

**THE JEWISH STRONG MAN: DANIEL
MENDOZA AND THE ASSAULT ON
STEREOTYPE IN LATE GEORGIAN ENGLAND**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is Daniel Mendoza (1764-1836), an exceptional boxer and a controversial figure of Georgian Anglo-Jewish society. It will chart his meteoric rise from greengrocer's apprentice to champion boxer, and his sudden decline. The thesis aims to put Mendoza in his proper historical context, focussing on the dominant issues for the Jewish community at the time. To do this, there will be a review of the major works of Jewish and English history from the period. It also attempts to bring Mendoza, previously overlooked by Anglo-Jewish historians, to the forefront of any debate about the position of Anglo-Jewry at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The study will examine, in particular, the effect of Mendoza on the stereotyping of Jews in late eighteenth century England, and how he presents himself, through his writings and manipulation of the press, as the antithesis of the traditional Jewish stereotype. To show this, the thesis draws on many primary sources, predominantly newspapers and boxing reports from England, as well as Mendoza's own memoirs, and Old Bailey proceedings.

RÉSUMÉ

Le sujet de cette étude est Daniel Mendoza (1764-1836), un boxeur exceptionnel et un personnage controversé de la société juive en Angleterre durant les réines des roi George III et IV. Elle documentera son ascension fulgurante d'un épicier apprenti à un boxeur champion, et son déclin soudain. Ce mémoire tente de mettre Mendoza dans son contexte historique approprié, concentrant sur les questions dominantes pour la communauté juive de l'époque. À cette fin, il inclura une revue des œuvres majeures d'histoire juive et anglaise de la période. Il tente aussi d'amener Mendoza, jusqu'ici négligé par les historiens anglo-juifs, au premier plans de quelconque débat sur la position des juifs anglais au début du XIXe siècle.

Cette étude examinera, en particulier, l'effet de Mendoza sur les stéréotypes des juifs en Angleterre à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, et comment il se présente à travers ses écrits et à travers ses manipulations de la presse, comme l'antithèse du stéréotype juif traditionnel. À ces fins, la thèse s'appuiera sur plusieurs sources primaires, principalement des journaux et des rapports de boxe d'Angleterre, ainsi que les mémoires de Mendoza lui-même et les procédés de l'«Old Bailey», la cour criminelle de Londres.

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INTRODUCTION

Daniel Mendoza (1764-1836) was a Jewish pugilist, or boxer, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He was champion of England from 1790 until his defeat by “Gentleman” John Jackson in 1795. He is accredited with developing the science of boxing and revolutionising the sport.¹ He stood at only five foot seven inches and weighed barely over one hundred and sixty pounds, yet with the style he developed he was undefeated from 1789 until his loss to Jackson in 1795. He was able to defeat his opponent by moving, defending and counterattacking at the right time. He opened a school for boxing very early in his career and the majority of his income throughout his life came from touring the country and demonstrating the skill that he possessed. Throughout his career and into his retirement, he was a hugely popular figure. Newspapers printed stories about his fights, as well as his personal life. He had a public argument with his former master, Richard Humphreys, in which they both aired their grievances in letters to newspapers. In London at the time, the series of letters between the two, which lasted over a number of years, were published by, and this is just a selection, the Whitehall Evening Post, Public Advertiser, Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, The World, Diary or Woodfall’s Register, The Star, The Times and the London Chronicle. Portraits of Mendoza were advertised in a similar number of newspapers, and were sold in huge numbers.

¹ Mendoza wrote an instructional guide entitled *The Art of Boxing*, which is still seen today as a crucial part of boxing theory.

Descriptions of Mendoza's battles were published in American newspapers. He was, for a time, the most popular and famous Jew in England. He interacted with royalty and counted even the Prince of Wales, soon to be George IV, as a patron. Yet scholars of Anglo-Jewish history, or English history in general, have not studied him in any detail. This should be rectified.

The reason for the general lack of attention to Mendoza is complex. Firstly, there has been a lack of writing, and academic intent in general, within the fields of Anglo-Jewish and English Georgian history. However, there are also great difficulties with Mendoza himself. He was a very complicated character, capable on the one hand of great kindness and intelligence, and on the other sporadic acts of criminality and violence that cannot be ignored. He may have been deported early in his life for robbery. He was also accused of fraud in a highly publicised Old Bailey Trial. He was found guilty of viciously assaulting a woman in 1795 because of her attitude towards his wife. In separate incidents, two of his sons were deported for stabbing two gentlemen who they had just robbed. He was both despised and loved within the Jewish community, as well as the non-Jewish population. In essence, he was a man whose living was made in beating another to the ground, yet he could write a preface to his memoirs that mentions Henry Fielding and Anacreon. He was a complex man with complex motives.

The fact remains, however, that he was the most famous Jew at the turn of the nineteenth century, the century that brought the Jewish community in Britain its biggest political and social gains. The documentation available to reconstruct Mendoza's story is not rich and much of what journalists and writers discuss is found in Mendoza's *Memoirs*.² This is a very difficult text to decipher and should not be taken as fact. This is largely because of the situation that he found himself at the time of its printing in 1816. Not for the first time, his life appeared to be unravelling and he needed the money. He was willing to overplay, and at the same time, underplay various aspects in his life in order to increase revenue. It was also the last attempt by Mendoza to fashion his own image. The way he describes himself as almost the antithesis of the Jewish stereotype, suggests a method to approach him. Within the framework of stereotypes, it is possible to examine his life through an academic lens, while also investigating the reaction to him from the public, his opinion of himself, and a re-evaluation of his life with special attention to the less palatable aspects of his personality.

MENDOZA AND STEREOTYPES

The use of "Jewish strong man" in the title is chosen purposefully to draw the reader into an acknowledgement of the stereotype of Jews as weak and

² Daniel Mendoza and Paul Magriel (ed.), *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza* (London: B. T. Batsford, LTD, 1951)

malformed. They were “distinguish’d for Pusillanimity and Cowardice”.³ One of the more offensive descriptions of Jewish cowardice comes from Charles Johnstone’s late eighteenth century novel, *The History of John Juniper*, where the hero tells the reader to “spit in a Jew’s face, give him a box on the ear...give him but a farthing at the same time...he will pocket the affront and thank you”.⁴ In particular, they could not be trusted to fight for King and country; Jonas Hanway describes how Jews “are not a warlike people as the Saxons were”.⁵ Of course, Jews were actually a significant part of the army in the areas that had large Jewish populations. According to Cecil Roth, King George III “was struck by the number of zoophoric names” after reviewing a regiment of soldiers from the East End.⁶ Perhaps the most amusing example of Jews in the army is an 1803 cartoon showing an Ashkenazi Jew pointing his bayonet towards a French soldier with the Jew saying, in a strong Yiddish accent, “...I’ll let you know Mounsheer, dat I fight for King Sheorge, and de Shynagogue!”⁷

The stereotype of Jewish cowardice was dominant for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The development of Jewish pugilism, in which

³ (Author unknown), *Reasons offered to the consideration of the Parliament, for preventing the growth of Judaism; inscribed to the Right Hon. The Lord Mayor* (London: J. Brett and R. Charlton, 1738), 8

⁴ Charles Johnstone, *The History of John Juniper, Esq.* (London: R. Baldwin, 1781), 261

⁵ Jonas Hanway, *A Review of the Proposed Naturalizations of the Jews* (London: J. Waugh, 1753), 78

⁶ Cecil Roth, “The Jews in the Defence of Britain” in *The Jewish Historical Society of England – Transactions* 15 (1939-1945), 14. Cecil Roth offers no citation for this observation.

⁷ *The Loyal Jew – and French Soldier or Beard Against Whiskers!!* (Engraving, 1803) in Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 232

Mendoza was the figure head, made such a difference that writers began to lament the fact that they could no longer insult Jews without consequence because, even if the victim himself was not a boxer, they knew people who were. Francis Place informs us, "About the year 1787 Daniel Mendoza, a Jew, became a celebrated boxer...the art soon spread among the young Jews and they became generally expert at it...it was no longer safe to insult a Jew unless he was an old man and alone".⁸ Another example of this change in mentality is shown in an engraving entitled *The Jew Beauties*. The engraving itself is a reference to the Jewish reaction to the 1802 play *Family Quarrels*, which included a disparaging musical number directed at Jewish women. The engraving shows the lyrics of the song and the actor who sang the song, John Fawcett, cowering before a Jewish woman in a boxing pose. The woman had learned to box from her brother. It seems that Place's lament also referred to Jewish women.⁹ Mendoza helped create a generation of Jewish strongmen and women.

The term stereotype has been the subject of many critical studies and has been the topic of vast numbers of publications. Here, I wish to examine the different interpretations of stereotype, and show what is most important for our study. Walter Lippman first coined the word "stereotype" in a paper

⁸ Francis Place, as quoted by M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edition, London: Penguin, 1966), 132

⁹ *The Jew Beauties. A Whimsical Song; - Sung by Mr. Fawcett, at Covent Garden Theatre* (Engraving, 1806) in Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 5

entitled *Public Opinion* in 1922.¹⁰ At first, his use of the word provoked little discussion. The Oxford English Dictionary defines stereotype as “a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics, which typify a person, situation etc; an attitude based on such a preconception”.¹¹

The discussion surrounding stereotypes has increased in the past fifty years. Published in 1960, Edgar Rosenberg’s *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* provided the following definition of a stereotype: “Shylock and Fagin are stereotypes – figures who conform to more or less identical patterns of behaviour, resemble each other physically, and subscribe to a relatively fixed moral code; who react in predictable ways to stimuli; and who may exist independently of historical changes and often in the very teeth of historical change”.¹² What is most interesting about his definition is that stereotypes may “exist independently of historical changes”. Does the stereotype of Jews as weak exist independently of Mendoza? Probably yes, as Jewish stereotypes were independent of Mendoza. Rosenberg’s thesis, however, fails to take account of different types of stereotype.

Michael Echeruo, whose book appeared in 1978, has also discussed the position of the stereotype in society. He believes that there are two different

¹⁰ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922)

¹¹ OED

¹² Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960), 10

types of stereotype, “cultural stereotypes” and “exo-cultural stereotypes”. He understands that cultural stereotypes are those such as the braggart soldier whom the audience know to be “a deliberate simplification or exaggeration”.¹³ Exo-cultural stereotypes, on the other hand, are those whose background is mysterious to the audience. Instead of knowing the character is a stereotype, with all that the word implies, they become an *example* of the group. Echeruo argues that Jewish stereotypes become an exo-cultural stereotype. As was the case with Rosenberg, Echeruo provides an oversimplification of Jewish stereotypes, particularly in areas where Jews were present, most notably London. Perhaps Jewish stereotypes could become exo-cultural in provincial areas. William Cobbett, a virulently antisemitic writer of the nineteenth century, in his popular journal *Political Register*, describes how “we never used to see a Jew, in the country, without driving him away...I have pelted them many a time...and I thought I was doing my duty”.¹⁴ To Cobbett, growing up in the country, he saw it as his duty to defend himself and his values against the Jews. This is an example of the Jews as an exo-cultural stereotype.

However, within London, the existence of Jewry in economic and social spheres meant that Jewish stereotypes had to become cultural. Although stereotypes always existed, and still do to this day within some sections of

¹³ Michael Echeruo, *The Conditioned Imagination from Shakespeare to Conrad: Studies in the Exo-Cultural Stereotype* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 13-14

¹⁴ William Cobbett, “To Big O” in *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register* 69 (1830), 732

society, many non-Jews came into contact with Jews and saw that they largely conformed to the class that they were within. Todd Endelman's *The Jews of Georgian England*, depicts a Jewish society in London that was not obsessed with landmark rulings, but relied much more on "the stuff of concrete reality".¹⁵ Integration, particularly amongst the lower classes, increased to the extent that Jews and non-Jews were criminal partners, lovers, actors and boxers. As early as 1770, Joseph Josephs was sentenced to death for armed robbery along with Mary Ann Ryan and James Simpson.¹⁶ I am not arguing that the two non-Jews did not hold stereotypes directed towards Jews, but that it is unlikely that these were exo-cultural. Mendoza shifted stereotypes to cultural on a much larger scale than the relationship between Joseph Josephs, Mary Ann Ryan and James Simpson could ever achieve; he was, for a time, an example of the group. This was because he was a high profile figure both within and outside of the Jewish community. Echeruo's analysis of stereotypes is important, Jewish stereotypes were not an example of the group. This may have been the case in years when there was no Jewish community, but it was figures such as Mendoza that led to a decisive shift away from exo-cultural stereotyping.

The differentiation between cultural and exo-cultural is crucial to the study of stereotypes. Other writers have made important observations as well.

¹⁵ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 249

¹⁶ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 268

Edward Said notes in *Orientalism* that a stereotype stresses the distinction between a dominant group and the other.¹⁷ He also understands that the imagination of a stereotype becomes the reality, and mythical assumptions take the place of direct perception. He argues that people believe they “know” a group because of the stereotype, even if there has been no direct contact with an individual from the group. He is, in many ways, expanding on Echeruo’s exo-cultural thesis. Sander Gilman agrees with both Echeruo’s and Said’s point, arguing that stereotypes become “powerful enough to substitute for realities”.¹⁸ He goes further, seeing stereotypes as an outward reflection of an internal cognitive process of the majority population.

MENDOZA AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Aside from the academic debate over stereotypes, there has been growth in recent years over the place of the “Jew” in cultural studies in general. This has particular resonance with Daniel Mendoza, as he was a figure that had cultural influence, but little intellectual or political standing. Raymond Williams was one of the pioneers of the idea that popular and, as he was a Marxist, working class cultural productions were worthy of debate.¹⁹ However, although the subject grew during the 1980s and 1990s and developed offshoots into women’s studies and feminist theory, as well as

¹⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)

¹⁸ Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 4-5

¹⁹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

African American and gay and lesbian studies, the study of Jewishness in this context has fallen behind. This is in part due to the difficulty, particularly in America, of dividing Jews from the host population. The question, which has repeatedly been asked in papers such as Gilman's *The Jew's Body* and in many of the essays in Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin's *Jews and Other Differences*, of whether a Jew is white dominates the field and has made the development of Jewish cultural studies very difficult.²⁰ On the one side, there are those, often within minority communities, who see Jews as being very much white and part of the establishment, no different from those groups they see as having assaulted them. On the other hand, there is also a long history between Jews and Africans and an element of anti-Jewish rhetoric that associated the two. For example, as Gilman quoted in his *Freud, Race and Gender*, W. W. Kopp could warn in 1935 that sexually mixing with Jews would result in babies having "Jewish-Negroid" characteristics.²¹ Unfortunately, it seems that Jewish cultural studies suffered from what much of cultural studies was designed to investigate, racial categorisation. It is not only pressure from outside that has hindered the development of Jewish cultural studies. Within Jewish Studies in general there has been a resistance to move into the field of the Boyarin brothers and others. This is largely because academics are worried about losing the uniqueness of the Jewish experience when it is compared to others around the world. The growth of Holocaust studies has caused other fields in

²⁰ Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) and Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (eds.), *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

²¹ Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22

Jewish history to be suspicious of cultural studies, as well. It appears that scholars have placed the events of late antiquity, through to the early modern period but before the growth of racial politics in the nineteenth century, as being “primarily of antiquarian or philological interest, rather than critical resources for the necessary fashioning of Jewishness in the present”.²²

This affects the study of Daniel Mendoza in a few key ways. Mendoza is significant because cultural studies promote the study of people or writing that affects the community on a popular level, not just an intellectual one. Mendoza was a populist hero; intellectual contemporaries, with a few exceptions, did not regard him as anything more than a thug, but he was revered within certain circles. Mendoza also attacked a stereotype that is very popular within Jewish cultural studies currently, the alignment of Jewish men and femininity. Although this was largely a nineteenth century phenomenon, the way that Mendoza presents himself is the antithesis of the hysterical, castrated image of the Jewish man, which became popular with the development of social Darwinism and Freud.

²² Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, “Introduction” in Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (eds.), *Jews and Other Differences*, viii

MENDOZA AND ANGLO-JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

One of the many potential reasons why Mendoza has been overlooked is because of this reluctance in Jewish history to accept cultural studies. It is not just a problem within cultural studies; his lack of recognition is also symptomatic of a larger problem of ignorance in European Jewish history. Anglo-Jewry, its community, influence and importance, has been overlooked for years.²³ This can be traced to difficulties within the fields of European, and specifically English, Jewish history, as well as the historiography of the Georgian period in general. In European Jewish history, perhaps the most important influence has been that of the Holocaust. Presented with a history that seemed to defy explanation, historians have attacked the problem in swathes. This has taken the focus away from Anglo-Jewry, with historians primarily examining communities on mainland Europe destroyed by the Holocaust. This is understandable. In recent times, other significant factors have affected the study of Anglo-Jewry. Geographically, historians of Europe have seen England as an extension of European history. They can do this because there is an assumption that major themes in Jewish history transcend borders. Emancipation, for example, was a dominant theme throughout Jewish history at this time and remained so throughout the nineteenth century. This was largely the examination of the migration of the

²³ For further information on this please see David S. Katz, "The Marginalisation of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History" in T. Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1992), 60-77

Jews “from the self sufficient world of Rabbinic tradition and corporate autonomy” to the modern Jewish experience – a full citizen in a modernised state.²⁴ It has been argued that it was the most significant event in Jewish history; there are other exceptional occurrences, but it is the case that no group of Jews was left untouched by the development. How this change took place and the rate of change varied from country to country, town to town and village to village. Even within Georgian history in general there has been little focussed scholarship. It has led Hannah Smith to lament that the early Georgian period has been “so little studied” that even “George II, his queen, and his royal household still await full scholarly reassessment”.²⁵ It is no wonder then that Anglo-Jewry of this period, and Daniel Mendoza as well, has likewise been overlooked.

According to Todd M. Endelman, in several important books on the subject, the English, and particularly the London, experience for Jews was completely separate to those in Poland, Germany or Russia. Firstly, there had not been a Jewish community in England for the majority of the medieval period. Whereas the community structure in much of Europe had been developing for nearly a thousand years, no such legacy or traditional institution faced Jews in England. There was also no real *Haskalah* movement, which was a

²⁴ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 3

²⁵ Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12

preoccupation of German Jewry in particular.²⁶ Furthermore, England was a country that prided itself on its liberalism. In this idea, the English experience for Jews was more similar to those in America. No community had autonomy, least of all the Jewish community, they were far more responsible to the state than in other European countries, where they remained under the strict and highly religious umbrella of the semi-autonomous *kehilla*.²⁷

David B. Ruderman, in his recent important books *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key* and *Connecting the Covenants*, has both attacked and supported Endelman's thesis.²⁸ He wants to reintroduce a debate over the place of Anglo-Jewry's intellectual community and to refute Endelman's claim that there was no *Haskalah* movement. Endelman believes that the acculturation of Anglo-Jewry was not a top-down process, but rather a bottom-up, social process, that did not require an intellectual framework. He believes that this was unique to England (except for certain similarities with America) and tries to move away from the traditional view, which Jacob Katz championed in *Out of the Ghetto*.²⁹ Katz traced the origins of enlightenment, emancipation, and cultural assimilation to German Jewry and "argued implicitly that the

²⁶ The *Haskalah* is the word used to refer to a movement specifically dedicated to Jewish Enlightenment. It is believed to have begun in Germany in the Eighteenth Century, although this is vociferously debated. I will discuss this further in my examination of books by Todd M. Endelman and David Ruderman.

²⁷ A *kehilla* simply means a congregation or community, in the case of Eastern Europe, the word takes on political connotations.

²⁸ David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and David B. Ruderman, *Connecting the Covenants: Judaism and the Search for Christian Identity in Eighteenth Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

²⁹ Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973)

German model was the proper lens for viewing similar developments among other European Jewries".³⁰ Endelman tried to show that Katz's hypothesis could not work for England and presents a society where the upper and lower classes of Jews assimilate at differing paces by taking the characteristics of the host nation. Endelman also questions Katz's implicit belief that "ideologically articulated shifts in conscious thought are the landmarks of historical change".³¹

Ruderman, on the other hand, argues against some ideas from both Endelman and Katz, but also sees some truth in them. He does not believe that Anglo-Jewish assimilation was either a top-down or a bottom-up process but rather a mixture of the two. On the one hand, he disagrees with Katz's assertion that Germany was the central place where the *Haskalah* was conceived and passed down. He also argues against Endelman's simplistic portrait of Anglo-Jewry, believing that there was intellectual discussion. For Ruderman, the assimilation of Anglo-Jewry was "a constant negotiation and reciprocity between persons of variegated economic, social, and intellectual standing".³²

He argues this for several different reasons. Firstly, he disagrees with Katz because of the fundamental differences between the German and English

³⁰ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 4

³¹ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 5

³² Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 6

experience for Jews. The German *Haskalah* was born out of the fact that their Jewish community was a literate, intellectual group in a position of permanent dissatisfaction, politically and socially. In England, certainly during the eighteenth century, and especially after the furore of the Jew Bill in 1753, they were neither particularly literate nor oppressed. Even though this was the case, and the *Haskalah* as we know it was specific to German society, Ruderman argues that there must have been intellectual discussion and development. In this way, he is closer to Katz in believing in the importance of intellectual development. He very loosely describes Anglo-Jewry's intellectual development, without trying to overplay its importance, as an English *Haskalah* (although the name can cause some confusion), with specific issues concerning the Anglo-Jewish experience. For example, Anglo-Jewry, unlike European Jewry, became monolingual in a very short space of time. This brought in issues of translation, and also how to defend the Masoretic text of the Bible, especially when it was translated. Their Protestant neighbours, who moved away from Latin to English some years before, paralleled this. Living under Protestantism was also a fundamental difference between Anglo-Jewry and those in Eastern Europe in particular. English intellectuals also began to take a great interest in the original, Hebrew form of the Bible, and often questioned its integrity. New theories of government, and the relationship between the state and its subjects, were also being discussed, and it forced the Jewish elite to develop a position for Jews within it. Furthermore, Jews responded to, and used, Christian

arguments against the various secularising ideologies that were becoming more prominent in the eighteenth century. They also read Locke and Newton to counteract their ideas, which, according to Ruderman, “offered a unique and original response to the secularising forces of modernity in their own environment”.³³ However, Ruderman also contends that although there were secularising influences, England was still a profoundly religious environment. This being the case meant that Jewish and Christian theologians still had to define themselves against the other.

Ruderman’s arguments are quite persuasive. Perhaps, his most important contribution is to bring back into focus a lost group of intellectuals and to show that England was not an intellectual desert, relying on the brilliance of German Jewry. Characters such as Abraham Tang, David Levi, Joshua van Oven, to name but a few, deserve to be remembered for the thinkers that they were. Indeed, Ruderman tells us that his book “seeks to reclaim a place for a small group of Jewish intellectuals who have been generally neglected”.³⁴ This is important, and it is to his credit that he does not overemphasise their role, simply telling us that there was an intellectual discussion, and it did have some effect. Even this characterisation, however, maybe exaggerated. There were some very interesting intellectual characters in England at this time. For example, Joshua Van Oven and Patrick Colquhoun’s plan to decriminalise the Jewish lower classes shows the

³³ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 9

³⁴ Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 20

development of a new relationship between government and its subjects. We can see that they both believed in government intervention in such matters, that it was the government's job in a liberal society to effect change when there was a problem case. Indeed, it shows Foucault's theory of governance (that in a liberal society you use freedom as a way to keep your subjects under control), by both granting liberty for good behaviour and taking it away if the state saw fit. However, those were largely practical plans, and not intellectual in the way of David Levi. The Jewish intellectuals in England very rarely got noticed, even within their own community. A search of the British Library's newspaper database can show this. There are no results for Abraham Tang. David Levi has more attention but it is still minimal. The influence of these intellectuals was not as pronounced as Ruderman suggests. He is attempting to bring them to the centre of the debate precisely because they have been so neglected. This finds parallels in other works of Anglo-Jewish history, most notably in the discussion of Felsenstein below. England's Jews did have an intellectual milieu during the eighteenth century, but it was social figures, such as Daniel Mendoza, who were more important to the development of the Jewish community. Even Ruderman understands the importance of social figures; he disagrees with Endelman only for underplaying the intellectual life of the Jewish community, not for representing the Anglo-Jewish community as primarily social.³⁵

³⁵ Indeed, I support Ruderman's attempt to bring under studied Anglo-Jewish figures the respect they deserve. However, I personally believe that the influence of Mendoza made a much more tangible difference to the community.

Simply, then the Anglo-Jewish experience was not the same as European Jewry and it deserves a far greater amount of study as an aspect of emancipation, not solely as an example of it. There are those historians who have tried to rectify this problem, notably the influential Todd Endelman, Frank Felsenstein and David S. Katz, as well as Ruderman.³⁶ They have realised that the Anglo-Jewish experience is crucial to our understanding of Jewish history precisely because it was different.

Internally, Anglo-Jewish history has been struggling to come to terms with two giants of the field who dominated Anglo-Jewish historiography until recently. The picture Cecil Roth and Lucien Wolf painted from the beginning of the twentieth century has influenced many but also has taken the focus off the Anglo-Jewish community precisely because they so dominated the field.³⁷ In their classic works, Roth and Wolf painted a picture of gradual acceptance and general toleration.³⁸ The outcome was to present Anglo-Jewry in a very favourable light, and to represent English society as a liberal one, which,

³⁶ I have already mentioned Endelman's very influential *The Jews of Georgian England*. Others to add onto that list would be Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990) and "The Englishness of Jewish Modernity in England" in J. Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity the European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1987), 225-246. Works by David S. Katz include, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and D. S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 1990). I have already mentioned Frank Felsenstein's influential *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*. He has worked extensively in this field.

³⁷ Interestingly, two contemporary writers, Lord Hervey and Horace Walpole, also dominate the traditional histories of the early Georgian monarchy. This will be discussed at greater length later.

³⁸ Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941) and Lucien Wolf and Cecil Roth (ed.), *Essays in Jewish History* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1934) are the classic histories.

despite setbacks, was kind to the Jews and was a complete contrast to the building of tension on mainland Europe. For Roth the position of Jews in England could be thought of in terms of “a gradual acceptance based on common sense rather than doctrine, consolidating itself slowly, and never outstripping public opinion”. Indeed, he concludes his 1941 study entitled *History of the Jews in England* with a tribute to “English tolerance”.³⁹ It is no wonder then that, when post-Second World War historians were presented with dealing with the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust, Anglo-Jewry was overlooked.

A few historians, mainly those who were noted before, Endelman, Felsenstein and Katz, have rectified this in recent years. They argue that Cecil Roth and Lucien Wolf were biased by a desire to justify Jewish emancipation, often over-emphasising the Jewish community, particularly in the worlds of politics and economics.⁴⁰ They also pay little attention to the history between the readmission in 1656, which touched Oliver Cromwell and other great characters of the time, and full emancipation in 1858, precisely because it was an “overwhelmingly social rather than primarily political and intellectual” history.⁴¹

³⁹ Roth, *History of the Jews in England*, 267

⁴⁰ Lucien Wolf and Cecil Roth (ed.), *Essays in Jewish History* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1934)

⁴¹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, x

The reaction against Roth and Wolf has caused problems of its own. Felsenstein's important study *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* alludes to this in his introduction. In it, he describes how "previous writers on the subject have tended to minimize the aggressive strain of anti-Judaism". To rectify the problem he feels he needs to overemphasise the antisemitic element of English culture to a point where "some readers come away...with a sense that the case I put forward is overstated".⁴² It is to his credit that he refers to this problem in his introduction but he does indeed exaggerate aspects of Anglo-Jewish history as a reaction against Roth and Wolf. His chapter titles, for example, point towards the imbalance that he himself mentions above. By giving his chapters such designations as "Jews and Devils" and "Ev'ry child hates Shylock", Felsenstein shows that his intent is to portray solely the antisemitic aspect of Anglo-Jewish relations. The difficulty for historians working under the shadow of Roth and Wolf is seen here clearly: Felsenstein wants to react against them, even to the detriment of his own study.

From within and without, Anglo-Jewish history has been overlooked or misconstrued. Unfortunately, Mendoza seems to have been similarly treated, even by those in the field who are now changing the problems of before. Endelman, in his wonderful *The Jews of Georgian England*, devotes a few pages to Mendoza, but focuses more on the negative impact of the Jewish

⁴² Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, 2

influence in prize fighting. In the index of Felsenstein's book, Mendoza is only mentioned three times, and one is a footnote. How can a man who was so influential during his lifetime, have become a mere footnote in history?

MENDOZA AND GEORGIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Gilman argues that stereotypes can show the internal cognitive process of host nations during times of great change. If this is the case then the internal debates in England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century must have been intense. Faced with changes on an unprecedented scale, the English population at large must have struggled to come to terms with their place in society, and the direction of society in general. From the largely rural seventeenth century, the eighteenth and early nineteenth century must have been a veritable minefield of torment for the English system. Not only was the urbanisation of society causing problems for the government, the issue of who was English, or whether you could become English was at the forefront. The eighteenth century was framed by unions with Scotland and Ireland, with the Jew Bill of 1753 punctuating the century. The English had to come to terms with their newly formed "British" identity and how it could align with those who they saw as aliens. This formed the basis of the internal debate in England at the time.

The eighteenth century was also a time of conflict, as England attempted to assert its authority over Scotland and Ireland in particular. The 1745 Jacobite rebellion culminated not only in the massacre of Culloden, but legislation aiming to ethnically cleanse the highlanders and their tribal structure. The Irish rebellion of 1798 claimed the lives of over thirty thousand people, as the English wiped out an entire generation of political leaders. The English hoped to be able to step into the vacuum that they created. The difficulty of identity only became more acute during the Napoleonic Wars in 1803-1815, as those who were not English were seen as potential traitors. In essence, the fear of Englishmen was that the unions with Scotland and Ireland, as well as the Empire, were diluting them.

The historiography of the early Georgian period also reflects the changing nature of the eighteenth century. In the words of Hannah Smith, in her *Georgian Monarchy*, “we have...two eighteenth centuries, and two takes on the monarchy”.⁴³ The reality of changing societies means that there are going to be two impressions of it. On the one hand, you have those who are more inclined to conservatism and then those who react much more positively to change. As a historian, depending on your personal bias, you tend to focus on one aspect or another. The 1980s and 1990s saw the growth of knowledge and discussion of “the public sphere” and secularism during the eighteenth century. Works like Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation* and Paul

⁴³ Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12

Langford's *A Polite and Commercial People*, focus specifically on how it was the public that dominated commercial and cultural life, and was the sponsor of the English Enlightenment that Voltaire so admired.⁴⁴ This was to the detriment of the traditional pillars of the aristocracy and the church. Colley and Langford argue that in contrast to the commercial spheres, the elite and their society could not compete with the new ideas and intensity of the private sector. The court only became more essential with George III who understood how powerful culture and entertainment were in the new "public sphere".

Within this argument, George I and II become nothing more than peripheral figures, even figures of jest. Smith believes they have gained a historical reputation, due to writers of the time, who were biased against the "sauerkraut and sausages" monarchs.⁴⁵ This argument has a long history and can be traced to contemporary sources. These sources made this idea prevalent through time and stained the reigns of these two kings immeasurably. By far the most detailed memoirs of this period come from the writings of Lord Hervey and Horace Walpole, and they have influenced history writing for generations.⁴⁶ G. K. Chesterton's *Short History of England*, written in the early twentieth century, contains all the shortcomings of Walpole and Hervey's

⁴⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

⁴⁵ W. M. Thackeray, *The Four Georges: Sketches of Manners, Morals, Court and Town Life* (London: Falcon Press, 1948), 63

⁴⁶ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 7

writings.⁴⁷ These writers were sympathetic, unapologetically so, to the Jacobite cause, and, therefore, were against a foreign, Protestant king being enthroned – let alone a foreign king with financial, familial and language issues. To be sure, there was a strain of anti-Georgian feeling in Britain at this time, George I was incredibly divisive, but to suggest, as Chesterton does, and even E. P. Thomson later (although for separate reasons),⁴⁸ that he was “the barbarian from beyond the Rhine”, who conjured nothing but disgust amongst the masses, is too far.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the idea of the weakness of George I and II has remained at the forefront of academic thought for generations. Even during the 1980s and 1990s, the time when an alternative view on society in early Georgian Britain rose to the surface, they still regarded George I and II as imposters, who did more to further divide society. Smith describes the situation as being “very much the case of *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*”.⁵⁰ This one-dimensional opinion of the early Georgian monarchy cannot entirely be true. Even though there was hostility to the early kings, they were installed by parliament and must have had some support. Indeed, the most influential book on the subject, Ragnhild Hatton’s *George I: Elector and King*, painted a much different picture to the anti-German traditional histories.⁵¹ Writing

⁴⁷ G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930)

⁴⁸ E. P. Thomson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975)

⁴⁹ Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, 186-187

⁵⁰ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 9

⁵¹ Ragnhild Hatton, *George I: Elector and King* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978)

from the perspective of European history (her previous areas of study were principally Sweden and France), she placed George I within a European context whilst also examining previously unexplored private archives in England. Far from the sauerkraut eating, mistress bedding, unimpressive monarch of the traditional histories, George I emerges from her work as an intelligent ruler, a devoted family man and, above all, someone who understood and respected British political culture. This work, and those of Lewis Namier and John M. Beattie, provided an alternative to Chesterton and Thomson, as well as providing the opportunity for a rethinking of eighteenth century society.⁵²

J. C. D. Clark argues, in *English Society*, that, in contrast to the opinions of Colley and Langford, England was a “confessional society”, which relied heavily not only on the aristocracy but also on the clerical intelligentsia.⁵³ He argues that decisions on society were made in the collegiate rooms of Tory Oxford and Whig Cambridge as opposed to the taverns and ballrooms of London and Bath. He believes that the eighteenth century should be represented as a traditional, and not a modern, society. In this way, he parallels Ruderman’s thesis, they both believe that there was significant success and intellectual growth within religious communities at this time.

⁵² Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 1963) and John M. Beattie, *The English Court in the Reign of George I* (2nd edition; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

⁵³ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology, and Politics during the Ancien Regime* (2nd edition; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

We can see then, that the eighteenth century, even for the historians who study it today, creates differing opinions. This is in large part due to the internal cognitive process that was evident at the time, as Gilman describes, and why the portrayal and discussion of stereotypes became so prevalent. The reality is that the eighteenth century was a contradictory period, with the shoots of a new, modern society appearing in the foundations of a very traditional culture. Historians stress that the Revolution of 1688-89 was a highly conservative event. We know that theories on divine rights flourished and that theological ideas were prevalent. In a Jewish context this can be seen in the growth of philo-Semitic ideas and institutions, dedicated to the development of Jews for their ultimate conversion and ushering in of the messiah. Even as late as 1809, Evangelicals began the London Society for the Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, indicating the anti-clerical atmosphere in England at this time was not as pronounced as Colley and Langford would have us believe. It can also be seen in the reaction to the Jew Bill of 1753 when medieval images of Jews were conjured to secure its defeat both in public opinion and in parliament.⁵⁴ This was not the case when Jewish bills came up for discussion in parliament during the nineteenth century. There was a strong loyalist sentiment for the king, which we can see in the creation of the Doggett's Coat and Badge Race (still being competed for today). The competition was held on 1st August 1714, specifically as a celebration of George I's coronation.

⁵⁴ T. W. Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda and Politics in Eighteenth Century England: A Study of the Jew Bill of 1753* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962)

The eighteenth century was also a period of progress and change, with a strong antimonarchical sentiment. Walpole and Hervey's writings on the Georgian monarchy show dissatisfaction towards the introduction of the Hanoverians onto the throne. The reaction to Lord Bute's "Scottish" influence on the crown can be seen on many contemporary etchings and pamphlets. A particularly gruesome portrayal of Bute is from the engraving *The Glorious Minority in 1763*, in which Bute's severed head is on a pike with William Pitt the Elder looking out from behind a curtain approvingly.⁵⁵ Society was, in relative terms, wealthier than in previous years. There was more money available to spend on leisure activities. The theatre flourished. Society, on the whole, was secularising. Those in rural areas flocked to the city to join immigrants from all creeds to pursue the industrial dream. English society during this period was two-headed – on the one hand extremely conservative and on the other increasingly modern. It is important to note that this was not an impossible situation; humans are, by nature, hypocritical and contrary. It is in this context of contrasting societies that the success of Mendoza must be seen.

MENDOZA AND THE THEATRE

More specifically, Michael Ragussis argues in his book, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain*, that the best place

⁵⁵ *The Glorious Minority in 1763, With the Head of the Majority Blason'd* (Engraving, 1763) in Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, 37

to see England's internal cognitive process was on the stage.⁵⁶ His thesis is that theatre in Georgian Britain, which was the most popular form of entertainment in London at this time, was a microcosm of England. He bases this on two ideas. Firstly, theatre provided unusually vivid (both visually and aurally) representations of ethnic and national identity and, secondly, it was a direct, live and communal environment in which people reacted.⁵⁷ He believes that issues of ethnic acculturation became acute in the late eighteenth century and that there were a plethora of plays focussing on ethnic minorities to show this. Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to *The Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser* in early 1766 described the situation as a "Family Quarrel" (also the name of the play, which is the subject of the engraving that was discussed above) and it was on the stage that stereotypes were developed, but it was also where ethnic minorities could protest the state of English society.⁵⁸ Ironically, a Jew going to see a show that had Jewish stereotypes in it (and then potentially protested it) was actually taking on the activities of the host nation. Indeed, Endelman has described Jews, particularly poor Jews, as being "in many respects very similar to the non-Jewish" population.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010)

⁵⁷ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, 14

⁵⁸ Benjamin Franklin, "To the Printer" in *Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London: January 15th, 1766)

⁵⁹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 192

Perhaps Ragussis' most interesting comment on Georgian theatre is his understanding that the stage was not only a place to stereotype minorities but also a platform from which they could defend themselves and the images that were presented.⁶⁰ He believes that far from being the great reconciler, theatre actually brought conflict. The traditional argument, begun by Walter Scott in the early nineteenth century, is that theatre brought minorities and the host community together, however, it is clear that to be English in this period was to exclude Scots, Jews or any other minority.⁶¹ This was what was performed on the stage, although the minorities in question turned against this stereotype. There were several occasions where minorities protested the image that was presented to them. As early as 1759, Scots disrupted the opening of *Love à la Mode* because they did not like the representation of Scotsmen on the stage. These types of disturbances were frequent. We know the Irish rioted in 1767 and the Scots again in 1781. The Jewish reaction in 1802 to *Family Quarrels* was also part of this phenomenon. So the theatre was a place where minorities could react against stereotypes but also an arena for stereotypes to be aired. Did boxing provide a similar debate? How was Mendoza the Jew reconciled in a society coming to terms with major changes?

⁶⁰ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, 12

⁶¹ Walter Scott, "Review of *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esquire, Including a History of the Stage from the Time of Garrick to the Present Period*, by James Boaden," in *Quarterly Review* 34 (June 1826)

MENDOZA, SPORT, AND “JEWISHNESS”

Like the theatre, boxing was an arena in which the debate over stereotypes was played out, both in the ring and within the crowd. The similarities between sport and theatre are well known, if debated. Both have a focal point of entertainment and are watched by a crowd, who pay money to view it. However, sport as an entertainment industry has often sat uncomfortably with those who see it as a pure form, outside of the supposedly malignant influence of capitalist entertainment. For example, there have been during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries great debates as to whether sportsmen should be paid. Indeed, this debate split nearly all of the most popular sports in England. In soccer, the Football Association of England reluctantly agreed to allow paid professionals in 1885, largely because of the success of a breakaway league in the north. The Rugby Football Union split at a similar time between those in the north who played rugby league and were paid and those in the south who were considered amateurs and played rugby union. It was not until 1995 that rugby union finally came to terms with modern sport and allowed clubs to pay salaries to their players. Cricketers, until 1962 were divided into those who were considered “amateurs” and those who were “professionals” – amateurs being only provided with expenses and not a salary.⁶² It is also important to

⁶² This, of course, was often taken advantage of, to the extent were amateurs were receiving more in fees than a professional was in salary. W. G. Grace, cricket’s superstar and, in theory,

remember that the image we have today of someone who is “amateur” rather than “professional” was the opposite until more recent times. An “amateur” was considered purer and more able. The captain of the English cricket team, for example, was always an amateur (sometimes to the detriment of the side) until Len Hutton in 1952.

Boxing was slightly different from team sports. It was a game played by individuals often for the purposes of betting by wealthy patrons. It required much less organisation than the team sports noted above, largely because two individuals could set to in an open space at any time. At first, it was less a sport and more of a gambling game and this meant boxers had different rules under which to perform. Betting was so integral to the sport that rules were brought in largely for the purpose of guaranteeing the fairness of a contest (the official line is that rules were brought in to protect boxers– however, the rules created by Jack Broughton in the 1740s did not exactly focus on player safety). The influence of money on the sport, and the simplicity of having a boxing match, provided different models for boxers. Boxers often could earn enough from bouts to not require a second income. They would decide terms with their opponent prior to the contest and the winner would take the majority of the money. Later, when Mendoza and his opponent introduced a system of charging individuals to watch a fight, the discussion over the proceeds and the venue took many months and was played out in the press.

an amateur, in the winter of 1872-3, on a boat to Australia, reportedly claimed fees in excess of 1500 pounds, whereas the professionals were only paid 150 pounds.

Threatening letters were sent to newspapers by both parties, each accusing the other of dragging their heels in the negotiation process. This only helped increase the public's voracious appetite for boxing and, in particular, to see the show down between Mendoza and his former mentor Humphreys. Speculation exists that this was designed by the two of them to increase sales. It is impossible to prove, but given the power money had over boxing at this time, not unbelievable.

The divide between amateur and professional boxing did not really exist – if you could afford to live off your winnings then you did, otherwise you opened taverns or academies to teach the art of pugilism. This lack of divide (if you were good enough, you fought), helped to increase boxing's popularity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, to the extent where the Prince of Wales and even George III himself took a keen interest.

The lack of rules regarding those who were considered amateur and professional, and the fact there was no prerequisite for class or wealth, only ability was needed, as well as the influence of betting on boxing, meant that Mendoza could rise to the top despite his religion. He was hugely popular within the Jewish community of course, but he held a position in society that was never seen before by Jews in England at this time. For example, it was Mendoza, and not a Rothschild or a Goldsmid, who supposedly was the first Jew to meet George III. Mendoza, in his *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel*

Mendoza, tells an anecdote about his sudden rise to the elite of society. Asked by his patron to join a hunt gathering near Oxford, Mendoza

“Happened to follow this sport in a way which gave great displeasure to a gentleman, who rode up to me, and accused me of riding among the hounds, and of other improper conduct, threatened to horsewhip me unless I altered my behaviour. I felt greatly irritated at his language...and therefore warned him in a resolute matter, not to attempt anything of the sort, and declared, that if he raised his whip for such a purpose, I would certainly strike him off his horse, be the consequence what it would...My surprise was greatly excited at learning almost immediately afterwards, that the person I had offended was none other than his Grace himself”.⁶³

This anecdote shows us several things. Firstly, Mendoza, a man who described himself as being of the “middling class of society” and who, at various points, had worked as a greengrocer and glass cutters’ apprentice could rise to such a position is unheard of.⁶⁴ Furthermore, he was invited to ride with the “Duke”, whether it was the Duke of Cambridge or some other royal, this level of social acceptance for a Jew at this time was rare. The story also shows Mendoza’s belligerent attitude perfectly. He had a very short temper and was quick to use it, even when riding with nobles. Clearly, for a

⁶³ Daniel Mendoza and Paul Magriel (ed.), *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza* (London: B. T. Batsford, LTD, 1951), 38

⁶⁴ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 14

time, Mendoza could rise to the top of his profession and society, which “perhaps few men of my rank in life ever achieve”.⁶⁵ At least, it was the impression that he wanted to give his readers.

This is not to suggest that the debate about stereotypes ended with Mendoza’s acceptance into the highest echelons of society. This, in my opinion, is where boxing and theatre are most similar. There was a real debate amongst those who watched boxing and they were often those in the lower classes. We can see this debate, most simply, by the way that Mendoza billed himself. He was always “Mendoza the Jew”. His Judaism was not hidden (although he does not mention his Judaism in his memoirs except during his early years and other brief moments) and he was clearly proud of describing himself as the Star of Israel. He was a hero to young Jewish men, in particular, but also to women, as we can see from the engraving *Jew Beauties*, and this obviously drew competition from those non-Jews, who saw it as a point of national pride. His bouts with Richard Humphreys were seen as a battle between England and Israel. However, as we shall see, it is a little more complicated than this. Mendoza’s memoirs should not be trusted, precisely because these debates were happening. He needed to fashion himself in such a way that would relate to both the Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of society. It is very hard to know whether this story is based on anything other than his own self-image.

⁶⁵ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 14

Ragussis' thesis that the theatre was the venue for debates over ethnicities and stereotypes is comparable here too. Boxing was a place where "ethnic identity was consistently theatricalised".⁶⁶ Illustrations on commemorative mugs showing the battle between Humphreys and Mendoza indicate a level of subconscious antisemitism.⁶⁷ Two gentlemen only entitled "Isaac" and "Benjamin" second Mendoza and although they are not the gross caricatures of previous images of Jews, they are certainly different from the rest of those pictured. This is in comparison to Humphrey's team who are referred to by their last names. His seconds are "Johnson" and "Tring", two well-known fighters from the period. Interestingly, Johnson has struck a boxers pose, as if he is in the battle as well. This was most likely because Mendoza accused Johnson of taking a knockout blow for Humphreys. Isaac and Benjamin, on the other hand, stand idly by, even with quite a defensive posture. The impression given is that the team supporting Mendoza are cowards, whereas those who are on the side of Humphreys are united. When one understands that these battles were described as England versus the Jews, the mug takes a whole new meaning. The impression that the illustration is intended to give was to show Mendoza as being only supported by the Jews, which is the opposite impression we get from the anecdote above.

As much as Mendoza attacked stereotypes, he also struggled to convince others. Still, it was not only Mendoza's opponents who theatricalised boxing

⁶⁶ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, 1

⁶⁷ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 96-97

for purposes of an ethnic debate. Upon his final victory over Humphrey's, Mendoza's supporters sang a song called "My Little Dicky," as an insult to Richard Humphrey's. A selection of the lines I will show below:

"My Dicky was all the delight of half the genteels in town...What a damnable shame to be spoil'd by a curst little Jew from Duke's Place...(Dicky) swore if the Jew would not fight, he would ring his Mosaical nose, sir...You've only to sport your position and quickly the Levite will sherry...While the Jew's humble bow seemed to please, my Dicky's eyes flash'd with vivid fire; He contemptuously viewed his opponent, as David was viewed by Goliath".⁶⁸

Upon first reading the lines of the song, it might seem shocking that it was sung by Mendoza's supporters. They are clearly accentuating Mendoza's Judaism to insult Richard Humphrey's and his supporters. If there is any example of the debate on stereotypes being played out for the public it is this song. Not only do they refer to Mendoza's alleged cowardice ("quickly the Levite will sherry"), they refer to Jewish noses, "curst little Jews", and Biblical stories ("as David as viewed by Goliath"). They seem to singlehandedly assuage all stereotypes of Jews in a single song and all because Mendoza had won. All the debates that were highlighted by Ragussis and Felsenstein about Jewish features, shown by Ragussis as being in the form of a stage Jew, whether Jews could be trusted to fight, as well as the importance of the Old

⁶⁸ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 63

Testament are seen here. Boxing was not only a place where stereotypes were played out, like in the theatre, it was where the minority, the stereotyped, won and used their alleged weaknesses as a way to insult the host community. The song itself is significant because it represents how Mendoza wants to present himself as a Jew. If the story above, where he goes hunting, represents the image of how he wished to be seen as a Christian hero, here we have him presenting himself as a Jewish hero. The significance is because, as mentioned, he attacks the traditional stereotype of the Jew. He is presenting himself as the opposite to the stage Jew, the character of popular imagination. This will be addressed again in greater detail in a comparison of Mendoza's character in his memoirs with that of Charles Dickens' Fagin.

Furthermore, the lyrics of the song support the previous suggestion that Mendoza did not altogether dispel stereotypes on Jews. What he did though was change them, or at least provide a counterweight to them. The fact he is willingly drawing attention to stereotypes of Jewry shows that he was taking these "examples" of what Jews were like and dispelling them in humour. He used them in a cultural and not exo-cultural way. He was happy to draw attention to these examples because it was a simplification, an exaggeration of a Jew. He understood that people would not take these descriptions as proof that Jews are cowardly or hook nosed, but actually would reverse it so they saw it as a comedic figure, something that could be used to insult an

Englishman, without fear of the imagery being taken seriously. This development also shows the security of the Jewish community, the imagery they used was no longer the basis of their reality, and they were able to use it in a self-deprecating way to insult Humphreys. Whether or not they intended the song to hold much significance is questionable. One thing is for sure, if William Cobbett, a particularly poisonous antisemite, heard it, he would have been devastated at the newly found security of the Jewish community, and their gentile friends.

MENDOZA AND HIS *MEMOIRS*

No discussion about a memoir can be satisfactory without a brief look at the large collection of writings on the subject of autobiographies. It will affect how we read Mendoza's work, as well as show us how he wished to present himself. One of the most influential early theorists of autobiography, Roy Pascal, said in 1960 that "the distortion of truth imposed by the act of contemplation is so over-riding a qualification of autobiography that it is indeed a necessary condition of it...autobiography may be a means of revealing the truth, or it may be a means of hiding it".⁶⁹ Studies produced by neuroscientists have recently supported this idea. They suggest that memory is reconstructive and, therefore, influenced by the context in which they are reproduced. This concurs with literary theorists, who believe that there is an

⁶⁹ Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 69

active role in the part of the autobiographer in his reconstruction. Neuroscience believes that there are two different types of memory. Implicit memory is used to describe how we store language or the ability to write for example. They are actions that we do not think about, and, in essence, come naturally. These are stored in a specific part of the brain. Explicit memory is the act of remembering facts about objects and people. This is stored in various places around the brain and requires retrieval. This retrieval process takes in your surroundings and the position you find yourself in at that very moment. According to some scientists, this memory storage may actually only allow you to remember the meaning of your memories and not necessarily the exact situation.

What does this entail for the use of autobiography in history writing? It is a very fashionable question at the moment, but one that has often been overlooked by historians. Historians overlook it because they are largely positivist in their examination of historical evidence, they come from a position that a document is innocent until proven guilty. They also try and stay detached from what Michael Stanislawski, in his book *Autobiographical Jews*, believes is “literary fads”.⁷⁰ Perhaps the extent of work on autobiographies also means that historians are now not permitted “to look any longer at autobiographies as unproblematically reliable first person

⁷⁰ Michael Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews: Essays in Jewish Self-Fashioning* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 6

accounts...or as unmediated sources of truth".⁷¹ I believe this is true, however, it also does not mean that autobiographies, or memoirs, are no longer useful in historical reconstruction. Stanislawski believes that an autobiography can show us the inner workings of a historical figure, without necessarily providing us with a truthful account of their lives. The questions that have to be asked are why this was omitted, what character is he trying to create for himself, and not necessarily whether the facts are correct. It is from this position that I cautiously approached the memoirs of Daniel Mendoza.

Mendoza's memoir is special because it is the autobiography of a Jew. Jewish autobiographies from this period are rare, and the reason for this has been debated. Alan Mintz has argued that "the relative alienness of autobiography in Jewish culture...results from the secondary status of the individual in Judaism".⁷² However, we have evidence of Jewish autobiographies from the eighteenth century in much more traditional Jewish communities than London (Rabbi Jacob Emden's work comes to mind here). It is not something that can be generalised. Indeed, Jacob Schacter believes it is the complicated relationship between the "metaphysical issues of his or her relationship with God" and this would be on an individual basis.⁷³ Even this Stanislawski has problems with. He sees that painting Jews en masse in any regard as

⁷¹ Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews*, 5

⁷² Alan Mintz, *Banished from Their Father's Table: Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 206

⁷³ Jacob J. Schacter, "History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden" in Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron and David N. Myers (eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1998), 428-429

unacceptable. He sees in the writings of Maimonides, Judah Halevi and other important Jewish philosophers, a near constant expression of the individual. He believes that it is certainly unclear why so little Jewish autobiographical work has survived, but contends that it may have been to do with the community structure that wanted to stay away from expressions of individuality and suppress self expression of any kind. Whatever the case, Jewish autobiographies can show us a great deal. I would like to now examine briefly the first Jewish autobiography and show later, where there are similarities with Mendoza's work.

Josephus' *Life* is quite possibly the first complete pre-Christian biography in existence. The difficulty for historians, however, is the apparent inconsistency between *Life* and his earlier work, *War of the Jews*. The question of whether to disregard *Life* in its entirety as a historical document has been raging for years. The contradictions put his entire body of work under scrutiny and posed serious historiographical questions about the use of his earlier writings. For a writer such as Josephus, who constantly tells us that he is unbiased and presents nothing but the truth, it was a large gamble to take. The contradictions in *Life* are there because they tell us something about Josephus' life at the time. If we come from a position, as discussed above, that all explicit memory is subjective and delivered through a filter of your present circumstances, then we can understand not whether he produces "truth", this in reality is a circular question, but what his situation

was, and whether this would effect using his historical writings. He was, as Stanislawski has put it, self-fashioning. Whether this was due to his argument with Justus of Tiberias, who seemed to have accused him of being a liar and a traitor, or just because of the difficulties of being a Jew in the Roman elite is unclear. It was most likely both. The contradictions, according to Stanislawski, come from the “narrative imperatives of historicism and self-fashioning”, which has been the preoccupation in field of history writing for years and, in many regards, still is.⁷⁴ His self-fashioning required him at once to be a loyal Jew and a loyal subject of Rome, two contradictory ideas and, as Stanislawski tells us, “the constituent dilemma not only of first century Judean Jewry, but of Jewry as a whole between the years 70 and 1948”.⁷⁵ This same dilemma can be seen in the work of Daniel Mendoza.

Daniel Mendoza’s memoir is typical of its kind and is similar to Josephus’ nearly two millennia earlier. It is his final chance to fashion himself, as he was reaching the end of his life. He was desperate to put his case forward, to present himself in a way that would be deemed worthy of a character who was the champion of England, and, for a time, one of the most well-known individuals in the sporting world. However, we have to be very cautious when reading his memoirs. We have to remember that he is fashioning himself and remember that the anecdotal evidence he puts in, may have been put there to serve a purpose for Mendoza’s current desires. As we have seen,

⁷⁴ Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews*, 23

⁷⁵ Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews*, 31

the retrieval of your memory is done through the filter of your current circumstances. Mendoza's circumstances at the time of printing this autobiography, in 1816 when he was 52, were rather perilous. He had been to debtors prison several times, he had been involved in various scandals, and was largely penniless from several disastrous business decisions.

The question, as posed earlier, is whether we can take any of his *Memoirs* to be "truthful". Stanislawski, and others, have written exhaustively on the subject but it appears they have not come to a direct conclusion. It seems that one should decide on a case-by-case basis. In this instance, when there is a discussion of Mendoza's writings, only when his writings can be backed up by contemporary evidence, either from newspapers, Old Bailey records or other documents, will his examples be cited as "truthful".

Before examining Mendoza's autobiography in detail, it is important to look more closely at the position he found himself in, and discuss how he is trying to present himself. Firstly, and most simply, Mendoza was in desperate need of money. He was constantly in debt, and had been at least twice to debtor's prison. He had been tried for fraud over handling stolen goods, and had lost money on every business he had tried to set up.⁷⁶ His family too, it seems, was in difficulty. We can see from Old Bailey Records and an article in *The Times* from April 9th 1816 that his first child, Abraham Mendoza, "son of the

⁷⁶ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 06 July 2011), October 1793, trial of DANIEL MENDOZA (t17931030-90)

celebrated pugilist”, was arrested and sentenced to death for robbing Mr Wood of Bishops Gate.⁷⁷ His sentence was later commuted to deportation. His book was released at around the same time as his trial and deportation and it must have had a profound effect on his life and also on the way the book was received. These situations would affect the memories he wrote down, as he portrays himself in such a way that will sell books and promote the image that he wishes.

This is quite possibly why he expands upon his life as a boxer, and his life after, as opposed to writing only a short section on his upbringing. He probably made the conscious choice that people would be more interested in buying a book that predominantly highlighted the epoch of his career. He writes only ten pages on his youth, whereas he devotes four chapters, nearly forty pages, to just his three year rivalry with Humphreys. Mendoza also spends a large portion at the end of the book explaining how he got into his present circumstances; making a careful case for himself and the difficulty that he now found himself in. It is also apparent that one of the reasons he leaves out much about his youth is because it was far from the perfect start to his life. In an article in the London Chronicle from 1782, there is evidence of a certain Daniel Mendoza being found guilty for stealing from, and then stabbing, his victim. The newspaper story tells us that Mendoza was apprehended for robbing Mr. Forest, who upon capturing him and waiting for

⁷⁷ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 06 July 2011), July 1816, trial of ABRAHAM MENDOZA (t18160710-7)

the local law enforcers, was stabbed three times in the hand. He released Mendoza and Mendoza then ran away. Mendoza had seven accomplices who were caught, it appears they were a street gang of some kind, however, it was specifically Mendoza who was associated with the assault. There is little way to prove whether this Daniel Mendoza was the same person as the boxer I am studying. However, certain aspects of the story point towards him. Firstly, the newspaper article, published in the London Chronicle between September 17th and September 19th 1782 describes Mendoza and his companions as being part of the same "*profession*". I have not added the italics, they appear in the article, and it was the only word that was highlighted in this way. I think it is a reference to their religion as much as their occupation. Why would a journalist point out that they were all pickpockets if they were all being tried for being pickpockets? A much more likely solution would be that he was referring to the fact they were all Jewish.

Mendoza would have been eighteen at the time of his arrest, which would place him in a job that he says his father found him. He worked at first as a glasscutter, which appeared to be the job he was most successful at, were it not for the fact that he gave a "severe thrashing" to his master's "very haughty...and scurrilous" son. His next job was working as a grocer but this too caused problems – his mistress was a Jew and he constantly was called to defend her against molestation from the gentry. He portrays himself as the protector of all and would reverse the insults reserved for his mistress into

an assault on the person giving the stereotype. From there, he went to work as a tea-dealer and it was in this employment that he fought in his “first pitched battle that attracted the attention of the public”.⁷⁸ It is quite possible that these descriptions of his youth were interrupted for two years by his deportation to the Horn of Africa.

The descriptions of his youth all serve a purpose to Mendoza and so should not be trusted. They present him as a hard working, respectful, and protective young man. It fits in perfectly with his attempt to fashion himself as a Jew, outside of the traditional stereotype, as well as a typical Englishman with strong ethical boundaries. His description of his job with the green grocer is particularly contradictory because he is called to defend a Jew but remain an Englishman. The tension of the memoir can be seen through this sequence. Notably, he is sacked from this job even though he was protecting the mistress of the house. There is no reason given, and one can infer that it was left out for a reason. It is almost as if he is admitting that, at the time, defending a Jew resulted in dismissal. It shows perfectly the difficulty of Mendoza’s career, how to marry the desire to be an English Jew. It was a debate that was being had on the stage, as Ragussis has shown, I believe it was a debate that was happening in Mendoza’s memoir as well, whether or not the stories are true.

⁷⁸ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 16

To return to the issue of Daniel Mendoza and the robbery, another reason to suspect it was the Mendoza who is subject of this thesis is because of the alibi that was given. According to the newspaper reports, Mendoza provided a very bizarre defence. He pleaded not guilty because he apparently only stabbed his victim twice and not three times, and therefore could not be found guilty. Not only this, but after admitting that he had stabbed the man twice, he called two defence witnesses to the stand who said that he was with them at the time of the crime. Obviously, it left the court dumbfounded and he was found guilty.⁷⁹ His punishment was transportation to the coast of Africa for two years. There is no more information in the sources about him from this point. The criminality of Mendoza, in my mind, is not to be questioned. There is further evidence, which will be examined later, to prove this. Whether this Daniel Mendoza is the celebrated pugilist is harder to say, and we will never know for sure. However, the positivist historian in me, having read his memoirs and the fanciful stories he creates with such elegance, can see elements of the man in the alibi he used to defend himself. The theatricality, and sheer bravado, to use it, gives the impression it was Mendoza. If this is the case, it would call into question much of the description of his early years, which, in my opinion, are already tarnished beyond being proved factually true. If one accepts that there is little way that Mendoza could present the “truth” in his youth situation, there is a distinct possibility that Mendoza did partake in criminal activities outside of working

⁷⁹ *London Chronicle*, September 17th – 19th 1782

and boxing during this time. It would make sense that Mendoza was not the character that he portrays himself as in the book but rather a man with far fewer scruples about fighting and criminality than at first it might suggest.

His memoirs are littered with times where he presents himself as protecting his good name or just more generally defending virtue against evil. Magriel rather incredulously describes how these fights “seemed to seek him out”.⁸⁰ Even Magriel, who sympathises with Mendoza, believes that his descriptions are in some way flawed or exaggerated. In one day Mendoza had three fights, none of which were his fault. It does seem slightly unbelievable that a man could fight as much as he did without having a very short temper and an aggressive streak that went beyond the protection of virtue! However, it is interesting in various anecdotes, the extent to which Mendoza promotes this image. It is part of fashioning himself as an Englishman, and the opposite to the stereotype of a Jew. As we saw earlier, Jews have been accused of cowardice, and here Mendoza creates these stories as a way to counteract this. Whether the fights occurred over something petty, or indeed have no basis in truth at all, is not clear. What is clear is that it serves his purpose.

He credits his father for his own courage and morals. According to Mendoza, his father showed him the difference between “true and false courage”.⁸¹ It seems likely that Mendoza exaggerates the influence of his father. The

⁸⁰ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 4

⁸¹ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 15

writing of memoirs such as this usually attribute success of some kind to a parent and autobiographies from this period tend to focus on genealogy and family lines as a way to show success. In this way, Mendoza is no different to Josephus when he explains in *Life* the line of priests he is descended from. However, Mendoza also had a more important motive. Crucial to his self-fashioning was to prove to himself, and others that he was “normal” and not some crazed criminal, and, likewise, to show how he was different to the perceived rootless Jew of popular imagination. He wanted to prove that he was grounded in something real, a relationship, so that he could offer the reader an image of his moral upbringing, as opposed to the stories that were heard in the press. One can see a reflection of his own relationship with his sons in this passage. It seems likely that his relationship with them must have been under strain. Both Daniel and Abraham had been accused of violent robbery. Mendoza himself was regularly in custody. By highlighting the relationship with his father, it is almost as if he is trying to defend himself against further accusations of immorality relating to himself and his own family.

Mendoza informs us that he was educated at a Jewish school but was instructed in English grammar, writing, arithmetic, as well as Hebrew. It is unclear which school he attended, but it would have most likely been a small school solely for Jews. Although, as Magriel notes, he was “born to Jewish parents, received a Jewish education, married a Jewish girl” and of course

fought as a Jewish boxer, it was his secular education that appears to have made the most impact. Indeed, in his preface to the memoirs he wrote he gives a very eloquent apologia for boxing. One such section reads:

“That the art of pugilism is founded in nature, is so obvious a truth, that it scarcely requires any illustration. Anacreon, in one of his odes, has justly remarked, that nature, in the distribution of her favours, has furnished all creatures with weapons proper to their protection...Man, the Lord of Creation, is furnished with hands, and with reason to guide them in the hour of danger, when either his own life, or the lives of those dear to him, are attacked”.⁸²

One can see the effect here of a secular education and that it had a profound effect on Mendoza. He goes further in this passage, and by the end of the preface has mentioned the Archbishop of Cambray’s Telemachus, Henry Fielding, Shakespeare, as well as Romans and Cretans. The question that is important here, after discussing his education, is why he begins his memoir in such a way, and what it shows us about his self-fashioning. In his preface there is no mention of his Judaism and he uses solely English or classical references in his apologia. I would argue that he is trying to present himself as both a Jewish and a Christian hero, a hero that straddles both worlds. As Magriel points out, his Judaism was clearly important. However, it was not

⁸² Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, ix

the most important thing to him. The most important thing for Mendoza was winning and making money. In his memoirs he shows us that he was happy to break rules to further his career. The extent of travelling and eating in inns that being a prize fighter entailed meant that there was no way he could keep Kosher. In fact, Mendoza's first fight was organised for a Saturday and he had no qualms in participating even though the majority of his support could not attend. Magriel goes so far as to say "he never let custom or ritual stand in the way of what he wished to do".⁸³ This could describe much of Anglo-Jewry at this time and it is testament to the community that they overlooked keeping the laws and rituals for success and acknowledgement.

Mendoza's laxity and secular education also created a gentile market for him, precisely because he would eat, interact and enjoy the contact of non-Jews. It could be nothing more than a reaction to the rhyme scheme, but the first line of the second verse mentions that "Dicky was all the delight of half the genteels in town".⁸⁴ This indicates that Mendoza had gentile support, even quite a large and elite group. Mendoza here has helped to reverse some of the negative associations with Jews, and in particular, the title Jew.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it was to this segment of the population that he was trying to sell his book. It was necessary for him to tap into a larger market and his discussion of classical literature is clearly meant to reflect an educated,

⁸³ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 2

⁸⁴ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 63

⁸⁵ For an interesting discussion of the word Jew in English society please see Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 116

gentile readership. The commercial aspects aside, just from the preface, one can see that Mendoza crossed boundaries and became a boxer who could, and was, supported both within and without of the Jewish community.

Even though this is the case, the way he presents himself is important for our study. He presents himself as the complete reverse of the traditional Jewish stereotype. Indeed, I would argue that his entire memoir is dedicated to reversing this popular image of Jews.

MENDOZA AND FAGIN

The comparison between Mendoza's writings and Charles Dickens' Fagin, the quintessential nineteenth century portrait of a Jew, will shed further light on Mendoza's self-fashioning. Jews tended to be portrayed in literature, in both plays and novels, as the traditional stereotype, completely at odds with Mendoza's representation as a Jewish strong man. There were of course exceptions, but the majority, from Shakespeare to Dickens, used the stage Jew, or what became the stereotypical representation of a Jew, as an intrinsic part of their work.

One famous portrayal is Fagin in Charles Dickens' *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (1837-39). The book, which was immensely popular, and was released in instalments to further increase its readership, contained probably the

most significant representation of a Jew since Shakespeare's Shylock. Felsenstein believes that "the portrayal of Fagin presents a more characteristic picture of the endurance of endemic anti-Semitic attitudes".⁸⁶ This of course is debated amongst literary scholars and others, and every aspect of Fagin's portrayal has been scrutinised. Perhaps the most debated, but least significant, was the extent to which Dickens consciously created this image of the evil Jew, even if it was diluted slightly. I actually believe that Fagin's Jewishness was more to do with the character, the cultural stereotype, than any inherent desire of Dickens to humiliate Jews or represent them with this one figure. This can be seen in the fact that it is actually very difficult to define Fagin as a Jew. The only way to see him as a Jew is because he is constantly labelled "the Jew".⁸⁷ But he is a Jew in name only. Fagin, when awaiting his fate by hanging, pushes away a group of Jews who had come to pray beside him.⁸⁸ It has led Montagu Modder to describe Fagin as lacking "actuality" and that at best Fagin is "an outcast Jew".⁸⁹ Although Modder is correct in this analysis, his thesis that stereotypes change as society evolves, does not stand up to scrutiny. Fagin's Jewishness is a tool for Dickens, enacted for similar reasons as Shakespeare's portrayal of

⁸⁶ Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, 238

⁸⁷ Charles Dickens and Kathleen Tillotson (Ed.), *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 50 (there are many more references).

⁸⁸ Dickens and Tillotson, *Oliver Twist*, 361

⁸⁹ Montagu Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Meridian Books, 1960), 218. I believe that Mendoza is similar to Fagin in this way. Mendoza also, it seems, never had any qualms about breaking laws. He is, in many ways, an "outcast" Jew.

Shylock. Jews in literature were not of the characteristics of Mendoza, or at least of qualities that Mendoza wanted to portray of himself.

Physically, Fagin has the quintessential appearance of the evil Jew. He has a “villainous-looking and repulsive face...obscured by a quantity of matted red hair,” which was usually associated with Judas and commonly associated with Jews in drama.⁹⁰ Fagin wears the clothes of a traditional old clothes man. He is given a “shrivelled body” and has the characteristics of a nocturnal lizard-like creature that slinks to and from his den. Dickens’ tells us that “he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile...crawling forth, by night, in search of rich offal for a meal”.⁹¹ This idea, of the Jew as a reptile, with scales, and an ability to see at night, is part of the quintessential stereotype, and is one of a few passages where Fagin is dehumanised and given a beast like appearance.

It is not only in his physical appearance that Fagin is given characteristics of the typical stereotype. He is represented as a coward, not only is he a “white-livered thief,” but “false-hearted”, someone who will betray anybody to save himself.⁹² He is even associated with blood libel. Fagin was the character who organised Oliver’s kidnapping, and in the first scene that he is left alone with

⁹⁰ Dickens and Tillotson, *Oliver Twist*, 50

⁹¹ Dickens and Tillotson, *Oliver Twist*, 120-21

⁹² Dickens and Tillotson, *Oliver Twist*, 93 and 260

Fagin, Oliver overhears him gloating about capital punishment whilst playing with his treasures. Having noticed that Oliver is awake, Fagin goes into a fit of fury, grabs a bread knife and hovers it over Oliver's body. Here we have the unmistakable image of a Jew, holding a knife as a young, innocent, and abducted, Christian boy lies there awaiting his fate. The fact it is seen through the eyes of Oliver adds to the horror of Fagin's actions and, in Felsenstein's words, "demythologizes the reader's very worst inner fears concerning Jews".⁹³ Furthermore, he holds a bread knife, which adds to the accusation that the blood of the child is used to make bread for Jewish rituals. It adds to the spectre of Fagin's chilling appearance, his attitude and scenes that Dickens created, giving the unmistakable image of the Jew of popular imagination.

Although it is true that by today's standards Dickens would be accused of being antisemitic, I strongly disagree with this contention. His famous letter about the issue of Fagin shows that he had accepted that his portrayal was too closely associated with the word Jew and in subsequent editions he removed many of these references to Fagin.⁹⁴ He also wrote *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864, as a supposed apology for Fagin – creating a sympathetic Jewish character in Mr Riah. Again, this is not an acceptance of wrong. He understood that the villain Fagin caused offence in some quarters. The reality was that he portrayed Fagin as he did precisely because he was the Jew of

⁹³ Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, 243

⁹⁴ These revisions were made in Dickens' 1867 collection.

popular imagination. He was the stereotypical villain and the book required one as part of its structure. The fact it was released in instalments would only add to this. Dickens' needed a villain that would resound with his readership every week. They needed a palpable figure of evil to counteract the innocence of Oliver. Fagin was a Jew because at this time, the villain caricature, rightly or wrongly, was Jewish. This does not mean that everyone hated Jews or saw them like Fagin. For example, Hollywood movies went through a period of having an English villain as their stock evil character. It would be improbable that all people who saw these films automatically hated Englishmen. It was a tool, merely a character people could relate to. Fagin was a character of *popular* imagination, Dickens for all his genius still relied on his readers. He was incredibly popular in his own day and so had to represent in some way early nineteenth century society. Fagin is a product of this. Dickens was like Shakespeare before him, and Rattigan after; he was a populist writer who relied on an audience. For all that he broke with tradition, he still rooted his work in the subject and style, as well as prejudices, of the day.

Furthermore, it was around the time of Oliver that there was a growth in Jewish rights. In 1831 all restrictions were rescinded against Jewish traders. In 1833 the first Jew was called to the bar and in 1835-36 the first Jewish sheriff and alderman were elected. The reason, for this study, that Fagin is important is precisely because he was a Jew of imagination only, and a representation of a Jew in literature. Mendoza's portrayal of himself (with all

of its exaggerations and biases) was rare in a society where in the arts Jews were stock characters and stereotypes. However, the fact that Fagin was a stock character and not one designed to represent Jewry as a whole, is testament to Mendoza. Fagin is, quite simply, a cultural stereotype, whereas others before him were not. The image of Judas, as is discussed below, during the period after Jewish expulsion, was most definitely an exo-cultural stereotype.

How does Mendoza counter this image? His entire book reads as a defence against the traditional Jewish stereotype. During his early quarrels, Mendoza, a Jew, a character usually shown as being immoral and cowardly in literature, suddenly becomes this superhuman figure, one who teaches the English, the nation that prided itself on its robust character and protection of innocents, moral decency and substance.⁹⁵ Furthermore, in a later altercation with a soldier, who pulls out of a pitched battle because he recognises Mendoza as an esteemed pugilist, Mendoza informs him that he should “take more care in the future, whom he attacked”.⁹⁶ Mendoza is now instructing an English soldier about whom he should fight and giving him tips on his method. In an earlier pitched battle, for which there is a contemporary source, *The Times* from December 16th 1789, describes a bout with a soldier. *The Times* describes it as his first pitched battle and is most likely a story that was passed around his supporters. Let us compare the two passages, one from

⁹⁵ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 23-24

⁹⁶ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 33

The Times and one from Mendoza himself to see if we can unravel the extent of Mendoza's self fashioning.

Mendoza in his memoirs describes the situation as follows: "Walking on the road near Chatham Barracks, part of a regiment of soldiers happened to pass, when one of the sergeants accosted me in a very rude manner, and ordered me in a peremptory tone to get out of the way, and upon remonstrating with him on his uncivil behaviour, struck me a severe blow...I could not refrain from offering to fight him on the spot and he readily accepted my challenge...We accordingly stripped and set to, and after fighting for an hour, I had the satisfaction of coming off completely victorious...One of the officers of the regiment who in first instance seemed rather inclined to take the part of my opponent, was so gratified at witnessing what he was pleased to term an uncommon instance of spirit and resolution in a youth, that he immediately presented me with five guineas and afterwards exerted his influence, with effect, in procuring orders for my employer".

The Times article on the other hand, describes the situation as follows: "Mendoza with all the riches he possessed in the world, placed in a box on his head, stopped near Chatham, whilst a regiment was marching to the barracks from exercise. A Soldier, as we have experienced from those who march to the rank, takes delight in insulting every subject out of a red coat, and lo he tilted Mendoza's treasure from his into the kennel as he passed by – the little

Jew complained to the Officer, and offered to box the soldier – which for the sake of sport was accepted as soon as the regiment was dismissed, and the Jew to the surprise of all present gained a complete victory over the Christian, although the man of war was near thirty, and the confectioner only sixteen. The consequence of winning the battle was that the Officers made a subscription to pay for the loss his shop sustained, and the populace buying up all his broken tarts...he is now accounted the neatest, quickest, and most active pugilist in Europe”.

Mendoza’s portrayal and that of *The Times* is subtly different and we can see Mendoza consciously moving away from the traditional Jewish stereotype. Firstly, Mendoza makes no mention of him carrying “all the riches he possessed” in a box on his head. Instead, in Mendoza’s version he is still a salesman, but one that suggests a person of trade, rather than a peddler, which is the distinct impression given in *The Times* account. Mendoza distances himself from this by showing that he gained great business for his master, but that nothing was actually bought at the time. On the other hand, *The Times* story describes the populace buying “his broken tarts”, which again makes him sound like he was poor, and very much the lowest part in society. Furthermore, the comments on his physicality, describing him as the “Little Jew” in the *Times* article, is different to the Mendoza version as it implies that he was the stereotype of the physically deformed Jew that we see in Dickens. Furthermore, the language that Mendoza chooses, for example

“peremptory tone”, is a conscious choice to promote his self image, and undermine the stereotype. The Times account and Mendoza’s rival passage indicate the difference of how Mendoza perceived himself and how others at the time saw him.

This image of him as the defender of English morality, as well as the counterpoint to the physical Jewish stereotype, is only given more substance by an early 1789 portrait of him. “Daniel Mendoza: the most Scientific Boxer ever Known” is an engraving by H. Kingsbury, modelled on the painting by T. Robineau.⁹⁷ The picture was advertised in newspapers, including the World, with the promotion, “the likeness needs no comment, and the attitude he stood for”.⁹⁸ In the picture, Mendoza is seen in his pugilist pose in the foreground. His muscles are tensed and his face is in profile, much like that of a classical painting. There are no discernable features that point him out as Jewish, the only way you would know is if you knew Mendoza was a Jew. He is the complete contrast to the images of Fagin as a reptile. Even more interestingly, he is posing with English countryside in the background. There are rolling hills, fields, even a copse in the distance. It is the landscape of William Blake’s Jerusalem and its “green and pleasant land”. What makes the image more impressive, is that it is Mendoza who is defending the landscape, and if pushed further, England itself. The engraving enables his self fashioning, we have already seen that contemporary passages describe him

⁹⁷ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 16

⁹⁸ *The World*, May 18th 1789

as a peddler, and he is attempting to move away from that, to promote himself as different from the stereotype.

MENDOZA AND THE STAGE JEW

We can see why Mendoza was trying to fashion himself as the counter to the stereotype of popular imagination again with Jewish characters on the stage. It was a character that was incredibly popular in the Georgian period. The image of the stage Jew in the Georgian period is one that was born out of many centuries of development, even before the time of Marlowe and Shakespeare. Even after expulsion in 1290, Jews were represented in performances that usually were associated with Easter. Traditionally, in these strikingly crude performances, Judas would be the character that was recognised as being Jewish. He would have a flaming red beard, and would be bent underneath moneybags, images of which, according to Bernard Glassman, go back at least until the thirteenth century (and correspond well to Dickens' portrayal of Fagin).⁹⁹ The representation of Jews continued even without any living Jews to compare them to and this made them even more stereotypical. We know that Corpus Christi in Oxford continued a summer festival, which relived the Passion, for many years after it was founded in 1264.

⁹⁹ Bernard Glassman, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes without Jews: Images of the Jews in England, 1290-1700* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 19

By the Georgian period, the stage Jew had become a fixed and useful tool for playwrights and performers. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is probably the most well-known image of a stage Jew, and is represented, like Fagin, as dehumanised, an animal not recognised by society around him. He is "a creature that did bear the shape of a man".¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Thomas Dibdin's *Family Quarrels* (1802), we see the character Proteus, who was a Christian cross dressing as a Jew, singing offensive songs about Jewesses he had successfully courted. The fact he was cross dressing, and known to be cross dressing, shows how much the stage Jew became a fixation of writers. They became part of an ethnic debate, "a form of ethnic spectacle, used on the stage to locate the boundary between Englishness and otherness".¹⁰¹ Indeed, it led one contemporary journalist, on the protests against *Family Quarrels* to ask why a man could not enjoy "the frivolity of the Frenchman, the effeminacy of the Italian...the blunders of the Irishman, the irascibility of the Welsh...displayed in full force on the stage".¹⁰²

The stage Jew was part of this milieu. It was most certainly a representation of an undercurrent of xenophobia in English circles, but it was not directed solely at the Jews. It was directed at anyone who was different. The stage Jew was a role that was used to make English audience members laugh, just like Fagin was used to connect with an audience that needed a villain.

¹⁰⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3:2:1653

¹⁰¹ Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*, 2

¹⁰² "The Dramatic Guardian" in *The Monthly Mirror*, December 1802

Shakespeare, like Dickens, was a populist writer who needed a caricatured figure with whom the audience would relate. The fact remains, however, that Jews were not specifically targeted at any point with violence more than the Irish or Scots. Indeed, there were accusations against Mendoza for his role in violence against protestors during the Old Price Riots in 1809. Mendoza and other Jewish boxers, whom he knew, worked for the management of the theatre during the Old Price Riots, so-called because they were protesting the raising of prices at the newly built New Theatre in Covent Garden, to keep the rioters under control. Here we have a reversal of the traditional oppression of Jews by Christians indicates once again that the Jew of popular imagination, whether on the stage or in novels were merely characters, based on antisemitic ideas, but were not representative of a virulent hatred of Jews. If Christians employed Jews to protect their assets, surely the belief that the stereotype of cowardice, for example, was based on a deep-seated hatred, is untenable. However, it is interesting that it is not mentioned in his memoirs. Clearly, this was an event that did not satisfy the image that he was trying to portray.

Mendoza's reversal of the traditional stereotype can also be seen in his reaction against feminisation of the male Jew, which often was revealed on stage. The idea of a Christian "cross-dressing" as a Jew, or indeed as a Jewess, was familiar to audiences in the late eighteenth century. Although the comparison of Jewish men to women is often seen as a largely nineteenth and

twentieth century phenomenon, the roots of this can be seen earlier. The act of circumcision has been questioned since St Paul, who discusses in Romans the purpose of the ritual. This developed over many years and came to represent male Jews as butchers, barbarians and, if one pushes it further, women. There was little difference in the nineteenth century between cutting the foreskin, and mutilation of penis, to the extent where Jewish men became female. This was understood and discussed by Freud, most significantly in *Moses and Monotheism*. He believes it is a symbolic substitute for man's fear of castration, however, this was taken by those who were antisemitic as being genuinely an act of castration. During the nineteenth century, this took on further significance, as Jews were connected more and more to hysteria, for example, which was seen as a female quality.¹⁰³ They were also associated with the rise of syphilology, Jewish men were seen as more likely to catch syphilis, much like women, who were understood as being the carriers of the disease.

Mendoza attacked this association in many ways. The most significant was to distance Jews from the stereotype of being weak and cowardly, seen as feminine characteristics, and to develop a generation of Jews in London in particular that were feared for their strength. The best example is that of the

¹⁰³ The effect this comparison had on Jewish women is debated. For the debate on the position of Jewish women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries please see, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (eds.), *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) and, in particular, articles by Ann Pellegrini and Maria Damon within it.

female boxer threatening an actor from the engraving entitled *The Jew Beauties*, which was discussed earlier. Mendoza, in his *Memoirs*, fashions himself as the epitome of manliness. He does not need to train because of the “excellence of his constitution”.¹⁰⁴ In his early battles, he often presents himself as small, battling against much larger opponents. To an extent this is true, although it is impossible to be certain, as it is a large part of his self-fashioning. In the song “My Little Dicky”, which he prints in his memoirs, it described Richard Humphreys as Goliath, who viewed Mendoza as David. The ultimate act of manliness, the slaying of Goliath by David, is enacted in his *Memoirs*, and counteracts the image of the feminised male Jew.

MENDOZA AND RICHARD HUMPHREYS

Mendoza’s work, therefore, went some way to attack the traditional stereotype of Jews in novels and on stage. After his early fights, the period in his life where he built his reputation, he became an established boxer, known for his technical ability, under the patronage of the mysteriously entitled Mr. G.¹⁰⁵ His great mentor at the time was Richard Humphreys, he noticed Mendoza’s prestigious talent and became a sort of manager, organising training facilities before big fights and the money that they would receive.

¹⁰⁴ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 29

¹⁰⁵ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 34. It is odd that he refers to this patron as Mr. G, considering the book would have most likely sold more if there were references to wealthy patrons by name. Perhaps he is protecting them, or they were unwilling to have their names released. Humphrey’s patron (who eventually wagers on Mendoza) is known as Mr. R. I would argue that these characters were from the Royal family, as we know Humphrey’s one time great patron was the Prince of Wales.

Their relationship, in the end, turned to envy and disgust. Mendoza got more popular and the wealthy elite was interested in supporting him. Mendoza at the time, wanted the appreciation and success, and disliked Humphreys' methods. He particularly disliked the quality of training facilities that were organised for him. Before one fight, Humphreys had organised for Mendoza to train in what Mendoza tactfully called a house that "was let out to a certain type of woman". Mendoza presents himself as a virtuous man, who was never "very attentive to training" relying instead on "the excellence of my constitution", and so refused to train there and relieved himself of any wrongdoing.¹⁰⁶

Again, the extent to which Mendoza presents an idealised version for the book is unknown, but what we do know, was that by this time he was courting Esther, who he would marry in 1789. Maybe, this was a factor in his decision. It is likely that the significant reason in this instance is his self-fashioning. It is unclear whether the story is factually true, from what we know of Mendoza, it seems unlikely that he would have been put off by a brothel. What is clear is that he is moving away from the criminal connotations of his profession, religion and life, which we have seen was actually prevalent throughout.

¹⁰⁶ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 29

Whatever the case, it was clear that Mendoza was becoming too big for Humphreys, and relations between them soured. Mendoza opened a school for boxing in Capel Court and from there taught many illustrious characters the art of self defence. This was not uncommon for prize fighters but Humphreys again felt like he was purposefully undermining him. Mendoza, knowing that he was indebted to Humphreys' connections, did not want to fight him. However, this changed in 1788. Humphreys' patron, it appears, had bet on Mendoza to win a fight against a well-known fighter, and Mendoza duly defeated him with some ease. This patron, due to the manner in which he had won, gave the winnings, some twenty guineas, to Mendoza. According to Mendoza, this was too much for Humphreys to take. Humphreys, angered by the favour his patron had shown Mendoza, asked one of his associates to claim, that the money was in fact a loan. He arrested Mendoza and took him into custody, Mendoza was all too happy to pay the "pretended debt and costs" as he "never before had the honour of having my name coupled with that of one of the phantoms of the law, John Doe or Richard Roe".¹⁰⁷ Whether the story is true, or in fact he had been lent the money (later in life Mendoza spent a time in debtors prison), it was clear that the classic battle between master and disciple for supremacy of England was going to take place. In this instance, it is through this lens that Mendoza presents himself during this section of the memoirs. He wants to set the stage for what he viewed as the biggest boxing rivalry England had ever seen.

¹⁰⁷ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 34. The comment is unlikely to be true.

Before the first arranged bout at Odiham in Hampshire on 9th January 1788, several skirmishes took place. This was most likely to raise interest in the fight and to promote the Humphreys/Mendoza rivalry. Throughout the period of their battles, they both played the media very well. They were the first sportsmen, in my opinion, to use the media as a tool to develop interest in themselves, and their rivalry. This became increasingly important as the series continued, to keep the public interest, they continually sparred in the media. The first fight, fought in enclosed space, for the sole purpose of ticket revenues, generated much interest. A contemporary engraving by J. Grozer, from the painting by Anton Einsle, shows crowds packed into the arena, with people in trees and on walls to watch the contest. What is all the more remarkable is that this was the first sporting event for which people had to pay an entry fee. The entry fee was also half a guinea, which at ten and half shillings, was a small fortune to the majority of people living in England at this time. It indicates the interest in the Humphreys/Mendoza rivalry, as well as the clientele that they were hoping for. They would have set the price so high because they would have wanted the most established patrons to watch, and as both had royal connections, it had to be an event of some substance.

The first bout ended in suspicious circumstances and further stoked the rivalry between the two heavyweights. According to Mendoza, as he was about to land the blow that “would have proved decisive”, Humphreys second

blocked the punch to protect his fighter.¹⁰⁸ There was some controversy, as you would expect, but Mendoza's umpire supported Humphreys and the match continued, until Mendoza could not continue to fight. In a footnote in his memoirs, Mendoza explains that his umpire's behaviour was "extraordinary...but...afterwards learnt he had laid his money against me" and that "he could not be expected to be very willing to decide against himself".¹⁰⁹ The first great battle between the two lasted forty seven minutes and ended in some controversy. The most interesting information for our study is the fact that Mendoza used two seconds, called Jacobs and Isaacs, who were most likely Jewish and also had a Jewish umpire, Mr Moravia. This was in comparison to Johnson and Tring for Humhreys and his umpire, Mr Ford. Here again we have a battle between all Jews on one side and the English on the other. It is the physical realisation of a battle that was taking place in the minds of many Englishmen and Jews at this time as they came to terms with their place in society. Similarly, the theatre was a focus of discussions over ethnicity and the position of Jews in England, with sparring back and forth in text and physicality, boxing, it appears, was the realisation of this, with all the drama and theatricalisation that any production on the stage could produce. These performances, with all the carnage associated with them, helped shift people from holding exo-cultural stereotypes about Jews to cultural stereotypes. By becoming the face of English boxing, every citizen of England had the origin of Jews demystified and the figure of Fagin

¹⁰⁸ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 39

¹⁰⁹ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 39

after him, for example, came to be seen as a deliberate simplification, not as the embodiment of the Jewish community.

Unfortunately for Mendoza, he was not able to challenge Humphreys again for over a year. This was due to an injury in his loins, which rendered him unable to stand. However, that did not stop the verbal contest between the two. Mendoza even refers to this section as “a verbal contest with Humphreys” in his memoirs, acknowledging the extent to which the masses followed it and how decisive it was for the relationship between the two men, and, more importantly, their relationship with the public. It quite simply never took the two men out of the public eye.

The relationship, and the next fight that would no doubt take place, stirred the sporting press into a frenzy. Firstly, Mendoza sent a letter into the *World* newspaper, after the fight in January 1788, giving them what he saw as a fair account of the fight. Mendoza it seems, had slipped and injured himself, which after taking further blows from Humphreys made him “wholly incapable of standing” and it was from the “untoward accident” that left Mendoza a defeated man.¹¹⁰ An addition by Mendoza, keen to prove that he was no coward, is an insert from his surgeon, Mr. Henry Saffory of Devonshire Street, who confirms that “the excruciating pain...was sufficient

¹¹⁰ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 41

to deprive him of the ability to stand”.¹¹¹ It appears that people had been circulating rumours about the seriousness of Mendoza’s injury and he needed to prove that he was in fact injured. Indeed, the following letters from Humphreys appear to question his integrity. Humphreys asserts that Mendoza is only interested in “parrying, not fighting”.¹¹² Although Mendoza comes out worse for the letters, he is ultimately the one who is injured and cannot fight, whereas Humphreys can just antagonise him, there is no mention of his Judaism. At no point does Humphreys associate his Judaism with his inability, or lack of desire, to fight. Considering this was a very personal battle, one that was being played out in the media, and both parties had a desire to increase their popularity; Humphreys stays away from what would have been the easiest insult. Why this is the case is unclear. From what I can tell, and there is little evidence for this assertion, there was a genuine grudging respect between the two former partners and Humphreys understood that Mendoza’s Judaism had little bearing on his ability to fight or not. He had, after all, discovered Mendoza’s talent. It also had little bearing on his popularity as has been shown earlier. This could be a positive spin on the situation, and Humphreys could just be unwilling to become the face of anti-Jewish reaction in London. Even later, when the verbal sparring continued, largely over the date of the next battle between the two, and Humphreys declared that Mendoza “never meant to fight me, and I hereby declare him a coward”, there is no reference to his Judaism. Indeed, it is really in Mendoza’s

¹¹¹ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 41

¹¹² Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 44

response, which laid out the reasons against such assertions, that we get an impression of why Humphreys would stay away from associating the two. Mendoza regarded his "own duty to the public too much...to disgust them by retaliating in such coarse language, and attempting to vie with my antagonist in rudeness: but if your readers will compare the character of a man who has fought seventeen battles, and many of those with persons larger than himself, and who, though so well attended by scholars that he has no need to fight again, is willing to engage once more, merely as a point of honour...when extremely ill...and when the other...offers to fight him, retracts his challenge, they will easily determine which most deserves to be called a coward!"¹¹³ Here again, we have Mendoza in the face of the establishment, explaining in no uncertain terms why he has done no wrong and turning that blame upon Humphreys.

The fact that a Jew in the late eighteenth century, the letter was written in the summer of 1788, could feel confident enough in his position to defend himself in such terms speaks volumes for the respect that Mendoza received from the public. Jews, and in particular, the Jewish community, had kept a very strict line about its public relations up until this point. There were very few outspoken people in the community, none of whom had the scope of Mendoza. The community was interested in consolidating the gains that had been made by their readmission and did not want a repeat of the Jew Bill

¹¹³ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 53

debacle in 1753. The period of Mendoza's supremacy also came at a time of attempted reform within the Jewish community, the elite did not want to be associated with what they saw as the criminalisation of the Jewish poor. Starting in 1788, the Ashkenazi Talmud Torah school began a series of improvements. In 1799, a modern Jewish school was founded by the maskil Hyman Hurwitz. From the late 1790s as well, Patrick Colquhoun's report on the criminality of the Jewish poor became public and caused much embarrassment for the Jewish elite. Interestingly, Joshua Van Oven and Colquhoun, tried to create a communally financed, government supported agency for the relief and the control of the Jewish poor. It was a delicate time for the Anglo-Jewish elite. However, now, there was a Jew, clearly associated with the community, accusing one of the greatest boxers England had ever known of being a coward, and giving him lessons, not only in sparring, but in civility.

The second contest between the two took place on 6th May 1789 in Stilton, Huntingdonshire. According to Mendoza, the amphitheatre that they had built for the occasion could hold two to three thousand people and that "public curiosity was excited to the highest degree".¹¹⁴ The amphitheatre was filled in a short space of time, leaving many outside disappointed. One such character, a Mr. Fewterell, tried to climb over the fence to see the fight for free, even though the walls had been furnished with iron spikes to prevent

¹¹⁴ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 59

such an intrusion. Mendoza informs us that it “caused some little disturbance at the time, but order was speedily restored”.¹¹⁵ Again, we have evidence of how popular Mendoza and Humphreys’ were, and, in particular, the significance placed on a contest between the two. Mr. Fewterell, would not have attempted to scale a wall, with iron spikes to prevent him, if it was not a bout of some significance. It is even more impressive that so many people came to watch the fight even though it was in Huntingdonshire, which is in Cambridgeshire and around ninety miles from Duke’s Place in London. It was no easy journey to make, and it was made, it seems by thousands of people, according to press reports and contemporary sources.¹¹⁶

The battle commenced a little after one o’clock in the afternoon. Mendoza had changed his seconds for the bout, opting for two boxers called Brown and Ryan. He also, unsurprisingly, changed his umpire to Sir Thomas A. Price, who, being a gentleman of some stature, would have increased Mendoza’s credibility. Again, it is very interesting that a knight of the realm would support Mendoza. He was clearly a very fashionable boxer to support. Similarly, a Mr. Thornton, “a gentleman of independence and fortune”, allowed the fight to take place on his property, thus protecting the fighters and spectators from the magistrates. There is a noticeable shift from the first fight. In the first battle, Mendoza was seconded by Jews, but now it seems his

¹¹⁵ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 59

¹¹⁶ For example, *The Times*, May 8th 1789, and for another example of his popularity, *The Times*, January 7th 1794 and in America, *The Columbian Herald*, August 27th 1787.

seconds were Christian, as well as the umpire. It is hard to know why this is the case. However, we know that the letters, published in the media between the two fights, created a great amount of anticipation and increased the popularity of both fighters. No Jew had reached this level of attention, except perhaps those associated with the Chelsea murder case in 1771.

The case deserves some discussion because it was a difficult time for Jews everywhere, and the negative publicity associated with it. The publicity Mendoza received was largely positive, which was in complete contrast to public reaction twenty years earlier. On the night of 11th June 1771, a gang of nine Jews broke into the house of a Mrs. Hutchins in Chelsea. In the course of the robbery, a servant who tried to resist, was murdered. The case was unprecedented in many ways. Firstly, the government offered a fifty pound reward for any information concerning the whereabouts of the gang. This it turns out was the gang's downfall, as one member, Daniel Isaacs, when he had turned on hard times, took the money and made known the rest of the gang members. Before their arrest, posters were circulated throughout the country through the Post Office and the Customs and Excise department, another extraordinary decision. When they had been arrested, the Secretary of State himself, Sir John Fielding, decided to try the case at the expense of the government, as opposed to making the victim pay, which was normal procedure. Ironically, the story received little attention after the initial murder. It was only later, as gang members were being arrested, and the

reward posters had been circulated that the case began to create a furore in the press. In Truro, the mayor arrested two Jews because he could see no visible means of support. This was characteristic of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion that surrounded the Jewish community in these years. The press ran continual stories about the potential whereabouts of suspicious Jews. The Jewish community was stunned by the reaction, and there were a series of statements published by the Great Synagogue distancing themselves from what they saw as “foreign miscreants who stain our religion by calling themselves Jews”. However, the prejudice and ill will created by the case lasted many years. Cobbett was still using Chelsea to attack the Jews over fifty years later. The reaction to Mendoza, the fact that his support and patronage also included non-Jews, is truly remarkable given that barely twenty years earlier a Jew “could scarcely pass the streets...many of them were pulled by the beards, while those who ought to have taken the insulters into custody stood calmly by and triumphed in the insult”.¹¹⁷

The effect the Chelsea murder case had on the Jewish community cannot be underestimated. Perhaps the jubilant reaction to Mendoza was an expression of relief after the vicious backlash following the Chelsea murder. Certainly Mendoza gave the Jewish community a sense of belonging and confidence, which was not the case after the insecurity of twenty years earlier. But to truly be regarded as a great fighter, he had to win. The fact remained, as he

¹¹⁷ William Jackson, *New and Complete Newgate Calendar* (London: Alex Hogg, 1795), 5:23

walked into the ring, that he had lost to Humphreys previously. It was a crucial fight for Mendoza and his career. The battle concluded with no little controversy. Having fought for over forty minutes it appeared that Mendoza was getting the upper hand. Unexpectedly, Humphreys “either from weakness or otherwise” collapsed “without a blow”.¹¹⁸ The crowd, disappointed with the behaviour of Humphreys, called for Mendoza to be the winner. However, again, the seconds and umpire of Humphreys disagreed and wanted the battle to continue (it appears that Humphreys could rest during the discussion!) The disagreement ended when a third party, Mr. Harvey, decided that the bout should be continued. Eventually, Mendoza won, Humphreys collapsed again from exhaustion, and he took his title as Champion of England.¹¹⁹

The third contest with Humphreys took place on 27th September 1790. The bout lasted for seventy two rounds and well over an hour. It again ended in a complete victory for Mendoza, as Humphreys was too exhausted to continue. The period from 1790 to 1795 was the peak of Mendoza’s popularity and success. His chapter on this period in his *Memoirs* is entitled “engagements in the theatre”. It gives an impression of how popular he was. There is also evidence in newspapers of his popularity as he was used to advertise various theatrical events. For example, in *The Gazatteer and New Daily Advertiser*

¹¹⁸ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 59

¹¹⁹ *The Times*, May 8th 1789

from October 1790, there is an advertisement for Daniel Mendoza who will play “Tomorrow and every Saturday in future, at the Lyceum”.¹²⁰

The fact that Mendoza would play at the Lyceum theatre on a Saturday shows how lax he had become about adhering to any open sign of his Judaism. Throughout this section in his writings, he makes no reference to his Judaism. This could be part of his self-fashioning. He is most likely unwilling to bring his Judaism to the forefront of his image. His preoccupation is to present himself as a sympathetic character in light of the difficulty that he was in at the time of publication. He also wants to present himself as an antithesis to the Jewish stereotype, and to do this he has to downplay his Judaism. The question remains about how openly Jewish Mendoza was. It is hard to say, as we should not trust his own writings on the subject. What we can see is the way that newspapers reported his religion. They nearly all describe Mendoza as Jewish. Whether it is the story from *The Times* detailing his first battle, or descriptions of his court appearance, nearly all refer to his Judaism in some way. Indeed, even as late as 1809, a letter from J. Brandon, manager of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, describes Mendoza as the “fighting Jew”.¹²¹ In all of his travels, it seems unlikely that Mendoza would be able to keep kosher, he spends a lot of time in inns, and, as we have seen, he could not keep the Sabbath. Mendoza seems to be an English Jew, he sees his Judaism as part of his identity but not the essence of it. He is the product of the society

¹²⁰ *The Gazatteer and New Daily Advertiser*, October 22nd 1790

¹²¹ “To the Editor” in *The Morning Post*, October 18th 1809

around him much more than the Jewish community, although his Jewishness is never far away. Mendoza, it seems, proves Endelman's thesis that "English Jews quietly adopted the habits of Englishmen because they wanted to feel at home there".¹²²

MENDOZA AND HIS DECLINE

The year 1795 marked a turning point in Mendoza's life. It was the beginning of a long decline and there were two events in particular that overshadowed him, one that he reports, and one that he does not include in his memoirs. The first event was his defeat by "Gentleman" John Jackson, who then took the honour of being the champion boxer of England from Mendoza. Mendoza would never reach the level of boxing that he had in the years previously. It appears that the new generation of boxers combined Mendoza's technical ability with the size of the traditional pugilists from before. He was now facing opponents he could not compete with physically. Even though this was the case, the humiliation inflicted on him by Jackson was great. He spends a large part of his section on Johnson describing another bout that he was "induced to fight" only a few days before.¹²³ He does this to draw attention away from the battle with Johnson and to subconsciously deflect the reader into believing that if he had not fought the first fight, he would have been in better form in the match against Johnson. He does not give a long description

¹²² Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 164

¹²³ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 87

of the battle with Jackson but from newspaper reports we know that the bout lasted little more than a quarter of an hour and Jackson inflicted a severe beating on Mendoza by holding his long hair and pulling his head repeatedly into upper cuts.¹²⁴ Mendoza was vanquished, and as he laments in his *Memoirs*, it was the “only instance of my losing a battle where I did not afterwards defeat my antagonist”.¹²⁵ The defeat to Jackson must have been disastrous for Mendoza. Throughout his life, he had proved himself by winning boxing matches. He defended not only himself, but had the weight of his community on his shoulders. However, by this time, other Jewish boxers were becoming prominent, and he was no longer the sole representative. “Dutch” Sam and Abie Belasco were two other very successful Jewish pugilists who were coming through the ranks. Mendoza trained both boxers and there is little doubt that were it not for the success of Mendoza the new generation of Jewish pugilists would have been less popular. Mendoza, being the personality that he was, took his change in fortunes badly.

There is no mention in Mendoza’s *Memoirs* of an incident that was widely reported in the press in late October 1795. It certainly tarnished Mendoza’s reputation and brought his profession, and religion into disrepute. It appears that one evening, a woman called Rachael Joel and Mendoza’s wife, Esther, got into a dispute. During the course of the argument, Joel accused Esther of

¹²⁴ There is a boxing myth, which is impossible to prove, that every boxer has cut his or her hair short after Mendoza’s defeat to Johnson.

¹²⁵ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 88

being an adulteress and a cheat. Daniel Mendoza, after hearing what was said, knocked Joel to the ground and assaulted her as she lay there. The press informs us that she was a “small, thin and delicate woman” and that the assault was brutal. Mendoza, who was then working as a recruiting sergeant for the Aberdeenshire Fencibles (he was largely responsible for capturing deserters), used the large boots that were part of his uniform to inflict heavy blows upon the woman. The description of the assault in the press was disturbing. Not only did Mendoza assault her, they wrote, but after she tried to escape him, he chased her down and continued to beat her. The argument arose because she was owed eighteen pence on the Mendoza account. From a man that was earning hundreds, if not thousands of pounds, this marked a low point in his life. We know that the Mendoza was arrested and tried for the crime before the Recorder at Guildhall, presumably as he had committed the crime where the City of London had jurisdiction. The press reports go further and report that members of the “Hebrew sect” crowded the avenues leading to the courthouse.¹²⁶ The incident itself was on the front page of newspapers and the jury returned a guilty verdict. Mendoza, it appears, let the less palatable side of his personality become public knowledge.

¹²⁶ *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, October 28th 1795

CONCLUSION

Although Mendoza continued touring his pugilistic art well into the nineteenth century, 1795 marked the beginning of a steep decline. From this point on, he was never the focus of the press, and he had lost respect within the wider public. His *Memoirs* end rather abruptly; there are only twenty two pages after his defeat to Jackson, whereas there are over eighty documenting his early fights. Perhaps not consciously, Mendoza displays to his reader the difficulty of his life after the defeat. From this point on, debtors, provincial theatres and scandal overshadow his life. However, one should not underestimate the impact his life and career had on reassessing stereotypes and on the perception of Jews in general. He consciously, or subconsciously, represents himself as the antithesis of the Jewish stereotype, to the extent where his desire to not be cowardly translates itself into acts of terrible violence, which should not be condoned. His desire to be both English and Jewish, and the antithesis of the Jewish stereotype, also affects his writings to the extent where they are untrustworthy. The extent to which he subverts the Jewish stereotype can be seen in the final chapter of his *Memoirs*. He informs his reader about his current position by reimagining the *Merchant of Venice*. "Here," he tells us, "The scene was reversed; the Christian the unfeeling prosecutor, - the Jew the unfortunate debtor".¹²⁷ Although not always successful, Mendoza went some way in reversing the stereotype, and

¹²⁷ Mendoza and Magriel, *The Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*, 108

bringing the Jew of popular imagination to being solely of imagination only. He helped changed the stereotyping of Jews in England from exo-cultural to cultural.

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