period. I shall argue that this cluster of paintings was the result of a confluence of styles. It was the eclectic nature of the artist which predetermined a working procedure where he borrowed, or reworked, to be exact, the best from a multiplicity of styles. A conscious expression of existence was imaginatively translated through the medium of oil paint, where his sense of alienation affirmed 'a version of otherness or Jewishness in which qualities of sincerity, truth and comfort vested'.⁴⁵⁹ His idiosyncratic notion of realism provided him with a language through which these values could be articulated.

The thesis has proposed that the artist's paintings of Jewish subjects were predicated on a polemic in terms of their representation of otherness. Through this representation Gertler sought to establish values which might be commensurate with his Jewish identity. It was, as Steyn has suggested, a 'way of enunciating them that he interpreted as being in conflict with those of the English middle class, represented for and to him by Carrington and her crowd'.⁴⁶⁰ This included their championing of modernism and its aesthetics in British art. Gertler's ethics and independence of mind prohibited him from being seduced by the dictates of 'the provincial Modernism in British art'.⁴⁶¹ As a language it did not have any personal relevance to 'what he wanted to express about life'.⁴⁶²

Gertler, owed artistic debts to a variety of influences, from those who taught in the immediate environment of the Slade, for example Tonks, Steer and Rothenstein, to those featured in the first and second Post-Impressionist exhibitions organised by Roger

⁴⁵⁹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.120

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p.46

⁴⁶² John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.114

Fry: Gauguin, Cézanne and Van Gogh at the first exhibition and, more importantly for the artist, the dominance of the paintings of Matisse and Picasso at the second. I propose that these paintings had a profound effect on the young artist. The significance of these influences on the artist's mind was remarked on by the artist himself decades later. He recalled: 'The entry of Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse etc., upon my horizon was equivalent to the impact of the scientists of this age upon a simple student of Sir Isaac Newton'.⁴⁶³

For some of the contemporary audience, faced with these Continental canvases, a revision of ideas was precipitated. Within the normative cultural framework, this revisionism was considered dangerous as it presented a real threat to the very notions of what 'a work of art is in the first place'.⁴⁶⁴ It created questions around the validation and distinction of good and bad art, and for the art establishment it directly challenged the canon of academic art and the idealism of form in Renaissance art. To this extent, Fry's exhibitions, according to Nash, incited 'a national upheaval'⁴⁶⁵ with regard to the canon of art. Perhaps because of the insular nature of British art institutions, the 'shock was great'⁴⁶⁶ for the contemporary art public and its institutions. There were those in the art establishment who were stimulated to vitriolic outbursts, where writers and speakers in their interpretation and assessment of these canvases 'found evidence of "horror", "madness", "infection", "sickness" of the social "putrescence", "pornography", anarchy and evil'.⁴⁶⁷ The Continental canvases of the Post-Impressionists produced a national outcry and a shock which reverberated through the corridors of art institutions nationwide, the epitome of which was the Royal Academy, which found them 'simply unmentionable'.⁴⁶⁸ More pertinent to the direct experience of Gertler was the attitude taken to these works by the teaching staff at the Slade. Tonks felt that they constituted a real threat; to him the language of the new painting was problematic and unacceptable to such an extent that he actively tried to persuade his students to avoid Fry's exhibitions and 'not to study the new art'.⁴⁶⁹

Post-Impressionism, as such, threatened the curricular studies at the Slade, for exposure to such artistic language might, it was felt, dissuade the students from learning

⁴⁶³ Anon. Mark Gertler, *Studio*, September 1932, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.114

⁴⁶⁴ Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939*, p.46

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p.65

⁴⁶⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.93

⁴⁶⁷ Harrison, *English Art and Modernism*, p.47

⁴⁶⁸ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.93

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., p.94

the skills that Tonks was 'trying to teach them'.⁴⁷⁰ These were specifically the canons of academic tradition based on the Antique Rooms and the human figure, and the idealism of Renaissance art. What these new ideas about art fundamentally called into question was the 'learning' of art, primarily of the human figure, which no longer seemed valid: 'So idealised in Renaissance, art might now be shown hideously distorted or perhaps completely fragmented and indicated merely by a few signs.'⁴⁷¹ This radical re-evaluation was perceived as undermining the methodology and apprenticeship at the Slade. Long and extensive training in drawing was now thrown into question. Gertler himself was upset, for 'he had spent years mastering techniques and a style which suddenly looked out of date'.⁴⁷²

Gertler was no different to the other students at the Slade who were products of traditional training and methods learned in their early student years. Yet despite the upset caused to him by Fry's 1910 exhibition, Gertler's independent spirit absorbed the modern movement, as it had done with other previous artistic languages, for example the pre-Renaissance Italian masters, where he made a 'close study of the early Florentines'.⁴⁷³ The relevance of this, I suggest, is that the paintings of Jewish themes created in 1913 were a product of the conflation of the artist's absorption of stylistic influences up to this period which also included not only Post-Impressionism but also conserved versions of Florentine painting.

During 1913 he felt acute discomfort because, I would like to suggest, his capacity to assimilate was impeded by his contextual position, that is, by the presence of cultural obstacles within his Jewish context. These presented a resistance to the strategic principle of assimilation, namely the effacement of Jewish identity and 'otherness'. Writers like Tickner and Steyn, I contend, do not fully appreciate the implications of this for Gertler's assimilatory process and why his deeply felt ambivalence created a problematic and protracted process. Like his fellow student at the Slade, Stanley Spencer, Gertler still lived at home. The family lived in Whitechapel in the Jewish East End. The implications of this was that Gertler's Jewish 'otherness' was continually reinforced by the influence of his home environment, an environment steeped in cultural memories and religious heritage and rituals circumscribed by a geographical space which constituted a separate area. This area was one demarcated by the barrier of

⁴⁷⁰ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.94

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ *The Star*, December 1912, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.361

language, both written and spoken, against the surrounding Gentile area of the host country.

Within this Jewish enclave Gertler's Jewish identity, like that of any other Jew, became the embodiment of the environment and its community. First and foremost it was denoted by the singularity of the Jews and 'those customary practices that mark the distinction from the rest of Christian Society',⁴⁷⁴ in particular the barrier of a common language, Yiddish. Woodeson and MacDougall comment on this as being the language that was historically spoken in the Gertler household, which is substantiated by the fact that 'Mark continued to speak Yiddish to Golda for the rest of his life.'⁴⁷⁵ How plausible was it, given these circumstances, that Gertler's ethnic identity could undergo a profound transformation within the omnipresence of his Jewish environment? Ostensibly, assimilation prescribed that the individual should make a radical break from his or her historic past and its consciousness. Arguably Gertler's position made the escape from strangerhood impossible, and therefore militated against his attempts to meet the demands of the dominant culture to renounce his communal loyalty and past.

Assimilation/modernisation was a process, Bauman has observed, which was also a cultural crusade which declared that the 'strangers' original state is a stain that has to be washed off.⁴⁷⁶ Given Gertler's situational position, we can readily discern his dilemma; he became personally torn between cultural inheritances, one to remain Jewish and the coercive process of assimilation to become English, therefore accepting one heritage at the expense of another. We can only speculate on the difficulties that he may have had in reconciling the coexistence of the Jewish and Gentile worlds, or, more to the point, in dealing with the irreconcilabilities of the different experiences and traditions of these worlds. I argue that it created a dichotomous situation for the artist where his diverse loyalties must have made him feel 'torn by being Jewish and by being English'.⁴⁷⁷ Given these circumstances, the artist had to practice switching identities between 'private' and 'public', between 'family' and 'school'.⁴⁷⁸ I suggest that the implication of this was that it created a hybrid identity, a double consciousness because of this contextual position. Ostensibly there is a duplicity in Gertler's existence where he is trapped in a play of appearances that inevitably provoked the tensions of

⁴⁷⁴ Nancy A. Harrowitz, *Anti-Semitism, Mysogyny and the Logic of Cultural Difference*, p.43

⁴⁷⁵ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.12

⁴⁷⁶ Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.71

⁴⁷⁷ Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.8

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9

ambivalence. To this extent I suggest that the artist was caught up in a process of self-policing, where, according to context, he felt the need to conceal his Jewish 'otherness'.

I argue that Gertler, by 1913, had realised the ultimate futility of his initial assimilatory hopes, and that, as a process, he recognised that it had intrinsic limits. I would propose that each of the three paintings of Jewish themes are focused and reflect, in their own way, the collapse of the artist's assimilatory adventure. The Enlightenment dream that he once believed in had turned, by 1913, into feelings of moral outrage at the values that he had once embraced. I would suggest that these paintings reflect different facets of his predicament, which had accumulated at this time and which provoked a longing for a way out.

The Rabbi and His Grandchild.

The thesis will examine the formal representation of *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* (1913; Figure 21), its history and its stylistic development, all of which demonstrates the eclecticism of the artist. The painting reflects a contrast of age, a rabbi in his senior years and his grandchild. However, the title of the painting is misleading, as it did not in fact express an actual relationship; rather, it was a fiction. The relationship was not authentic; they were not related, did not know each other and had never met. In fact the painting itself was initially never conceived as a double portrait, but was a conflation of two separate paintings that Gertler consciously brought together to create a double portrait reminiscent of the 1910 painting of his father and mother, *The Artist's Parents*.

The model for the grandchild was Dora Dlaskowsky, a local girl who was, at the time of the sittings, eight years old and who

went to his Elder Street studio two or three times a week after school to sit until the light went, receiving 2s 6d for each sitting. Over this period Gertler executed several pencil drawings of her, both head and shoulders and three quarters face, but she did not recall him ever using paints.⁴⁷⁹

At one stage the artist had added another girl's head, but decided to paint it out. The painting started out as separate pencil drawings of the subjects, one of which was later

⁴⁷⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.80

exhibited under the title *The Old Jew*; ‘suddenly however, he wrote to Carrington, he conceived the idea of combining the two pictures’.⁴⁸⁰

The paintings underwent continued reworking and transition until the artist decided on the predominant portrayal of just two heads, one old and wrinkled, the other young and healthy. As we can see, the painting reflects a stark contrast in age, where the bony fingers of the old man touch, in a very delicate and sensitive way, the chin of the young girl, ‘raising it slightly’,⁴⁸¹ while it appears that his arm is around her shoulder. The old man’s bony fingers are accentuated and appear to be a bridge between the two portraits which simultaneously links them.⁴⁸² The painting can be seen to highlight the artist’s concern with the human condition and the frailty and temporal nature of existence, symbolised by a contrast between the beauty of youth and the decay of old age.

During the development of the painting, Gertler had at one stage decided to abandon it and had gone on holiday to Brighton. However, this brief vacation was to ironically inspire him to re-engage with the painting; for, as he strolled along the promenades of the seaside resort, the central concern of his canvas was actualised by what he saw: the stark contrast of youth and old age, of ‘invalids who were promenaded along the seafront – horrible old emaciated women who sit upright in chariots drawn by degraded and shabby men’.⁴⁸³ This vacation experience gave him a renewed energy to rework the canvas on his return in April. At times it went badly and he grew disgusted with his ‘horrible incompetence’.⁴⁸⁴ However, despite the trials and tribulations he managed to bring the canvas to a satisfying conclusion in May 1913. Ironically, after all the reworking and frustration involved, ‘the final version was much nearer to his original version’.⁴⁸⁵

Stylistically ‘the simplification and exaggeration of the rabbi’s features’⁴⁸⁶ reflected the fact that Gertler’s work was moving in a new direction, and overall the painting was characterised by a simplification of form that reflected a confluence of at least three different influences. In this respect the painting is a multilayered cultural product, and embodies many styles that Gertler had to navigate

⁴⁸⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.80

⁴⁸¹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.123

⁴⁸² MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.81

⁴⁸³ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, 2 April 1913, in Carrington (ed.) *MGS*, p.51

⁴⁸⁴ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.81

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

through in his student years. This is remarked upon by Woodeson, who draws attention to similarities to Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of an Old Man and Child* in the Louvre.⁴⁸⁷

The thesis established how the Florentine bias of Slade pedagogy fostered the artist's early enthusiasm for the paintings of Early Renaissance artists like Piero della Francesca and Giovanni Bellini.⁴⁸⁸ These influences can be clearly seen in the profile of the old man, which exhibits the lingering Quattrocento influence by the way in which it is outlined by a fine dark line. The modelling of the features reflects a clear definition of contours, a concern championed in the Slade pedagogy. The colouring of the painting exhibits the luminous but muted tones of northern Europe, reminiscent of the German paintings of Holbein and Durer. The painting is dark; it is broken up by the luminous and whole portrayal of the grandchild, highlighted by the sparing use of red for lips and jewellery in contrast to the ashen paleness of the rabbi.⁴⁸⁹

However, the unity of the composition is held together by the bold, simple forms of Post-Impressionism, which is expressed in the exaggeration of features. More particularly, the Post-Impressionist Gauguin influenced Gertler when he saw the artist's canvases exhibited in 1911. The influence of Gauguin can be seen to dominate in the overall design of the painting, where the continuous silhouette of form, so characteristic of Gauguin, defines the whole composition.⁴⁹⁰

If we continue the analysis of *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* in terms of an expression of a self-hatred and a sense of difference by the artist, this was the result of Gertler's attempt to integrate into a 'society that was markedly anti-Semitic',⁴⁹¹ I shall go onto contend that this is evident in the rabbi's physiognomy. The painting had wider implications as regards a vocabulary of difference that connoted an historical representation of the Jew, one where 'images of Jewish difference inherent within the sphere of religion metamorphosised within the darkened image of the Jew'.⁴⁹² In this respect, the painting can be seen to represent an historic continuity of Jewish representation and a translation of racial stereotypes propagated by the gospel of Christian theology. In this ways it can be interpreted as articulating a sense of 'otherness' that realised the broader implications of a racial discourse and as constructing a difference and identity that has informed, historically, Western attitudes

⁴⁸⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.338

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p.335

⁴⁸⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, 2002, p.13

⁴⁹⁰ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.338

⁴⁹¹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.22

⁴⁹² Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.68

towards the Jews. As such *The Rabbi and His Grandchild*, I would argue, became an affirmation of otherness which was accepted by the artist as a false definition of the self.

By 1913 it was quite evident in Gertler's quest for self-erasure that resulted in an acute ambivalence, which seems to support the hypothesis of Gilman's perspective and its outcome. In *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* a disorder, I argue, is played out in the grotesque and caricatured facial features of the rabbi, where the painting reflects a distinct visual image of 'otherness' and a construction of racial difference. The physiognomy of the rabbi becomes a salient matter of the particularistic other, a Jewishness that reflects the fantasy of racial difference, and whose discourse and racial stereotypes express an historic continuity of anti-Semitic thought, where 'The construction of the Jews moves, with modernization, from the language of religion to the pseudoscientific mobilization of the category of race in the new nineteenth-century disciplines of anthropology, ethnology and biology.'⁴⁹³

I would propose that in his self-hatred Gertler subscribed to a code of difference that is underpinned by the scientific culture of the nineteenth century, where racial difference became predicated on the notions of racial biology and a diagnostic system that relied on the interpretation of external appearances, the physiognomic, to put forward assumptions about the pathological nature of the individual. The language of religion was replaced by a racial identity of the Jews, now contextualised within the racial biology of the nineteenth century, 'one which could be observed, measured, understood and pathologized'.⁴⁹⁴ The painting, I suggest, should be appraised within this secular scientific context, where racial difference is rationalised as a phenomenon which can be observed, then labelled as exhibiting the pathological or pathogenic qualities of the Jewish body.

In this respect, Gertler's painting invites us to pay conscious attention to its physiognomy as a distinct racial category whose inherent nature is predicated on a construct of difference that is absolute and immutable, an acknowledgement that 'a pathognomonic status of the Jew's body as a sign of the Jew's inherent difference'.⁴⁹⁵ Gertler's internalised sense of difference, translated into a visual representation that interpreted the nature of the Jew as having an unhealthy disposition and a capacity to carry disease.

⁴⁹³ Sander L. Gilman, 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the Modern Jewess' in Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, (eds.) *The Jew in the Text*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.22

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p.49

The facial features of the rabbi reveal salient markers of racial stereotypes that are part of the generalised vocabulary of difference in Western culture. In this way, I suggest, the artist has given the painting a status that corresponds to the assumptions of the scientific discourses and popular writings of the period. Discussions of the nature of race and the study of the images of the nineteenth century and the Jew were typical of the racial dialogue of writers like Johann Pezzel and his contemporary Joseph Rohrer. Such writers argued that the essential Jew was the Eastern European Jew, or the Galician Jew,⁴⁹⁶ from the Gertler's own ancestral home.⁴⁹⁷ As MacDougall points out, 'his parents, Louis and Kate (always known as Golda) were both natives of Przemysl in Galicia, then part of Austria-Poland'.⁴⁹⁸

Racist writers suggested that Jews from the East suffered from, 'disgusting skin diseases'⁴⁹⁹ that were apparent in their appearance, in 'the skin colour'.⁵⁰⁰ Skin was an outward manifestation of the Jew 'which mark[s] the Jew as different',⁵⁰¹ a salient marker, and other writers wrote about the 'blackness of the Jew',⁵⁰² and their distinct internal disposition. In this sense, there is a connection between Gertler as an Eastern European Jew and the anti-semitic rhetoric that articulated the site of heritage as a category of race. In this respect, I argue that Gertler mirrored popular racial assumptions by a construction of Jewishness, a social evaluation that, I suggest, was internalised by Gertler within assimilation that complemented the assumptions of the scientific community of the nineteenth century. The rabbi as an image of the 'Eastern Jew',⁵⁰³ celebrates a biological reality of a racial ideology which is calibrated in the striking features of his face and skin.

I suggest that there is a connection between the rendition by the artist of the tonal qualities of the rabbi's skin and the assumption by the scientific community of the nineteenth century that the nature of skin colouration was the central marker of race. The portrait, I suggest, colludes with the scientific opinions in a racial discourse that

⁴⁹⁶ Gilman in *The Jew's Body*, p.88, cites Johann Pezzel, a Bavarian writer who describes the Galician Jew as dishonest, unclean and likens them to Orang-utans, 'covered from foot to head in filth, dirt andrags, covered with a type of black sack'-Skizzeron Wien: Einkultur und Sittenbudasder Joseph inis Zeit, ed. Gustav Gualtz and Anton Schlosser (Graz: Leykan Verlag, 1923), pp.107-8

⁴⁹⁷ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.173

⁴⁹⁸ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.3

⁴⁹⁹ Joseph Rohrer, *Versuch ueber die Judischen Benohmer der Osterreichischen Monarchie*, (Vienna: NP, 1804), p.26, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.173

⁵⁰⁰ Elan Isaac Wolf, *Von Der Krankheiten der Juden* (Mannheim: 1777), p.12, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.172

⁵⁰¹ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.172

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

argued that the Jew was equated with being black, or at least swarthy. Within this context, Gertler seems to give credence to this assumption in his depiction of the rabbi, where the external manifestation of his skin accords with a vocabulary of difference and with one of the qualities that marks the Jew as visible, where the blackness of the Jew implies his diseased nature.⁵⁰⁴ The skin reflected, according to this ideology, the essence of the disease; it was a canvas on which the illness is visible in all its blackness and yellow qualities.⁵⁰⁵

Given the complexion of the rabbi and the descriptive references of the nineteenth-century scientific assumptions, the portrait readily lends itself to this explanation. It also reflects, I would argue, the internalised sense of difference that Gertler felt, which contributed to realising this racial construction of Jewishness. There was an irreducible otherness reflected by a racial discourse that stressed the impurity of the Jews and by implication their inherent corrupt and diseased nature. Even Jews themselves, like the physician Elan Isaac Wolf, subscribed to this racial fiction in his interpretation of the skin colour of the Jew, i.e. that it was 'black- yellow'.⁵⁰⁶ Gilman argues that historically yellow skin was strongly associated with the Jew, and that within racial discourse it was 'the standard image of the diseased Jew'.⁵⁰⁷ For Gilman, the actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844 - 1923) most embodied this fantastic projection and representation of the semite character. Bernhardt, in Wilde's original *Salome*, epitomised 'all Jewish "racial qualities"'.⁵⁰⁸ The artist Hans Makart, who painted a portrait of Bernhardt, withdrew his portrait of her from a major exhibition because of the portrait's colour, i.e. it reflected a complexion that was jaundiced, and as such the accusation levelled at the picture was that because of this it became an evocative image of decay and degeneration embodied in the significance that yellow had at the turn of the century. In Gertler's paintings the visual expression of the rabbi in his complexion is not coincidental at all and begs the question to what extent Gertler was complicit in this racial paradigm, which stressed that skin colour was a significant fact of the physiognomy and that in accordance with nineteenth-century racial discourse it was

⁵⁰⁴ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.173

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.173

⁵⁰⁴ Gilman 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the Modern Jewess', p.104

⁵⁰⁵ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.173

biologically determined. It implied a racial inferiority that underpinned a generalised vocabulary of difference and a specific representation of the Jew.

The scientific outlook of the nineteenth century assumed that Jews had a 'special relationship with the most frightening disease of the period, Syphilis'⁵⁰⁹ and that the disease became a stigma of a category of race. By implication it was claimed that the disease was symptomatic of the Jews' unreliable nature and biological uniqueness. The visual expression of the rabbi is not restricted to the definition of difference demarcated by the scientific community, but, I would argue, reflects a discourse that was prevalent in the popular imagination of the late nineteenth century, and found in the literature of writers such as G.K. Chesterton. For example, in his story *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911) the Jewish villain's skin changes because of his misdeeds to a 'sickly yellow'.⁵¹⁰ The fiction of Haggard and Kipling showed the extent to which Jews could be deemed 'black' and reflected the racial categorisation of 'Negroid-Jews',⁵¹¹ which Bryan Cheyette says was 'commonplace in European society from the mid-nineteenth century onwards'.⁵¹²

Gertler, as a victim of this construct of Jewish visibility and pathology, may have perpetuated this popular mythology in the racial symbolism of the rabbi that combines with a certain formal primitivism in pictorial codes, giving an African look to his portrait, which has undeniable negro qualities. The implication of this is that, given this scientific perspective, it ensured not only that Jews remained foreign but that their biological impurity was not redeemable, since their mongrel appearance was due to interbreeding that had taken place in their history. This accorded to the scientific myths of the nineteenth century.⁵¹³ These myths were propagated by racial science, which

⁵⁰⁶Gilman 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the Modern Jewess', p.112

⁵⁰⁷Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1944), 2: 531, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.173

⁵⁰⁸Brian Cheyette 'Neither Black nor White: the Figure of "the Jew" in Imperial British Literature' in Nochlin and Garb (eds.) *The Jew in the Text*, p.39

⁵⁰⁹Ibid.

⁵¹⁰Houston Steward Chamberlain, 'Foundations of the Nineteenth Century Trans. John Lees, 2 Vols (London: John Land and the Bodly Head, 1913), 1:389, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.174. Jews were the products of cross-breeding which had happened in their Diaspora in the period of the 'Alexandrian Exile'.

suggested that the Jews' mongrel characteristics were caused by interbreeding with Africans and that this impurity became written in the physiognomy and psyche. It was due to this scientific and popular mythology that Jews bore the sign of 'the black' and his supposed diseased nature, which no amount of acculturation could efface. The essence of the Jew, according to this mythology, would always be 'lurking beneath a surface'.⁵¹⁴

Skin was not the only physical attribute that was central to the definition of identity that 'enabled the scientist to see the Jew as black'.⁵¹⁵ The Jew's nose, within this racial-biological argument, was declared to be another 'pathognomonic sign of the Jew',⁵¹⁶ and like the skin and its colouring carried with it negative connotations. According to the scientific literature of the nineteenth century, the nose was an outward sign of the difference of the Jew within and was a mark of his racial inferiority and self-perception.

The outcome of this process was a representation of difference which was registered in the facial features of the rabbi, 'his skin, eyes, nose which individually and collectively bore the stigma of stereotypical Jewishness'.⁵¹⁷ It was this cultural response by Gertler that was responsible for him giving the rabbi's skin the undeniably jaundiced complexion that marked the 'diseased Jew'.⁵¹⁸ It also marked the nose according to the exigencies of the science of race, which claimed that the ultimate visual sign of the Jew was the nose. It became the 'central loci of difference in seeing the Jew'.⁵¹⁹

Like the stigmatised skin, there is arguably a remarkable resemblance between the portrayal of the nose of the rabbi and the vocabularies of anti-Semitic literature. One such publication in 1880 was *The Races of Man: A Fragment* by Robert Knox, in which the representation of a specific Jewishness has an African look and is connected with the rabbi's visual appearance. It is as if Knox literally describes Gertler's portrait:

⁵¹¹ Nochlin, *The Jew in the Text*, p.10

⁵¹² Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.174

⁵¹³ Ibid p.101

⁵¹⁴ Nochlin, *The Jew in the Text*, p.8

⁵¹⁵ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.173

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p.180

The physiognomy of the Jew is like that of the Black ... the contour is convex; the eyes long and fine, the outer angles running towards the temple, the brow and nose apt to form a single convex line, the nose comparatively narrow at the base, the eyes consequently approaching each other; lips very full, mouth projection, chin small, and the whole physiognomy, when swarthy, as it often is, has an African look.⁵²⁰

The narrative of this text with its emphasis on Jewish-Negroid features comes quite close, to say the least, to describing the persona and physiognomy of the rabbi. Therefore, visually the portrait could lend itself to projecting a stereotypical representation of difference and the origins of the black Jew. As an object of cultural projections the painting expresses itself as a highly artificial remnant that was derivative of the artist's negative integration and a self-hatred within his process of assimilation. These circumstances dictated that the internalised self-perception of the artist agreed with the resulting image of the rabbi. This, I feel, accounts for the lack of a redemptive quality about the painting or sense of renunciation of racial stereotypes of a Jewish particularism. Because of this, the portrait reflects an irreducible otherness that is the result of a discourse of racial science, whose logic of difference was exclusion.

I propose that the nose as an inherent sign of difference characterises the painting and by implication and meaning becomes strongly associated with the assumptions of the literature of the period, in particular the idea that it had close links to Jewish sexuality, the circumcised penis.⁵²¹ The conformity to stereotype which Gertler gave to the shape of the rabbi's nose mirrors the imagery and well-established assumptions about the 'black'⁵²² Jew in late nineteenth-century British society. It was also a sign of Jewish sexual difference, which reflected a relationship, according to popular medical thought, between the size of the nose and the genitalia. It was also, according to such assumptions and rationale, indicative of the damaged nature of the Jew, the aberration of his penis.⁵²³ The portrait of the rabbi within this perspective can therefore be seen as circumscribed by a racial distinction, where his nose has by implication become a pathological sign, a phallus. It was also strongly associated with a primal sexuality that reversed 'traditional positive associations between the size of the nose and that of the male genitalia'.⁵²⁴ Jewish sexuality was perceived, because of this logic, as inverted and dysfunctional, and consequently the nose in anti-Semitic literature

⁵²⁰ Robert Knox, *The Races of Man: A Fragment* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), p.133, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.174

⁵²¹ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.189

⁵²² Ibid., p.175

⁵²³ Ibid., p.189

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

was caricatured as being elongated. It became a mark of racial distinctions, a potent sign of sexuality, a symbol of sexual degeneration and a dangerous threat.⁵²⁵

The biological meaning of the nose was not restricted to the scientific culture of the nineteenth century. It found a parallel if not equivalence in the literary and artistic community. Indeed, the assumptions of biological racial theory, comments Steyn, became a powerful and potent force, a presentation of fact and a realism which she argues shaped the artistic and literary imagination of the period. This was particularly evident by the mid-nineteenth century, where the science of race was perceived by the cultural community as providing a new basis of realism, a rationale which 'was connected through a chain of complicities and associations, to scientific materialism, which itself had come to be understood as constituting the truth'.⁵²⁶ It was a truth and a legitimacy that became so accepted and socially extensive that it was ubiquitous in European society.

However, what was more pertinent to the genetic idea of race is what Gilman refers to as the 'genotype'⁵²⁷ of the Jew, a term coined by geneticist Wilhelm Johannsen in 1909, what Allen refers to as 'the inner reality',⁵²⁸ which he felt was significant for evolutionary change. Gilman, however, failed to elaborate on this term, and I propose an extension on Gilman's brief comment, as well as his failure to look at the correspondences between Galton and Johannsen and his genetic theory. Frederick Churchill stresses that even at the end of Johannsen's career the scientist was quite clear about the formative influence of Galton's studies and the inspiration that underlined his own analysis. In fact, the pure line research carried out by Johannsen was dedicated to Galton, and, as Churchill points out, Galton's law of regression and model of heredity

⁵²⁵ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.189

⁵²⁶ Juliet Steyn, in Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the Text*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.43

⁵²⁷ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.20

⁵²⁸ Allen, 'The Naturalist and the Experimentalist: The Genotype and Phenotype', Briefly, these experiments could be viewed as a critique of Darwinism and the refutation of its hypothesis of continuing change in heredity. From these experiments he concluded that natural selection was an insufficient explanation for the emergence of new species. From a heterogonous population, 'he bred through self fertilization, two pure lines of bean, one yielding high and one low seed weights. After two generations of inbreeding, Johannsen took the largest and smallest seeds, and selectively bred from each for several more generations. Even using the most rigorous selection procedures, he found he could not further alter the weight of seeds in either pure line'.(p.196) Johannsen concluded from this experiment that despite the cross fertilization of these two pure lines that had different average weights, 'both pure line populations showed a normal curve for distribution of seed weight'.(p.197) In this respect he felt that both populations, i.e. both pure lines, must be genetically identical, and it is for this genetic identity that Johannsen coined the term *genotype*. However, there was still a normal curve of variation in these identical lines, a variation that Johannsen suggested was not based on a genetic determinism but a variation that he attributed to non-hereditary factors. It is for this non-hereditary variation in the pure line that Johannsen coined the term *phenotype*.

are referred to. The terms *genotype* and *phenotype* emerged in the experiments on the breeding of pure line beans that Johannsen conducted in 1903.

The distinction between genotype and phenotype

The term *genotype* underwent development from 1909 to 1926. Johan Henrik Wanscher defines the word as literally meaning ‘the genetical type’.⁵²⁹ The term, Wanscher points out, is abstract in its meaning, and he states that it ‘belongs to the organism and represents the effect of hereditary material’.⁵³⁰ Fundamentally it denoted the organism and its constitution. The definition of the genotype gave rise to the phenotype, that is, the outcome of the relationship that the genotype had with the environment and its conditions, and thus ‘realised personal character of any organism’.⁵³¹ J.D. Watson in *Molecular Biology of the Gene* defined the phenotype as referring ‘to the appearance (physical structure) of an individual’ and what Churchill states is the ‘appearance type’ whose genetic composition was its genotype.⁵³² For Watson all appearances including biological, chemical, structural and behavioural attributes were referenced to the phenotype. The distinction between the phenotype and the genotype was that the former, within a given duration of time, reflected change ‘as the appearance of the organism changes’.⁵³³ Conversely the genotype was not subject to change but was what Watson refers to as a ‘constant’.⁵³⁴ This conception in genetics challenged the transmission conception in heredity within the naturalist, Darwinian tradition, which was essentially phenotypical, whereby the effect of the environment on the individual could impact and transform the biology within the offspring within generations, that is, the idea of evolution and natural selection have an interrelationship with the environment in the acquired attribution of character and traits, or what is termed ‘the transmission conception of heredity, of acquired characteristics’.⁵³⁵

Galton, as Gilman points out, produced a series of composite photographs. This series was seen as Galton’s most successful in that they depicted the Jew as a type epitomised by the physiognomy of what was felt to constitute Jewishness. The

⁵²⁹ Johan Henrik Wanscher, ‘An Analysis of Wilhelm Johannsen’s Genetical Term “Genotype” 1909-26’, *Hereditas* 79: 1-4 (1975), p.2

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Frederick B. Churchill, ‘Wilhelm Johannsen and the Genotype Concept’, *Journal of the History of Biology*, 7 (Spring 1974), p.5

⁵³³ Ibid., p.6

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p.19

composites were made with a camera that had numerous adjustments for varying the position and the scale of the individual portrait. In doing this he invented a method of composite portraiture. Galton made the case for applying composite portraiture for anthropological purposes and this he did to the British Association in Plymouth, to whom he submitted his first results of this photographic process. He argued that composite portraiture was a way of extracting characteristics that were atypical that is the 'typical characteristics from a number of photographs or drawings of several people that were quite alike in appearance but differed in minor detail. The photographic process was precise in its mechanics, which produced a picture that was generalised, and which could not be attributed to the likeness of one specific person, and in a sense ironed out phenotypical distinction and therefore averaged out the physiognomic features of any given group of men: 'composite portraits made by combining those of many different persons in to a single resultant figure'.⁵³⁶ The process therefore erased features that were distinctive and idiosyncratic, which merely evaporated due to the process used of underexposure. The composite portrait was a portrait of a type, a collective representation that presented a fabrication of reality and an actualisation of its existence: 'these ideal faces have a surprising air of reality'.⁵³⁷ Allan Sekula points out that this fabrication by composition was creative through the 'process of successive registration and exposure of portraits in front of a copy camera holding a single plate. Each successive image was given a fractional exposure based on the inverse of the total number of images in the same that is, if a composite were to be made from a dozen originals, each would receive one twelfth of the represented total exposure'.⁵³⁸

The request to make these portraits was made by Joseph Jacobs in 1883, who provided Galton with the subjects for his portraits. This Jacobs did by recruiting Jewish men and children: the children were then studying at the Jewish Free School, Bell Lane, London, and the men were from the Working Men's Club in London. These Jewish children were from poor parents, and as Joseph Jacobs observed, 'as I drove to the school through the adjacent Jewish quarter, the expression of the people that most struck me was the cold, scanning gaze, and this was equally characteristic of the school

⁵³⁶ Francis Galton, 'Composite Portraits Made by Combining Those of Many Different Persons into a Single Resultant Figure', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 8 (1879), p.132

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p.133

⁵³⁸ Sekula, 'The Body and The Archive', p.46

boys'.⁵³⁹ In 1886, Jacobs stated: 'a number of photographs of Jewish boys were taken at the Jewish Free School through the kindness of Mr Angel, the well-known headmaster of the admirable institution, and Mr. Galton was good enough to compound them in the way familiar to all here'.⁵⁴⁰ They were multiple exposures of young Jewish school boys that tried to capture their Jewish physiognomy and thereby create an image of the essence of the Jew, the Jew's very nature.⁵⁴¹ Through his exposures, Galton claimed that the eyes of the school boys revealed that 'cold scanning gaze'⁵⁴² of the Jew, which he argued indicated their specific racial difference and their inward nature, an emphasis on their internal reality, a Jewish genotype, a genetic continuity. Galton believed that it was in the Jewish gaze that the pathology could be located and understood. The eyes, contended Galton, are the portals of observable phenomena which provide a direct route by which the authentic nature became exposed and their genetic inheritance made visible by the gaze. The eyes were the clearest expressive means by which the genotype of the Jews could be understood and which could demonstrate and display an ineradicable nature rooted in their biological make-up, 'their psychological make-up and their cultural heritage'.⁵⁴³ It was widely accepted that the eyes were a conduit for the expression of Jewish pathology, but it was the specific description of the design and construction of the eyes that Gertler's understanding of culture controlled by the powerful notion of racial biology can best be understood.

In the realm of anthropological literature, the Jewish social scientist Joseph Jacobs, in his essay 'Anthropological Types',⁵⁴⁴ published in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* described the physiognomy of the eyes, which bore similarities to those of the rabbi. In his essay Jacobs states that

Eyes themselves are generally brilliant, both eyelids are heavy and bulging, and it seems to be the main characteristic of the Jewish eye that the upper lid covers a larger proportion of the pupil than among other persons. This may serve to give a sort of nervous, furtive look to the eyes, which, when the pupils are small and set together with semistrabismus, gives keenness to some Jewish eyes.⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁹ Sekula, 'The Body and The Archive', p.52

⁵⁴⁰ Joseph Jacobs, 'On The Racial Characteristics of Modern Jews', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 15 (1886), p.38

⁵⁴¹ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.64

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Tamar Garb, 'Modernity, Identity and Textuality' in Linda Nochlin & Tamar Garb (eds.) *The Jew in the Text*, p.22

⁵⁴⁴ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.69

⁵⁴⁵ Maurice Fishberg and Joseph Jacobs, 'Anthropological Types', *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 12 vols (New York: Fink and Wagnalls, 1904), Vol 12, pp.291-5, as quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.69

Although there is an absence of evidence either directly or at an intermediate level between the design by Gertler of this part of the anatomy and the text by Jacobs, I can at least argue that there is a connection; that is, I claim that Gertler produced a pictorial representation of the genotype of the Jew in his portrayal of his Jewish subjects, and as such, like Jacobs and many others, became subject to the prevalent powerful notions of racial biology when the difference of the Jewish body became absolute within the Western tradition.

It is this interplay of textual references and assumptions that I suggest agreed with the artist's sense of difference. It was an understanding of the self that projected on to the construction of the rabbi's anatomy, most prominent in the striking features of his Jewish face. However, it is the whole physiognomy of the rabbi which suggests an aggregate of stereotypical projections that can be read as part of a rhetoric of race, a discourse whose precepts express a deterministic view of our heredity, of how our genes shape character and nature. Accordingly, within this secular scientific context, the rabbi's portrait can be seen as a product of this language of race, where the attributions of difference, I argue, are scientifically based and therefore an absolute. This irrevocable otherness and particularism is reinforced by Gertler through the accoutrement of the rabbi with a skull cap; an affirmation of who he is, his position and status within the enclosed Jewish community. The portrait presents an otherness which, within this ideology of the science of race, served, according to Tamar Garb, as a means by which civilisations could expound their fantasies and prohibitive behaviour. The representation of otherness became a vehicle by which this could be safely played out, a repository for the projection of the social flaws of the dominant culture, i.e. essentially, what society does not like about itself.⁵⁴⁶

The painting, I argue, is a reminder of the Jew's wilful blindness to accept the Christian scheme of salvation and to continually adhere to their old dispensation. The image of the rabbi in these circumstances can be viewed as highly emotive and provocative, a portrait which evokes images of extremes and a strong interplay of fantasy and reality. I suggest that the rabbi can be viewed as performing a social role as the 'phantasmagorical Jew',⁵⁴⁷ whose 'racial abjection ... is at once interesting and abhorrent'.⁵⁴⁸ The portrait is unequivocal in its ideological position as a representation

⁵⁴⁶ Garb 'Modernity, Identity and Textuality', p.22

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

of Jewishness endowed with all the negative characteristics that the Christian majority most hated and despised primarily in themselves.

The Jewish Family

However, despite Gertler's captivity within his assimilatory process and its legacy, legible in the face of the rabbi, his next painting, *The Jewish Family* (1913; Figure. 22), can possibly be viewed more fruitfully as an act of liberation. It is expressive, perhaps, of an escape from his acceptance of difference based on the projections of the scientific culture of his period, one which becomes more life-affirming and stirs our imagination and our sympathies: 'Poverty and sadness, sexuality and repression, tensions between man and woman, young and old are witnessed in these images',⁵⁴⁹ as Steyn observes.

In this painting Gertler created a representation of a Jewish family that was based partly on his own, one which was far removed from the 'notion of the happy family',⁵⁵⁰ its sanctity and reverence, its domesticity central to bourgeois life and texts such as Gerlberg's. In this particular sense, Gertler 'escapes the cloak of otherness',⁵⁵¹ of bourgeois ideology and the scientific projections, which, I argue, underpins the construction of *The Rabbi and His Grandchild*. In this way it is challenging in its stark contrast to the myth of bourgeois domesticity as more real and genuine. Gertler had a sharp awareness of the realities of hardship, of living as a family of seven in one room while his father Louis 'eked a living from shaving walking sticks in the East End, and of Golda having to fend for herself and her children, keeping them precariously from starvation when Louis set off to find work in America'.⁵⁵²

Although Gertler's father is present in the painting, along with Golda, this is not an example of portraiture but an allegory of existence, where for this family the only glimmer of hope amongst all their hardships is the binding laws of Judaic theocracy. The shallow space which these family members inhabit is a far cry from the pleasures of the family and Gertler's painting of *The Playful Scene*, whose whimsical spirit and domestic gentility reflected the genre of Tonks, Steer and others in the New English club. The domestic space of *The Playful Scene* is in direct contrast to a visual space that expresses the harshness of life, which has pared down their physiognomies, draining these figures of all sentimentality. There is no sense of family comfort in this

⁵⁴⁹ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.123

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.3

⁵⁵² Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.171

decontextualised space, which is stark, desolate and unforgiving. Stylistically the group of figures are pushed to the point of caricature, as A.J.Finberg, the critic who worked for the *Star* newspaper, pointed out:

In Mr Mark Gertler's *Jewish Family* so much emphasis is placed upon certain characteristics of the sitters that presentation is occasionally pushed to the point of caricature. The seated old man in the picture is as monstrously grotesque as a gargoyle or some of the figures in medieval wood carving.⁵⁵³

According to the recollections of the artist, the pared-down representation of his father authentically captured his demeanour and expression. Gertler stated that his father used to get 'terribly depressed about life',⁵⁵⁴ and all the suffering and disappointment that he had gone through. His facial features, like the rabbi's portrait, bear testimony to a racial physiognomy, 'the Slavic cheekbones, hooded eyes, pronounced nose and protruding lips'.⁵⁵⁵ The old man's face is wizened, framed by his beard and skull cap, and his gaze is 'unfocussed', giving him an 'otherworldly look'.⁵⁵⁶ With a melancholic expression he sits hunched up over a walking stick which appears to support him. He clasps the stick with 'oversized hands',⁵⁵⁷ almost in a mournful way, or perhaps steeped in sorrow for the child who may perhaps graduate to the same meagre existence. The child was based on the artist's niece, and the dress that she is wearing could be interpreted as a shroud, wrapped around her. In appearance she looks like a 'carved doll',⁵⁵⁸ a 'small adult'.⁵⁵⁹ The portrait of the child remains unfinished, evidenced by the signs of the unprimed canvas showing through. The doll-like features of her face contrast the lack of detail in the rest of her body, which is blocked in with a slab of dirty pink, with just a faint indication of clasped hands. Steyn observes: 'Playfulness is kept under wraps, in check, signifying perhaps the tight culture for which she is being prepared.'⁵⁶⁰

The figures in the painting have a stillness that reflects the physical tangibility of monumental sculpture in wood or stone. It is as though Gertler has consciously set out to produce an artefact for a social use. The family stand in ascending order from left to

⁵⁵³ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.123

⁵⁵⁴ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.166

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p.168

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p.123

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.123

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

right, with Golda as the head. She is dressed as a peasant in the ubiquitous red headscarf which so characterises the motif of his mother. In Tickner's reading, Golda acts as a 'bookend, the backstop, the rock against which the others lean'.⁵⁶¹ Again she is portrayed by the artist as the matriarch, and her posture is indicative of her all-encompassing authority. She is clearly the fulcrum of the family; her bulk and her physical substance informs us that she is the one who will weather all the vicissitudes of existence that the family is likely to experience. Tickner makes an analogy with Golda's omnipresence, in that all the figures in the painting are like a set of Russian dolls that 'could nest inside each other – inside Golda'.⁵⁶² In the painting Golda is the backbone of the 'Jewish family', the main breadwinner who is ever ready for work at any time.

Her slightly parted lips give us a 'faint hint of life'⁵⁶³ and perhaps highlight the significance of her presence in the family group. That is, it appears in the painting that she is saving the life of the family by breathing life into the hierarchical stiffness of their bodies. Overall *The Jewish Family* is perhaps the most expressionistic work of the cluster of paintings painted around 1913. This is suggested by an angularity and simplicity of forms which have a flat relief and show an underlying abbreviated method of drawing.

The whole family group has a unified simplicity which reduces specificity. Gertler's family are presented in many respects as no more than designs. They certainly do not meet the formal requirements of portraiture, and, I suggest, they are residual to his exposure to the second Post-Impressionist exhibition, which, Tickner stresses, made a considerable impact upon Gertler, leading by 1913 to the artist developing a 'more primitivising style'.⁵⁶⁴ This point finds agreement with Woodeson, who comments that in 1913 Gertler was at the forefront of 'simplification and formalism',⁵⁶⁵ illustrated by the exaggeration of the features within this painting, notably in their heads and hands. This suggests that Gertler was concentrating on more formal means of expression, partly on the precepts of Post-Impressionism, 'with its fresh emphasis on formal means on line, colour, scale, interval and proportion'.⁵⁶⁶ It was an artistic expression whose formal values were assessed in their own right.

⁵⁶¹ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.166

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p.168

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p.165

⁵⁶⁵ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.127

⁵⁶⁶ Francis Spalding, *British Art Since 1900*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p.37

I would argue that *The Jewish Family* is partly a result of these imperatives and was responsible in some respects for the painting showing a naive primitivism. It has been suggested by Rothenstein and Woodeson that the style of the painting is connected with the paintings of his fellow student Stanley Spencer. They point out that similarities in style were a result not so much of professional interaction but of capturing a general mood and artistic expression around this time.⁵⁶⁷ During the period from 1912 to 1913, the two painters both articulated and embraced an arbitrary simplification, which can be seen if we compare for example, the block-like treatment of *The Jewish Family* with Spencer's *John Donne Arriving in Heaven* (1911; Figure 23), particularly the elephantine body of Golda with the soft cylindrical forms of Spencer's painting. The enlarged parts of the figurative style of both painters are striking in similarity and may reflect not only their immediate influential environment but a hybrid of many styles which they both admired. They both summarised a range of influences, from early Italian art, for example Giotto and Masaccio, to their contemporaries, including Picasso and Cezanne whose progressive styles they would no doubt have come across in Roger Fry's exhibitions of 1910 and 1912. For Woodeson it was evident that Gertler was interested in Cubism, and Picasso became a significant influence. Rothenstein comments that 'Gertler made a close study of Picasso.'⁵⁶⁸ It has been suggested by McDougall that Gertler may have seen studies from the Blue period in 1912 in a show of Picasso's drawings at the Stafford Gallery in April as well as in the Post-Impressionist show in October.⁵⁶⁹ *The Jewish Family* reflects Gertler's deep interest in this continental artist, and he attempted 'to represent one of his traditional subjects with the pathos and the attenuated delicacy of a work of this painter's "blue" or "pink" period'.⁵⁷⁰ The paintings of this period have a sobriety, an almost solemn quality and an air of compassion. *The Jewish Family* shares this same quality and portrays the same harshness of Picasso's paintings: a world inhabited by people steeped in poverty with a shared experience of life.

In the treatment of the subject matter both artists share a similarity in the use of tonal range and a limited palette. However, there is a particular aspect in Picasso's work that characterises the Blue and Pink Periods which, I argue, diverges from a commonality with Gertler. John Richardson suggests that there is a 'more romantic

⁵⁶⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.342

⁵⁶⁸ Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, p.211

⁵⁶⁹ McDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.346, n.39

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

agony than social criticism to “Blue Period” imagery’,⁵⁷¹ and that the Spanish artist used sentiment in a manipulative way to portray subjects who are distilled with suffering. It reflects a cynicism, Richardson implies, on the part of the artist in making ‘sorrow acceptable to bourgeois tastes by sentimentalizing and sanitizing it’.⁵⁷² In this respect Richardson suggests that the paintings of the Blue and Pink Periods were not constructed to provoke moral outrage or to be a reflective mirror to highlight social inequities or self-questioning; rather, Richardson argues that their subtext was to absolve bourgeois society of feeling guilty about its victims. In fact, as far as Picasso was concerned, it was he himself who was the ‘principle victim of society’,⁵⁷³ and although Gertler may have perceived himself likewise, the purpose of his 1913 paintings had little to do with sentimentality or appeasing bourgeois taste, far from it, *The Jewish Family* can be very much equated with throwing an ideological assegai into the heart of bourgeois society with an affirmation of a ‘version of otherness’,⁵⁷⁴ and unlike the Spanish painter in this period, he wanted to create a clear distance for himself from bourgeois taste. However, both artists pillaged history for multiple influences which reflected a common ground of shared tastes. For example, both appreciated and used Egyptian and African art in the development of a formalised and simplified style. More pertinent was the shared admiration for Gauguin.

The Family Group

The Family Group (1913; Figure: 24) marks a change in style that could be perceived as marking a closure to the conflation of issues of class and ethnicity and their resulting conflict, which had bedevilled the artist. It is as though he had removed himself from the arena of his historical dispute, and the painting is devoid of projections of racist, stereotypical physiognomies. *Family Group* is simple in its rendition and formal design; it does not allude to or specify an ethnic or social habit. Space is shallow; a short-depth stage gives no clue to the identity of the individuals or their homes in this non-narrative space. They are just occupants of a barren space, and in its simplicity the poverty of the collective family group is reflected. As such, it overrides all other concerns in this intimate portrait.

⁵⁷¹ John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso, Volume 1: 1881-1906* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.222

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.120

Unlike *The Jewish Family*, *Family Group*, painted in the same year, does not, I suggest, share the same concerns, namely the promotion of a version of otherness, a Jewishness that was un-negotiable, that is, a repudiation of the precondition of integration, the adaptation of Jewish life that agreed with the 'evolving values of the bourgeois order',⁵⁷⁵ the precept of fitting in.⁵⁷⁶ *The Jewish Family* could be read as a personal acknowledgement by the artist about the fraudulent 'game of assimilation'⁵⁷⁷ and the mistake he made about the nature of emancipation. I argue that *The Jewish Family* expresses this essential truth and a sense of social irreconcilability that the artist experienced in his attempt to negotiate his ethnic difference.

The Family Group does not share these concerns, nor does it attempt to define and differentiate 'otherness' by equating suffering and its proportionate expression. This was represented by the extent of pained emotion inscribed on the physiognomy of the subjects in *The Jewish Family*. To such extent that it exudes an 'otherness' that is almost of biblical proportions, i.e. carrying the weight of the collective suffering of the Jewish Diaspora of the last two thousand years. *Family Group* reflects, I suggest, not only a radical break in style, but also avoids the connotations of this historical reference, which marked the Jewish world and its life. In contradiction, *The Jewish Family* is quite pronounced in asserting the values of the foreign Jew and in propagating the myth of the 'stranger in our midst'.⁵⁷⁸ Gertler invests in the painting 'qualities of sincerity, truth',⁵⁷⁹ which he castigated the middle classes collectively and individually for not possessing in his correspondence at this time. This can therefore be seen as refuting the 'bourgeois body politic',⁵⁸⁰ that distinguished British Jews from the replication of English bourgeois life and the joys of domesticity and its secularisation. British Jews and their religious culture were on a trajectory towards a confluence with the secular, and as such religious laws were identified with the laws of the family and were made compatible with the notion of the English bourgeois family as Steyn states, 'Jewish family life was reified and home in this discourse becomes a place of pleasure'.⁵⁸¹ *The Jewish Family* can be seen to express not only a collective condemnation but one which was on an individual basis, i.e. Gertler's protracted relationship with Dora Carrington and the frustration that

⁵⁷⁵ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.120

⁵⁷⁶ Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah*, p.25

⁵⁷⁷ Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p.84

⁵⁷⁸ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.109

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p.120

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p.121

this caused him. Steyn stresses that he castigates her, comparing her unfavourably with another correspondent: 'I have just had a letter from a Jewish girl I once knew. A girl that is simple and beautiful, who is, thank God, not arty and of my own class. She will not torment my life.'⁵⁸²

Within the context of class and ethnicity, *Family Group* does not seek some kind of accommodation, nor does it seek to substitute alternative values and redefine 'otherness'. It hardly reflects the ideas ordained by secular and religious life. Gertler's painting can be seen as a rebuttal of the constrictions of Anglo-Jewishness and denies the very social order and values that he had originally aspired to: the celebration of ideas and values of the bourgeoisie and the avoidance of a subject which was morally charged. The only concern is with emotion, and, unlike *The Jewish Family*, the painting is a portrayal of the poverty of a small family and is overridingly an emotional portrait. The painting is poignant, as it reflects Gertler's basic aim to 'paint a picture in which I hope to express all the sorrow of life'.⁵⁸³

The Family Group gave notice that social and religious categories were no longer relevant issues to the artist. The painting could be interpreted as the beginning of this conscious acknowledgement, which steered the artist to seek refuge in more formal pictorial aesthetics. It was an attitude towards existence where life is lived according to one's own tastes, and it was to become the foremost criterion within which Gertler perceived himself. This was summarised by Steyn as a 'de-classed Jew'⁵⁸⁴ 'whose identity is structured according to an artistic criterion, manifold as an aestheticized world'.⁵⁸⁵ I argue that major confluences determined this development and Gertler's artistic endeavours, primarily the confluence of the prescriptive nature of assimilation that evoked a sense of marginality and his irreconcilability with his family's social and cultural network.

Throughout the period of 1913, his ambivalence intensified, not only in class but also in ethnic terms. *The Family Group* was therefore painted at a time when he felt increasing discomfort with his all-encompassing environment and its surroundings. The artist complained that it was 'stifling'⁵⁸⁶ and that it had 'an inbred air of existence'.⁵⁸⁷ He was beginning to feel like an outcast, being no longer able to relate to the values of

⁵⁸² Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, 2 July 1912, 9217.21, Tate Gallery Archive

⁵⁸³ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.114

⁵⁸⁴ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.116

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p.120

⁵⁸⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.124

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

his family or the inhabitants of Whitechapel, to his own heritage, their relationships and traditional practices. There was therefore a shift in his attitude towards the role that Judaism had played in his life, which was still present, fixed in the lives of his family members. These confluences within the development of his career were gradually drawing him away from his family in the East End of London. Significantly, this was a little later symbolised by his geographical relocation to Hampstead in 1915.

The Family Group can be interpreted as a mirror which reflects the flight of the artist from such protracted social and religious conflicts. It presents us with a glimpse of a marked progression where Gertler was recasting his art to a new meaning, one which attempted to cancel out a fixed ethnic or class identity. Gertler could no longer accept the values inherent in his anglicisation, nor could he reorientate himself to the values implicit in his racial background. He could be perceived as an individual who was caught between two worlds, unable to reconcile himself with his formative background, or conversely with his new social milieu. Although Gertler loved his family dearly, he realised that their criterion of artistic success was different from his own, and as such he felt that it was hopeless to expect from them any spiritual understanding of his paintings, as they only equated success in creativity with financial remuneration. This criterion of success implicit in Gertler's formative cultural background was commented on by the artist; it was impossible to talk to his family about art 'for they had neither words, nor mental conceptions'.⁵⁸⁸ They could not understand why their son threw away the opportunities and promise of wealth and the advantage of his entrée into the fashionable world of portraiture.

Clearly, Gertler's family's criteria of artistic success was different from his own. Success according to Golda, meant something quite different from what her son felt it was. For the Gertler family art was just a means of making money, a kind of magic that went on in the West End. It brought success and fame and money, and beautiful ladies in furs and diamonds and carriages and motorcars and fine cloths and rings on everybody's fingers.'⁵⁸⁹ Artistic success was directly linked to financial remuneration, its power of acquisition and its outward display in the accoutrements of material success. Gertler's family felt that it had sacrificed a lot in order for Mark to achieve his artistic ambition, and 'after his successes of a year or so before, the family had breathed

⁵⁸⁸ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*. p.120

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

sighs of relief and happiness'.⁵⁹⁰ Gertler's entrée into the 'world of fashionable portraiture'⁵⁹¹ afforded the prospect of securing family wealth and fame. However, the individualism of Gertler's artistic ambition was now becoming more clearly defined, so much so that 'now events were uncovering the real issues'.⁵⁹² His artistic independence did not conform to the tastes of conventional collectors, nor to the market of the Royal Academy, and this explains why commissions were hard to come by in the period around 1913. The artist explained that the 'curse is that even the most cultured buyer almost unconsciously looks for a little prettiness'.⁵⁹³ What Gertler referred to as his 'ugly types'⁵⁹⁴ did not sit comfortably with the contemporary bourgeois art market. This was no mere coincidence, for his pictorial language was intentional; as Steyn states, 'it provided him with the means of disassociating himself from bourgeoise art'.⁵⁹⁵

In *Mendel*, Gilbert Cannan writes: 'there came a terrible day when he had to tell them that he had not a penny in the world and that he was a failure'.⁵⁹⁶ His family could not understand why he was not taking advantage of his opportunities, success and hard-fought-for fame. However, as stated, the artist's criterion for artistic success was very different, and Gertler felt it was hopeless to expect from his family any spiritual understanding of his painting. He was an aesthete, while his family was materialistic and unfortunately their perspective ordered their values, which was clearly not in accord with the aestheticism of their son.

In many respects the significance of Whitechapel as a source of inspiration was coming to its useful end, and was no longer presenting itself as the essential source of his art. Arguably it was a sign that the development of his career was gradually drawing him away from his family and his East End background. *Family Group*, I suggest, represents an awakening consciousness and the artist's realisation that he needed to take flight from his East End habitat.

The aesthetic world was one in which Gertler had decided to make his permanent residence. It would enable him to escape to a life where he lived purely according to his own tastes, an existence which for him had a valid value system and justification for existence, by either Yiddish or Anglicised codes where he was no

⁵⁹⁰ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.120

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dorothy Brett, July 1913, 9217.83, Tate Gallery Archive

⁵⁹⁴ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.120

⁵⁹⁵ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.118

⁵⁹⁶ Cannan, *Mendel*, p.320, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.121

longer living according to false values, one liberating him from being bound by identities which were socially constructed. *Family Group* can be seen as significant, as representing a juncture in time where the artist has made a conscious decision to re-evaluate his life.

Like the previous paintings, the artist persisted in portraying his family members, as is evident in the painting, with the artist's elder brother Harry and his wife Ann and the struggling baby (Rene).⁵⁹⁷ However, unlike its predecessors, it can be seen as a departure, for it does not codify 'otherness' and does not present subject matter drawn from Jewish life. There is no hint of an expression of a stylised 'Jewish physiognomy',⁵⁹⁸ that reaffirms the position of the Jews in their otherness. The painting does not exude this external manifestation that interrelated with the suggested self-hatred of the artist, nor does it continue to imply the exclusive relationship of poverty with Jewishness. Arguably it brings closure to the construction of the myth of otherness that characterised his earlier work. What is significant about *Family Group* is the artist's concern with universality, equating his family's peasant existence with the material existence of all others. I suggest that this interconnectedness of poverty and peasant life ensures that the painting escapes the relevance of ethnicity and is therefore quite distinct from *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* and *The Jewish Family* and the expression of self-hatred that permeated them.

The artist seems to have consciously reinforced this by the portrayal of the physicality of his family members, whose appearance resembles mere designs, angular forms placed like 'cutouts against Spartan interiors',⁵⁹⁹ elements which MacDougall suggests 'mark[s] the beginning of the expressive style in Gertler's work, which is often linked to folk art'.⁶⁰⁰ The emergence of this, it is speculated, could be due to the influence of an inherited memory from particular historical circumstances, perhaps even by recollections of the discussions that went on in the Gertler household; as Woodeson states, 'The talk was mostly family gossip - endless recounting of their experiences in Austria and Whitechapel or discussion of the business.'⁶⁰¹ However, it is necessary to go beyond this speculation and try to establish a more direct relationship.

⁵⁹⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.13

⁵⁹⁸ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.64

⁵⁹⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.13

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.123

In conversation with Luke Gertler, the artist's son, I asked whether the Gertler family, or his grandfather and mother, had owned any folkloric artefacts from their ancestral homeland. Luke stressed that when his grandparents arrived in England in 1896 they had only the clothes they stood up in and brought nothing else.⁶⁰² In this respect a successful search for the suggested folkloric influence emanating from his historical origins remains elusive.

⁶⁰² Interview with Luke Gertler, 2008

Chapter 6

The Final Act: The Last Jewish Subjects

The years of the First World War marked what Gertler called the ‘second book’⁶⁰³ in his life. This was realised not only by a radical departure in his art but also by a conscious decision which was taken by the artist around 1914 to extricate himself from his Jewish habitat, Whitechapel. Gertler was ‘beginning to feel stifled by everything here in the East End’⁶⁰⁴ and planned to move to Hampstead, which he eventually did in July 1915. The thesis argues that this was indicative of a resolve that emerged from the exhaustion of his assimilatory experience, provoking a decision to – in Juliet Steyn’s words: ‘revoke a fixed class and ethnic identity’.⁶⁰⁵ The beginning of 1914, I suggest, brought a closure to a sequence of representations of categories of Jewish difference, which were in part derived from cultural stereotypes whose subtexts reflected the artist’s assimilation experience and its crucible, self-hatred.

The departure from Jewish themes and subjects in 1914 finalised Gertler’s concerns with the category of Jewish difference and a Jewish particularism. However, it did not affect his adherence to a formalism which was derived from his awareness of the more avant-garde artists in London. Two extreme examples which appear to Spalding as ‘isolated in the history of the period’⁶⁰⁶ are *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill* (1916; Figure 26) and *The Merry-Go-Round* (1916; Figure 27). To make sense of their visual language they must be seen not only as part of the artist’s development but also as categories of ethnicity and class within ‘a narrative of class relationships, ethnic identity and visual representation in early twentieth century England’.⁶⁰⁷

Like Eddie Marsh in 1912, the young writer Gilbert Cannan was instrumental in broadening Gertler’s artistic and social horizons; as MacDougall observes, ‘Cannan’s friendship opened a new door to Gertler.’⁶⁰⁸ They quickly became good friends, and Cannan allowed Gertler to make his home at his converted Mill House in Cholesbury,

⁶⁰³Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, January 1915, in Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, pp.80-91

⁶⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.125

⁶⁰⁶Francis Spalding, ‘The Early Years’, in Noel Carrington et al, *Mark Gertler: The Early and the Late Years*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art, 1982, p.8

⁶⁰⁷Janet Wolff, ‘The Failure of a Hard Sponge’, p.14

⁶⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p.94

Buckinghamshire, where a 'little circle of writers had gathered'.⁶⁰⁹ Cannan later introduced Gertler to Ottoline Morrell, a London hostess, the wife of Liberal MP Philip Morrell and half-sister to the Duke of Portland. On Thursday evenings Ottoline Morrell held 'at homes'⁶¹⁰ at her house in Bedford Square, where she gathered round her a circle of writers, intellectuals, politicians and individuals who collectively were known as the Bloomsbury Group. The introduction to Morrell and his entrée in to the Bedford Square salon facilitated numerous artistic contacts, Morrell not only befriended Gertler but became his champion and patron, offering the artist further financial support; as Woodeson states, 'Ottoline's formidable energies were at once devoted to getting Mark launched.'⁶¹¹

This deep incursion into Georgian upper-middle-class and ruling class society may have invited Gertler to make unfair comparisons with his family, which, I suggest, may have perhaps hastened his eventual geographical relocation. The enthusiasms and varied interests of his new friends, I argue, only served to emphasise the lack of cultural capital of his family and their actual poverty, too, alienating him further from them. However, when he had had enough of this social scene in London – all the parties and company of Bedford Square he would escape and seek solace back in his former Jewish habitat. Although in 1914 Gertler was finding it more difficult to live with his family, he was indecisive about his planned move to Hampstead. This hesitancy to achieve his grand ambition of an independence from class and ethnicity was reflected artistically. One consequence of this was that he left behind those types of representations of Jews which had been pervasive in his art by 1913.

The Fruit Sorters

The painting *The Fruit Sorters* (1914; Figure 25) was significant, for it was the first to express Gertler's initial encounter with his new environment in the countryside which was later to become his permanent residence. This introduction to the joys of the countryside was courtesy of Gilbert Cannan, who allowed Gertler to stay and use his converted mill in the Chilterns as often as he liked. For the artist it became a retreat from his urban habitat, and one which he clearly celebrated in *The Fruit Sorters*. The

⁶⁰⁹ Miranda Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell: Life on the Grand Scale* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p.77, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.96

⁶¹⁰ Holbrook Gerzina, *Carrington: A Life*, p.56

⁶¹¹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.139

painting was an outcome of the happiness Gertler felt at his first real exposure to the English countryside, its seasons, the spring and its leaves and buds.⁶¹² That the painting's visual language was heavily formalistic was discerned by the press at the time: *The Pall Mall Gazette* found a 'mixture of arbitrary simplification with realistic detail'.⁶¹³ MacDougall has suggested that the painting was inspired by *The Apple Gatherers*, a painting by Stanley Spencer which had been in the collection of Edward Marsh.⁶¹⁴ In many respects the painting is a portrayal of two worlds, the rural and urban, with elements reminiscent of Spitalfields Market in Whitechapel. It could be argued that the painting envisions a pastoral relocation: the East End workers from Spitalfields with their baskets are transported to a rural setting and reinterpreted as fruit pickers laden with their 'overflowing baskets'.⁶¹⁵ It is as though Gertler has transported a frieze of East End figures to a rural setting in a journey much like his own. It is a protean image about a shift from one world to another and is a potential metaphor of the artist's state of flux. His figures hold baskets full of fruit, but one could say that they are not confident that they have left the spartan interiors of Gertler's Jewish paintings of 1913.

The painting constitutes an allegory of Gertler's life during this period; an individual who is in transition but is hesitant in making a commitment. This was confirmed in August 1916, when Gertler wrote of his inner life before he painted *The Fruit Sorters*: 'I was all confusion.'⁶¹⁶ This may well have been in reference to the feelings that he had towards his family and unfair comparison of them with his new 'society' friends. Conversely, the confusion may also have been caused by the antagonism and ambivalence he felt towards his friends among the upper middle class, which continued unabated. Ottoline Morrell encouraged Gertler to talk about his troubled self⁶¹⁷ and he admitted to her his ambivalence towards 'society'.⁶¹⁸ However, Gilbert Cannan was an exception amongst his new friends. According to Gertler, it was an instant friendship because they had discovered that they shared so much, including an unprivileged Jewish background. Significantly, Gertler was suspicious about accepting an invitation to tea from Cannan. He wrote: 'I might have to engage in

⁶¹² Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.95

⁶¹³ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, June 1914, as quoted by Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.141

⁶¹⁴ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.95

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15

⁶¹⁶ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, 24 August 1916, Carrington (ed.), *MGS* pp.120-1

⁶¹⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.97

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

intellectual conversation which I hate so.’⁶¹⁹ But it turned out that Cannan also disliked ‘too much abstract philosophizing’.⁶²⁰

Janet Wolff widens the issue of Gertler’s aesthetic exclusion and the difficulty he felt in relation to his own position to the Bloomberries, ‘by considering him and his work in the context of class relationships, intellectual life and modernism in England in the first decades of the twentieth century’.⁶²¹ Wolff suggests that the marginalisation that Gertler suffered in his relationship to the Bloomsbury Group was symptomatic of the macro level of society and the conflicting nature of its social relationships of class and cultural ideas. She suggests moreover that these factors contributed largely to ‘the failure of the avant-garde in England’⁶²² in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Primarily Wolff operates a reductive model of the ‘classic operation of cultural capital’⁶²³ served to maintain the hegemony of the Bloomsbury Group and their class-based relationship at the expense of the more ‘militant modernist artists’.⁶²⁴ As an ‘exclusionary strategy’,⁶²⁵ cultural capital was the motor at the intersection of social relationships and a system of cultural production, factors which Wolff asserts produced a closed system within the dominant culture of society.

For writers like Noel Annan and Raymond Williams the maintenance of this closed system in society was epitomised by the hegemony of the Bloomsbury Group, which was tied structurally and ideologically to the ruling class:

That society consisted of the upper levels of the professional middle class and the county families, interpenetrated to a certain extent by the aristocracy [Or more generally] The Stephens and the Stracheys, The Ritchies, Thackeries and Duckworths had an intricate tangle of ancient roots and tendrils stretching far and wide through the upper middle classes, the county families and the aristocracy.⁶²⁶

⁶¹⁹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.145

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Wolff, ‘The Failure of a Hard Sponge’, p.49

⁶²² Ibid., p.53

⁶²³ Ibid., p.54

⁶²⁴ Harrison, *English Art and Modernism*, p.88

⁶²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darby, *The Love of Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.44, as quoted by Wolff, ‘The Failure of a Hard Sponge’, p.54

⁶²⁶ Leonard Woolff, *Beginning Again* (London: 1964), p.74, as quoted by Raymond Williams, ‘The Bloomsbury Factor’, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), p.160

The Bloomsbury Group were characterised as an ‘intellectual aristocracy’, a term which Annan popularised in his 1955 essay⁶²⁷, was a group tied together by its social network of friendship and kinship ties. Annan, in his study ‘The Intellectual Aristocracy’, analyses, like Williams, the nature of this aristocracy, highlighting a number of distinguished families. Like all links of kinship, the past arguably bequeaths to the present and its future behaviour or psychological traits that immortalise it. However, for historians, family lineage is more significant in the way it reveals ‘some caucus of power or influence, such as the Whig cousinhood which moulded the country’s culture. Such an influence was exerted by an aristocracy of intellect which began to form at the beginning of the nineteenth century.’⁶²⁸ Annan points to the Whiggish antecedence of this ‘aristocracy of intellect’⁶²⁹ and the extent to which a specific upper-middle-class families intermarried and came to monopolise educational institutions and key academic positions.

It was this class-based cultural formation of the avant-garde that, Williams argues, determined the avant-garde. Charles Harrison stresses that in the matter of style the Bloomsbury Group embraced Post-Impressionism, which was quite distinct from the more militant modernist art, Vorticism. However, apart from this preference in style, Harrison suggests that there were strong ideological differences, and it is here that the lines of demarcation were drawn between the English upper-middle-class membership of Bloomsbury and the predominantly working-class fraternity of the vorticist avant-garde.⁶³⁰ Actually I would argue that this suggestion of a strict class difference made by Harrison is misguided, for Wadsworth and Nevinson, who were part of that vorticist avant-garde, came from the nouveau riche. They came from wealthy backgrounds, and their forefathers owned businesses or industries: for example, Wadsworth’s family acquired their wealth in the spinning business, namely Wadsworth and Sons Mill. MacDougall points out that like Nevinson, ‘Wadsworth’s background was privileged’,⁶³¹ while C.R.W. Nevinson was the son of author and philanthropist A.W. Nevinson.⁶³² In this respect, their backgrounds were closer to the Bloomsbury Group:

⁶²⁷N.G. Annan, ‘The Intellectual Aristocracy’ in John H. Plumb (ed.), *Studies in Social History*(London, New York and Toronto: Longman, 1955)

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p.57

⁶³⁰ Harrison, *English Art*, p.88

⁶³¹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.42

⁶³² Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.58

for example Clive Bell, whose family fortune was based on the ownership of coal mines.

That said, the rebel artists of the avant-garde were ‘mostly the children of working class men’,⁶³³ for example William Roberts and David Bomberg, who did not perceive themselves as having a class stake in society. As such, they considered that they had less to lose and everything to gain; they presented themselves as pariahs to the existing social order and their iconoclastic ideology reflected a stark confrontation in terms of class. The membership of the Bloomsbury coterie did not share the advantage of a rupture with the past or a blind faith in technological change, as did their working-class counterparts. The rebels employed an orthodoxy that embodied a view of reality that was irreconcilable with the aesthetic sensibility of the Bloomsbury movement. Arguably these competing sensibilities may explain the inevitable dissociation of artists like Edward Wadsworth, C.R.W. Nevinson and Wyndham Lewis from the Bloomsbury-dominated Omega workshops in Fitzroy Square. The rebels – those who left – defined themselves as a distinct faction, which was realised by the establishment of the Rebel Art Centre in March 1914 at premises in Great Ormond Street.⁶³⁴

The Exhibition: Twentieth-Century Art

However, nothing epitomised these competing sensibilities in the public context more than the exhibition *Twentieth-Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1914. I would suggest that the underlying aim and purpose of the exhibition was to articulate the prevailing sensibility and embodiment of the ‘Bloomsberries’ style, the expression of its conservative mentality and its class and ideological position. The exhibition, organised by Gilbert Ramsay, mapped out the development of modern art, the progress of art since Impressionism and the absorption of its technique in the work of young British artists. The exhibition ‘was loosely divided into landscapes, works of decorative designs, works showing influence of Cezanne, Cubists including Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry and finally works said to have ‘abandoned representation almost entirely’.⁶³⁵ Those who were categorised as non-

⁶³³ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.89

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Introduction, *Twentieth-Century Art: A Revision of the Modern Movement*, quoted by Gruelzner Robins, *Modern Art in Britain 1910 -14* (London: Merrell Holburton, 1979), p.140

representational were Wyndham Lewis and the secessionists from the Rebel Art Centre. What might be thought of as highly significant was the fact that separated from the rest and hung together in a small room, were works by Jewish artists, seven of which were by Gertler. The other contributors to this gallery were from the Jewish art circle of Montparnasse: Amedeo Modigliani, Jules Pascin and Moise Kisling, as well as Jacob Kramer and British Jewish artist David Bomberg. Bomberg also curated this subsection of the exhibition held in the small gallery. For Charles Harrison and Juliet Steyn, the ideology of the exhibition was quite explicit: the articulation of difference and aesthetic distinction, the construction of aesthetic boundaries and hierarchies.

Yet for Steyn the fact that the artists who participated in the exhibition had a commonality of shared ethnic origin was purely coincidental. What was crucial for both Steyn and Harrison was the narrative of the exhibition, which they suggest was contrived to redefine fixed social categories that would disavow an open dialogue about cultural homogeneity and transgression. In this respect the rationale met the overarching objective of the exhibition to 'instate a modern aesthetic'⁶³⁶ by a purposeful creation of dichotomies. Hanging the Jewish canvases in a separate space created a disjunction with the thematic expression of the exhibition. This ambivalence made them subject to celebration or vilification, and it reflected, (for Harrison and Steyn,) the main purpose of the exhibition: to secure a particular version of modernism by presenting an inferior category that would define and legitimise its dominant position in English art.

Lisa Tickner argues that the exhibition in the separate space was predicated on a shared common experience realised by the 'critical factors'⁶³⁷ of class and their sense of displacement. Furthermore, their social provenance was strongly associated with a preference of style. It was a preference where it was felt there was common ownership and a collaboration with a cosmopolitan world; for example, Bomberg wanted to express the dynamism of the city, the motion and the machine age which this expressed, and as such art should not be photographic but expressive. For Tickner it was an espousal of modernity rather than ethnicity that represented itself in the exhibition of the small room; the participating artists saw themselves as 'equal collaborators in a cosmopolitan modern world'.⁶³⁸ This testified to the selection process of the exhibition,

⁶³⁶ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.100

⁶³⁷ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.158

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

where works of Jewish themes that were rendered in a naturalistic way were largely rejected in favour of the modern aesthetic

Tickner points out that the exhibition's catalogue made no ethnic distinction in art, either that of being British or putting forward the notion of a Jewish art. Significantly there was an absence of art that was distinctively Jewish, even with the Zionists or assimilated Jews. Tickner suggests that it was not discernable and simply did not exist: 'For Martin Buber, posing the question "Is a Jewish art possible today?" at the fifth Zionist Congress in 1901, the answer had to be a resounding "No": a national style needs a soil from which to spring and a sky towards which to rise, that is, an homogenous society from which it develops and for which it exists.'⁶³⁹ Two thousand years separated them from a single foundation, a national homeland which had created diasporic conditions. There could no longer be an art that could express a homogeneous experience and as such mitigate a distinct racial advocacy of a national art. Diaspora predisposed Jewish cultural identity to the process of assimilation and in doing so created heterogeneous individual, for whom 'a national art was neither possible nor meaningful in a cosmopolitan field dominated by individual talent'.⁶⁴⁰

In this respect the diasporic experience, I would argue, had evolved the relevance of a shared psyche, a collective consciousness and ethnic claims on artistic expression. As such, I suggest that this accounted for a noticeable absence of a Jewish art that could be deemed distinctive. Within this context there could be no 'Jewish art because there is no settled Jewish nation'.⁶⁴¹ However, what Tickner point out is that the narrative of the exhibition strongly correlated Jewishness with a class-based appropriation of style: Cubism and Futurism. This, as Steyn suggests, became a 'symbolically important place as other',⁶⁴² and in this sense the exhibition served as a cultural project to produce distinctive categories and to reinforce cultural differentiation and national culture and a definition of modernism: which, Bauman argues, 'simultaneously brings about the levelling of differences and again creates boundaries and structures further differences'.⁶⁴³

For Steyn and Tickner, the narrative of the exhibition was one of intent to create boundaries, a structuring of difference that inhabited a space 'outside of and for a

⁶³⁹ Kenneth Silver and Romy Golan, *The Circle of Montparnasse* (Universe Books, 1985), p.67, as quoted in Tickner, *Modern Life*, p.162

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., p.163

⁶⁴² Steyn, *The Jew*, p.110

⁶⁴³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p.59

mainstream of modern art'.⁶⁴⁴ As such, it represented a hierarchy that was negotiated, predetermined and decreed. I argue that it was not only circumscribed by the narrative of the exhibition but supported by a fraction of the contemporary press, for example the *Manchester Guardian*. The newspaper inferred the ideological position that the 'nucleus of Jewish artists are cubist',⁶⁴⁵ and that this extended to exaggerated and emotive accusations that this stylised practice of modernism was not only racialised but cohabited with malign influences and was subversive. As Steyn presents it; 'the message of the *Westminster Gazette* was clear as a bell: modern art was infected by foreign influence.'⁶⁴⁶

Within contemporary terms, Jewishness equated with radical modernism and became synonymous with a malign influence that had otherworldly qualities, i.e. a relationship with occultism, and the world of the irrational where reason did not exist, 'the emotive world of the other'.⁶⁴⁷ For the detractors of Cubism and Futurism these connotations served to justify a version of modernism that permitted a racialised dialogue of 'the stranger in our midst',⁶⁴⁸ and a reasonable justification for their expulsion. I argue that the nation's culture developed a narrative that propagated difference and a rearticulation that evoked the 'demonization of the Eastern European Jew'.⁶⁴⁹ In doing so I suggest that it sanctified difference and established an ideal of Englishness that was deemed both national and natural. This assumed embodiment of the ideological commitment of the exhibition arguably underpinned a visual representation of an exclusionist version of Englishness. This acceptance conferred expulsion on that which was felt to be antipathetically foreign, primarily the Jew as a category was 'installed at the extreme edge of social relations as Other whereby he occupied both a cognitive and socio-economic position which secured and maintained him as a different, distinctive and inferior class of being'.⁶⁵⁰ Given this influence, the contemporary radicals 'the Whitechapel Boys', amongst whom Gertler was now numbered, found themselves marginalised by a 'narrative of class and ethnic identification'.⁶⁵¹ This was the outcome of a system of closure and construction of Englishness and English art that reflected what Wolff referred to as the 'conservative

⁶⁴⁴ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.99

⁶⁴⁵ 'Post-Impressionists for Whitechapel', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 April 1914

⁶⁴⁶ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.106

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p.99

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., p.109

⁶⁴⁹ Wolff, 'The Failure of a Hard Sponge', p.162

⁶⁵⁰ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.110

⁶⁵¹ Wolff, 'The Failure of a Hard Sponge', p.64

tendencies'⁶⁵² of the Bloomsbury Group. Within this context –which the thesis has established over the preceding pages - it highlights the continued conflict that Gertler had with members of the Bloomsbury Group and the source of his ambivalence about the upper classes.

Gilbert Cannan at His Mill

Despite this marginalisation by virtue of class, education and ethnicity, I propose that the influence of the social matrix of his fellow exhibitors served as a source of advancement in Gertler's stylistic development. This, I argue, resonates in his painting *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill* (1916; Figure 26), whose conception, I propose, is derivative of an 'anchorage in Jewish folk conceptions which had emerged in the early part of the twentieth century'.⁶⁵³ Writers like Rothenstein and MacDougall have remarked on the appearance of a folk influence in Gertler's work at this time; yet they are vague and nebulous in their assertions. Although Rothenstein clearly announces that the painting is significant for its 'expressive folk art',⁶⁵⁴ he cannot be specific about the origins of its expression and is reduced to speculation Gertler's early years:

Whether the emergence of this element was due to something he had recently seen, to something innate, or to some childhood or even inherited memory of folk-art in Eastern Europe, I cannot say; but it is perhaps relevant to recall that it was by an example of popular art, a poster advertising a meat extract, that he was first moved to draw.⁶⁵⁵

Unlike Rothenstein and MacDougall, Avram Kampf's account of modernist Jewish art specifies folk art as an influence, placing its emergence within an historical context. Kampf attributes the flourishing of the conception of folk art to what, he argues, 'amounted to a Jewish Renaissance in Eastern Europe before the First World War'.⁶⁵⁶ Folk art, he claims, became an object of increasing focus for Jewish artists in their attempt to affirm a distinct cultural identity and embark on a 'quest for a Jewish secular art'.⁶⁵⁷ This appetite originates from a generation of Jewish artists born in Russia between the 1880s and 1890s who came to maturity between 1909 and the

⁶⁵² Wolff, 'The Failure of a Hard Sponge', p.63

⁶⁵³ Avram Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1990), p.16

⁶⁵⁴ John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956), p.212

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.17

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., p.15

Russian Revolution of 1917, and who felt the need for and the possibility of a national Jewish art. Their commitment led them to excavate their past history. In doing so they drew inspiration from icons and relics of their past, i.e. gravestones, carvings, religious objects from home, the popular print in the Jewish lubok and the art that adorned the architecture of painted synagogues. On the continent this folk aesthetic was further advanced by S. Ansky, who in 1912 organised in St Petersburg the 'first Jewish Ethnographic Expeditions into the towns and villages of Wholinia and Podolin'.⁶⁵⁸ Alan Birnholz argues that the Jewish Ethnographic Society emerged as an expression of the deep Jewish interest in their folk history. This overriding Jewish interest 'encouraged the collection of Jewish art objects'⁶⁵⁹ and the creation of 'a museum of Jewish art in St Petersburg';⁶⁶⁰ this institution also provided patronage both morally and financially to young artists like Chagall and Lissitzky. Max Kozloff supports Birnholz in his assertion that the Ethnographic Society in St Petersburg supported contemporary artists. Both Birnholz and Kozloff substantiate Kampf's claim that there was a vigorous flowering of paintings and literature in Russia during the period from 1917 to 1924. From these traditional Jewish communities this expedition collected 'folk legends, photographs, songs, melodies, customs, games, rituals, proverbs etc'.⁶⁶¹ Something like 700 objects⁶⁶² were collected during these explorations and became part of a collection of a 'Jewish museum planned by the Ethnographic Society'.⁶⁶³

Some artists sought salvation in these remnants of the past, the objects of a Jewish communal life, a folk art conception, 'an art derived from the people's soul'.⁶⁶⁴ This cultural renaissance became closely related to the popularist tendencies and groundswell of nationalist fervour that arose from the 'freedoms gained from Tsarist oppression and the emergence of an active Hebrew and Yiddish literature and theatre'.⁶⁶⁵ For many of the artists the quest for a Jewish secular art was inseparable from the quest for political emancipation and cultural autonomy. The vocabulary of folk art, its motifs and iconography were viewed as a means whereby a synthesis could take

⁶⁵⁸ S. Ansky, 'The Folklorist', in H.A. Abramson (ed.), *Vitebsk Amol* (New York: 1956), as quoted by Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.16

⁶⁵⁹ Alan C. Birnholz, 'E. Lissitzky and the Jewish Tradition', *Studio International*, 186, Oct 1977, p.130

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.16

⁶⁶² During the cold war these objects were locked in storage in the Ethnographic Museum of the People of the USSR in Leningrad (verbal communication Zussia Ephron, 1977), p.165 n., as quoted by Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.16

⁶⁶³ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.16

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

place to create a modern Jewish art that expressed a Russian Jewish contemporary condition. It was felt that on the 'basis of folk art a true national style could be built'⁶⁶⁶ because 'Folk art was the folklore, the deepest end of the fine arts, their true origin and ancestors.'⁶⁶⁷ Within the process of secularisation, emancipation and enlightenment, folk art became embedded in the evolution of a Russian modern art as a generation of artists achieved maturity by rejecting realist art. These artists had 'given way to Impressionist and Post-Impressionist tendencies'⁶⁶⁸ and then later to the 'abstract tendencies of Suprematism and Constructivism'.⁶⁶⁹

This unlikely union and intersection reflected an interrelationship of a form of self-conscious individualism which arose from the autonomy of Jewish emancipation and the collectivity of Judaism, a fusion with Hassidic pantheism. However, there was an affinity between folk art and the advanced tendencies in modern art, with its frequent distortion of natural appearances, its conventions and abstractions which made a synthesis possible. As such, a harmony existed at the time between the idea of a national Jewish art and identity and that of modern art and its practices.

Kampf argues that the importance of the presence of *The Machmadim* group was that it 'created important links with other Jewish artist groups whose members were connected by personal ties to a whole Yiddish avant-garde network who gathered in various European cities'.⁶⁷⁰ Primarily the factor that cemented these disparate groups of artists together, suggests Kampf, was a 'series of artistic and literary magazines'⁶⁷¹ such as *Schriften*, *YungYiddish* and in London the Yiddish language journal *Renaissance*, which spread a folkloric tradition and that translated a specific Jewish experience within modernist terms. All shared and spread the enthusiasm and the impetus of a revolutionary modernism premised on the aesthetic of a folkloric tradition. We can only speculate whether this literary enthusiasm was a fertile source of inspiration for the young Gertler. Equally the participation of the 'circle of Montparnasse' in the exhibition at Whitechapel may have been relevant to Gertler's development.⁶⁷² The circle of Montparnasse was widely implicated in the artistic and cultural life of Paris, and as an artistic circle it was 'embedded in a network of Jewish artists, dealers, friends and

⁶⁶⁶Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.22

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid. p.16

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., p.28

⁶⁷² Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.163

collaborators in art and literary magazines across Europe'.⁶⁷³ It was highly likely that the flowering of a Jewish renaissance and exaltation of a specific Jewish aesthetic was brought about by this inter-relationship and arguably it came to the attention of the British avant-garde. As such, within the context of the exhibition in the small room at the Whitechapel Gallery this racial strain of modernism in the plastic arts may have come to the forefront and to the attention of Gertler.

However, these assumptions are tentative. What is much more feasible as an influential source for the conception of Gertler's *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill* is the Yiddish theatre of London's East End. I argue that it was this medium more than any other resource that was a transformative experience that underpinned the painting. Gertler was a devotee of the theatre, and it was this experience that, I suggest, imbued him with the spirit of the aesthetic of a folkloric tradition. It was this resource that provided the liberation that gave the painting its folk art nature. Tickner points to the 'flowering of Yiddish drama'⁶⁷⁴ as a direct consequence of a specific Jewish literary renaissance throughout Eastern and Western Europe which gave audiences the opportunity to participate and identify with a cultural heritage.

For Kampf the theatre was highly significant as an entity within the Jewish community. With its emphasis on the collective consciousness rather than individualism, it expressed the primordial loyalties, pervasive unity and expansion of a Jewish national consciousness. Not only did it serve to entertain, but within the Jewish community it was perceived as an educative force. It provided a means of expression that actively engaged the audience, i.e. 'the audience ... was an active and interested participant in the drama'.⁶⁷⁵ It did this by 'Remembering old folk legends, by examining past and contemporary writing and turning them in to stylised dramatic stage form. They moved towards the crystallisation of a Jewish style.'⁶⁷⁶ This characterised the spirit of the Yiddish theatre where nationalist tendencies were defended by the expressive word: it was drama which could only be 'understood by Yiddish speaking people',⁶⁷⁷ by those who knew the language of Hebrew and Yiddish.⁶⁷⁸ This was

⁶⁷³ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.163

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., p.54

⁶⁷⁶ The Habiman Theatre was organised on a strictly collective basis with expenses as well as income equally shared amongst the actors. See Uri Haklai, 'The Life Work of Nachum Zemach against the Background of the Revival of Jewish Culture in the Soviet Union' (PhD Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1974), pp.163-8, as quoted by Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.170n.

⁶⁷⁷ Joseph Leftwich, 'Jewish London – Fifty Years Ago', in (ed.) Ben Uri Commemorative Volume (London: Ben Uri Society, 1966), p.5

⁶⁷⁸ Yiddish is a richly expressive language based on medieval German spiced with Hebrew, Russian and Polish words and written in Hebrew characters. See David Mazower, *Yiddish Theatre in London*, (London: Museum of the Jewish East End), p.9

personified by being the amalgam of contemporary writing which enacted the experience of the day-to-day reality of people and that of the 'ancient and time honoured folk tradition'.⁶⁷⁹ Within this context the past was given credence by its reference to the present, and it is this relationship that inaugurated the creation of a sense of intimacy with the audience. It facilitated a mode of communication that allowed 'each person to react to his or her own common situation'.⁶⁸⁰ I argue that through Gertler's own prism of participation this folkloric expression filtered through his psyche, and this could only be described as a Jewish expression. It is this folkloric aesthetic expression that I claim was invested in the painting *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill*, a subtext which was acknowledged by John Rothenstein, who claimed that it was 'The first important painting known to me with this folk art overtone'.⁶⁸¹ Yet despite this cultural reference, there is an absence of an iconography that symbolises its antecedence: a specific Jewish historical past.

One can only assume that with Gilbert Cannan at his side, that Gertler, through his episodic visits, absorbed the rich vitality of the Jewish theatre in Whitechapel in the East End. Like any other member of the audience, Gertler, the thesis speculates, gained an intimate insight into folklore experience and a distinct and historical past that was his. This intersection between the past and the present, I claim, gave him a keen penetration and understanding of the contemporary psychological attitudes inherent in the Yiddish plays. It was at this interface that he gave public animation and palpable expression to the Hassidic plays through the evocation of a dance. In her memoirs, Ottoline Morrell recalled that Gertler and Cannan would 'act and dance a queer London East End Jewish play together, accompanied by the cry of that despised race "I am only a Jew"'.⁶⁸² Morrell's observation that this was a 'queer', 'strange' dance implies a language of dance that was esoteric and idiosyncratic. Her derogatory connotations were perhaps because she did not fully understand the origins of the dance. Gertler's enactment of the vocabulary of the theatre through movement and non-verbal expression was in recognition of a certain authenticity and arguably his true racial identity. The wit and proverbs embedded in such Hassidic plays, I claim, determined the nature of his gesticulation and the pictorial choreography of the body in his paintings. It

⁶⁷⁹ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.42

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p.9

⁶⁸¹ Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, p.212

⁶⁸² Robert Gathorne-Hardy (ed.) *Ottoline: The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.277

indicates that he had an intuitive grasp of the style and attitudes of his historical folklore history, a rekindling of an ancestral past that shaped 'how one spread one's finger or stuck out one's hand'.⁶⁸³

What appeared to Morrell as a strange dance from a romantic folklore idyll went back, according to Kampf 'to a slow paced, simple primitive way of life, reflecting organic cultural wholeness and the steady rhythm of traditional communities'.⁶⁸⁴ Actually this could not be further from the truth in respect of Gertler's ancestral past. Rather, it could be deemed less of a celebration than a dance that disguised the harsh reminder of his early years of Slavic culture. Distant memories of the past were steeped in poverty and insecurity, and had less to do with the harmonious idyll of folklore fantasy and more to do with the economic hardship and survival that Gertler's family had had to endure. Like many families, the Gertlers were not untouched by the endemic poverty that prevailed in Przemsyl, Galicia, an existence marked by increasing hardship. People like the Gertlers and their children were driven to extremes in their quest to survive, which led to individual or group resourcefulness and transgressing the law: 'All the children became adept at stealing vegetables from fields and market barrows'.⁶⁸⁵ This was against a backcloth of strong prejudice directed towards Jews in Galicia and the racial fantasies that were surfacing at the time, where people were all too willing to believe in 'grotesque stories of Jewish outrages against Christian children',⁶⁸⁶ occurring at a time when there was violent anti-semitism growing on Galicia's borders with Austria, Russia and Poland. The folklore of Gertler's ancestral past was not an Arcadia but an interlude in the experience and threat of anti-semitic violence. I can only speculate that the dance stirred up an ancestral past marked by anti-semitism.

Within this context, I argue, the recapturing of the past through the medium of dance and an Arcadian idyll was more of a wish fulfilment by Gertler, a projection of what he would have liked to experience but did not. However, perhaps this strange dance as observed by Morrell was more to do with the celebration of the present, with Gertler's immersion in the habit of the folkloric tradition in the countryside. His stay with Gilbert Cannan at Cholesbury brought him into contact with its surrounding countryside. He was so enraptured by this new environment that he stopped working on *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill* to make a number of studies from nature: 'Gertler spent his

⁶⁸³ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.22

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., p.20

⁶⁸⁵ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.6, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.6

⁶⁸⁶ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.6

day at Cholesbury making studies from nature, marvelling at the peaceful countryside and embracing it with the rapture of a poor city-dweller seeing its beauty as if for the first time.⁶⁸⁷ Cholesbury became Gertler's anglicised Arcadia. It was a country retreat in the form of a converted mill house, and when there was no room there, Gertler lodged in a little cottage nearby. Gertler's excursions to the theatre world may have been enlivened imaginatively by his present immersion in the rustic environment at Cholesbury. As such, I argue, he was perhaps better placed to interact with the folklore narrative distilled in the dramatised play and its expressive stage design. This was an artistic vocabulary replete with Jewish life experience that, Kampf argues, transversed the political and geographical boundaries from Eastern Europe to the West, and in the process promoted the idea of modern art at one with Jewish identity.⁶⁸⁸ In many respects the importance of the theatre was that it 'provided a meeting ground for the interaction of all avant-garde movements in drama, music, literature and stage design'.⁶⁸⁹

The theatre was not only a spiritual force within the community but an outlet and site for aesthetic development where drama intersected right across the spectrum of the progressive arts. Kampf has proposed that the creative force of the Yiddish theatre and its folkloric tradition spread to the West and with it its anti-naturalism, which invaded the set pieces and stage design of drama, particularly the 'abstract tendencies of Suprematism and Constructivism'.⁶⁹⁰ This representation of the new aesthetic direction taken by Jewish artists was one where they equally 'drew from their own tradition',⁶⁹¹ primarily the motifs based on Jewish folk art. Jewish folklore tradition celebrated the natural world and the creatures that inhabited it: 'lions, pigeons, plants found in haggodote (Passover stones) and synagogue ornaments and gravestones'.⁶⁹² This abundance of forms provided a rich repertoire for artists in the East like Nathan Attman, who incorporated them into his graphic art, which departed from natural appearances. Lissitzky took a similar approach: 'In his numerous illustrations for Yiddish books [he] also strove to combine the sources of Jewish folkart and Western European modern art to create a Jewish style.'⁶⁹³ It was a style dominated by an overlapping of planes, linear flat planes that were crisp and sharp and constructivist or cubist in manner. They were

⁶⁸⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.95

⁶⁸⁸ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.27

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p.29

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p.16

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ibid., p.21

⁶⁹³ Ibid., p.21

highly formalised, the nature of which deleted any significance of shade or depth. This formalism in modern art had a remarkable correspondence with Jewish folklore art, where there is an absence of three-dimensionality. It therefore shares with the advanced tendencies of modern art an emphasis on two-dimensionality. This characterised all Jewish artefacts, where depth was avoided 'in ... painted, carved, drawn or etched figures'.⁶⁹⁴ However, as Joseph Gutmann points out, 'as a religio-ethnic minority in the medieval Christian environment, the Jews, as might be expected, adopted the prevailing Christian artistic styles in order to convey their own unique messianic tradition.'⁶⁹⁵

The claim here, then, is that the distinguishing quality of Jewish art emergent at this moment – internationally – was a predilection for angular planed flatness, and when decorative motifs were required, there was no distinction made between them and the central one; rather, 'it was fully integrated into a harmonious overall design'.⁶⁹⁶ In this respect, according to Kampf, the working procedure of folkloric art presented itself as having a natural unity with the aesthetic directions of modern art, which in turn reflected the aesthetic profession of both Eastern and Western Jewish avant-garde artists. Robert Pincus-Witten questioned the emphasis that Kampf gives to Jewish art as 'imaginistic' or 'illustrative'.⁶⁹⁷ He argues that Kampf's aesthetic position was historically prescriptive, that is, 'the time-honoured distinction between form and content has contributed to the spurious notion that imagery or iconography may be – is – ethnically identifiable whereas process or form is impervious to such a designation'.⁶⁹⁸ He states that Kampf, because of his descriptiveness, organised the exhibition entitled *The Jewish Experience in Art of the 20th Century* as a descriptive iconography.⁶⁹⁹

To this extent, Pincus-Witten argued that Kampf put forward in his exhibition an aesthetic which was arguably retrograde and completely ignored 'the axiomatic character of Jewish art'.⁷⁰⁰ That is, Jewish art was inherently abstract, and in this respect, Pincus-Witten claims that Kampf became an apologist for 'ethnic imagery'.⁷⁰¹ Pertinent to this claim perhaps are two of the propositions that Pincus-Witten puts

⁶⁹⁴ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.24

⁶⁹⁵ Joseph Gutmann, 'When the Kingdom Comes: Messianic Themes in Medieval Jewish Art', *The Art Journal*, Winter 67/8, XXVII/Z, p.168

⁶⁹⁶ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.24

⁶⁹⁷ Robert Pincus-Witten, 'Six Propositions on Jewish Art', *Jewish Art Magazine*, December 1975, p.66

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

forward to question Kampf's emphasis on Jewish art as imagist or illustrative. Primarily, he claims that the idea of illustrating mosaic law through imagery is an antithesis to Judaic theocracy, which does not permit 'graven imagery'.⁷⁰² This was central to the East of the Sephardic, where it observes the second commandment of the mosaic law. The communication to Moses from God on Mount Sinai for the people of Israel was 'You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above nor on earth below, or the water under the earth.' The Jews were therefore prohibited from representing the spiritual dimension of their religious faith and their material existence on earth. In artistic terms they were therefore not permitted to depict any aspect of nature which included people. The second commandment is quite categorical, according to Judaic theology, in the restriction and prohibition of any artistic image. It could be said that the purpose, according to Nadler, of the second commandment was to prevent the Israelites 'from engaging in the kind of idolatry that was common among neighbouring people at the time',⁷⁰³ which Nadler argues was perceived to pose a threat to the nation's political and religious unity, as well as, the nation's uniqueness. This precept, suggested Pincus-Witten, permeated Western Europe 'and the Ashkenazic commitment to the Book'.⁷⁰⁴

But the theatre world was a locus for both community experience and artistic representation both of which reflected a strong cultural influence and ethnic self-assertion irrespective of geographical and political boundaries. I would argue that Gertler was fully planted in the culture of his people and that he absorbed not only the ethnic spirit of the theatre but also the forms of visual expression whose commonality – internationally – were characterised by anti-naturalism. Although Rothenstein did not make the direct connection that the theatre was an inspirational source for Gertler, he did allude unknowingly to its importance when he stated that the painting had 'obvious dramatic possibilities'.⁷⁰⁵ However, apart from Rothenstein's inference, this has largely been overlooked by historians, as has the importance of the theatre in Jewish Whitechapel life. The thesis claims that the influence of the theatre underscored and was instrumental in the conception of *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill*. Gertler's visual experience of the theatre world, animated by the spirit of Jewish folklore, was arguably articulated by a synthesis of folkloric and modernist art practices, conjoined forces that,

⁷⁰² Pincus-Witten, 'Six Propositions on Jewish Art', p.67

⁷⁰³ Steven Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.73

⁷⁰⁴ Pincus-Witten, 'Six Propositions on Jewish Art', p.67

⁷⁰⁵ Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, p.212

I propose, were in dialogue in the conception of the painting and account for its striking resemblance to the idiom of folk art. It is as if Gertler deliberated on the possibility of producing a Jewish ornament, an artefact of Jewish folklore tradition whose two-dimensionality is articulated in flattened angular planes, but also in painterly, terms. Thus the visual representation of Gilbert Cannan and his dogs reminds us of a wooden relief where their physical representation is completely pared down.

The painting conforms to the dictates of Jewish ornamentation and its principles of design, upon which the general layout is premised. This is expressed by the central motif of Gilbert Cannan, which has a harmonious unity with its surroundings in the 'upright converging gothic forms of the trees and the Mill'.⁷⁰⁶ The robustness of these forms rivals Cannan, the central subject, and prevents this central motif from determining the composition. To some extent it reflects the purposeful evasion of its significance. As such, everything within the painting has been treated on an equal basis in relation to the central subject. The overlapping upright planes that surround the central subject are commensurate with its flat relief and sharply delineated form. There was already present a pronounced formalism in Gertler's *oeuvre*, 'a strain of naïve primitivism',⁷⁰⁷ and 'an underlying quality of harshness',⁷⁰⁸ which had intensified over the years. This was preconditioned by the eclecticism of the artist, who had borrowed from a multiplicity of 'primitivising',⁷⁰⁹ styles from the early pre-Renaissance European masters 'such as Cimabue and Giotto'.⁷¹⁰ However, I claim that what precipitated the conception of *Gilbert Cannan* was less to do with an eclectic sequential development and more to do with Gertler's spiritual engagement with the esoteric culture of the Yiddish theatre. This is why the painting has been generally acknowledged by critics as an isolated phenomenon in Gertler's *oeuvre*. It was a radical departure in which the Yiddish theatre became for Gertler a transformative experience, which has largely been overlooked as a site of influence in commentaries on his work. This was an experience, as Paul Wexler points out, that was 'imported directly from Eastern Europe at the start of the Great Immigration of the 1880's' and primarily located itself in London's East End, where it became central to the lives of Jewish immigrants.⁷¹¹ The growth in the

⁷⁰⁶ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.116

⁷⁰⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.342

⁷⁰⁸ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler: A New Perspective*, p.14

⁷⁰⁹ Tickner, *Modern Lives and Modern Subjects*, p.165

⁷¹⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.64

⁷¹¹ Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jew* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavic Publications Inc., 1993), p.50

Yiddish theatre, as Wexler points out, found its ascendancy in the Pavillion Theatre⁷¹², which, as David Mazower states, was ‘on one of the busiest crossroads in the East End at the point where Valance Road meets Whitechapel Road’, and was known as ‘the Drury Lane of the East’.⁷¹³ The audience consisted mostly of ‘Yiddish speaking immigrants’.⁷¹⁴ John Rodick describes the audience of what has been called the heyday of the Yiddish theatre as an unsophisticated one and very unconventional: ‘at first sight a typically music-hall, one busy with oranges and nuts’.⁷¹⁵ This observation reflected Gertler’s own recollection of his Yiddish theatre, which he frequented as a small child, and where he deposited himself ‘in the front row of the gallery, where, clutching at his orange or bag of nuts, he could lean forward and enjoy the glamour of the performance’.⁷¹⁶

Rodick describes the Pavillion theatre as an environment that was free from restraint and the censor, but which suffered from a lack of funds. These two factors resulted, according to Rodick, in the production of dramas that had tremendous vitality.⁷¹⁷ This quality was commented on by Gertler himself in a letter of 1 April 1914 to Dora Carrington, when he remarked that ‘Yiddish theatre was far more vital than the English’.⁷¹⁸ Perhaps this explains why *Gilbert Cannan* led to the bewilderment of one critic, who upon seeing it in an exhibition stated: ‘It seems to be a caricature both of nature and man but one cannot quite see the joke of it.’⁷¹⁹ What the critic clearly did not appreciate or fully understand was its cultural autonomy and the narrative that expressed the originality of the ethnic character of Jewish folk art through the expressive artistic vocabulary of the Yiddish theatre. In accordance with this interpretation, the painting can be seen as a phantasmal stage scene at the Yiddish theatre with a shallow stage and set. The subtext of the painting was consequently an expression of a specific Jewish experience which embodied the artist’s subjective remembrance and his conscious desire to go back to his orthodox beginnings as set out scenographically as if on a stage.

Given our claim about the rationale of the conception of *Gilbert Cannan*, the pictorial construction of the painting could make reference to the common currency

⁷¹²Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jew*, p.50

⁷¹³Mazower, *Yiddish Theatre in London*, p.16

⁷¹⁴Ibid.

⁷¹⁵John Rodick, ‘The Theatre in Whitechapel’, *Poetry and Drama*, March 1913, p.43

⁷¹⁶E.J. Fedarb, Reminiscences of Mark Gertler (unpublished) from a letter to the author, 7 January 1998, N320, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.16

⁷¹⁷Rodick, ‘Theatre in Whitechapel’, p.16

⁷¹⁸Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, January 1914, Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.63

⁷¹⁹Ibid., p.199

within the Yiddish theatre of both Eastern and Western Europe. Kampf has provided an account of the then state of Yiddish stage design, that evoked an awesome monumentality by its cubo-futuristic style and was central to the Russian artists who worked in the constructivist manner. This progressive artistic stage style was in its abstract conception highly formalised: 'sharp geometric volume which cut through space whose purpose was not to represent anything in particular'.⁷²⁰ Crucial to our argument is Kampf's claim that contemporary vanguard Jewish art mirrored the style of stage design prevalent by 1920 in the Yiddish theatre. The logic of this was purposeful in dramatising the scene, transmitting a 'concept of the environment in which the actor performed',⁷²¹ and as such evoking a focus of concentration and intensity to the drama. The simplification of form also extended to the attire and costumes of the actors, so that, for example, the 'physical deformity of the beggar'⁷²² intensified the expression of the character.

This was, as Kampf argued, not a continental aberration but a universal style that prevailed throughout Yiddish theatre, and as such its diffusion across Europe accounted for Gertler's independent incorporation of it in London around the mid-1910s, an adoption of anti-naturalistic forms expressed in a graphic, artistic way. It is in this respect that the plastic conception of *Gilbert Cannan* in its manner and approach arguably co-opted the progressive tendencies existing between the years 1914 and 16 in the Yiddish theatre in Whitechapel. For example, The Feinman Yiddish People's Theatre, or Temple of Art, was initiated and influenced by the Moscow Art Theatre, 'founded by the dramatist Peretz Hirshbein in Odessa in 1908'.⁷²³ It was seen as a Jewish cultural centre which intended to promote standards of the highest excellence and express ethnic self-sufficiency and pride in Jewish self-expression. The Temple of Art was self-sufficient in terms of its institutional control, that is, it was run and controlled exclusively by Jews. The staff of this theatre, whether or not engaged in dramatic theatre, or those working behind the stage, or those involved in musical accompaniment, shared the same religion and culture. The problem was that the ambition of the company to achieve standards of the highest excellence meant that such ambition drove up production costs, which subsequently meant that the very people it was meant to entertain could not afford the admission ticket. The Temple of Art

⁷²⁰ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.30

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid., p.31

⁷²³ Mazower, *Yiddish Theatre*, p.18

therefore lost out to the Pavillion theatre, which catered for cheaper opera and drama. However, what I suggest is that the short but influential production life of this theatre did promote the cross-fertilization of Eastern European influence in the dramatic arts and the artistic influence it brought with it. It created a dialogue which is reflected in and positioned *Gilbert Cannan* along the continuum of a process towards an increasing formalism which was present in the stage design of the Yiddish theatre world. The painting clearly demonstrates cubo-futuristic forms, 'cubist inspired intersections',⁷²⁴ which can be seen in the representation of the mill and the trees which exhibit a still Gothic linearity which cut through the pictorial zone and the disparities reflected by consequent narrowing and widening of space.

The portrait of Cannan is reductive in expression and his physicality is transposed into a sharp delineated angularised humanoid form. In the painting Cannan, like his continental counterparts on stage, is placed within an environment that is conceptualised in an abstract way. But perhaps this metaphoric expression of Cannan as actor is more authentic than it seems. For when one enquires into the life history of Cannan, it is evident that there was a considerable degree of commitment by him to participation in the theatre world. Indeed, for a time in his early life he had worked on stage as an actor before embarking on a career as a drama critic and writer: 'By 1914 he had already published four novels, a collection of plays, a book on the theatre and a translation of three foreign novels as well as regularly contributing theatre reviews to the avant-garde quarterly *Rhythm*.'⁷²⁵ Cannan was in fact seen as something of a pariah as a drama critic because of the nature of his harsh reviews, which 'offended many of the old guard in the theatre'.⁷²⁶ It would be fair to say that Cannan was steeped in theatrical life to the extent that it meshed with the core of his identity. With his outspoken love and preference of the Yiddish theatre 'he even agreed that the Yiddish theatre was far more vital than the English'.⁷²⁷ With his theatrical background there was a synthesis within the painting where Cannan could naturally - as a folkloric hero - assume centre stage of a painting that celebrated a lost tradition of Gertler's ethnic past. This was romanticised not only by Cannan but by the depiction of the mill - the backcloth of his portrayal. Although the mill was Cannan's authentic home, it was arguably a metaphor for the lifeblood of the organic ways of folkloric tradition, the

⁷²⁴ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.21

⁷²⁵ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.92

⁷²⁶ Ibid., p.93

⁷²⁷ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, January 1914, Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.63

agricultural mode of production upon which it was based and the provider of its staple diet, bread.

The painting could also be perceived as a celebration of his friendship with Cannan, one perhaps that Gertler may have felt could be more commonly found in the organic life of folk tradition. Gertler liked Cannan so much that he said that he found it difficult by the end of a sociable evening to 'tear myself away'.⁷²⁸ There developed quite quickly a deep camaraderie; they spent much of their time together in deep conversation and shared enthusiasms. Cannan was to Gertler, in Yiddish terms, 'a mensch'; an exemplary male - 'He is a true man',⁷²⁹ Gertler wrote; 'there are not many like him'.⁷³⁰ Gertler's celebration of Cannan in paint was paralleled by Cannan's celebration of Gertler in the written word. The painting of Cannan was completed in 1916, when Cannan published a novel based on Gertler's life. The novel was called *Mendel*, a Yiddish name by which Gertler's family had often used to call him.

Cannan had a genuine passion for the East End and its inhabitants, and he had established many contacts in the area. When he first met Gertler, Cannan wanted to know everything about his people and quickly befriended him. 'Fascinated by Mark's exotic background he conceived the idea of using his life as the basis of a novel and Mark agreed to this'.⁷³¹ Written over a period of time, Cannan exercised his legal mind, listening and carefully making notes based on Gertler's recitation of his early life and 'everything he thought'.⁷³² Gertler later on in his life stressed the accuracy of Cannan's text. Above all, the novel is predicated on Gertler's love for Dora Carrington, an unrequited passion that Cannan himself had experienced in his life for the 'sculptress Kathleen Bruce who had rejected him to marry the explorer Robert Falcon Scott'.⁷³³ We can only assume that their mutual disappointments with their Gentile love objects contributed to a communion between them and that Cannan could empathise not only with the fraught relationship that Gertler was having with another Gentile female Carrington, which mirrored the past experience in his life, but also, his present situation, the feeling of being 'trapped in a marriage with a woman seventeen years his senior'.⁷³⁴ with whom ultimately he had little in common. Just as Gertler romanticised Cannan in

⁷²⁸ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, January 1914, Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.63

⁷²⁹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.159

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p.93

painterly terms, so did Cannan in his portrayal of Gertler in the written form. Gertler reminded Cannan of the German poet Heinrich Heine, with his existential position as a 'gifted Jew'⁷³⁵ lost and bewildered, 'adrift in a Christian society'.⁷³⁶

Gilbert Cannan is an artistic representation that can be viewed as having ethnicised tendencies because of its inherent folkloric conception. It is a diasporist painting which is secularised, thereby conforming to a logic that realises an absence of any artistic expression to a theological referent. In this context the Hebraic tradition and Jewish historical memory was denied an iconography. The painting is cleansed of any exaltation of emotive or transcendent qualities invested in objects that lend to clarify the interpretation of Talmudic discourse. The painting is therefore divested of the ethical and religious context of the great Jewish legacy, the Torah. The negation of this allows the painting to transcend the realm of any implied narrative.

I would argue that the painting's formalised energy reflects a liberated and aesthetic detachment that captures an artistic synthesis predicated on the harmonious union of Jewish art and advanced avant-garde tendencies. Gertler translates this affirmation and essence of the artistic folk conception and dramatizes it in the painting, which could be described as a phantasmal stage scene from the Yiddish theatre. In essence the painting articulates the ethnic cause; its fervour for the theatre became a nodal point, a bulwark against erosion presented by the processes of assimilation and enlightenment 'which act as solvents on the traditional faith of the Jewish community'.⁷³⁷

The spirit of the Yiddish theatre may have strengthened the personal sense of Gertler's Jewish identity, but unlike many of those who attended the theatre it did not extend to the collective engagement of a nationalist, Zionist, cause:

Theatre audiences probably comprised the very same asserted East European Jew who found in 1915 the Ben Uri society for the advancement of art among the Jewish masses and published later the Yiddish magazine *Renaissance* in which Bomberg published poetry and drawings.⁷³⁸

Gertler was never interested in taking up the mantle of political or social action to advance a cause. Any latent nationalist spirit of the theatre was in a sense privatised within the vortex of his individual social and cultural experience, his personal struggle

⁷³⁵ Letter from Gilbert Cannan to Ottoline Morrell, 20 May 1914, University of Texas at Austin, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.93

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj*, p.12

⁷³⁸ Ibid., p.54

with the social and cultural milieu in which he moved and operated. This national zeal sounded the death knell of his process of assimilation and of the loss of a Jewish self-hatred which placed him personally in a position where he no longer felt the need to deny his Jewishness or to pretend that he was English. The transmutation of the Yiddish dramatised play onto the small confines of a painting reflected the imprint and self-assurance of a secular racial identity. The small stage scene of the painting reflected an affirmation of racial identity which was confined to the private realm of his individual experience rather than the collective zeal of the many. It is this that essentialises *Gilbert Cannan*, a painting that is expressive in a covert way.

The Merry-Go-Round

In 1916, at the same time that he was working on the *Gilbert Cannan at His Mill*, Gertler was also working on what was described to Lytton Strachey in May of that year as ‘a large and very unsalable picture of Merry-Go-Rounds’.⁷³⁹ There is common agreement among historians and critics that the painting is symbolic of Gertler’s personal feelings towards the Great War, ‘a satire on Militarism, its futility and the artist’s pessimism’.⁷⁴⁰ However, it is also perceived by historians as a ‘reflection of the ups and downs and confusion in Gertler’s life over the past few years’.⁷⁴¹

The inspiration for *The Merry-Go-Round* (1916; Figure 27) was a festive event, a bank holiday fair on Hampstead Heath. The painting was developed from a number of drawings of this event. What started out as an innocuous study of a carousel developed, he wrote, into ‘something far more sinister’,⁷⁴² an image whose ultimate expression was the inherent brutality of mechanised warfare. For MacDougall, this artistic expression was ‘underlined by the strident colour scheme, and personified by its riders who are trapped forever, with their mouths opened in a never-ending scream’.⁷⁴³ It is as though these riders – sailors, civilians, soldiers – are pressed together in rows, enveloped in a nightmarish world of mechanisation made inescapable by the extreme fixity that controls every part of the painting’s design, recalling for Woodeson, the ‘horror and

⁷³⁹ Letter from Mark Gertler to Lytton Strachey, 9217.27, Tate Gallery Archive

⁷⁴⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.127

⁷⁴¹ John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minorities Gallery, p.22

⁷⁴² Letter from Mark Gertler to S.S. Koleliansky, 13 September 1916, British Library, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.127

⁷⁴³ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.15

deadlock on the Western Front'.⁷⁴⁴ The painting measures well over 6ft by 4ft and it was the largest canvas painted by Gertler. Considered by most critics and historians as a war painting, it was painted by a pacifist and a non-combatant, and it summarised Gertler's outward expression to the emergence of the First World War. 'The War is indeed terrible', he wrote, 'and how ludicrous'.⁷⁴⁵

The reality of the First World War had far-reaching implications for not only Gertler himself but also his family. The threat posed to Gertler became demonstrable in his civilian life, i.e. the prospect of conscription and active service in France, for in 1916 the Military Service Act had introduced conscription for unmarried men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one. The imposition of conscription created great anxiety for Gertler. He wrote to Carrington:

I expect I shall be dragged into this wretched war, before it's over, but I shall keep out of it as long as I possibly can. How hateful it all is. How I shall hate it if it spoils my life and prevents me from carrying on my work. How hateful it would be to lose one's life, or even be maimed for life, through a purpose in which one has no sort of belief.⁷⁴⁶

We may not fully imagine the stress that Gertler must have felt from this immediate threat and the worry that was caused by rumours of public intimidation, of men being stopped on the street and having to justify themselves as to why they were not in military uniform. This public behaviour was initiated by a wave of patriotism and war fever that gained momentum with the news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 and the spread of propaganda about alleged German atrocities against Western allies.⁷⁴⁷ When Gertler went to the recruiting office 'he was trembling in every limb'⁷⁴⁸ but fortunately his worry about conscription subsided when he was refused entry into the armed services on account of his enemy alien parentage. The actuality of war was being directly experienced by Gertler. When the Zeppelin raids commenced on the London streets it brought him face-up 'to the reality of War',⁷⁴⁹ MacDougall writes on this trauma. The horror of war confronted him while he was completing *The Merry-Go-Round* for he recalled while travelling on a London bus that 'he saw the sky light up in front of him as a Zeppelin streaked across it, shots bursting all round "like huge stars"'. Rushing to the tube for shelter, he looked back "like Lot and was, like him, nearly

⁷⁴⁴ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.225

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.148

⁷⁴⁶ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington 1 July 1915, in Carrington (ed.) *MGSL*, p. 97

⁷⁴⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 13 June 1916, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.123

⁷⁴⁸ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.126

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.115

petrified into a block of salt”⁷⁵⁰ that is, he cast himself as a Hebraic figure from the Old Testament.

I claim that *The Merry-Go-Round* summarised, as Holbrook Gerzina suggests, his ‘state of mind’⁷⁵¹ during the period of intense militarism across British society between the years 1914 and 1916. The overtly military overtone of the painting disguised the anxiety prevalent in Gertler’s life that was consequential in fuelling the nightmarish quality of the painting. The implications of war and the stress and worry it placed on Gertler and his family soon became evident. The primary threat it posed was to their material circumstances. With regard to Gertler’s own position, the emergence of the war threatened two supports in his artistic life: the possible closing of his father’s furrier and picture-making businesses, both of which were seen as ‘luxury items which could be affected by the war’.⁷⁵² The threat of closure to his father’s businesses also stemmed from the possibility that both Golda and Louis, his parents, might be subject to deportation because they were now classified as ‘enemy aliens’.⁷⁵³ This was because they had not been naturalised, and as such were deemed worse than foreign: “‘Poor Mark is in a great taking about his parents,” one friend commented. “They are not naturalized, aged sixty, infinitely poor etc. He fears they may be “repatriated” i.e. sent back to Austria.”’⁷⁵⁴ Gertler witnessed on a daily basis Jews being deported, and as such he naturally worried that his parents might suffer the same fate. Added to this, the reports from Przemyśl, Austria, his parents’ home town, must have caused him further concern.⁷⁵⁵ Newspapers were reporting on the degree of fighting and destruction in his parents’ country of origin and on the high level of casualties that were occurring because of the bombardment in Przemyśl. If his parents were to be deported, they might find themselves ‘in the middle of the fighting between Russia and Austria’.⁷⁵⁶ We cannot comprehend the worry and stress that Gertler and his family were under about becoming ‘casualties of war’.⁷⁵⁷ Fortunately, however, Golda and Louis were delivered from this possible fate by the intervention of the Polish Society, which offered to turn

⁷⁵⁰Letter from Mark Gertler to The Right Hon. Dorothy Brett, October 1915, University of Texas at Austin, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.180

⁷⁵¹Holbrook Gerzina, *Carrington*, p.83

⁷⁵²Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.149

⁷⁵³*Ibid.*, p.180

⁷⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p.149

all people who came from Galicia into Poles, provided they could 'speak Polish'.⁷⁵⁸ Fortunately for Golda and Louis, they could, and so the threat of deportation was lifted.

The climate of war also posed a dilemma for Gertler as regards the saleability of his work and therefore his income. He had to 'sell his pictures and the few collectors who were still buying modern work preferred to play safe'⁷⁵⁹ – safe, that is, in terms of purchasing paintings that were not deemed experimental or progressive. The climate of the war had introduced a cultural change in aesthetic appreciation that articulated marketability: 'the public, whose attitudes were increasingly affected by the war, had less and less time for experimentation in art'.⁷⁶⁰ Experimentation in art that had assumed importance prior to 1914 vanished and was replaced by a cultural climate that was moralistic and austere. It effectively neutered all experimental enquiries and any such artistic expression was met with public disdain and viewed as novelty for its own sake. Benjamin Buchloh has argued that the reinstatement of the traditional mould of representation – a new classicism, was not the result of a popular demand for the re-emergence of the figurative tradition, nor the result of an artistic climate of a reinterpretation of past masters; rather, he argues that it was an ontological condition of western culture under the stress of the Great War, 'an ancient ordering system endemic to the syndrome of authoritarianism'.⁷⁶¹ Artists, Buchloh argues, were subject to this condition and for him they became mere ciphers of a longer catastrophic social regression.

This can be seen as the re-establishment of an aesthetic which reaffirmed a return to allegory, an introspective quality that artists internalised and artistically expressed, which Buchloh suggests brought into being the condition of melancholy and internalised introspection. As such, he suggests that this reflected historically a rhythm in aesthetic manifestations which accompanied, mirrored and anticipated the 'bankruptcy of capitalist economy and politics'.⁷⁶² Such allegorical modes of representation, for Buchloh, were an affirmation of the status quo, a confirmation of dominant ideology and the means by which it facilitated the continuing rule of an elite. According to Buchloh's reading, artists were part of a cynical generation trapped in a cultural climate of authoritarianism. In this respect, therefore, there is a negation by

⁷⁵⁸ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.149

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.183

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting', *Art World Follies*, 16 (Spring 1981), p.39

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*

artists of their own movements by their reversion to classicism, where their condition and nature predisposed them to internalise a larger oppression. This was realised, as Buchloh argues, in ‘haunting visions of an incapacitating infantilizing melancholy’,⁷⁶³ and then, at a later stage, in the outright adulations of manifestations of reactionary power. It follows therefore that the existing power structure prevails at the expense of complying with an artistic aesthetic that has helped to create ‘a climate of desperation and passivity’.⁷⁶⁴ For Buchloh, therefore, a new classicism at the advent of the First World War was ‘an authoritarian classicism’⁷⁶⁵ which was merely a demand for a cultural tradition that affirmed ‘eternal or ancient systems of order’⁷⁶⁶ and which idolised ‘the perennial monuments of art history and its masters’.⁷⁶⁷

The serious nature of the war caused critics and the public alike to withdraw their support for progressive artists which they had previously championed. Unfortunately this new critical climate that swept in with the emergence of war coincided with a time when, Gertler’s own artistic development was ‘growing more personal and original’.⁷⁶⁸ Gertler’s experimentation in art, like that of other artists of the avant-garde, was now deemed as a ‘fundamentally frivolous and unimportant activity’,⁷⁶⁹ a superficial game that should not be played, given the gravity of the war. The war also provoked a split in the radical avant-garde, expressed by the artists who were prepared to put on a uniform and join the ranks of the armed services and those who chose not to, i.e. pacifists and conscientious objectors. Ottoline Morrell was a gatekeeper for such individuals and she moved to Garsington Manor in the village of Garsington, five miles outside of Oxford. Gertler made his first visit to Ottoline’s home in September 1915, and he became ‘one of Ottoline’s most regular guests’.⁷⁷⁰ Garsington soon became a refuge for pacifists throughout the war: ‘here pacifism was not only respectable but the orthodox religion’.⁷⁷¹ It was frequented by a circle of writers, the Bloomsbury Group and intellectuals, and as Gertler stated, it was a retreat where ‘we came and knit ourselves together’.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶³ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression’, p.39

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., p.41

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p.43

⁷⁶⁸ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.183

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.118

⁷⁷¹ Carrington (ed.), *MGS*, p.76

⁷⁷² Letter from D.H. Lawrence to Ottoline Morrell, 20 June 1915, quoted in Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* (London: Vintage, 1995), p.325, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.119

For right-wing moralists, the war was seen as a purifying fire to save English culture from decadence, a fire that would ‘consume the rotten core of culture’,⁷⁷³ which had developed a degenerate and diseased spirit that had infected the disciplines of ‘Philosophy, Music, Literature and Art’.⁷⁷⁴ It was this sinister form of moralising that Gertler became a casualty of when he exhibited his painting *The Creation of Eve* (1914; Figure 28). As MacDougall points out, *The Creation of Eve* was the last work that Gertler painted before he left Whitechapel, and despite echoes of Blake and Stanley Spencer, it was one of his most startling and original pictures. The painting was labelled by the critics as blasphemous and was berated by a right-wing faction in the press as being eccentric and sensationalist. Within the intersection of patronage and public domain, MacDougall argues that ‘the picture made a great impression on the society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell who identified in it an ‘intense, tangible, ruthless, hot quality’.⁷⁷⁵ The painting caused ‘uproar’ and anger that was acrimonious, reactions which utterly bewildered Gertler: ‘Some people in a rage stuck a label on the belly of my poor little “Eve” with “Made in Germany” written on it.’⁷⁷⁶ The painting was exhibited at a time when the news from the Western Front was dismal. The high casualty rate incurred by the allied forces, the Zeppelin raid on London and debacle of Gallipoli had ‘created hysteria among the people at home’.⁷⁷⁷ Feelings about the war had reached fever pitch and anything remotely connected to Germany or perceived to be German was frowned upon and attacked. The newspaper *The Morning Post* labelled *The Creation of Eve* ‘Hunnishy indecent’⁷⁷⁸ and, as MacDougall points out, linked Gertler’s work to that ‘sinister foreign subversion of British culture’⁷⁷⁹ which was suspected of being ‘behind all experimental art’.⁷⁸⁰

This critical reaction by the press made Gertler synonymous with malign and subversive alien influences, which was probably not helped by his ‘German-sounding name’.⁷⁸¹ Also, it was well known that Gertler was an established member of the coterie that gathered regularly at Garsington, i.e. that he associated with ‘pro-German’⁷⁸²

⁷⁷³ Philip Hoare, *Wilde’s Last Stand* (London: Duckworth, 1997), p.14

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, Sunday, December 1915, Carrington (ed.), *MGS*, pp.106-8

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.186

⁷⁷⁸ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.123

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² Ibid.

pacifists. Despite the Germanic connotations that critics and the public alike attributed to *The Creation of Eve*, their derision, I would suggest, was more to do with the notion of the enemy within, that is, the Eastern European Jewish immigrant, than with the enemy outside, i.e. the German war machine. In this sense, the adverse publicity that was heaped upon this painting, I claim, was metaphoric and implied that the enemy was the alien working-class Jew, the East End immigrant.

The pictorial expression and language of the painting suggest a choreographed dance, in which a dark-skinned Jehovah god has grasped a blond, fair-haired gentile woman in a quite violent fashion. In this painting one can see the repetition of Jewish physiognomy that Gertler portrayed in *Jews Arguing*. Jehovah has what Sander Gilman calls the 'unique construction of the Jewish body',⁷⁸³ a vocabulary of difference that has a generality which has inscribed itself throughout the whole body. This, I suggest, reflects not only a racial discourse whose vocabulary was propagated in nineteenth-century science but one whose origins reflected a continuity about the 'assumptions of Jewish difference which had pre-existed since christianity'.⁷⁸⁴ A specific Jewish appearance can be seen to have been given to the representation of God in *The Creation of Eve*. This, as Gilman argues, making reference to Robert Knox, can be seen to be represented by markers of Jewish difference in the colour of the skin, the shape of the nose, the protrusion and fullness of the lips, 'his muzzled-shaped mouth and face, removing him from certain other races...as Robert Knox noted mid century'.⁷⁸⁵

Gertler in his self-hatred has projected 'the internalisation of the Christian image of the innate difference of the Jew',⁷⁸⁶ a sense of difference that had been projected into his psyche, incorporated a mythology of assigned difference, to create a context by which he makes sense of himself and his difference. As we can see, the dark-skinned god has arguably an African look, for the pathognomic significance of the skin is quite clear in its complexion, which is swarthy. Gertler has imported the African character of the Jew, a powerful belief, Gilman argues, which crossed racial boundaries and was promoted as fact in the racial discourse of the new sciences of the nineteenth century, which 'enabled the scientist to see the Jews as black'.⁷⁸⁷ In this respect the Jews now

⁷⁸³ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.203

⁷⁸⁴ Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment*, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), p. 134, as quoted by Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.174

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.174

bore 'the sign of the black.'⁷⁸⁸ Gilman also associates the skin colour with the idea that black skin denoted the presence of syphilis and the blackness of the skin was due to this physiological condition, which changed the nature and colour of the skin. For such racial discourse, 'It is the appearance, the skin colour, the external manifestation of the Jew which marks the Jew as different'.⁷⁸⁹

Even the acculturated Western Jew believed that this was the sign of difference which marked them off from their Eastern European counterparts. Nadler argues that the physiognomic character of the portrayal of Jews was significant in Renaissance and Medieval art, and that this generally characterised them and became 'part of a world view',⁷⁹⁰ where difference was significantly defined: 'The bulging, heavy leaded eyes, hooked nose, dark skin, large open mouth and thick fleshy lips of Jews in paintings and graphic arts make them look more like cartoon characters than normal human beings.'⁷⁹¹ In the portrayal of the God in *The Creation of Eve* Gertler has given this subject not only a swarthy skin but 'the Jewish or hawk-nosed',⁷⁹² a nose which is very convex and extends for the whole length from the eyes to the tip. Gertler has, according to Christian vernacular representation, violated the image. *The Creation of Eve*, particularly the portrayal of God, arguably lends itself to the portrayal of the signs and qualities of the atavistic nature of the Eastern Jew, a primitive disposition and an innate nature that predisposes the behaviour of the Semite to a gestural language which is emotional, uncontrolled and violent. Perhaps it is not unexpected that we find Adam floored in a crouching position beneath an animated Eve.

Gertler's rendition of the Garden of Eden has a parallel, if not an equivalent, to Heinrich von Kleist's mythology of the Garden of Eden, which he presented in his essay *On the Marionette Theatre and the Problem of Feeling* in 1810, in that they shared the same creative expression to a specific cosmology. Indeed, Gertler's rendition of Eve in regards to her physiognomy and delineated physicality shares that of a marionette and in this respect the appearance of Eve to that of a marionette is striking. Briefly, Kleist argues that the marionette is an inanimate object that invites a 'comparison between the physical phenomenon of movement'⁷⁹³ in them as puppets and a 'certain mental

⁷⁸⁸ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.174

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., p.172

⁷⁹⁰ Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*, p.62

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p.179

⁷⁹³ Robert E. Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist* (New York: New Directions Books, 1995), p.1

phenomenon in man'.⁷⁹⁴ For Kleist, the marionette essentialises the condition of man's existence before and after his Fall from grace, i.e. man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, consequent to man's decision to defy God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge. This act of defiance induced self-consciousness, a capacity for self-reflection and self-determination that, according to Kleist, has ravaged the human psyche throughout human existence. The essay is quite explicit in its theological source of the Old Testament's Book of Genesis.⁷⁹⁵

Kleist promotes his philosophical rationale to elicit the symbolic understanding of the marionette. Within the context of his metaphysical theory the marionette, Kleist argues, is symbolically imbued with innocence and has a nature which is unspoilt. It has a centre of gravity that reflects its harmonious union with an ultimate reality and a divine will. The marionette before the Fall is a creature of one world who possesses an infinite consciousness that responds 'naturally and gracefully to divine guidance'.⁷⁹⁶ This is underscored by its apparent weightlessness. The marionette in this respect is in a 'state of Grace'⁷⁹⁷ and it reminds us, man, of the lost paradise that cannot be reclaimed. Gertler's Eve is in the same suspended state and is depicted before The Fall where she has been taken from the rib of Adam by a Jehovah God. Like Kleist's Marionette Eve has been suspended by Jehovah, God, who is by proxy, a kind of puppeteer. Adam in the painting, as I have stated, is in a crouching position and held down by God.

However, I would suggest that there is a duplicity about Gertler's depiction before The Fall, for the painting also anticipates the Fall. This, I argue, is expressed in the rendition that Gertler has given of Adam. Adam's body seems to be heavy with sin, and I suggest that there is a premonitory aspect in Adam's pose, poignantly expressed by the envelopment of his head by his left arm. There is almost a grimace on his face due not only, I argue, to the aftermath of his rib being used by Jehovah God to conjure up Eve, but also, possibly, in anticipation of the calamity to come. His eyes are closed with the realisation of the coming Fall. In this respect, he becomes the notion of Kleist's the dancer, who exemplifies the fallen state of man because of the act of eating from the Tree of Knowledge and who consequently acquires self-consciousness, free will and self-determination. Adam, in this respect, as portrayed by Gertler, is like the

⁷⁹⁴ Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, p.1

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., p.37

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., p.36

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., p.38

dancer clearly earth bound and as such, like the dancer is not 'held from above'.⁷⁹⁸ However, he is in a dilemma, for he now has to attempt to perform naturally, with apparent ease. He has to achieve grace, but cannot, for gravity shifts continuously. As such, there is pretence of grace, where his performance becomes one of affection. The soul is at a point other than that of the centre of gravity of movement. Gertler's Adam, like the dancer's fall from Grace, still has a glimmering of the paradisiacal harmony symbolized in the marionette or in Gertler's painting Eve. I argue that Adam, like the dancer, is the creation of two worlds, two conflicting halves that are irreconcilable and therefore constitutes a dysfunction. The dancer's Fall has not only led to the acquisition of self-reflexion but has blocked his communication with nature's harmony, and therefore militates against a unification of his wholeness, the perfection of spontaneous unconscious movement and its centre of gravity.

For Gertler's Adam as for Kleist's Dancer, the only means of redemption and a means to regain wholeness and the one gravitational point lost in the Garden of Paradise, would be if 'human consciousness could pass through to the infinite and thus become united with the divine again'.⁷⁹⁹ If he was able to pass back to the Garden of Eden he would find himself on a continuum where he would become wiser and more self-aware, and would not suffer the internal conflict and doubt consequent to his Fall. It would reflect the ultimate development of humankind, where the two parts would be brought into harmony. This would perfect the human condition, where the human race would be able to carry out the actions and have the same confidence as a marionette dancing on the strings of a puppeteer or the redemption of Adam in a spiritual reunification with Jehovah God: outwardly Gertler has given God an ethnic identity.

Jehovah is dramatized, perhaps blasphemously, as seizing Eve in a gesture from the Apache Dance which was a regular 'turn' in the East End music halls.⁸⁰⁰ The Apache Dance that for many characterised the music hall, was now arguably choreographed by Gertler in *The Creation of Eve* and contained a Gentile Eve. As such the painting's exposure to a bourgeois audience, its perception and interpretation could only provoke a hostile reception as a rebuke to middle-class culture. In this respect, *The Creation of Eve* is a celebration of working-class culture and as such it cannot be a surprise, if, in the context of its reception the painting was negatively received by the

⁷⁹⁸ Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, p.38

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., p.37

⁸⁰⁰ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.88

public and the press. For the avant garde it could be said that the painting reflected 'a self-conscious restaging of modern sexuality'⁸⁰¹ in that it suggested a form of sexuality recast as an Hebraic myth of masculine and patriarchal sexuality.

Completed in 1916, *The Merry-Go-Round* can be seen as a product of Gertler's incessant struggle and frustration with Carrington, which tested his emotional well-being, as did the emergence and implications of the First World War. The direct expression of this is the trapped, frozen mouths of the riders on the carousel, characterised by MacDougall as: 'frozen in motion, the mouths of the riders opened in a long unending scream'.⁸⁰² It could be said that the open mouths of the riders express a particular kind of frustrated oral performance: pluralities of a savage oral rage, an aggregate of Gertler's sense of frustration and his tormented social relations during the years leading up to 1916. The mouths, which are a primary portal of human expression, become a physiognomic contortion that dominates the space. Their multiplicity, in close proximity, acts to amplify the silence. What is therefore established is a pictorial economy which procures the space for itself as it is the purposeful displacement of Gertler's own voice. Gertler as an orator attempts nothing less than to transform his dummy-like riders into vocal agents. It testifies to the expression of his emotional and physical being, which is transferred into a mute world. The enactment of the detachment of his voice is sublimated into the physiognomy of the contorted open mouths of the riders. They are under the proprietorship of Gertler, in a corporalisation of the performing Gertler and his dummies. Within this context the mouths of the prosthetic dummy mutes become conduits of Gertler's own body, 'providing a warrant for violence that might be otherwise seen as excessive or unpalatable'.⁸⁰³

I would argue that in *The Merry-Go-Round* Gertler enacted an extension of 'a rich historical practise',⁸⁰⁴ namely a ventriloquial exchange,⁸⁰⁵ a display by the artist of a 'protean malleability of personal identity',⁸⁰⁶ where his dummies lend themselves to the imagination of the spectator, and in this sense they become 'figures of speech'⁸⁰⁷ in the mute world of the painting. In the language of ventriloquism Gertler is thus like a

⁸⁰¹ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p.87

⁸⁰² MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.127

⁸⁰³ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.407

⁸⁰⁴ David Goldblatt, 'Ventriloquism: Ecstatic Exchange and the History of the Art Work', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51: 3, Summer 1997, p.389

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., p.390

⁸⁰⁶ Leigh Eric Schmidt, 'From Demon Possession to Magic Show: Ventriloquism', *Religion and the Enlightenment Church History*, 67 (June 1998), p.274

⁸⁰⁷ Goldblatt, 'Ventriloquism', p.390

mesmerist harnessing the imagination of the spectator, and under his skilled management he produces ‘the perceptual “illusions” of hearing’,⁸⁰⁸ the purpose of which is to apprehend ‘solely and exclusively the attention of the audience’.⁸⁰⁹ I would argue that Gertler becomes a dramatist who by proxy creates an oral illusion which cannot be phonetically discerned, only perceived by the ‘motionless lips’⁸¹⁰ of the dummies.

In the dramatic world of *The Merry-Go-Round*, Gertler, as the putative dramatist, promotes the illusion of ventriloquism. David Goldblatt uses the notion of ‘ecstasis, the ancient Greek word designating being beside itself’,⁸¹¹ to describe ventriloquism which can also be interpreted as one ‘stepping outside the self’,⁸¹² a transmutation where ‘one person’s voice’ can be discerned from something that is either inanimate or animate.⁸¹³ Goldblatt contextualises this notion philosophically from Pythagoras to Nietzsche, proposing that it has played a central and important role in philosophical thinking. He points to Nietzsche’s writing, particularly *The Birth of Tragedy*. For example, Nietzsche says: ‘to be a dramatist all one needs is the urge to transform oneself and speak out of strange bodies and souls’.⁸¹⁴ The primary dramatic phenomenon was one of projection through the use of an inanimate conduit – the dummy. Goldblatt states that the puppets were used previously in witchcraft and foreshadowed the dummy ‘that eventually became the *sine qua non* of vaudeville art of the late 19th century and transformed it, into a widely distributed commodity of edifying amusement’.⁸¹⁵ This is the primary objective of a ventriloquist’s routine, which sets a ‘trap for the gaze’.⁸¹⁶ *The Merry-Go-Round* can arguably be seen to assume the dramatic quality of the symbiotic relationship of the ventriloquist’s routine, i.e. the dummy becomes the dominant body of this illusory oral space, which or who detracts away from their authorship, and in this sense the artist is confined to a passive role. Dugald Stewart states that the ancients believed that ventriloquists were different from other men in that they had an ‘organic facility’,⁸¹⁷ which they called ‘*engustumanlieas* or

⁸⁰⁸ Schmidt, ‘From Demon Possession to Magic Show’, p.276

⁸⁰⁹ Dugald Stewart, ‘Observations on Ventriloquism’, *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, 1828, p.243

⁸¹⁰ Goldblatt, ‘Ventriloquism’, p.391

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

⁸¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday), p.55, as quoted by Goldblatt, ‘Ventriloquism’, p.386

⁸¹⁵ Goldblatt, ‘Ventriloquism’, p.386

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., p.391

⁸¹⁷ Dugald Stewart, ‘Observations on Ventriloquism’, p.9

belly prophet'.⁸¹⁸ However, as Leigh Eric Schmidt stresses, ventriloquism acquired malevolent connotations as a conduit for celestial existence, i.e. demons or familiar spirits, which are, as Joseph Glenvill writes, 'those so possessed by the devil that they become his mouthpiece', associated with the divine struggle of the soul.⁸¹⁹

Schmidt contextualises ventriloquism historically, tracing its emergence from the meaning placed upon it within Christian discourse, i.e. the association with superstition and demonic possession. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Schmidt argues that through the emergence of secular society the occultist connotations placed upon it by Christian discourse faded and a more innocuous meaning was placed upon it through rationalist explanation; it therefore found itself 'loosened from the confines of theological debate and demonology'.⁸²⁰ Ventriloquism within secular society became a codified art and found its new found expression in the expansion of the entertainment business of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Goldblatt suggests that it became associated with the low art of vaudeville and comedy clubs.⁸²¹ Suffice to say that it is not outside the realms of possibility that Gertler encountered this type of performance art early on in the East End of London. On the artist's own admission he was a devotee of vaudeville, of the music hall and of low comedy. Indeed, he remarked to a friend in the 1930s that 'as a small child he remembered heading the queue for the "gods" at a local theatre on Saturday afternoons, when the Sabbath officially ended.'⁸²²

The music hall, which became common across London in the mid nineteenth century, included many types of performance art, such as illusionists, conjures, acrobatic circus acts, etc. Ventriloquism was part of this repertoire, and Gertler at some point in his early youth may have encountered this on a number of occasions; however, there are no direct references in his letters relating to this entertainment format. What I argue is that the experience of the music hall had an aesthetic profundity that became a latent inspirational source that emerged and developed from the original conception of *The Merry-Go-Round* in 1915, which was inspired by the bank holiday fair on Hampstead Heath.

⁸¹⁸ Stewart, 'Observations on Ventriloquism', p.9

⁸¹⁹ Saducismus Triumphatus: On Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions 1681, as quoted by Schmidt, 'From Demon Possession to Magic Show', p.274

⁸²⁰ Schmidt, 'From Demon Possession to Magic Show: Ventriloquism', p.274

⁸²¹ Goldblatt, 'Ventriloquism', p.389

⁸²² E.J. Fedarb, Reminiscences of Mark Gertler(unpublished), from a letter to the author, 7 June 1998, as quoted by MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.15

Gertler localises and vocalises his body within an imaginary space, the intensity of which becomes a mute visual phenomenon within a thick congestion of bodies in a restricted space. However, we as onlookers, an attentive audience might ask from where this sourceless mutism might issue. How are we to make sense of the source of this riot on the carousel? Where there is substitution of sound for sight, the migration of the voice from the body, the open mouth which is the physical apparatus of speech becomes a grotesque parody of the procurement of the power of language.

The expressive power of the riders presents a dream, a vocal and auditory fantasy world which traps the onlooker into becoming a victim of auditory hallucination. They are crystallised within the specific portal of the human anatomy that functions as a means of exorcism for Gertler's inner demons.

The satirical nature of *The Merry-Go-Round* was apparent to those in his social circle. As already noted it was felt that such a painting portraying military personnel in an 'unheroic and unpleasant a fashion was asking for trouble'⁸²³ if it was exhibited. The painting was covert in its pictorial expression of the soulless nature of the war on the Western Front, a war machine which was 'voraciously consuming men but getting nowhere'.⁸²⁴ Arguably it was also an extension of a commentary on modernity and a consciousness whose existential angst and disquiet reflected a cosmology that was unforgiving. In this respect the parallels with the narrative of Kleist's metaphysical theory in *On The Marionette Theatre* are striking. The highly formalised puppets on Gertler's mechanised roundabout seem to be trapped, like Kleist's marionette, in a world where there is no redemption and where they share the same cosmic fate: original sin exhibiting the consciousness of men caught in an unbreachable situation between imperfection and the attainment of perfection.

When Gertler stayed with Gilbert Cannan in the autumn of 1914, he first met D. H. Lawrence on a walking trip. They became good friends; in fact, 'Mark was one of the few people to gain and retain Lawrence's consistent approval.'⁸²⁵ Lawrence, a miner's son, shared the same working-class background with Gertler, and both had had a difficult struggle. This commonality may have gone some way to unifying their friendship, which is significant for the critical discourse surrounding *The Merry-Go-Round* and the interpretation Lawrence placed upon the painting, locating it within the

⁸²³ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.227

⁸²⁴ Ibid., p.225

⁸²⁵ Ibid., p.159

context of ethnic identity. This was supported by the famous remark by Lawrence: 'It would take a Jew to paint this picture.'⁸²⁶ This has had the effect of racialising historically the critical discourse on the painting. Bequeathed by Lawrence, this was not without foundation, as we shall later explore.

During the painting of *The Merry-Go-Round* in 1915, Gertler finally realised his ambition and extricated himself from his domicile in Whitechapel in the East End of London and settled in Hampstead, where he obtained a studio: 'he finally found Penn studio, situated practically on the heath, Rudel Crescent'.⁸²⁷ The studio was to be a safe refuge and home for the next seventeen years of Gertler's life. This sanctuary constituted a geographical relocation which served the artist's intention to revoke a fixed Jewish and class identity and to live a life purely as an aesthete: 'There I shall be free and detached – shall belong to no parent. I shall be neither Jew nor Christian and shall belong to no class. I shall be just myself and be able to work out things according to my own tastes.'⁸²⁸ The detachment epitomised by Hampstead presented itself as an auspicious beginning; however, this became punctuated by interludes of flights back to his ethnic context, 'back to the East-End to being nursed by mother'.⁸²⁹ This regressive behaviour was in response to the social round of Bedford Square and later Garsington, the country estate of the Morrells.

The irony of Garsington, for Gertler, was that it was a cultural environment that was remote. It removed him from his class and ethnic background, but equally it became a source of his continuing ambivalence towards this social circle, that is, the Bloomsbury Group and their coterie, for whom and for whose opinions Gertler cared little. This contempt can be judged by the tone of his letters, where he acknowledges personal discomfort in the company of these people. Equally, however, the denizens of Bedford Square and Garsington were conduits for patronage, the main buyers of his work. Gertler soon realised that these buyers and their purchases were not based on aesthetic tastes but predicated on fashion. The need to compromise himself artistically with the tastes of these buyers further fuelled his ambivalence towards and his distaste for the social circle of Garsington. In the 1971 catalogue for an exhibition at the Minories Gallery, Woodeson states:

⁸²⁶ Janet Wolff, 'The Jewish Mark in English Painting', in David Peter Corbett and Lana Perry (eds.), *English Art*, p.188

⁸²⁷ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.110

⁸²⁸ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, January 1915, Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.81

⁸²⁹ MacDougall, *Mark Gertler*, p.112

There is a note of cynicism new to Gertler in *Merry-Go-Round*. It may reflect his disillusion with the wealthy society people introduced to him by Lady Cunard and others. He soon realised that these 'little wretches' cared nothing for his pictures and brought them only to be in fashion.⁸³⁰

The Merry-Go-Round was a conduit for the negotiation of the personal and cultural conflict that Gertler experienced during the early years of the First World War. Beyond this personal narrative the significance of the painting within the discursive practices of modernism concerns the relationship between ethnic identity and visual representation. The critical vocabulary of Lawrence has been primarily responsible for the artistic appraisal and racial tenor that has been historically placed upon it. Lawrence, upon receipt of the photo of the painting sent to him by Gertler, responded in a letter that opened with highly emotive remarks: 'horrifying, terrifying and even obscene'.⁸³¹ The letter then went on to develop a discourse and exposition of the painting's ethnic significance. Lawrence, by doing so, placed race at the centre of any attempt to critically evaluate the painting, and as such 'served to over determine the interpretations of it'.⁸³²

As friends and outsiders, Gertler and Lawrence quickly found affinity and commonality in their shared experience and struggles with their working-class backgrounds, and in the 'experience of a class to which they did not belong by birth'.⁸³³ Although Lawrence shared the particular class position of Gertler, in the understanding of class, inequality and the experience of traditional class identities and allegiances he differentiated himself ethnically from Gertler. This ethnic difference was unremittingly expressed in his writing and valorised his cultural appraisal of *The Merry-Go-Round*. Lawrence's particularisation of Gertler was complicit with the racialised exclusion of the past and the Judaic relationship with Christendom.

In this sense Lawrence set out to historicise Jewish difference that not only essentialised Gertler but positioned him, as a 'uniquely timeless and unchanging victim',⁸³⁴ outside the social, political and historical processes. Within this context, Lawrence reveals Gertler in a broader history of differentiation of ethnicity which

⁸³⁰Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minorities, p.24

⁸³¹ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.125

⁸³² Ibid.

⁸³³ Ibid.

⁸³⁴ Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*(Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p.10

served to 'fix the Jews'⁸³⁵ as a racial representation and as an irredeemable other. There was no attempt by Lawrence to rescue Gertler from this paradigm of difference. Framed by his racial-cultural critique, Lawrence was unable to transcend the racial opposition implicit within the Judaic and Christian dialogue, the consequence of which was Lawrence's lack of any attempt to efface Jewish specificity. Lawrence became complicit with the Western literary canon with its history of racism and anti-semitism. This racial discourse premised *The Merry-Go-Round* on a dialogue that was articulated by the 'deterministic'⁸³⁶ version of modernity. It is of little surprise, therefore, that Lawrence's discourse on the painting exhibited the language of ethnic incommensurability:

It would need your national history to get you here, without disintegrating you first. You are of an older race than I and in these ultimate processes you are beyond me, older than I am. At last your race is at an end...these pictures are its death cry. And it will be left for the Jew to utter the final great death cry of this epoch: the Christians are not reduced sufficiently...You are twenty-five and have painted this picture – I tell you, it takes three thousand years to get where this picture is...and we Christians haven't got two thousand years behind us yet.⁸³⁷

As a Christian, Lawrence placed his aesthetic appraisal within a homogeneous European tradition of Christianity which predetermined his perceptions and self-identification as fundamentally 'different in kind to that of Gertler',⁸³⁸ and by which Gertler's historicity had placed him, Lawrence, two thousand years behind Gertler the Jew. Lawrence conferred on *The Merry-Go-Round* a racial specificity that served to place the painting beyond his critical insight, and he therefore disavowed any claim to establish a valid evaluation of the painting. He decreed that any authentic judgement could only be carried out by the unconditional support of another Jew, like the sculptor Jacob Epstein.⁸³⁹ It is only within this context that he felt that a proper critical insight could be achieved. He promoted a racial critique that has surrounded and haunted *The Merry-Go-Round*, and with this he has unequivocally consigned Gertler to be the other.

In making this racial distinction Lawrence embraced a discursive practice about the notion of what constituted 'Englishness'⁸⁴⁰ and the nature of 'visuality',⁸⁴¹ a

⁸³⁵ Cheyette and Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*, p.10

⁸³⁶ Ibid., p.12

⁸³⁷ Letter from D.H. Lawrence to Mark Gertler, 9 October 1916, as quoted by Wolff, 'Jewish Mark', p.10

⁸³⁸ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.125

⁸³⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰ Philip Dodd, Preface, 'Englishness and the National Culture', in R. Colls and P. Dodd (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 188-1920* (London: Groom & Helm, 1986), p.2

construction that, I would claim, was predicated on a discourse of exclusivity that defined Jewish identity while suggesting ‘that to be English was amongst other things to be not Jewish’.⁸⁴² Philip Dodd has observed this characteristic:

a great deal of the power of the dominant version of Englishness during the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century lay in its ability to represent both itself to others and those others to themselves. Such representation worked by a process of inclusion, exclusion and transformation of elements of the cultural life of these islands.⁸⁴³

The definition of Englishness and its culture has historically been used through an ‘exclusivity’⁸⁴⁴ strategy to emasculate social groups that have threatened the dominant order. These processes of exclusion characterised by discursive practices have been enacted primarily by the ‘national system of education’ which has disseminated a definition or redefinition of national identity and hence can be viewed as custodian and transmitter of British culture. Within these discursive practices Britishness was defined in opposition to the other; we have seen that economic and other fears surrounding the influx of Jewish immigrants, whose ‘alienness’⁸⁴⁵ all too obvious, generated widespread ‘anti-alien agitation’,⁸⁴⁶ a social agitation that culminated in the rise of anti-semitism.

Within these circumstances there was a statutory response within the government with the implementation of the 1905 Alien Act, ‘designed to reduce the level of Jewish immigrants’.⁸⁴⁷ It was within this context that ‘a transformation of the conception of national identity came into being ... where the Jews played a central role and became crucial as the “necessary other”’⁸⁴⁸ in the formation of a new Englishness. In doing so, there was a radical shift in the definition of the Jew: ‘the ideal alien for the production of Englishness’.⁸⁴⁹ The representation of difference was the logic of a discursive strategy of exclusion in the construction of Englishness and national identity. This process of exclusion was not so much a category as a relationship where one definition mutually depended on the other, a coexistence but oppositional in nature, one defining the other; as Woolf suggests:

⁸⁴¹ Jane Beckett, ‘(Is)land Narratives: Englishness, Visuality and Vanguard Culture 1914-18’, in David Peter Corbett and Lana Perry (eds.), *English Art 1860-1914 Modern Artists and Identity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), p.196

⁸⁴² Janet Wolff, ‘The Jewish Mark’, p.180

⁸⁴³ Dodd, ‘Englishness and the National Culture’, p.2

⁸⁴⁴ Wolff, ‘The Jewish Mark’, p.182

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

Raphael Samuel puts it like this: ideas of national character have typically been formed by processes of exclusion where what it is to be British is defined in relations of opposition to enemies both without and within. In the period under discussion, the excluded other par excellence is the Jew.⁸⁵⁰

This strategy of exclusion, together with the cultural construction of the definition of the Jew, was not confined to the political realm, but also insinuated into English literature and the texts of art criticism. It was another friend, Ottoline Morrell, who was a patrician, who pre-dated Lawrence in applying a racialised exclusion process to Gertler and his work. As part of the dominant order and as a custodian of national ideology and its discursive practice, Morrell awarded Gertler a badge of distinction but also of exclusion by referring to his works as having a 'Jewish mark which gave them a fine intensive, almost archaic quality'.⁸⁵¹ What is evident in Morrell's remark is a vision and a discursive practice that was pervasive in referring to a distinct visuality within Jewishness and the discursive construction of a collective identity by the processes of exclusion. This was to be continued by Lawrence in his evaluation, and, like Morrell, he felt that Gertler's painting of 1916 had an identifiable racial visuality and as such was decidedly not a representative of English art. As Morrell was a precursor to Lawrence's critical evaluation, it might be useful briefly to examine the nature of her insight into Gertler's work.

What was this Jewishness that Morrell had supposedly detected in Gertler's work, which encompassed subject matter as well as style? As regards subject matter, there is no difficulty in understanding Morrell's attribution to Gertler's work, since his paintings at this time were distinctly Jewish in dealing with Jewish persons and Jewish life, for example *The Rabbi and His Grandchild*. However, when it comes to style, Morrell's remarks are problematic, for 'she was talking about style as much as content'.⁸⁵²

Although Lawrence was from a wholly different social background to Morrell, it may have been that her description of an 'archaic quality'⁸⁵³ is significant in relation to *The Merry-Go-Round*. Is it more than coincidental that the same attribution of archaism was used in Lawrence's contemporary assessment of Gertler's work? Arguably this was the result of a continuity of discursive practice characterised by a racial aesthetic that

⁸⁵⁰ Wolff, 'The Jewish Mark', p.182

⁸⁵¹ Gathorne-Hardy, *Ottoline*, p.253

⁸⁵² Wolff, 'The Jewish Mark', p.187

⁸⁵³ Gathorne-Hardy, *Ottoline*, p.253

propagated the notion that ‘there was something fundamentally primitive within the artist himself’⁸⁵⁴ which was secured to racial identity. I suggest that historians have failed to develop an analysis of Lawrence’s vocabulary. To contextualise Morrell’s and Lawrence’s remarks one must consider the radical shift during the early years of the twentieth century in the interpretation of Jewishness, a redefinition that became pervasive not only in the political realm but notably in English literature. By inference this may explain Lawrence’s repetition of Morrell’s vocabulary and abbreviated description ‘archaic quality’,⁸⁵⁵ which was an affirmation of the inherent primitivism within Jewishness.

In many respects we can understand Morrell’s response to Gertler’s work. His paintings portrayed subjects in such an ‘expressionistic’ way that they must have seemed to be ‘products of an entirely separate culture – a culture that did appear intentionally “primitive”’.⁸⁵⁶ However, it is the congruity of Lawrence’s remark and its implication of the primitive and of racial identity that was less evident in *The Merry-Go-Round*, which is more arresting. After all, it is recognised that the painting was one of the first ‘not to deal with Jewish themes’.⁸⁵⁷ Yet, despite this, there was linkage in the reading by Lawrence and Morrell of Gertler’s work. Here was an articulation of a racial aesthetic, the ideology of ‘the alien Jew’,⁸⁵⁸ that prohibited Lawrence from making what he felt was an authentic critical reading of the painting. It is not without irony that Lawrence felt that only another ‘Jew’ could give credence to an unequivocal appraisal of *The Merry-Go-Round*. Jacob Epstein knew Gertler and had been formative in introducing him to the primitive artefacts on exhibition in the British Museum on 12 July 1912.⁸⁵⁹ Gertler noted that Epstein ‘revealed to me such wonder in works of art, my inspiration knew no bounds’.⁸⁶⁰ The influence of Epstein did not go unnoticed. Woodeson comments that Epstein’s *Rock Drill* (1914) has striking parallels to the mood expressed in *The Merry-Go-Round* and is the closest in expression among contemporary artists at that time, ‘both in feeling and in the reduction of forms to machine elements’.⁸⁶¹ Although, for Woodeson, there is an affinity between Epstein’s sculpture

⁸⁵⁴ Wolff, ‘Jewish Mark’, p.182

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., p.181

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., p.188

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁸ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.64

⁸⁵⁹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.84

⁸⁶⁰ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, July 1912, *MGSL*, p.43

⁸⁶¹ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.344

and Gertler's painting, for Wolff the stylistic expression of *The Merry-Go-Round* can be summarised by its 'cubo-futurist style':⁸⁶²

Forms such as the clouds and the horses' features are not derived from nature by simplification or distortion: they are conceptual signs for the things represented. Some of the details in the picture are purely abstract elements, included for compositional reasons.⁸⁶³

For Wolff, the painting assumes the definitive mantle of cubism. She asserts that he was influenced by the movement when he visited Paris in 1912 and also when he saw examples of cubist paintings exhibited in Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibition in London in 1912. The years thereafter, from 1912 to 1914, proved to be the most radical of Gertler's career. For Frederick Gore, *The Merry-Go-Round* is a 'post-Vorticist painting',⁸⁶⁴ while Mary Rose Beaumont is more cautious in her assessment, arguing that the painting was perhaps 'touched by Vorticism'.⁸⁶⁵ However, I can find no indication from Gertler himself that he was influenced by Vorticism.⁸⁶⁶ It remains a contentious issue, as all attributions of influences to works of art invariably are. Gertler had an independence of mind which prevented him from affiliating himself to any particular modern movement, and, as for Futurism, Gertler felt it was a 'cul-de-sac'.⁸⁶⁷

Richard Cork, in his introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition *Vorticism and its Allies*, mentions the sarcasm of Gertler in relation to the conflicting forces that emerged during the 'first stirrings of Vorticism':⁸⁶⁸ 'I look at them talking art, Ancient Art, Modern Art, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Cubists, Spollists, Futurists, Cave-dwellers, Wyndham Lewis, Duncan Grant, Etchells, Roger Fry! I look on and laugh to myself.'⁸⁶⁹ Whatever the arguments for the attribution of stylistic influences, what is pertinent is the loaded remark by Lawrence which placed race at its centre. It was the same exclusionary process that alienated Gertler at the Whitechapel Exhibition in 1914, which had a form of modernism which served to re-articulate racial difference, which consequently reaffirmed the 'position of the Jew as

⁸⁶² Wolff, 'The Jewish Mark', p.188

⁸⁶³ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, The Minorities, p.28

⁸⁶⁴ Frederick Gore, 'The Resilient Figure: Mark Gertler and Matthew Smith', in Susan Compton (ed.), *British Art in the 20th Century* (London: Royal Academy of Arts 1987), p.172

⁸⁶⁵ Mary Rose Beaumont, *Art Review*, April 1992, p.133

⁸⁶⁶ 'A term invented by the poet Ezra Pound in 1913, suggesting maximum energy' Shearer West (ed.), *Guide to Art* (London: Bloomsbury Publishers, 1996), p.883

⁸⁶⁷ Woodeson, *Mark Gertler*, p.110

⁸⁶⁸ Richard Cork, *Vorticism and its Artists* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976), p.5

⁸⁶⁹ Letter from Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, 24 September 1912, Carrington (ed.), *MGSL*, p.47

the other'.⁸⁷⁰ It suggested modernist art practices were an innate expression of their racial identity. The implication for Gertler was that through his participation in the Jewish section of that exhibition he was irreducibly 'alienized',⁸⁷¹ alongside other radical modernists occupying 'a space outside the mainstream of modern art even when apparently inside it'.⁸⁷²

I suggest that Gertler's sense of colour did not escape the racial paradigm of Lawrence's remark, the conflation of aesthetic expression and the instinctive nature of the 'necessary other', the Jew.⁸⁷³ This had been publicly presented and promoted by factions of the press since the 1880s in newspapers like *The Morning Post*. A dialogue had emerged which, like Lawrence's racial discourse, developed the programme of ethnic exclusion that stemmed from constructions of 'Englishness'.⁸⁷⁴ The implication for *The Merry-Go-Round*, within the context of Lawrence's remark, was that it coalesced and elucidated this racial ideal and aesthetic.

Gertler's habitat, the East End, had been subject to scrutiny for decades by social explorers and map-makers like Booth and Rowntree, the press and the literary world, both in fiction and non-fiction. As a geographical area it was likened to a foreign country whose inhabitants had to be 'observed, educated and tamed'.⁸⁷⁵ Jack London, in his book *People of the Abyss*, made analogies between the East End and the continent of Africa and warned the traveller of the potential hazards that lay in wait for them if they ventured into this dark terrain.⁸⁷⁶ T. H. Huxley compared East Enders to primitive tribes, writing that 'the Polynesian savage in his most primitive condition' was not 'so savage, so unclean, so irreclaimable as the tenant of a tenement in an East London slum'.⁸⁷⁷ For contemporary writers such conditions did not so much indicate class but race, and it was observed that since the 1880s the 'East End of London meant the Jewish East End'.⁸⁷⁸ The geographical area of Whitechapel provided an extravaganza of material for the literary community and the polemics of race. The area was used as a proclamation for an evidential basis for the 'definition of the Jew'.⁸⁷⁹ Gerlberg in his publication *Living London* described the East End as 'cosmopolitan' and symbolic of

⁸⁷⁰ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.124

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

⁸⁷² Wolff, 'The Jewish Mark', p.152

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., p.182

⁸⁷⁵ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.82

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ T.H. Huxley, cited by Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1975), p.315

⁸⁷⁸ RCii; Evidence (1903), as quoted by Steyn, *The Jew*, p.83

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.

the 'vagabondage of the race'.⁸⁸⁰ It was a habitat that was illuminated, asserted *The Morning Post*, with bright colour, a colour that was showy, garish, crude, excessive and utterly lacking in sophistication and without restraint⁸⁸¹. It was a world coloured by children and primitives, and bodied form an aesthetic that reflected an intimate relationship with nature and emphasised an 'emotionality'⁸⁸² and a racial passion. It was an unsophisticated environment that degraded the significance of art by showing that it was 'devoid of skill',⁸⁸³ elegance and any sense of refinement. This racial aesthetic was oppositional to the aesthetic qualities that defined 'Englishness'⁸⁸⁴ in art which is sombre, restrained and conservative.

The aesthetic of the East End which suggested exotic imagery to social observers attached itself to the explicit otherness of Gertler, who was transformed into the guise of a gypsy and a vagabond, as Steyn observes; 'This imagery percolated in the very representation of Gertler himself. He became an object of romantic fiction. Subsequent writing on Gertler reeks of exoticism and hardly repressed erotic images.'⁸⁸⁵ He became the embodiment of an amorphous world of projections of the Jew and the gypsy, a projection which Gilbert Canaan had used at the beginning of *Mendel*: 'There this "little knot of strange-looking people in brilliant clothes" attracted attention and passers-by, thinking them gypsies'.⁸⁸⁶ This was a colourful description of Gertler as Jew and gypsy, a vagabond who initiated the reader into his exoticism and a racial sense of colour: a 'gypsy gaudiness and vehemence were part of his instinctive nature not a deliberate taste'.⁸⁸⁷ This racialised sense of colour was to haunt Gertler within art criticism throughout his career. Within the context of *The Merry-Go-Round*, art historians like Charles Harrison, writing in the 1970's, avoided a racial discourse, concluding that the 'exaggeration of the colour suggests affinities to English Post-Impressionism'.⁸⁸⁸ But for others Gertler's sense of colour was due to his racial identity. Mary Rose Beaumont argued that Gertler was something of a phenomenon in English

⁸⁸⁰ S. Gerlberg, 'Jewish London', in *George Sims Living London*, Vol. 2 (London, 1902), p.29

⁸⁸¹ Anon., 'Whitechapel Gallery', *The Morning Post*, 11 May 1914, as quoted by Steyn, *The Jew*, p.107

⁸⁸² Steyn, *The Jew*, p.92

⁸⁸³ Ibid., p.108

⁸⁸⁴ Jane Beckett, '(Is)land Narratives', p.197

⁸⁸⁵ Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.127

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., p.82

⁸⁸⁷ Tim Hilton, 'A Brush with Bloomsbury', *The Guardian*, 17 January 1992 (Camden Arts Centre Archive), as quoted by Steyn, *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, p.128

⁸⁸⁸ Harrison, *English Art*, p.180

painting ‘namely vulgarity’⁸⁸⁹ and that this could be attributed to the fact that he was not ‘after all English’.⁸⁹⁰ His instinctual nature prohibited assimilation.

In conclusion, *The Merry-Go-Round* can be understood within a specific set of historical circumstances, a compressed social space found between the years 1914 and 1918 in British society. It stood as an irritant to the discourse of Englishness: ‘a national ideology through identification (and invention) of excluded entities. These entities were ostensibly particular works of art’.⁸⁹¹ The painting has, in a sense, a precise history, an inscription at a juncture, a redefinition that related to conformity to a particular hegemonic stylistic and aesthetic tendency. In this sense *The Merry-Go-Round* articulates its reception by D.H. Lawrence as a discursive ‘other’ and as being in possession of an aesthetic form that was consigned within the narrative of exclusion stemming from that paradigm of primitiveness and ethnic collectivity, as a non-Western racial identity. Within this narrative of *The Merry-Go-Round* was the ‘sartorial product of an aesthete’,⁸⁹² an allegory of suffering and the conflation of personal cultural conflict and modernist stylistic tendencies.

⁸⁸⁹ Mary Rose Beaumont, *The Economist*, 8 February 1992, p.133

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ Wolff, ‘Jewish Mark’, p.191

⁸⁹² Andrew Stephenson, ‘Refashioning Modern Masculinity: Whistler, Aestheticism and National Identity’, in David Peter Corbett and Lara Perry (eds.), *English Art*, p.133

Conclusion

The thesis has sought to develop and intensify the critical appraisal and assessment of the paintings of Mark Gertler. In doing so – as in the cases of previous assessments – the issues of ethnicity and class have come to the fore as determinants in shaping the style and the development of the artist's work throughout his career. These issues, it has been acknowledged, have also been the cause of incongruities which have prevailed to a greater or lesser extent in Gertler's work. This is because the artist negotiated his ethnic and class identity within the assimilatory process of British liberal culture, a process which held out the promise of Jewish emancipation conditional on the effacement of an ethnic specificity. In his attempts to navigate such a process, and his struggle to achieve an idealised Jewish selfhood incongruities arose due to his attempt to achieve the promise held out by assimilation into the dominant culture. Juliet Steyn has recognised that his position within such a process was responsible for shaping the artist's work, but she also suggests that his attempt to negotiate identities 'raise questions about assimilation and indicate just where the limits to that social process lay'.⁸⁹³ To allow us therefore to understand the pictorial language of Gertler's paintings, particularly prior to 1916, I have expanded upon Steyn's proposition by incorporating critiques of assimilation in order to help clarify and develop our understanding about what, I suggest, is the incommensurable nature of the process. More importantly, in intensifying our understanding of the process of assimilation, I have adopted Sander Gilman's methodology as a means within social psychology to highlight what Bauman referred to as the Jew being the signifier of incommensuality, or what Brian Cheyette refers to as Anglo-Jewish fiction.

This thesis, through Gilman's methodology, allows us to understand that the artist did not fully appreciate the consequences of the process that he had readily subscribed to. The consequence the thesis points to is an ambivalence which Bauman argues is symptomatic of the assimilation process and the double-bind that Gilman argues is derivative of the mechanism of the process. More importantly, for our understanding, particularly of the early Jewish paintings by Gertler, is what Gilman refers to as 'self-hatred' and the transvaluation of a racial discourse which, the thesis concludes, has an antecedent in the beginnings of Christianity. In this respect, I suggest,

⁸⁹³ Juliet Steyn, 'Mythical Edges of Assimilation' *Mark Gertler Paintings and Drawings*, Exhibition Catalogue (London, Camden Arts Centre, 1992), p.9

the nature of the assimilation process powerfully shaped in an incremental way the physiognomy in the pictorial language of his Jewish subjects prior to 1916. Gertler in his self-hatred became subject to the projections of the dominant culture and the narrative of racial stereotypes of ethnic difference. In this sense I conclude that the sequential portraits of Golda were conditional upon projections of difference from the reference group, i.e. the imprint and the physicality of the outward signs of Jewish specificity. I argue that the early paintings of his Jewish subjects were predicated on a representation of Jewish specificity whose language lay in the rise of nineteenth-century science, which propagated and emphasised the innate nature of the Jew – what Gilman has briefly referred to as the genotype and which the project sought to intensify. This line of enquiry has also led the thesis into the realm of eugenics.

The incongruities that the thesis highlights served as a subtext for even the earliest of Gertler's paintings, for example *A Playful Scene*. Even at this early stage, the thesis locates the subversive nature of Gertler's painting in his appropriation of a genre, i.e. the bourgeois domestic scene. In recognising this also highlights a paucity of critical accounts of Gertler's early paintings and the beginnings of resistance by Gertler within the assimilation process, which, the thesis argues, can be demonstrated by a reading of his early works. Even in the early portrait of Golda of 1911, which Steyn refers to as 'a competent Edwardian portrait',⁸⁹⁴ the thesis dissents from this assessment in arguing that it departs from the aesthetic ideal of Edwardian painting, particularly noticeable in the facture of the paint and also the bourgeois conception of femininity. In this respect, the project concludes that *The Artist's Mother* 1911 broke from bourgeois ideology and contravened its conception of femininity and its sexuality. *The Artist's Mother* like *The Return of Jephthah*, can be seen as a site of resistance by Gertler within Anglo-monoculture.

The thesis concludes, in examining *The Return of Jephthah*, by not only highlighting again a notable absence of critical appraisal of this work but more importantly claiming that it represents an existential leap for Gertler in bringing back a Jewish selfhood that is in contrast to the marginalised portrayal of Jews by Rothenstein and Solomon J. Solomon. The painting, I argue, can be seen in allegorical terms in that, just as Jephthah made a foolish vow to Jehovah, equally Gertler saw his own foolishness when he pledged himself to the assimilationary process and its promise. The

⁸⁹⁴ Steyn, *The Jew*, p.117

following painting, *Jews Arguing*, can be seen as more vociferous. Gertler's acknowledgement of his foolishness is represented in the painting of the physical

objects of Jewish orthodoxy, for example the prayer shawl and the large scriptural books, a metaphor of the linguistic otherness of the East European Jew which was an anachronism within British liberal culture and the Anglo-Jewish establishment.

In *Jews Arguing*, the thesis concludes the projections of the dominant culture can be seen to be clearly evident pictorially. For example, in the outward expression of the hands, the fantasised emotional display of the Jew is registered, which in nineteenth-century science demonstrated their inherent difference and relationship with femininity and the condition of diathesis – a flawed particularity. The thesis concludes by discovering these characteristics in a more veiled form in *The Apple Woman and Her Husband*, where Gertler found, through orientalism, a safer conduit for a display of otherness while characterising the disavowal of the self. *The Apple Woman*, in her oriental disguise, seems at first to represent a gypsy, and seems to mimic John's portrayal of ethnicity. However, the project concludes that *The Apple Woman* diverges from what I argue is Augustus John's portrayal, particularly in the painting *The Mumpers*. In the portrait of his father, Louis, there is depicted the unacceptable outsider of the East End Orthodox Jew, far removed from the anglicisation of his co-religionist. More importantly, the project highlights the absence of the correspondence of the painting to Zionism and Judaism. In this respect the painting has an emancipatory quality in referencing Zionist aspiration and the establishment of Israel.

The 1913 portrait *The Artist's Mother* has been transformed by Gertler into a more primitive style. This, the thesis suggests, was the outcome of an intensification of his self-hatred, the cause of which, I suggest, was his deeper incursions into upper-middle-class society and his personal contact with the Cambridge intelligentsia through his personal friendship with Edward Marsh. The externalisation of his conflict was translated through the application of the paint's surface where there is a crudeness and simplification of modelling. *The Rabbi and His Grandchild*, I suggest, had distinct connotations that are partly contingent on the science of race and an image of the Jew that had been propagated since the onset of Christianity. In this respect, the implication of the portrait of the Rabbi in his otherness, the thesis argues, can be read within the continuing critique of the Jew, a narrative of excessive stereotypes, I conclude, and representations of Jewishness that imply the full morality that civilisation sought to disavow. The physiognomy of the portrait, I conclude, is the key to understanding it as

an absolute object of projection. It functions as a symbol of the Jew's baseness in European imagination. Gertler in his self-loathing can be seen to subscribe to the phantasmagorical pseudo-identity of the stereotypical notions of the Jew. Gertler qualified this creation of *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* as the 'other' and consequently this bears the stigma of stereotypical Jewishness. Through his self-hatred Gertler's painting invites us to pay, I conclude, conscious attention to its physiognomy as a distinct racial category whose inherent nature is predicated on the construct of difference that is absolute and immutable.

The Family Group, however, can be seen as a shift from *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* and can be interpreted through its pictorial language as an attempt by the artist to take flight from the social conflict that he was feeling at this time. Whereas there was an inscribed 'otherness' that came in to play in an intense way in *The Rabbi and His Grandchild* and its predecessors, it is less apparent in *The Family Group*. In this respect, this can, at this juncture, be seen almost as a reconciliation with the assimilation process. Initially it seemed to be a situational impasse, one which was transgressed by the artist in this painting through self-awareness and aestheticism. Indeed, Gertler's flight into aestheticism can be translated by the paintings *Gilbert Cannan at his Mill* and *The Merry-Go-Round*, which I conclude reflects a psychological need to relocate, which he did to Hampstead, and his conscious decision to reject a fixed ethnic and class identity. As such, I conclude, these paintings that were created during the First World War make no reference to his Jewish subjects of 1913.

Gilbert Cannan at His Mill, I conclude, reflected a Jewish art, which was secular and I arrive at this conclusion through the use Avram Kampf's study of the renaissance of Jewish art in Eastern Europe. I suggest that this transgressed geographical boundaries through its radical modernism and found influence within a section of the British avant-garde. *The Creation of Eve*, which the thesis has demonstrated has largely been overlooked by critical appraisal, reflects a residue of his expression of self-hatred, particularly resonant in the physiognomic features of Jehovah God. *The Merry-Go-Round* can be seen as an acknowledgement of Gertler's pacifist position and his feelings of antipathy towards the First World War, as well as the confusion that he was feeling at the time over the protracted relationship he was conducting with Dora Carrington. The painting, I conclude, has a definite anti-war sentiment but is not expressive of Gertler's need to represent Jewish identity. However, what is poignant, is the projection onto the painting by others, particularly D.H. Lawrence, of a contextualisation and interpretation

within racial terms and the notion of Englishness in painting. In this respect, the discursive practice for the construction of the notion of Englishness through which, I suggest, Lawrence was articulating, gave *The Merry-Go-Round* a racial aesthetic and reinstated Gertler's Jewish origin, 'otherness' and exclusion.

Bibliography

Interviews Conducted by the Author

Gertler, Luke, son of Mark Gertler, 2008

Rabbi Meyer, The Brighton and Hove Reformed Synagogue, Palmeira Avenue, Hove, 2004

Rabbi Silverman, The Hove Hebrew Congregation, Holland Road, Hove, 2004

Archives

Collection of letters from and to Mark Gertler, Tate Gallery Archive

M.G. Lightfoot to Mark Gertler, 20 July 1910, 9217.14

Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, August 1912, 9217.19

Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, December 1912, 9217.9

Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, 2 July 1912, 9217.21

Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, December 1912, 9217.11

Mark Gertler to Dorothy Brett, July 1913, 9217.83,

Mark Gertler to Lytton Strachy, 9217.27

JEAS minutes, 29 June 1910, University of Southampton, MS135/AJ35

Published Sources

The Holy Bible, New International Version. London, Sydney, Auckland and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978

Encyclopedia Judaica. Jerusalem: Keys Publishing House, 1978

Ackelsberg, Martha, 'Introduction', in Koltun, Elizabeth (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976, pp.xiii-xx

Adler, Kathleen, in Nochlin, Linda and Garb, Tamar (eds.), *The Jew in the Text*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, pp.83-96

Allinson, Adrian, *Memoirs* (unpublished)

Allinson, Adrian, *A Painter's Pilgrimage*. MS. McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, Oklahoma

Andreski, Stanislaw, *Syphilis, Puritanism and Witch Hunts*. London: MacMillan, 1989

Annan, N.G., 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in Plumb, John H., (ed.), *Studies in Social History*. London, New York and Toronto: Longman, 1955, pp.241-287

Ansky, S., 'The Folklorist', in Abramson, H.A., (ed.), *Vitebsk Amol*. New York: 1956

Aris, Stephen, *The Jews in Business*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973

- Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989
- Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991
- Beckett, Jane, '(Is)land Narratives: Englishness, Visuality and Vanguard Culture 1914-18', in Corbett, David Peters and Perry, Lana (eds.), *English Art 1860-1914 Modern Artists and Identity*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp.195-212
- Bentwich, Norman, *The Jews in our Time*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960
- Bernstein, Basil, *Class, Codes and Control, Vol. 1, Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971
- Boime, Albert, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1971
- Boudaille, Georges, *Gauguin*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1964
- Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Cities*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1975
- Cannan, Gilbert, *Mendel*. London: Fisher Unwin, 1916
- Carrington, Noel (ed.), *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*. London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965
- Cesarani, David (ed.), 'Introduction', *The Making of Modern Anglo Jewry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.1-11
- Chapel, Jeannie & Mass Jeremy, *Victorian Taste: The Complete Catalogue of Paintings at the Royal Holloway College*. London: A. Zwemmer, 1982
- Cheyette, Bryan, 'The Other Self: Anglo-Jewish Fiction and the Representation of Jews in England, 1875-1905', in Cesarani, David (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. 97-111
- Cheyette, Bryan, 'Neither Black nor White: the Figure of "the Jew" in Imperial British Literature' in Nochlin, Linda and Garb, Tamar (eds.) *The Jew in the Text*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, pp.31-41
- Cheyette, Bryan and Marcus, Laura, (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1998
- Cohn-Sherbok, Lavinia and Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, *A Popular Dictionary of Judaism*. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995
- Connor, Steven, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford University Press, 2000
- Cork, Richard, *Vorticism and its Artists*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976

- Dodd, Philip, Preface, 'Englishness and the National Culture', in Colls, R. and Dodd, P. (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 188-1920*. London: Groom & Helm, 1986, p.2
- Easton, John Malcolm and Holroyd, Michael, *The Art of Augustus John*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1974
- Endelman, Todd M., *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979
- Endelman, Todd M., *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990
- Falkenheim, Jacqueline V., *Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism*. Michigan University Research Press, 1980
- Finkelkraut, Alain, *The Imaginary Jew*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994
- Fishberg, Maurice and Jacobs, Joseph, 'Anthropological Types', *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 12 vols. New York: Fink and Wagnills, 1904, Vol 12, pp.291-5
- Fraser, Derek, *The Evolution of the Welfare State*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009
- Friedenwald, Harry, *The Jews and Medicine*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1944
- Garb, Tamar, 'Modernity, Identity and Textuality' in Linda Nochlin & Tamar Garb (eds.) *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, pp.20-30
- Gartner, Lloyd P., *The Jewish Immigrant In England*. London: Simon Press, 1960
- Gathorne-Hardy, Robert, (ed.) *Ottoline: The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963
- Gaunt, William, *The Aesthetic Adventure*. London: Cardinal, 1975
- Gerlberg, S., 'Jewish London', in Sims, George, *Living London*, Vol. 2. London, 1902, p.29
- Gilman, Sander L., *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1980
- Gilman, Sander L., *The Jew's Body*. New York and London: Routledge, 1991
- Gilman, Sander L., 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the Modern Jewess' in Nochlin, Linda and Garb, Tamar, (eds.) *The Jew in the Text*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, pp.97-120
- Gore, Frederick, 'The Resilient Figure: Mark Gertler and Matthew Smith', in Compton, Susan, (ed.), *British Art in the 20th Century*. London: Royal Academy of Arts 1987, p.172

- Harrison, Charles, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981
- Harrowitz, Nancy A., *Antisemitism, Mysogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994
- Hayim Yerushalmis, Yosef, 'From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto', in Cardoso Isaac (ed.) *A Study in Seventeenth Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, pp.44
- Helbling, Robert E. *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*. New Directions Books, 1975
- Hill, Christopher, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*. London: Schocken Books, 1964
- Hill, Jane, *The Art of Dora Carrington*. London: The Herbert Press, 2000
- Hoare, Philip, *Wilde's Last Stand*. London: Duckworth, 1997
- Holbrook Gerzina, Gretchen, *Carrington: A Life*. New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1995
- Holroyd, Michael, *Lytton Strachey*. London: Vintage, 1994
- Holroyd, Michael, *Augustus John: The New Biography*. London: Chatto & Windus
- Hone, Joseph, *The Life of Henry Tonks*. London & Toronto: William Heineman Ltd., 1937
- Hutchinson, John and Smith, Anthony D., (eds.), *Ethnicity*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996
- Jeleniewski Seidler, Victor, *Shadows of the Shoah*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000
- Kabbani, Rana, *Europe's Myth of Orient*. London: Pandora Press, 1986
- Kampf, Avram *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Experience in Twentieth Century Art*. London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1990
- Koltun, Elizabeth, 'The Life Cycle and New Rituals', in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976, pp.19-30
- Knox, Robert, *The Races of Man: A Fragment*. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850
- Kriegel, Annie, *Les Juifs et le Monde Moderne*. Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1970
- Lambert, Angela, *Unquiet Souls*. London: MacMillan, 1984
- Leftwich, Joseph 'Jewish London –Fifty Years Ago', in *Ben Uri Commemorative Volume*. London: Ben Uri Society, 1966

- Livshin, Rosalyn, 'The Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester, 1890-1930' in Cesarani, David, (ed.) *The Making of Anglo-Jewry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.81-2
- McConkey, Kenneth, 'A Thousand Miles Towards the Sun: British Artists Travelling to Spain and Morocco at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in Holt, Ysanne (ed.) *Visual Culture in Britain: Volume 4*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, pp.25-43
- McKenzie, John L, *The World of the Judges*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967
- MacDougall, Sarah, *Mark Gertler*. London: John Murray, 2002
- Magnus, Philip, *King Edward The Seventh*. London: John Murray, 1964
- Martin, James D., *The Book of Judges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975
- Mazower, David, *Yiddish Theatre in London*. London: Museum of the Jewish East End
- Nadler, Steven, *Rembrandt's Jews*. London: University of Chicago Press, 2003
- Nash, Paul *Outline*. London: Faber and Faber, 1949
- Nead, Lynda, *The Myths of Sexuality*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988
- Nevinson, C.R.W., *Paint and Prejudice*. London: Methuen, 1937
- Nicholson, Virginia, *Among the Bohemians*. London: Viking, 2002
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing. New York: Doubleday
- Parkes, James, *A History of the Jewish People*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967
- Penrose, Roland, *Picasso: His Life and Work*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971
- Peters Corbett, David and Perry, Lara (eds.), *English Art 1860 - 1914: Modern Artists and Identity*. Manchester University Press, 2000
- Peltre, Christine, *Orientalism*. Paris: Editions Terrail/Edigroup, 2004
- Plaut, W. Gunther, *The Haftariah Commentary*. New York: UAHC Press
- Pollins, Harold, *Economic History of the Jews in England* . London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982
- Richardson, John, *A Life of Picasso*, Volume 1: 1881-1906. London: Pimlico, 1992
- Robins, Gruelzner, *Modern Art in Britain 1910 -14*. London: Merrell Holburton, 1979
- Rohrer, Joseph, *Versuch ueber die Judischen Benohmer der Osterreichischen Monarchie*. Vienna: NP, 1804

- Rothenstein, John, *An Introduction to English Painting*. London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001
- Rothenstein, John, *Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore*. London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1956
- Rubinstein, W.D., *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain*. London: MacMillan Press, 1996
- Sachko MacLeod, Dianne, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996
- Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 1999
- Schick, Irvin Cemil, *The Erotic Margin*. London and New York: Verso, 1999
- Seymour, Miranda, *Ottoline Morrel: Life on the Grand Scale*. London: Hodddard and Sloughton, 1992
- Shrone, Richard, *The Art of Bloomsbury*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1999
- Silver, Kenneth and Golan, Romy, *The Circle of Montparnasse*. Universe Books, 1985
- Soggin, J. Alberto, *Judges*. London: SCM Press, 1981
- Solomon, Norman, *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000
- Spalding, Francis, *British Art Since 1900*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989
- Stephenson, Andrew, 'Refashioning Modern Masculinity: Whistler, Aestheticism and National Identity', in Peters Corbett, David and Perry, Lana Perry (eds.), *English Art 1860-1914 Modern Artists and Identity*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000pp.133-149
- Steyn, Juliet, *The Jew Assumptions of Identity*. London: Cassell, 1999
- Sumueli, E., *Seven Jewish Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990
- Tajfel, Henri, *The Social Psychology of Minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group, 1978
- Taylor, J.R., *Bernard Meninsky*. Bristol: Redcliff Press, 1990
- Tickner, Lisa, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*. Newhaven and New York: Yale University, 2000
- Vaughan, William, *British Painting: The Golden Age*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999
- Weber, Max, *Ancient Judaism*. Illinois: The Free Press, 1952
- Weber, Max, *On Charisma and Institutional Building*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

West, Shearer (ed.) *A Guide to Art*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996

Wexler, Paul, *The Ashkenazic Jew*. Columbus, Ohio: Slavic Publications Inc., 1993

Wildenstein Daniel & Cogniat, Raymond, *Gauguin*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1975

Williams, Bill, 'East and West in Manchester Jewry, 1880-1914' in Cesarani, David (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo- Jewry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.15-33

Williams, Raymond *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso, 1980

Wilson, Elizabeth, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts*. London and New York: IB Taurus, 2002

Wolf, Elan Isaac, *Von Der Krankheiten der Juden*. Mannheim: 1777

Wolff, Janet, 'The Jewish Mark in English Painting', in Peters Corbett, David and Perry, Lana (eds.), *English Art 1860 - 1914: Modern Artists and Identity*. Manchester University Press, 2000, pp.180-194

Woolff, Leonard, *Beginning Again*. London: 1964

Wood, Christopher, *Victorian Panoramic Paintings of Victorian Life*. London: Faber and Faber, 1976

Woodeson, John, *Mark Gertler: Biography of a Painter, 1891-1939*. London: Sigwick and Jackson, 1972

Periodicals and Newspapers

Art Journal, June 1863

Saducismus Triumphatus: On Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions 1681

Beaumont, Mary, *Art Review*, April 1992, p.133

Beaumont , Mary Rose, *The Economist*, 8 February 1992

Bell, Clive, 'Gertler', *New Statesman and Nation*, 24/5/41, pp.528-9

Bernstein, Basil, 'Language and Social Class', *The British Journal of Sociology* 1 3, (1960), pp.271-276

Bernstein, Basil, 'Social Class, Linguistic Codes and Grammatical Elements', *Language and Speech*, 5 4 (1962), pp.221-240

Bernstein, Basil and Henderson, Dorothy, 'Social Class, Linguistic Codes and Grammatical Elements', *Language and Speech*, 5 4 (1962), pp.221-40

- Bernstein, Basil, 'Social Class, Speech Systems and Psycho-Therapy', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 19 (1964), pp.54-64
- Bernstein, Basil and Henderson, Dorothy 'Social Class Differences in the Relevance of Language to Socialization', *Sociology*, 3:1 (1969), pp.1-20
- Bentwich, Norman, 'The Social Transformation of Anglo-Jewry 1883-1960', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 2:1 (1960), pp.16-24
- Bhabba, Homi, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October* 28 (1984), pp.126-8
- Bilton, Jane, 'Edwardian Gypsy Idyll', *Fan* 21 (1990, Vol 3), pp.21-2
- Birnholz, Alan C., 'E. Lissitzky and the Jewish Tradition', *Studio International*, 186, Oct 1977, pp.130-136
- Bone, James, 'The Tendencies of Modern Art', *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1913), pp.20-34
- Brotz, Howard, 'The Position of the Jews in English Society', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 1:1 (1959), pp.94-113
- Buchloh, Benjamin H.D., 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting', *Art World Follies*, 16 (Spring 1981), pp.39-68
- Charlton, George, 'The Slade School of Fine Art', *Studio* (October 1946), pp.114-21
- Churchill, Frederick B., 'Wilhelm Johannsen and the Genotype Concept', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 7 (Spring 1974), pp.5-30
- Collins Baker, C.H. 'The Paintings of Prof. Henry Tonks', *The Studio*, February 1910, pp.3-10
- Cominos, Peter, 'Late Victorian Sexual Respectability: The Social System' *International Review of Social History*, (1963), pp.18-48
- Dafforne, James, 'British Artists, Their Style and Character', *Art Journal* (London, 3, 1862: March), pp.73-5
- Earp, T.W., 'The Edward Marsh Collection', *Apollo*, (Vol 56, No. 432), pp.177-186
- Galton, Francis, 'Composite Portraits Made by Combining Those of Many Different Persons into a Single Resultant Figure', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 8 (1879), pp.132-144
- Goldblatt, David, 'Ventriloquism: Ecstatic Exchange and the History of the Art Work', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51: 3, Summer 1997, pp.389-398
- Gutmann, Joseph, 'When the Kingdom Comes: Messianic Themes in Medieval Jewish Art', *The Art Journal*, Winter 67/8, XXVII/Z, pp.168-175

- Hilton, Tim, 'A Brush with Bloomsbury', *The Guardian*, 17 January 1992
- Holt, Ysanne, 'Eddie Marsh: A Picture Collector's Lust for Possession', in *Visual Culture in Britain* 2005, 6 2, pp.177-186
- Huttenback, Robert A., 'The Patrician Jew and the British Ethos in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Jewish Social Studies*, 40:1 (1978, Winter), pp.49-61
- Jacobs, Joseph, 'On The Racial Characteristics of Modern Jews', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 15 (1886), pp.23-62
- Lambourne, Lionel, 'Abraham Solomon, Painter of Fashion and Simeon Solomon, Decadent Artist', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, (1968 21), pp.274-286
- Lemaine, Gerard, 'Social Differentiation and Social Originality', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 4(1), pp. 17-52
- Lipman, V.D. *The Jewish Chronicle* (5 February, 1982)
- Pincus-Witten, Robert, 'Six Propositions on Jewish Art', *Jewish Art Magazine*, December 1975, p.66-9
- Rodick, John, 'The Theatre in Whitechapel', *Poetry and Drama*, March 1913, p.43-4
- Rubinstein, William D., 'Jews Among Top British Wealth Holders, 1887-1969 Decline of the Golden Age', *Jewish Social Studies*, 34:1 (1972), pp. 73-82
- Rutter, Frank, 'Augustus John', *The Studio* Vol C1, Number 455 (February 1931), pp.84-97
- Rutter, Frank, 'Sir William Rothenstein', *The Studio*, No 451, Vol 10 (March 1931), pp.232-41
- Schmidt, Leigh Eric, 'From Demon Possession to Magic Show: Ventriloquism', *Religion and the Enlightenment Church History*, 67 (June 1998), pp.274-304
- Sekula, Allan , 'The Body and the Archive', *October* 39, (1986), pp.3-64
- Shimoni, Gideon, 'From Anti-Zionism to Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry, 1917-1937', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, (1986), pp.19-46
- Shorter, Edward, 'Women and Jews in a Private Nervous Clinic in Late Nineteenth Century Vienna', *Medical History*, 33 (1989), pp.149-83
- Stewart, Dugald, 'Observations on Ventriloquism', *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, 1828, pp.241-252
- Symons, Arthur, 'In Praise of the Gypsies', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, (April 1908), pp.294-9
- Trumpener, Katie, 'A People Without History in the Narratives of the West', *Critical Inquiry*, 18:4, (1992), pp.843-84

Vincent, Cybil, 'In the Studio of Professor Henry Tonks', *The Studio*, Vol. 113, 1937, pp.83-7

Wanscher, Johan Henrik, 'An Analysis of Wilhelm Johannsen's Genetical Term "Genotype" 1909-26', *Hereditas* 79: 1-4 (1975), pp.1-4

Warner, Malcolm, 'Victorian Paintings at the Tate Gallery. Recent Acquisitions', *Apollo* (April 1986), pp.259-63

Wolff, Janet 'The Failure of a Hard Sponge. Class Ethnicity and the Art of Mark Gertler', *New Formations*, 28: Spring 1996: pp.46-64

Wolf, Lucien, 'The Zionist Peril', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 17, (October, 1904), pp.1-25

Zangwill, Israel, 'English Judaism: A Criticism and a Classification', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1: 4, (1889), pp.376-407

Exhibition Catalogues

Mark Gertler: Paintings and Drawings, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Camden Art Centre, 1992

Mark Gertler: A New Perspective, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art, 2002

Bohm-Duchen, Monica, 'The Jewish Background' in *Solomon: A Family of Painters*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Inner London Education Authority, 1985

Daniels, Jeffery 'Abraham Solomon', *Solomon: A Family of Painters*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Inner London Education Authority, 1985

Freeman, Julian, *Made at the Slade* Exhibition Catalogue. Brighton Polytechnic Faculty of Art & Design, 1979

Morris, Lynda (ed.), *Henry Tonks and the 'Art of Pure Drawing'*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Arts Council of Great Britain

Perry, Jenny, *Solomon J. Solomon RA*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Ben Uri Art Gallery, 28 Oct – 18 Nov 1990

Shrone, Richard *Mark Gertler: The Early and the Late Years*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art, 1982

Spalding, Frances, 'The Early Years', Carrington, Noel et al, *Mark Gertler: The Early and the Late Years*, Exhibition Catalogue. London: Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art, 1982

Steyn, Juliet, 'Mythical Edges of Assimilation' *Mark Gertler Paintings and Drawings*, Exhibition Catalogue. London, Camden Arts Centre, 1992

Woodeson, John, *Mark Gertler*, Exhibition Catalogue. Colchester: The Minorities Gallery, Cullingford, 1971



Figure 1: The Artist's Mother



Figure 2: A Playful Scene



Figure 3: The Hat Shop

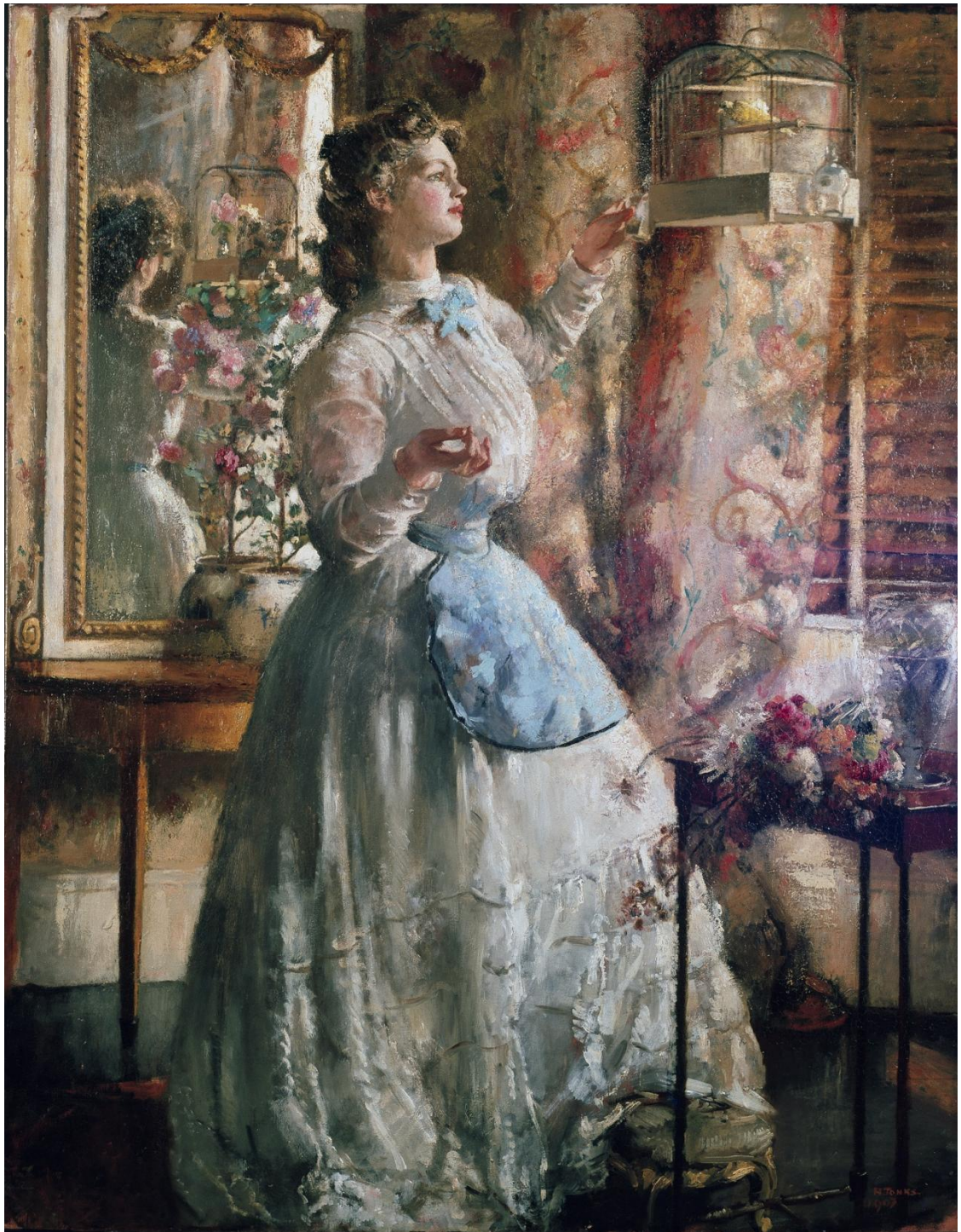


Figure 4: The Bird Cage

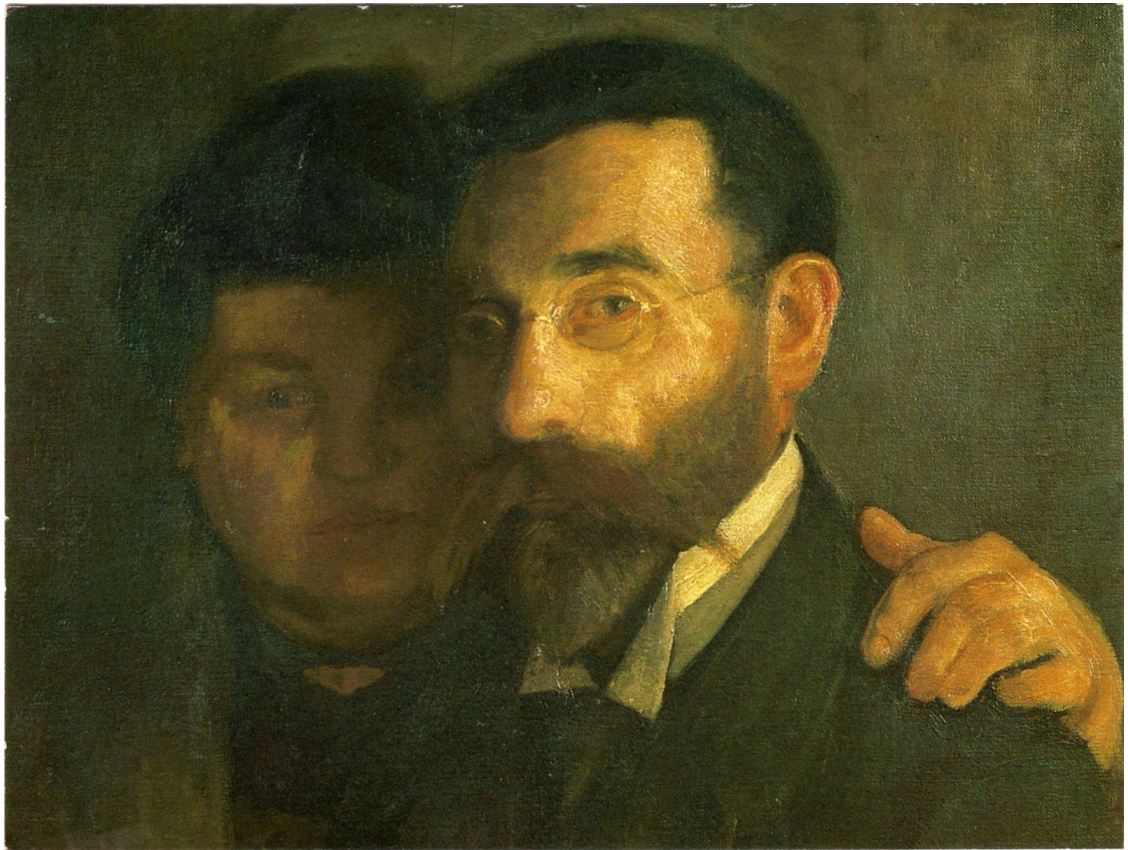


Figure 5: The Artist's Parents



Figure 6: The Acolyte



Figure 7: The Return of Jephthah



Figure 8: First Class – The Meeting: And At First Meeting Loved



Figure 9: First Class – The Meeting (Revised Version)



Figure 10: A Conversation Piece



Figure 11: Reading the Book of Esther



Figure 12: Jews Arguing



Figure 13: Study of a Girl's Head in Profile

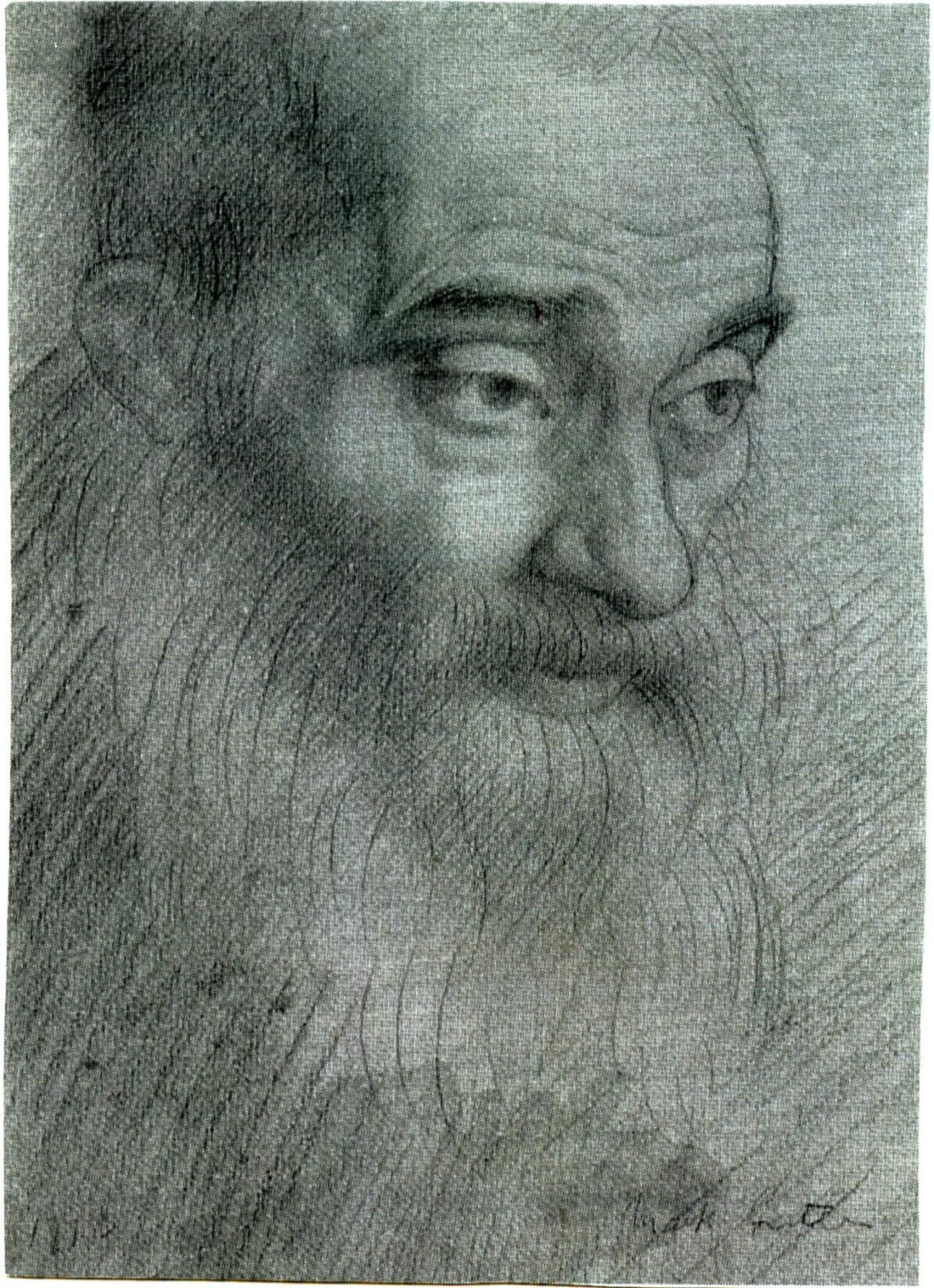


Figure 14: Old Man with Beard



Figure 15: The Apple Woman and her Husband



Figure 16: The Mumpers



Figure 17: Les Demoiselle d'Avignon

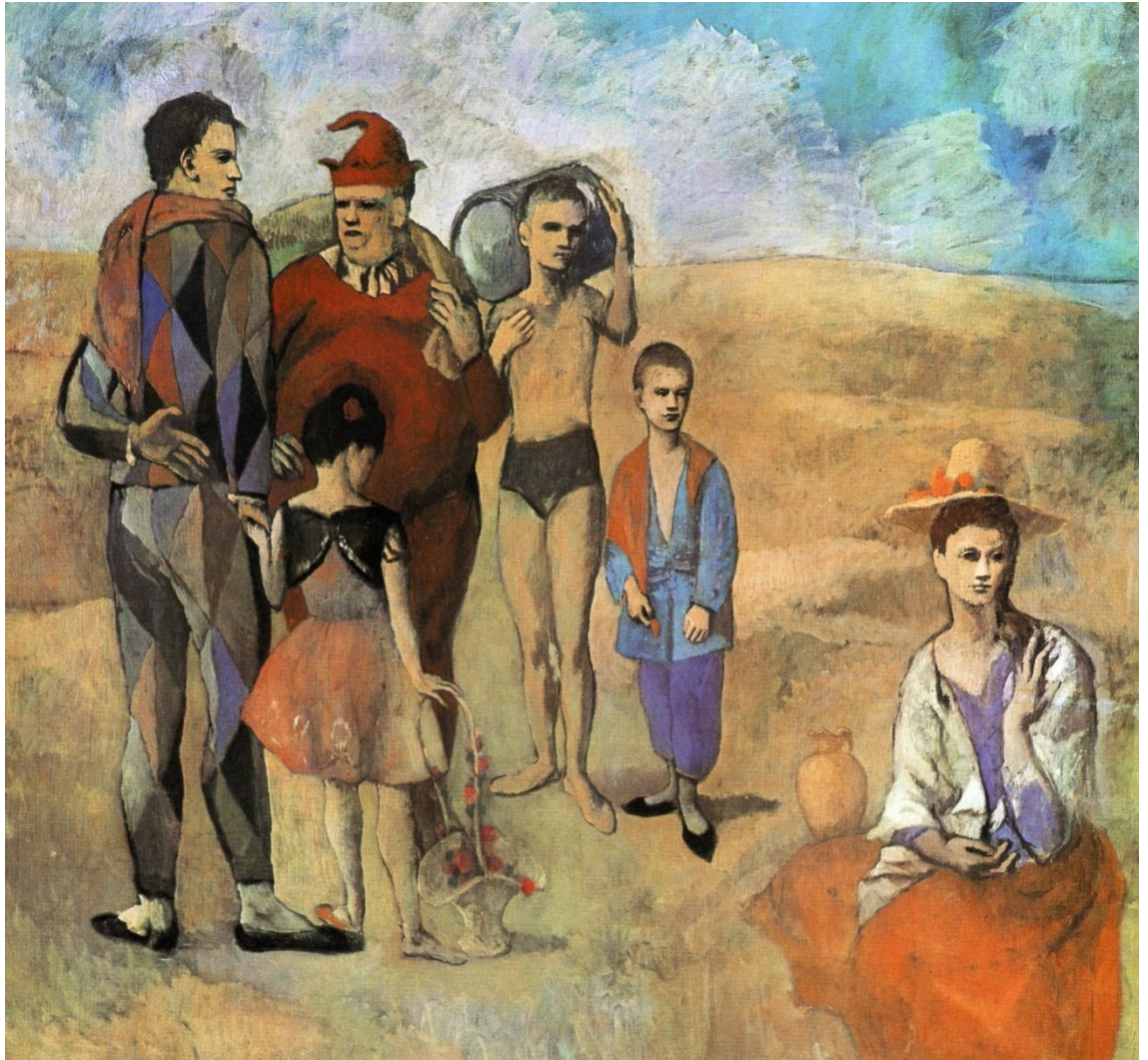


Figure 18: La Famille de Saltimbanques



Figure 19: A Young Jew



Figure 20: The Artist's Mother



Figure 21: The Rabbi and his Grandchild



Figure 22: The Jewish Family



Figure 23: John Donne Arriving in Heaven



Figure 24: The Family Group



Figure 25: The Fruit Sorters

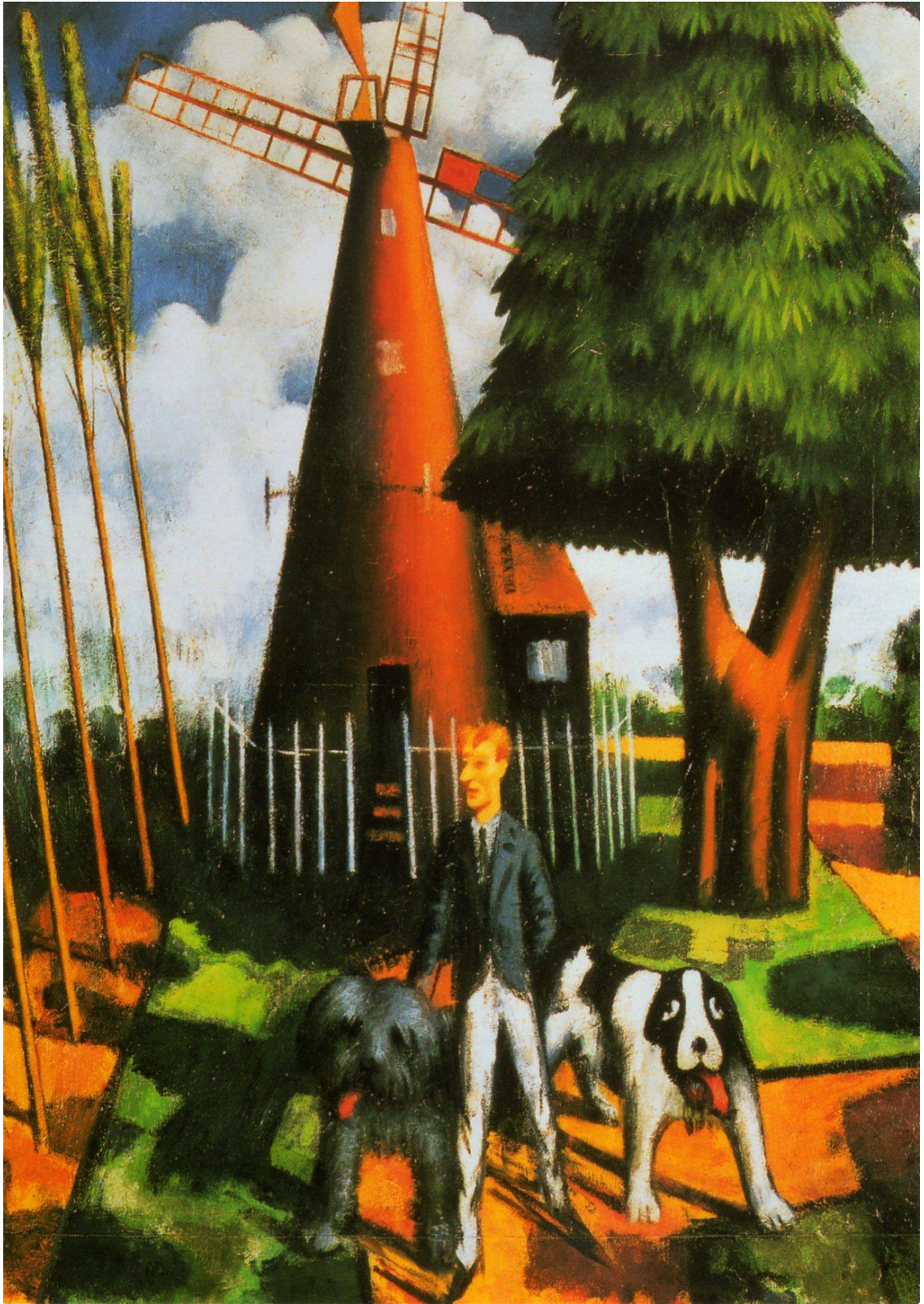


Figure 26: Gilbert Cannan at his Mill



Figure 27: The Merry-Go-Round



Figure 28: The Creation of Eve