

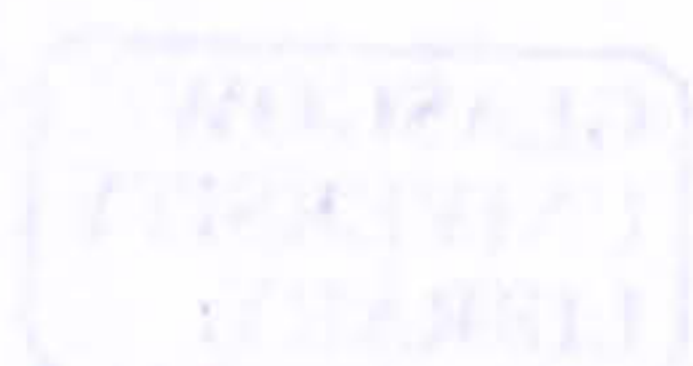
**Jewish Women in Glasgow c1880-1950:
Gender, Ethnicity and the Immigrant Experience.**

A Thesis Submitted in Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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The overall point of any PhD thesis is intellectual enquiry, however this work also brought me into contact with the history of Glasgow's Jews at a more personal level. I hope that I have done justice to the testimony provided by oral history interviewees. I am very grateful for the kindness, hospitality and above all interest of these individuals who gave me their time and wisdom in a selfless way.

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Abstract.

This study makes a contribution to the gender history of modern Scotland and addresses issues of ethnic diversity in the Scottish past. By examining the experiences of women in immigrant Jewish families and including gender analysis, it also forms an addition to British/Jewish history. The development of a Jewish community is examined in chronological format beginning with the arrival of immigrants from Eastern Europe and ending with aspects of Jewish acculturation. The thesis has three main aims: firstly it seeks to place women at the centre of the immigrant narrative; secondly it aims to explore the materiality of women's lives as lived in the working class Jewish community of the Gorbals, and thirdly, it endeavours to analyse aspects of Jewish suburban life in Glasgow that were shaped and expressed through changes in gender relations. There is also a thematic element to the analysis that includes the following topics: Jewish settlement in Glasgow; ways of making a living; domesticity; upward mobility; women's communal involvement, and lastly, the way that memories of Jewish life in Glasgow have been represented in different texts. The thesis makes use of multiple types of source material, including personal testimony, to argue that the identity of Glaswegian Jewry was shaped by the operation of gender as well as ethnicity and class; and in combination, these defined the social organisation of Glasgow Jewry. This approach demonstrates the intersection of culture with more customary social and economic aspects of the migration process and reveals the central roles played by women immigrants.

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Glossary.

- *Chanukah*: Also known as the "Festival of Lights", commemorates the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. *Chanukah* is celebrated for 8 days during which one additional candle is added to the *menorah* on each night of the holiday.
- *Der Heim*: literal meaning is home, but more colloquially refers to the 'old country'.
- *Kashrut*: Jewish dietary laws.
- *Landsleit*: Jews from the same town or district in the old country.
- *Lansmann*: Singular of the above and might be used as a form of address to a person from coming from same district in the old country.
- *Landsmannschaft*: A society or organisation formed out of members from the same district in Eastern Europe.
- *Menorah*: Candlestick with 8 branches used during the festival of *Chanukah*.
- *Purim*: Jewish religious festival
- *Shabbos*: The Sabbath, this is a particularly Scottish transliteration from Yiddish, otherwise usually written as *Shabbat*.
- *Shadchen*: Marriage broker or matchmaker.
- *Sheitel*: Wig traditionally worn by observant married women.
- *Shiva*: Week of mourning after the death of a close relative.
- *Shochet*: Religious functionary who carries out the slaughter of animals according to Jewish law.
- *Shtetl*, pl. *Shtetlekh*: the Yiddish word for 'little town'. It is a name that can be misleading as these towns varied greatly in size. Generally the title is applied to any settlement that had a majority, or significant proportion of Jews in the population. The *shtetlekh* have been subject to much mythologizing and nostalgic reinterpretations, both in fiction and in histories.
- *Treife*: Food that is not considered kosher according to the laws of *Kashrut*.
- *Yahrtzeit*: Anniversary of death and generally accompanied by the lighting of candles and recital of prayers.
- *Yichus*: Status based on family lineage or learning; a source of pride and worth derived from this.

Abbreviations.

GCA: *Glasgow City Archives.*

GUA: *Glasgow University Archives.*

GWZO: *Glasgow Women's Zionist Organisation.*

JAPGW: *Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women.*

JJS: *Jewish Journal of Sociology.*

PP: *UK Parliamentary Papers.*

SJAC: *Scottish Jewish Archives Centre.*

WIZO: *Women's International Zionist Organisation.*

List of Tables Included.

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Chapter 1.

Remembering ‘Jeanie the Jew’: an introduction to this thesis.

...she had a fantastic personality and everybody liked her – they used to call her Jeanie the Jew –that was her name, Jeanie. Well, that wasn’t her right name, her right name was Millie.¹

As outsiders to Scottish society, the generic identity of ‘Jeanie the Jew’ rendered anonymous much about the lives of first generation immigrant women, even within their own lifetimes. In this excerpt from oral testimony, the interviewee is recalling the personality of his mother –Millie – who immigrated to Scotland from Lithuania at the end of the nineteenth century. The complexities of her life were such that in her employment as a hawker, she acquired a new name. Her Scottish customers bestowed the name Jeanie, affectionately we must assume, in place of her given name. This woman was illiterate, and despite contact with people outside of the Yiddish speaking community of Jews, she learned little English during the remainder of her life which was spent in Glasgow. Notwithstanding, she made a living from selling drapery and raised her family in this city. There were many women like Millie whose stories are remembered in family histories passed on through successive generations. This is a precarious position. Such memories are easily lost and subsequently can be difficult, or impossible to recover. In Scotland this situation has unfortunately been aided and abetted by the marginalisation of Jewish women in published histories of Jewish settlement in Scottish cities.

This thesis focuses on the everyday lives of Jewish women, such as Jeanie, between 1880 and 1950. It explores the relationship between gender and ethnicity within a particular segment of the Jewish community in Scottish society, at a particular period,

¹ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913. Henceforth, this is the format that will be used for references to interview material. Names given in the text are sometimes pseudonyms –see Appendix on methodology.

and in a particular place. In doing so, it attempts to interweave examples of lived experience with the general paradigm of Jewish immigration to Glasgow. Too often studies of immigration and settlement treat all experience as homogenous. This universal narrative tends to take the lives of men, and male-centred interests as the measure of all experience. The study starts with the presumption that gender – as well as ethnicity and class – shaped the lives of immigrants and in turn influenced the creation of what became known as the ‘Glasgow Jewish community’. The remainder of this chapter will cover some essential, introductory issues relevant to this thesis and will do so in separate sections that are presented in the following order: Firstly, the aims of the thesis and its thematic content will be explained; secondly, it will define some key terms; thirdly, some preliminary examination of frequently used sources will be looked at, notably oral sources that provide important insights into women’s experiences; fourthly, a brief review of relevant literature is covered, and lastly, key areas of investigation that are included in each chapter will be summarised and this chapter outline will also explain the chronological arrangement of discussion.

The aims and main themes of the thesis.

The aims of this study are threefold. Firstly, it is to place Jewish women within the Scottish immigrant narrative. Women’s lives are at the centre of this work, as an antidote to histories that marginalize or ignore the place of gender in shaping the experience of migrants. Secondly, by examining the initial stages of Jewish settlement in Glasgow at the end of the nineteenth century, a wider historical context regarding the materiality of working class women’s lives is revealed. It is hoped that this study of Jewish women will also make a contribution to the overall picture of female experience within urban Scotland at this time and assert the place of gender in shaping this. Lastly, the thesis aims to analyse the interface between Jewish experiences of

upward economic and social mobility, and relocation to Glasgow's middle class suburbs. In doing so, the particular experience of Jewish women will uncover aspects of suburban life in Scotland that hitherto have not been subjected to historical scrutiny. The aim here is not only to examine women's experiences as wives and mothers, but also female involvement with such issues as education, employment and communal politics. This approach will uncover the ways in which women migrants and their female descendants responded to the local environment. In turn, the manner in which this Scottish city shaped the experience of being a woman is also explored, showing that this interplay of changes in circumstances that affected Jews, specific to this time and place, gave rise to a purposely-gendered consciousness of the Glaswegian, Jewish migrant experience.

In respect of the themes addressed in the thesis, large-scale events do require to be born in mind. Over this period of seventy years, change was certainly wrought by these and this timeframe is notable in that it includes involvement in two world wars, a period of severe economic depression, and numerous life changing technological inventions. Unavoidable also, is the fact of the Holocaust, although the full impact of this catastrophe was only visited upon Scottish Jews towards the end of our period. However, this thesis is not about mass murder, war, unemployment, or any specific innovation, even if Jewish women in Glasgow were touched by all of these things to varying degrees. In revisiting everyday experiences in the past, achieving a balance between such momentous events and more mundane influences is not easy. Hence, although there is no specific chapter devoted to, for example, the subject matter of the First World War, this is not to deny the immense impact of this event on Jews in Glasgow. Naturally, where it is relevant, the effects of the war are accounted for as they impacted on individuals. In any case, when looking overall at the key experiences

of women in this communal group, the war is not a dominant feature. In the existing historiography of Glasgow Jewry, the First World War is certainly viewed as an epoch changing event and this stance is somewhat reversed for this study.

A different chronology is used for this thesis that is more relevant to changes at the micro-level of Glasgow's Jewish community. Thus this account examines themes that seem to better define the sequence of transformations that affected people identified as an immigrant group in Scotland. These are: the settlement of Jews in the Gorbals district; secondly, ways of making a living; and thirdly, the upward social mobility of Glasgow's Jews. In addition, a fourth theme is that of domesticity and the relationship Scottish Jewish women had with this. This aspect is important for revealing the operation of gendered roles and the way that home life changed in response to the migration process. A fifth theme is the involvement of women in their community, outside of the home. Lastly, there is the recurring motif of how the history of this particular community is retold in both written and oral contexts.

Explanation of key terms in the thesis.

First and foremost, it is essential to be clear about what is meant by the description Jewish, which is an identity that is far from being as clear cut as might be supposed. One notable historian of Anglo Jewry commented in 1988 that 'Most British Jews resent the "race-relations industry", and many object to being termed an "ethnic minority" [sic].'² This is probably less true in the present day when the description 'ethnic identity' has become more commonplace and is generally accepted by the public, Jews included. Yet the common conflation of ethnicity with 'race', as opposed

² Alderman, G. 'Changing Political Allegiances' in Merrick, J (ed.) *The Lit at Home: A Celebration of the Centenary of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society 1888-1988* (Edinburgh, 1988) p.34.

to the separation of these two terms, which is in fact imbedded in the meaning of ethnicity, still has troubling connotations for many Jews. The notion that there may be a fixed Jewish identity definable either by biology or social construction has racist undertones and is clearly repugnant. However, if Jewish identity is not fixed what then does it mean to be a Jew? Within this thesis, the description 'Jewish' will be used as a commonsense title for people who self identified as Jews *and* were identifiable because of this. This group includes those who adhered to Jewish religious belief and those who had little or no religious faith. These 'secular' Jews are now recognised as having an ethnic identity that owes its character to traditional cultural patterns, and usually the individual's genealogical connection with Jews as a people. In this context, the growth of political Zionism in our period is also significant; Zionism proved a cultural rallying call to many Jews, which served to increase group identification as this nationalist movement gathered momentum. Thus, Jewish identity can involve religious belief, cultural patterns, and inheritance, but not necessarily all three at once. Following migration, there were also countless others who disengaged themselves from Judaism and from their Jewish ethnicity. This work is not concerned with this group, which by its nature is very difficult to identify and must be considered as totally assimilated, the latter being another term that requires some comment.

The terms integration and assimilation can be unclear as to meaning and indeed, are sometimes used as interchangeable descriptions in respect of immigrants. This confusion is probably a remnant of outmoded sociological models of the migration process that use the incomer/host society paradigm. This kind of model holds that incoming groups who become integrated accept membership of the receiving society and adopt most of its habits and values; in return, religious liberty and freedom to pursue traditional norms of family life are tolerated. In this view, integration should

lead to assimilation, which entails complete adaptation to the receiving society, the gradual disappearance of distinctive traits, and total invisibility within the host society. This model has always been problematic for many Jews as part of their endurance as a distinctive group is due to the avoidance of exogamy, which is a major factor in promoting assimilation by these measurements.³ For Jews then, settled integration is not the same thing as assimilation, and the latter has become a dangerous word that threatens group survival. Moreover, in the case of Jews, the Holocaust destroyed much of the optimism inherent in this view of seamless assimilation. Within the timeframe of this thesis, the successor to this model, that is, cultural pluralism, was not part of the social landscape; and yet Jews did settle within the local environment and strove to become integrated economically and socially while maintaining their own distinct culture. In a sense they anticipated this later trend towards of plurality in society, and by such a measure, they did become an integrated group. Group survival was by and large dependant on those who maintained essential ethnic traditions, even while becoming acculturated with local habits. The emergence of the kosher haggis is perhaps a glib way of describing this process, but it paints an evocative picture! However, it is important to remember that what is commonly left out of the account of Jewish integration is the specific effects that this ambition had on women in immigrant families within Jewish communities. And here again, is another description often associated with Jews.

In an interview conducted for this study, one elderly Jewish woman stated: ‘wherever they go, Jews are known as a community.’⁴ This interviewee’s comment exposes at

³ For discussion of this perceived problem see: Webster, W. ‘Defining boundaries: European volunteer worker women in Britain and narratives of community,’ *Women’s History Review* 9:2 (2000) pp. 257-276.

⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

least one difficulty with the description 'community'. Who defines the Jewish community? Is membership conferred or self-selected or both? This distinction matters, since to be included or excluded from a communal group can have repercussions not just for individuals, but also for how the group is viewed. At present, the word community is suggestive of positive virtues; it carries meaning that infers love of tradition, and social cohesiveness. For this reason, many ethnic groups themselves append the word community to a description of their social category, even when this proves to be made up of quite diverse people. For example, the majority of Jews in Glasgow were and are adherents to the Orthodox form of their religion, at least where they have had a religious affiliation. Many however, did not, and asserted their Jewish identity through political and cultural affiliations. As time moved on, a minority of Glaswegian Jews also joined the Reform movement in Judaism, and maintained their link through this. Likewise, although the majority were of Lithuanian extraction, there were some with other continental origins, for example, Poles and Germans. Over time, the ethnic identity of Jews living in Glasgow altered, and the unifying feature that distinguished them was their Jewishness however it was expressed, and the fact of their residency in Scotland, which led to the formation of a singular Scottish, Jewish identity.

This Jewish community was made up of people who self-identified because of their affiliation with either religious or non-religious Jewish organisations. Yet there were others who did not take an active part in any communal structures, but nevertheless asserted themselves as Jews and by their own inclination, they were part of a communal group in Scottish society. The words community and communal are used throughout this thesis with awareness that these are slippery descriptions that defy concise definition, and cognisant of the fact that we are all aware of how assigned

meanings can change. Over the timeframe involved here it is certainly true that Jews were known by wider Scottish society as ‘a community’ and that Jewish religious, cultural, political and welfare organisations were viewed as communal institutions. That is, they belonged to, and worked for those within the Jewish community. In this way, non-Jews conferred membership of the Jewish community from outwith it. However, Jews also appropriated this term, as much because of its positive connotations. It would be intrusive to offer a precise definition every time these descriptions are used, but the reader should be aware that, broadly speaking, community is used to refer to Jews living in Glasgow as a collective, but this does not override the heterogeneous nature of the individuals concerned. Community, in this definition has neutral meaning, implying no special moral attributes. Likewise, communal structures and organisations did not always reflect the views, or attract the loyalty of all Glaswegian Jews, but notwithstanding, they were usually seen as part of ‘the community’ from both inside it and out.

Sources.

A multiplicity of sources was called on to meet the thematic requirements that have been outlined. These include Jewish archival documents; official records such as parliamentary and local government papers; newspapers, in particular the local Jewish press; oral sources and other forms of personal testimony. Some expanded comment is appropriate on newspaper sources and on personal testimony. The London based *Jewish Chronicle*, which has been published since 1841 did cover news ‘from the provinces’ including Glasgow. The *Chronicle*’s coverage varied and the metropolitan bias of its editorial approach is undeniable. However, in the absence of other documentary records it does sometimes provide insights into the charitable and social activities of women within the established community of Jews in Glasgow. Likewise,

the paper's opinion was regularly far from impartial on the subject of immigration, but even so it provides an illuminating documentary source in respect of the relationship of patronage that developed between the Jewish establishment and those who arrived in the later nineteenth century. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the *Chronicle* provided the most important record of Jewish responses to social, political and cultural life across the UK, its position was never under threat. However, the pace of immigration and the growth of communities outside of London did promote diversification in the Jewish press.

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre are continuing to unearth evidence of a Yiddish press in Glasgow. But it is a measure of the rapid acculturation which took place following the first generation of migration that these attempts seem to have foundered and were replaced with English language papers. The most successful of these was *The Jewish Echo* (1928- 1994) back copies of which are housed in the Archives. The *Echo* has provided a rich documentary source for this study. In particular, its coverage of the activities of women's cultural and political groups during the interwar years has proved an invaluable aid given that the records of these societies have often been lost. The local nature of the *Echo*'s readership also means that the minutiae of community life is included, although it must be said that the *Echo* never shied away from the bigger issues of Jewish life. For example, from its inception, the *Echo* championed the cause of political Zionism and in the 1930s it fully engaged with the plight of German Jews.

As a source, personal testimony also deserves further elaboration in order to demonstrate something of the approach made to it within this thesis. In telling their life histories the people interviewed by myself generally spoke at length about their

childhood, schooling, working lives, and families; to varying degrees they also talked about major events that had an impact on their personal lives.⁵ To use the analogy of the world wars again, in the oral histories collected for this study some interviewees spoke at length about the impact of war, others barely mentioned it. This did have the strange effect of making some large-scale events seem relatively unimportant and is a clear indication of how memory does not act as a linear narrative. Indeed we all select memories according to a personal hierarchy of importance that is dependent on subjective judgements. Moreover, it indicates how it is possible that ‘the political impinges on individual lives in very different ways from the personal.’⁶ However, the subjective element of oral histories is now acknowledged as one of the strengths of this source even if it creates problems of interpretation.⁷ Thus, in constructing a history of how migration to Scotland affected Jewish women, a linear narrative has sometimes had to be imposed in order to chart the history of Eastern European migrants from arrival up until the immediate post-war years. Moreover, this approach must integrate what are the key events at the level of experience for this group as a whole. In order to meet these requirements, and tackle the argument that integral to this process of immigration were changes in gender relations, a variety of source material has been utilised that includes personal testimony but does not privilege it.

Oral testimony is used throughout the thesis, but this is not a study about the merits or otherwise of this particular methodology. Notwithstanding this comment, it is no longer possible to utilise this kind of source uncritically. A mass of theory now surrounds the methodology, treatment, and special insights that oral material are

⁵ See Appendix 1 for further details of interviewees and interviewing techniques employed.

⁶ Quoted in Lummis, T. ‘Structure and validity in oral evidence’ in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London, 2nd edition, 2000) p.277.

⁷ See for example the approach employed by Penny Summerfield in *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998)

concerned with. So, at various points in this analysis comment will be made about the utility of personal narratives, both oral and written. It is possible that an account of Jewish women in Glasgow could have been made without recourse to personal testimony, but it would have been a less inclusive account since documentary sources rarely convey views from the perspective of immigrant families themselves. The use of personal testimony therefore, offers the opportunity to present evidence that is based on an alternative historical consciousness and is extremely valuable because of this.

Likewise, analysis also embraces written testimony in the form of autobiographies and memoirs. There is a compelling reason for this in the case of Glasgow Jewry in that the image and identity of Glaswegian Jews is bound up with a particular sense of place and this has been prominent in memoirs. Immigrant life took root in the Gorbals district of Glasgow [see map B in Appendix 2] and two notable personal memoirs of Jewish life there have been published. By coincidence one of these was written by a woman, and the other by a man. Somewhat less coincidentally perhaps, these two works provide very different interpretations of Gorbals life, and have been assumed to be largely antagonistic in their differences, producing conflicting memories. These two works that ostensibly have so much in common, are a useful case study for examining the way that personal testimony can be a useful tool for understanding diversity of personal experience despite the challenges of interpreting individual memories.

Evelyn Cowan's memoir, *Spring Remembered – A Scottish Jewish Childhood*, was published in 1974 and this work, which has had three reprints, has been influential in the creation of what might be termed by critics as a sanitised version of Gorbals

Jewry during the period following the Great War. Cowan affectionately depicts a: 'Ghetto-like existence' from which, 'the city of Glasgow seemed far away, the world even more remote.'⁸ This author received acclaim for her work from within the Jewish community of which she was a member, and from outwith this. In contrast the writer Ralph Glasser who was born in the Gorbals in roughly the same period, portrays a very contrary image of Gorbals Jewry; One that is as grim and serious about the poverty experienced there, as Cowan's is optimistic and cheerful in the face of very real adversity. Glasser's portrait of *Growing up in the Gorbals* first published in 1986 also received a wide readership and critical approval, although its reception by Glaswegian Jewry was mixed.⁹

In tackling the autobiographical work of Cowan and Glasser, it is impossible to treat them as texts that simply reflect the reality of life in the Gorbals in the 1920s and 1930s, although they are sometimes approached this way. Nor indeed is it useful to reject them as evidence because of the way they contradict one another. Clearly both of these narratives have been influenced by different versions of accepted wisdom about the Gorbals, and affected by each author's own individual perspectives in later life about what their common past amounted to. The gender difference which shapes the memories conveyed in these two works, is striking, and yet this aspect of their difference is generally unacknowledged. Cowan's book is filled with female protagonists, strong and intelligent women who clearly influenced her future life which was lived out entirely in the heart of Jewish Glasgow.¹⁰ Glasser on the other hand, took flight from Glasgow as a young man and his memories of the Gorbals are principally with the men who shaped his own

⁸ Cowan, E. *Spring Remembered: A Scottish Jewish Childhood* (Edinburgh, 1974) p.18.

⁹ Glasser, R. *Growing up in the Gorbals* (London, 1986) Glasser died in 2002 at the age of 85.

¹⁰ Evelyn Cowan died in Glasgow in 1998 at the age of 77.

concerns—work, politics, street fighting, and his struggle to get an education.

Where women do appear, they are in the guise of downtrodden victims of the Gorbals or as women who adopted ruthless methods to escape this fate.

Cowan recalls the dynamism and inventiveness of her female relatives who worked to provide an emotionally and economically secure household. When asked about the discrepancies between her own memories of the Gorbals and those of Glasser's, Cowan commented that she felt 'he had misremembered, and that although life was hard, the deprivations were not as he remembered.'¹¹ The questions raised by such a dilemma obviously have implications for the treatment of oral testimony in this area. When second and third generation women recount memories of growing up in the Gorbals, these recollections do seem to be fashioned very largely by what happened within the family. The rituals of family life surround memories of their first generation parents and grandparents. These include the mundane aspects of life like meal preparation, and the celebrations occasioned by births, weddings and the graduations of brothers. Men on the other hand, have more vivid recollections of life as lived outside of family life and the home - education, work, social pursuits and even trips to typically male enclaves like barbers' shops and racetracks - are included.

The evidence so far demonstrated might well lead to the supposition that experience of living in the Gorbals is always likely to form a distinctively gendered narrative. Yet gender historians have questioned the rigidity of a 'separate spheres' model for

¹¹ Quoted in *The Edinburgh Star, Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community*. 9 March 1991, p.20.

understanding female and male experience in the past.¹² Clearly an approach to understanding Jewish women's lives as lived, which used this model stringently, would be in danger of repeating some sins of old by erroneously confining female experience to the home and ignoring their life outside it. It will be demonstrated in this thesis that immigrant women did not spend all of their time at home, and Gorbals street life was not at all times empty of female influences. Instead, dominant historical discourses have created this image and these in turn have had an effect on how female experiences can be narrated.

Analysis of oral testimony in this area needs to be sensitive to the fact that it is constructed out of an amalgam of public, gendered images. From a male perspective the streets of the Gorbals are largely recalled as no place for women. Somewhat unsurprisingly then, when women who lived and worked there are recalled, such narration usually conjures them up in a domestic setting concerned with private family matters. In the specific case of immigrant women, memories of them are often constructed in the light of prescriptions at large in Scottish society that ostensibly regulated female behaviour. Yet as Vickery has pointed out, the currency of such ideas needs to be 'demonstrated, not taken as read.'¹³

Nevertheless, ideals about the position of women within the home had a particular effect on immigrant families.

In the Gorbals many features of traditional Eastern European Jewish life came under threat and in response to this a greater investment was made in religious and cultural

¹² Vickery, A. 'Golden Age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history' in Shoemaker, R. and Vincent, M. (eds.) *Gender and History in Western Europe* (London, 1998) pp.197-225.

¹³ Ibid, p.220.

values perpetuated within the privacy of the home. Thus in 1928 an article in the *Jewish Echo* entitled 'The remedy for Assimilation' concluded that: 'The HOME [sic] is undoubtedly the most important factor in Jewish national life.'¹⁴ The role of women in the home was seen as pivotal in maintaining Jewish traditions. Thus the home became a highly charged area responsible for two convergent, yet strangely paradoxical ambitions in the process of greater integration. The level of integration that was demanded of immigrants entailed encouraging them to aspire to an image of femininity that was firmly domestic. Yet the home, and women's position within it, was also important for stemming the flow of loss through assimilation to the values of wider Scottish society. However, contrary to these ideals, oral evidence of Jewish women's roles in getting a living and providing for their families contradicts this domestic ideal. Such evidence rarely surfaces in either historical narratives or in a great deal of popular works. As will be seen, the boundaries of what we generally perceive as 'public' and 'private' spheres do require to be re-evaluated in respect of immigrant women's lives, because clearly they moved between both. Personal testimony has provided insights that have been invaluable for understanding gender relations within the community and the gendered nature of memories.

Review of Literature.

The exploration that follows covers convergent areas of women's, Scottish, and Jewish history. This is a combination that has not previously been attempted, and in order to furnish some background it is assumed that the reader will wish to know something more about the Jewish element in this historical synthesis. Scholarship in women's and Scottish history that is also relevant will be utilised in the text at appropriate points; however space precludes lengthy examination of these. The following brief review of

¹⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 20/04/1928 p.3.

Jewish scholarship is dealt with in the following order: British Jewish history, Scottish Jewish history, and lastly, relevant histories of Jewish women that take account of gender in their analysis.

British Jewish History

The title 'British Jewish' as applied to historical treatment of Jews is somewhat new; it has come into usage only since the 1990s and previous to this, the descriptions English and British were used interchangeably in this context.¹⁵ Even so, there has been no shortage of interest in the history of Jews in Britain. A general consensus existed until at least the start of the 1980s that the history of Jews in these islands had been all but completely recovered and no stone of experience had been left unturned.¹⁶ Indeed, a comprehensive review of such literature would be voluminous and is in any case already available in a variety of places.¹⁷ What follows therefore, does no more than repeat some of the basic facts of scholarly development in this area since 1960, in order to provide a summary backdrop and show that examination of the case of Jewish women in Glasgow fills gaps in many places within the existing body of knowledge.

Keen amateur historians within the Jewish Historical Society of England had been in existence since 1893.¹⁸ However, it was Lloyd Gartner's seminal text - *The Jewish*

¹⁵ Kershen, A. 'From celebrationists to confrontationists: some thoughts on British Jewish historiography in the twentieth century,' *Immigrants and Minorities* 19:2 (2000) pp.91-2.

¹⁶ Holmes, C. 'Historians and immigration' in Drake, M (ed.) *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History* (Oxford, 1996) p.167; Englander, D. 'Jewish East London', in Pryce, W. (ed.) *From Family History to Community History* (Cambridge, 1994) p.181.

¹⁷ See for example: Cesarani, D. (ed.) 'Introduction' in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990) pp.1-11; Englander, D. *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920* (Leicester, 1994) pp.365-370; Gartner, L. Preface to Third Edition of *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914* (London, 2001) pp.ix-xxi; Gartner, L. 'A quarter century of Anglo-Jewish historiography', *Jewish Social Studies* 48:2 (1986) pp.105-126; Kershen, 'From celebrationists to confrontationists,' pp.91-106; Stansky, P. 'Anglo-Jew or English/British? Some dilemmas of Anglo-Jewish history,' *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society* 2: 1 (1995) pp.159-178.

¹⁸ Scholarly papers are still published regularly as: *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*.

Immigrant in England - first published in 1960, which really marks the start of serious professional analysis.¹⁹ This book covers the period from the 1870s until 1914, when the Jewish population of Britain increased enormously due to the impact of mass migration from Eastern Europe. Predictably, Gartner's work stimulated new interest in this particular strand of migration, but this attention did not bear much fruit until, with the expansion of 'social history' that took place in the 1970s, a different approach to the practice of Jewish history began to take hold.²⁰ In the revisionist spirit of the time, the severe limitations of the overall approach to what had become known as *Anglo-Jewish* history were justifiably exposed. Much of the existing historiography, including to an extent Gartner's work, was condemned as overly metropolitan, celebratory of Jewish success, and hagiographic.

Prior to the era of Jewish mass migration, Britain had been home to a fairly settled Jewish group that included a small Jewish community in Glasgow. Many in this section of UK society were wealthy, and preferred to identify themselves as patriotic British subjects 'of the Mosaic persuasion'.²¹ So, a great deal of the historical output had been concerned with the progress and contribution made by this elite. Gartner's examination had certainly shifted attention away from the privileged within British Jewry, and made an admirable attempt to recover the experience of newer immigrants; to be fair, it was far from celebratory. However, there did remain something of a metropolitan bias in Gartner's work. Since the majority of Eastern European migrants settled in London this tendency was explainable. Nevertheless, criticism was reasonable on the grounds that the metropolitan experience was used as prototypical

¹⁹ Gartner, L. *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870–1914* (First published London, 1960, 2nd edition London, 1973, 3rd edition, London and Portland, 2001.)

²⁰ Endelman, T. 'In defence of Jewish social history,' *Jewish Social Studies* 7:3 (2001) pp.52-67.

²¹ Quoted in Kadish, S. 'A Good Jew or a Good Englishmen? : The Jewish Lads' Brigade and Anglo-Jewish Identity' in Kershen, A. (ed.) *A Question of Identity* (Aldershot, 1998) p.79.

for all immigrant Jews in Britain, a situation that was somewhat misleading. As the numbers of immigrants increased, dispersal occurred; and as we shall see this resulted in the formation of large immigrant communities across the country, including in Glasgow. Jews in the towns and cities of the North of England and in Scotland adapted differently to the local economic, political, and social cultures of adopted hometowns. Communal statistics collected from synagogue returns for the numbers of Jews settled in the UK are far from precise. However, the following estimated figures give some idea of the huge increase in the Jewish population that took place:

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Actual increase</i> | <i>% Increase</i> |
|-------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1891 | 101,189 | — | — |
| 1901 | 160,000 | +58,811 | +58.1 |
| 1905 | 227,166 | +67,166 | +41.9 |
| 1911 | 237,760 | +10,594 | +4.6 |
| 1916 | 257,000 | +19,240 | +8.1 |
| 1921 | 300,000 | +43,000 | +16.7 |

Table 1.1: Jews in the UK, 1891-1921. Source: *The Jewish Yearbook* (London, 1896-present.)

According to Feldman, about 120,000 Eastern European Jews settled in Britain between 1880 and 1914, and of these, approximately half were resident in London.²²

Cumulative population growth was due mainly to ongoing immigration up until the advent of the Aliens Act in 1905, which was an attempt to constrain further Jewish immigration.²³ Thereafter, growth was mostly as a result of natural increase in a group where large families were still the norm.

²² Feldman, D. 'The importance of being English: Jewish immigration and the decay of liberal England' in Feldman, D and Stedman-Jones, G. (eds.) *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations Since 1800* (London, 1989) p.56.
²³ See Gainer, B. *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London, 1972.)

By the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s what most attracted concentrated interest from social historians was this period of peak population increase, roughly between 1880 and 1914, and its repercussions in London. New work covered a variety of different social aspects of immigrant lives. For example, White's micro-study of the inhabitants of the East End's Rothschild Buildings is notable for including the voices of many former inhabitants of this working class residence.²⁴ Similarly Schmiechen's examination of work in the clothing industries, which were the staple areas of immigrant employment, turned the focus away from the elite and their institutions and highlighted the impact of investigations and legislation on London's clothing workers.²⁵ Particularly problematic areas of immigrant life were also studied in selected works, but these too showed a bias towards the case of London's Jews, one example being Bristow's *Prostitution and Prejudice*, which includes analysis for Britain but really only covers the case of London.²⁶

All of these publications emerged over the decade of the 1980s, and to a lesser or greater extent, engaged with issues that had been either ignored or underplayed in the more traditional work that had preceded them.²⁷ Furthermore, despite a continuing partiality for the immigrant Jews of London, a wide variety of new researches created heightened awareness of the way that Jewish immigrants had responded to British society, and indeed how British society had responded to them. The issues surrounding anti-alienism were imbedded in much of this output, but studies that took this as their

²⁴ White, G. *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block 1887-1920* (London, 1980.) See also: Fishman, W. J. *East End 1888: A Year in a London Borough among the Labouring Poor* (London, 1988.)

²⁵ Schmiechen, J. *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labour: The London Clothing Trades 1860-1914* (London, 1984.)

²⁶ Bristow, E. *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery, 1870-1939* (New York, 1983), and 'British Jewry and the fight against the white-slave traffic, 1885-1914,' *Immigrants and Minorities*, 2:2 (1983) pp.152-170.

²⁷ The foremost example being: Lipman, V. *A Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950* (London, 1954); See also the later: *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858* (Leicester, 1989.)

central issue really begin with the publication in 1979 of Holmes' *Anti-Semitism in British Society*.²⁸ Previous to this, overt acknowledgement of the operation of British anti-Semitism was a subject that was treated as so un-British and so unusual, as to be unmentionable. However, Holmes' treatment set the ball rolling for others to grapple with the peculiarities of anti-Semitism in the UK context.²⁹

Examinations followed about social relations amongst Jews in the workplace, the synagogue and in working class areas of settlement. Within this increased output, work that examined the crises of the 1930s in Europe and the cataclysm of World War Two also attracted attention. This produced analysis of the later strand of migrants who were fleeing Nazi persecution, and the political responses to them.³⁰ Some comparative work of anti-Semitism in a variety of national settings has emerged in addition, providing a context to what is, after all, a universal and not a parochial issue.³¹ Nevertheless, the way in which anti-Semitism can have a disastrous effect on the lives of Jews at a local level, and in the context of specific historical moments is equally relevant and some attempts have been made to recover these instances, which are too easily overlooked.³² These studies have in part come about because of the need to show that outright numbers of Jews may not be the only, or indeed the most significant factor in promoting prejudice. They have also emerged because Jewish

²⁸ Holmes, C. *Anti-Semitism in British Society* (London, 1979); See also review essay by Colin Holmes 'Britain and the Jews of Europe,' *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 22:1 (1980) pp.59-71.

²⁹ See for example, Kushner, T. *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989) and Kushner, T. and Lunn, K. (eds.) *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester, 1989.)

³⁰ Hirschfeld, G. (ed.) *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany* (Leamington Spa, 1984); Sherman, A. *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (London, 1973); Wasserstein, B. *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979)

³¹ Lindemann, A. *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge, 2000). See also, the various essays in: Wistrich, R. *Between Redemption and Perdition: Modern Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity* (London, 1990.)

³² For example: Kushner, T. 'Anti-Semitism and austerity: the August 1947 riots in Britain' in Panayi, P. (ed.) *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, 1996) pp.150-170.

social history also occasionally looked beyond the London horizon, demonstrating that anti-Semitism can flourish in localities where comparatively small Jewish groups live. For example, Alderman has looked at anti-Jewish disturbances in South Wales.³³ And Maitles has examined anti-foreigner sentiment in the West of Scotland.³⁴

Perhaps in an effort to counteract the metropolitan bias of Gartner’s work, histories specifically about other Jewish centres emerged. Krausz began this with an examination of Leeds’ Jews in 1964.³⁵ This marked the beginning of a modern treatment of what was quaintly termed ‘provincial’ English Jewry. The dispersal of Jews across the UK to other English cities, and as we shall see, Scottish urban centres, can be statistically demonstrated as follows:

| | 1906 | 1921 | 1952 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| London | 138,860 | 170,000 | 289,000 |
| Manchester | 28,000 | 32,000 | 36,000 |
| Leeds | 20,000 | 25,000 | 29,000 |
| Glasgow | 6,500 | 14,000 | 15,000 |
| Liverpool | 7000 | 7000 | 9000 |
| Birmingham | 4000 | 6000 | 8000 |

Table 1.2: Jewish population in the six largest centres of UK Jewish settlement.

There is a caveat attached to such figures, rendering them the best approximations. Demographic data in this area can never be wholly reliable due to the internal mobility of some migrants who moved between centres after initial immigration; and in addition a certain amount of self-selection was often involved in counting numbers.

³³ Alderman, G. ‘The Jew as scapegoat: the settlement and reception of Jews in South Wales before 1914,’ *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, (1974-1978) pp.62-70.
³⁴ Maitles, H. ‘Attitudes to Jewish immigration in the west of Scotland,’ *Scottish Economic and Social History* 15 (1995) pp.44-65.
³⁵ Krausz, E. *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge, 1964.)

Immigrants who opted out of Jewish communal structures regularly became invisible to a variety of enumerations, although they may still have very much identified themselves as Jews. For example, over the period under enquiry for this thesis, there was no religious or ethnic question on the national census. The figures above for 1952 were collected on the basis of a survey conducted by Neustatter in 1950, which sent out a questionnaire to 55 Jewish communities outside London; and for the years 1906 and 1921, on statistics collected for the annual *Jewish Yearbook*.³⁶ It is fairly clear that these numbers are approximations. The *Yearbook* statistics for example, are based on synagogue membership rolls and so exclude Jews not affiliated in this way. Thus the figure of 6,500 given for Glasgow in 1906 is almost certainly an underestimate of the numbers for the city at this time. At the turn of the century the Jewish population of Glasgow was demographically youthful and still struggling economically. This would account for a lower rate of paid up membership to synagogues, and hence a calculation of the population that was probably out of date.

Neustatter's study in 1950 was however, in the vanguard of demographic enquiries.³⁷ These became more popular from the 1960s onwards, perhaps partly as a correction to the lack of accurate data that was available for the past. Indeed, during the 1960s and 70s sociologists and demographers appeared to commandeer the field of Jewish studies in the UK, much influenced by previous and contemporaneous work done in North America. This trend might in part account for the time lag between the

³⁶ The survey was conducted by Dr. Hannah Neustatter and findings were published in Freedman, M. (ed.) *A Minority in Britain: Social Studies of the Anglo-Jewish Community* (London, 1955). Statistics for 1906 and 1921 published in respective editions of *The Jewish Yearbook*.

³⁷ Neustatter, H. 'Demographic and other statistical aspects of Anglo-Jewry' in *A Minority in Britain*, pp. 55-133 & 245-260; see also: Kosmin, B. 'Nuptiality and fertility patterns of British Jewry 1850-1980: an immigrant transition' in Coleman, D. (ed.) *Demography of Immigrants and Minority Groups in the United Kingdom* (London, 1982) pp.245-261; for problems associated with demography of British Jewry see: Prais, S. 'Statistical research: needs and prospects' in Gould and Esh (eds.) *Jewish Life in Modern Britain* (London, 1964) pp.111-135.

appearance of Gartner's book, and the later flourishing of historical treatments in the 1980s. The issues which exercised the imaginations of sociologists and demographers of migration at this time, had to do with the effects of modernisation on Jewish continuity in a post mass migration era, and in the wake of the effects of the holocaust. On the whole this kind of research usually included some brief historical perspective based on the literature then available, but little in the way of new material on the past.³⁸ However, interest in Jews beyond London, and in issues raised by sociological analysis, then combined with the new interest in writing social history to revitalise hitherto ignored aspects of the migrant experience. This formed the basis for the new historical work that did emerge during the 1980s. Yet recovery of neglected elements did not change the landscape sufficiently to effect a name change and the history of British Jews was still called *Anglo-Jewish* history.

In an important anthology of new work published in 1990, David Cesarani introduced a series of essays that attempted to use new approaches to the history of Jewish settlement in Britain. Included in the *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* was analysis that incorporated theoretical considerations in the areas of gender and culture, as well as class and ethnicity.³⁹ Moreover, evidence used by some authors originated not in

³⁸ For example: Benski, T. *Interethnic Relations in a Glasgow Suburb* (Unpublished thesis, University of Glasgow, 1976) and 'Identification, group survival and inter-group relations,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4:3 (1981) pp.307-319; Cromer, G. *A Comparison of Jewish and Non-Jewish Family Life with Special Reference to Intergenerational Relations* (Unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 1973) and 'Intermarriage and communal survival in a London suburb,' *Jewish Journal of Sociology* (hereafter *JJS*) 16:1 (1974) pp.155-169; Gottlieb, P. *Social Mobility of the Jewish Immigrant* (Unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 1970); Krausz, E. *A Sociological Field Study of Jewish Suburban Life in Edgware* (Unpublished thesis, London University, 1965) and 'The Edgware survey: occupation and social class,' *JJS*, 11:1 (1969) pp.75-95, 'The Edgware survey: factors in Jewish identification,' *JJS* 11: 2 (1969) 151-163; Prais, S & Schmool, M. 'Statistics of Milah and the Jewish Birth-rate in Britain,' *JJS* 12:2 (1970) pp.187-193 and 'The social-class structure of Anglo-Jewry, 1961,' *JJS* 17:1 (1975) pp.5-15; Prais, S. 'Synagogue statistics and the Jewish population of Great Britain,' *JJS* 14:2, (1972) pp. 215-228.

³⁹ Cesarani, D. (ed.) *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990.)

London, but from the second largest area of Jewish settlement in Manchester.⁴⁰ Other chapters were devoted to fresh approaches to some existing areas of study, including, for example, Kershen's comparison of Jewish Trade Unions in London and Leeds, and Louise London's analysis of the immigrant wave of refugee Jews in the 1930s.⁴¹

Issues generally surrounding Jews and migration to the UK have continued to be revisited since this time yet a bias towards political analysis has remained. For example, David Feldman's work has attracted attention because of its attempt to move Jewish history into the mainstream of British history.⁴² While this might be considered a radical move, Feldman does concentrate the part of his analysis concerned with eastern European migrants firmly within what have become the traditional areas of interest, namely labour, politics and social relations between the Jewish establishment and the immigrant community. Finally, there has been some notice given to comparative approaches and this has resulted in two publications both of which compare the case of Britain with Germany.⁴³ On the whole, the case of Anglo-Jewry has so often been seen as exceptional that this has apparently discouraged comparison, creating a static view that undoubtedly would benefit from more enquiries. This has been a very abbreviated review of work, but it demonstrates the way that politics, labour and social class relations have loomed large in historical interest, and have to some extent, monopolised the field much in the way that histories of an elite and their institutions dominated the older Anglo-Jewish history.

⁴⁰ Burman, R. 'Jewish Women and the Household Economy in Manchester,' pp. 55-75; Livishin, R. 'The Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester' pp.79-96 both in Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*.

⁴¹ Kershen, A. 'Trade unionism amongst the Jewish tailoring workers of London and Leeds, 1872-1915' pp.34-52, and London, L. 'Jewish refugees, Anglo-Jewry and British government policy' pp.163-190, both in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*.

⁴² Feldman, D. *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914* (New Haven, 1994.)

⁴³ Brenner, M. *et al.* (eds.) *Two Nations: British and German Jews in Comparative Perspective* (London, 1999); Liedtke, R. *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester, c.1850-1914* (Oxford, 1998.)

British Jewish History – and Scotland.

The exposé of new work in the *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* in 1990 did deserve the title of Anglo-Jewish, as Scottish Jews were conspicuously absent. Research into the case of Scottish Jewry was greatly facilitated by the opening of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre (SJAC) in 1987. This much-needed facility is housed within Scotland's oldest surviving synagogue in the Victorian district of Garnethill in Glasgow. Interest in Scottish Jews up until this point had been confined to one short monograph by Levy published in 1958, and based on a paper given by the author to the Jewish Historical Society of England.⁴⁴ In addition, and in keeping with trends at the time, a sociologist – Tova Benski – produced a study in 1976 into interethnic relations between Jews and non-Jews in the suburb of Newton Mearns on the outskirts of Glasgow.⁴⁵ Benski was able to furnish her analysis with brief, although sometimes insightful, historical perspectives on her case study. And this carefully conducted survey has provided invaluable data, which has been useful for this thesis.

The case of German refugees in Scotland was also examined in a single piece of research. Numerically fewer refugees came to Scotland as compared with England, but their presence did have an impact. Rayner Kolmel's research completed in 1980 investigated the reception and settlement (largely temporary) of German Jews in Scotland.⁴⁶ Kolmel's work concentrated on the relations between Scottish Jews and refugees, and he clearly shows that in the early years these were not always relaxed, but that in the wake of the war much was resolved for those refugees who choose to

⁴⁴ Levy, A. *The Origins of Scottish Jewry* (London, 1958.)

⁴⁵ Benski, T. *Interethnic Relations in a Glasgow Suburb* (Unpublished thesis, University of Glasgow, 1976.)

⁴⁶ As a non-German speaker, I was unable to consult Kolmel's complete work [*Die Geschichte Deutsch-Jüdischer Refugees in Schotland* (PhD dissertation, Heidelberg, 1980)] but a synopsis written by the author in English is available in Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, pp. 57-84; see also 'Problems of Settlement' in Hirschfeld, G. *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany* (Leamington Spa, 1984) pp. 251-277.

remain in Scotland. His analysis is pertinent in that it demonstrates the separate identity of Scottish Jewry that had developed by the 1930s and 1940s. General histories of Anglo-Jewish society usually tended to incorporate scanty material relating to Scotland within them, but with no reference to the separate national identity of Jews in Dundee, Edinburgh or Glasgow. This anomaly was explainable, even if difficult to forgive. Immigrant Jews themselves often conflated Scotland with England upon arrival in the UK, but generally speaking, it did not take them long to appreciate how the land lay. Historians were however, somewhat slower to realise this.

One of the specific difficulties of writing about Jews in Scotland's past has been that questions to do with the history of migration have become captive to two apparently overriding issues. The first of these is the overwhelming fact of Scottish *emigration*. Among European nations between 1861 and 1939, only Ireland lost proportionately more of its population through emigration than Scotland.⁴⁷ Thus, perhaps naturally, historians have gravitated towards explaining this situation at the expense of the contemporaneous flow of immigration. Somewhat ironically, the second major issue has been Irish *immigration* into Scotland. A combination of anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sectarianism has been a running sore in Scottish society for the past two centuries, and these issues have naturally attracted interest in the historical origins of the relationship between these immigrants and Scots. Put simply, Jewish immigration into Scotland has been sandwiched between these two influential trends, and in this context its history has been portrayed as something of model of toleration and seamless integration. The comparatively small numbers of Jews as against the much larger, and by and large earlier, influx of Irish has cast a long shadow over historical consciousness of immigrants in Scotland. Yet, it must be recognised that Eastern

⁴⁷ Flinn, M. *Scottish Population History* (Cambridge, 1977) p. 448.

European Jews were the second largest migrant group in nineteenth century Scotland, and considered as very much more exotic and foreign than their Irish counterparts.

This situation, together with the example of much Anglo-Jewish history, has made dissent from a standard narrative of uneventful, largely prejudice free, and welcoming arrival in Scotland for Jews, somewhat tricky. Something of the apologetic tone of the old Anglo-Jewish history persisted in Scotland for want of any challenge. This tenor, which Cesarani claims stressed: ‘the duration of Jewish settlement in Britain and the contribution of Jews to the “host” society’ meant that, ‘Jewish economic, political and cultural activity was [therefore] described largely in terms of the struggle for acceptance, the justice of Jewish claims and the extent to which Jews fulfilled the conditions of the emancipation bargain by becoming worthy British citizens.’⁴⁸ Jews did arrive in numbers a little later in Scotland than in England, but as they rarely had their separate identity acknowledged anyway, they were viewed historically as simply far-flung Anglo-Jews and written about in much the same vein, even within their own country. In the 1950s, the *Third Statistical Account for Scotland* quotes the Rabbi of Garnethill as saying that Glasgow was ‘a much pleasanter place for Jews to live in than most others in Europe.’⁴⁹ This may well have been a faithful personal opinion, but given that the events of the war must have been clearly in all minds at this time, this is a rather typical example of the bland sophistry that had come to be employed in respect of Jews in Scotland. In order to avoid mentioning any possible problems and skirt potential sensitivities, Jewish communal leaders often colluded in the rewriting of the past for the sake of a pleasanter future. In fact they behaved not so much as a pale

⁴⁸ Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.2.

⁴⁹ Rev. Dr. Cosgrove quoted in Hight, J. ‘Religious and racial relations’ in Cunnison, J and Gilfillan, J. B. S. (eds.) *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: Volume V, The City of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1958) p.754.

imitation of their apologetic English counterparts, but in a way that celebrated Scottish Jewish success with even more conviction. This tendency has had a long legacy. In the most recent coverage of Jews in an influential history of Scotland, it is commented that:

As they moved up the social ladder the Jews did not experience the same kind of systematic discrimination that was the lot of many Scots of Irish descent...⁵⁰

This sweeping judgement is fairly typical of the lack of attention given to the manner in which Jews did settle in Scotland, and the variety of their experience. Jewish immigrants are incorporated into the national history of Scotland generally using a static narrative of good relations, social improvement and communal integrity, all based on the known experiences of notable businessmen and male communal luminaries. Moreover, although it is undoubtedly the case that anti-Jewish prejudice was not as virulent in Scotland as in many other parts of the world, this is hardly a defence that it did not have an effect, or that it was experienced in a qualitatively different way from that imposed on many Irish immigrants. However, the absence of Jews as a highly visible impediment in labour and class relations, or in the political arena in Scotland has meant that their historical presence has been little scrutinised in these areas, or indeed elsewhere. Conversely, the political and ideological consequences of Irish immigration have been rendered highly visible because this has fitted well with a historical agenda that has concentrated on just such issues.

The will to rescue Scotland's Jewish history from the shadows of its English neighbour and into the limelight generally occupied by the Irish, was demonstrated in

⁵⁰ Devine, T. M. *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (London, 1999) p.521.

the setting up of the SJAC, and the publication of a short text to accompany this.

Aspects of Scottish Jewry pointed the way towards the rich seam of potential investigation awaiting interested researchers.⁵¹ The Archive itself has grown in the interim with new material turning up on a weekly basis, but as is regularly the case with such projects, there are limited funds to care for documents and disseminate their bounties.⁵² Among the instigators of this archive, was the author of the first published study of Jews in Glasgow. Kenneth Collins' *Second City Jewry* arrived in 1990, and this has become the standard text on Scotland's largest settlement of Jews and fourth largest UK Jewish community.⁵³ It made an extremely useful addition to the historiography of Jews in the UK, and was a correction to the continuing marginalization of Scotland, despite some interest in England's non-metropolitan Jews.⁵⁴

Collins' work charts the presence of Jews in Scotland during the late eighteenth century, and the rise of a Jewish community in Glasgow at the start of the nineteenth. He follows this development through to the end of the First World War. The periodisation applied was ambitious, but makes sense in the case of Glasgow Jewry. Jews were somewhat later to settle in Scotland than in other parts of the UK, and Collins wished to demonstrate this. He also describes in detail this fairly wealthy,

⁵¹ Collins, K. (ed.) *Aspects of Scottish Jewry* (Glasgow, 1987) See also: Collins, K *Jewish Medical Students and Graduates in Scotland: 1739-1945*. (Unpublished thesis, University of Glasgow, 1987) and subsequently, *Go and Learn: The International Story of Jews and Medicine in Scotland*. (Aberdeen, 1988.)

⁵² The SJAC flourishes despite financial starvation, mostly because of the enthusiasm, knowledge and dedication of the volunteer archivists who care for its contents. I am greatly indebted to them. However at present, access to the Archive is limited (Friday mornings, by appointment only) and this does pose some organisational difficulties for research that is protracted and detailed.

⁵³ Collins, K. *Second City Jewry: The Jews of Glasgow in the Age of Expansion 1790-1919* (Glasgow, 1990); See also by Collins: *Glasgow Jewry: A Guide to the History and Community of the Jews in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1993.)

⁵⁴ Jewish settlement in provincial cities and towns has however, continued to be marginalized in new works. In the most recent review of British Jewish Historiography, Anne Kershen mentions only one text on the subject, this being Williams' *Making of Manchester Jewry* (1976), published almost 30 years ago, see Kershen, 'From Celebrationists to Confrontationists,' pp. 91-106.

acculturated, but nevertheless compact community that flourished in Glasgow at the height of its status as second city of the Empire. His examination then moves on to cover the arrival of mainly impoverished Eastern European migrants in Glasgow, who began settling here in the 1870s. *Second City Jewry* is detailed, meticulous and thoroughly grounded in the wealth of new archival sources that were becoming available. All of these factors are its strengths and make it a reliable and invaluable reference tool. Yet, despite the fact that it arrived on the scene alongside new areas of inquiry into British Jews, it really owes a good deal to an older approach to Jewish immigration history. Collins' analysis is much concerned with the rise and maintenance of Jewish communal institutions, and there were no shortage of these in Glasgow. Moreover, he concerns himself with the men that drove forward these organisations, and the influences upon them. In this way it is a fact-laden book, dense with information about the when, who, what and where, but less concerned with the why.

The arrival of archival resources did however prompt more interest, and Braber's thesis –*Integration of Jewish Immigrants, 1880-1939* –which arrived shortly after this, was a further addition to what then appeared to be a growing field of enquiry.⁵⁵

Braber's study focuses on the Eastern European immigrants and the manner in which they became incorporated into Scottish society. It is strong on the economic base of the community and shows how Jews were able to fit within local trade and industry and were attracted to the city because of this. Overall, Braber concentrates on analysing the means taken by Jews to establish themselves both as a vibrant separate group, and as useful contributors to the overall social and economic climate of

⁵⁵ Braber, B. *Integration of Jewish Immigrants 1880-1939* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1992.)

Glasgow during periods of trade depression. In this way it departs from Collins' approach by taking a slightly more critical view of key aspects of life in the immigrant quarter, and in particular the dynamic between the established elite and the new immigrants over employment and welfare issues.

Both of these authors have given attention to some of the cultural aspects of immigrants' experiences in terms of education and associational life, but something of a hangover from the old ways of Anglo-Jewish history, where charting the rise and demise of institutions was considered vitally important, persisted in each of them. Unlike Collins though, Braber has engaged with the issue of anti-Jewish prejudice, although this subject had, by this time, found a writer of its own.⁵⁶ Henry Maitles' work is valuable for providing insights into aspects of Jewish life that are generally rather marginalized in the work of Collins and Braber.⁵⁷ The existence of left-wing politics among Jewish immigrants is acknowledged by Maitles, and he argues strongly for the issue of social class identity to be tackled in exploration of the Scottish Jewish past, in addition to the ethnic identity of the group. Maitles' work does introduce a more theoretical perspective into the historiography of Scottish Jewry that is perhaps lacking in other work. However, his arguments are strongly inclined towards bolstering the notion of a Jewish proletariat, and the persistence of this. As will be seen, this is an argument that is difficult to sustain given the marked upward mobility of most, although not all, immigrant families. A few other authors have also tackled

⁵⁶ See also: Braber, B. 'The trial of Oscar Slater (1909) and anti-Jewish prejudices in Edwardian Glasgow,' *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 88:2 (2003) pp.262-279.

⁵⁷ Maitles, H. 'Jewish trade unionists in Glasgow,' *Immigrants and Minorities*, 10:3 (1991) pp. 46-69; 'Fascism in the 1930s: The west of Scotland in the British context,' *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, 27 (1992) pp.7-22; 'Attitudes to Jewish immigration in the West of Scotland to 1905', *Scottish Economic and Social History* 15 (1995) pp.44-65; 'Confronting fascism: attitudes of the Glasgow Jewish community in the 1930s,' *The Local Historian* 27:2 (1997) pp.106-117; 'Blackshirts across the border: The British Union of Fascists in Scotland,' *The Scottish Historical Review* 213 (2003) pp. 92-100.

political anti-Semitism and fascism in Scotland, which has been more neglected north of the border than in the south.⁵⁸

The majority of published work on Scottish Jews is concerned with the largest community, that is, the Jews who lived in Glasgow; and for the most part, in a distinct area south of the river Clyde, within the greater Glasgow conurbation. Approximate figures for the growth of the Jewish population in Glasgow as compared with other Scottish cities are as follows:

| | Glasgow | Edinburgh | Dundee | Aberdeen |
|------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| 1906 | 6,500/(0.86%) | 1,500/(0.47%) | 149/(0.08%) | 85/(0.15%) |
| 1910 | 7000/(0.92%) | 1,800/(0.56%) | 152/(0.08) | 99/(0.06%) |
| 1929 | 15,000/(01.45%) | 2000/(0.47%) | 100/(0.06%) | 45/(0.04%) |
| 1939 | 15,000/(1.38%) | 1,500/(0.30%) | 117/(0.07%) | 50/(0.03%) |

Table 1.3: *Jewish Population in Scottish Cities. Source: The Jewish Yearbook in respective years.* (Figures in brackets represent percentage of Jewish inhabitants within total population of the city.)

Again, it must be stressed, that these figures are approximations; but it can be seen that although the numbers of Jews remained small in comparison with the general population, in Glasgow these did grow rapidly. Moreover, Glasgow was by far the largest Scottish concentration, and was statistically significant in terms of comparison with English centres.

The Glasgow community has attracted a small but steadily increasing amount of interest since 1990.⁵⁹ A further book by Collins on the subject of welfare and medical

⁵⁸ Holmes, C ‘Alexander Ratcliffe, Militant Protestant and Antisemite’ in Kushner, T. and Lunn, K. (eds.) *Traditions of Intolerance*, pp. 196-217; Milligan, T. ‘The British Union of Fascists’ policy in relation to Scotland,’ *Scottish Economic and Social History* 19:1 (1999) pp.1-17.

aspects of immigrant lives has also been published. This covers the same timeframe as *Second City Jewry* and is a collection based on his cumulative researches and findings in these specific areas.⁶⁰ Aside from this, there has been no other significant new research, and what is most notably absent in any of this work, despite its merits in promoting the history of immigrants in Scotland, is any awareness of the gender dimensions of the Scottish, Jewish migration record.

However, in addition to this historical output and of interest to the subject of Scottish Jews, is some literary work that has attracted attention. It has been argued that writing, and in particular fiction, has played a mediating role in the expression of a dual identity.⁶¹ Moreover, autobiographical literature can also give access to many of the subjective elements of the migrant experience that are missing from academic histories, including gendered subjectivity. The cultural output of Jews born in Glasgow in terms of writing has been noteworthy, and it is worth mentioning a few such writers before moving on.⁶²

The most prolific of these was undoubtedly Chaim Bermant, who arrived in Glasgow as a child and grew up there, attending university in the city before relocating for most

⁵⁹ Audrey, S. *Multiculturalism in Practice: Irish, Jewish, Italian and Pakistani Migration to Scotland* (Aldershot, 2000); Cosgrove, J. 'Scottish Jewry,' *The Jewish Yearbook* (2000) pp.12-23; Macgregor, J. 'Ceremony, rules and ritual: the identities of Glasgow Jewry 1850-1900,' *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 4:1 (2002, electronic version); MCKinney, S. 'Jewish education and formation in Glasgow: a case study,' *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 25:1 (2004) pp.31-41; Reisz, M. *Europe's Jewish Quarters* (London, 1991) pp. 130-145; Rodger, M. 'Glasgow Jewry' in Kay, B. *Odyssey: Voices from Scotland's Recent Past: The Second Collection*. (Edinburgh, 1982) pp. 113-121.

⁶⁰ Collins, K. *Be Well! Jewish Health and Welfare in Glasgow 1860-1914* (East Linton, 2001.)

⁶¹ Cheyette, B. 'The other self: Anglo-Jewish fiction and the representation of Jews in England, 1875-1905' in Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, pp. 97-111.

⁶² For synopsis of some literary work See Kaplan, H. 'Scottish Jewry: sources and resources' in Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, pp. 91-2; also Burgess, M. *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll, 1998) and *The Glasgow Novel* (Hamilton, 1999) for review of relevant texts.

of his life to London.⁶³ Bermant worked as a writer for several newspapers and television companies, and published over thirty books of fiction and non-fiction during his lifetime. Notable among these are two works of autobiography that include his memories and observations about Glasgow. It is clear that this formative experience had an influence on him throughout his life.⁶⁴ Several of his novels are useful for the literary insights they provide about the social mobility of Glasgow Jewry particularly, *Jericho Sleep Alone* (1964), *The Second Mrs. Whitberg* (1976) and *The Patriarch* (1981).⁶⁵ Bermant also populated his writing with a rich seam of both male and female characters whose activities paint evocative pictures of Jewish life in Glasgow. In addition, possibly the most well-liked (at least in Scotland) writer on Jewish life was Evelyn Cowan.⁶⁶ This author published many articles in the popular Scottish press, and a memoir- *Spring Remembered* - of her childhood in the Jewish Gorbals, which has been described as 'the classic of Jewish life in the ghetto of the old Gorbals of Glasgow.'⁶⁷ Lastly, in 1976 she published *A Portrait of Alice*, a novel of Jewish suburban life acclaimed as 'a harsh and impressive book written with skill and great honesty'.⁶⁸ However the most widely read work is undoubtedly Ralph Glasser's autobiographical trilogy published in the late 1980s.⁶⁹ The first volume in this trilogy

⁶³ Bermant was born in Poland in 1929 and lived variously in Lithuania and Latvia before immigrating with his family to Glasgow at the age of 8. He died in 1998.

⁶⁴ Bermant, C, *Coming Home* (London, 1976) and *Genesis: A Latvian Childhood* (London, 1998) See also: 'Anatomy of Glasgow' in Mindlin, M. & Bermant, C. (eds.) *Explorations: An Annual on Jewish Themes* (Chicago, 1968) pp.99-106; 'Jews who fled from fear and found a brave new face in Scotland,' *Observer Scotland* (12/02/1989.)

⁶⁵ Bermant's novels are all currently out of print, but many had several imprints in both the UK and USA. *Jericho Sleep Alone* (first published London, 1964); *The Second Mrs Whitberg* (1976); *The Patriarch* (1981) Subsequently, if referred to, a reference to the edition being used will be included in the footnote.

⁶⁶ Evelyn Cowan was born in the Gorbals in 1921. See entry in forthcoming *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* (Edinburgh, 2006)

⁶⁷ Cowan, E, 'The Jewish Connection,' *Scots' Magazine* 112:2 (Nov. 1979) pp.163-73; *Spring Remembered: A Scottish Jewish Childhood* (Edinburgh, 1974); Description quoted from: Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel*, p.16.

⁶⁸ Cowan, E. *Portrait of Alice: A Novel* (Edinburgh, 1976); Quotation from Burgess, *Ibid*.

⁶⁹ Glasser, R. born in 1916, died 2002. The trilogy consists of: *Growing up in the Gorbals* (London, 1986) *Gorbals Boy at Oxford* (1988) and *Gorbals Voices, Siren Songs* (1990.) Omnibus edition referred to in this thesis (London, 1997.) The trilogy was followed by: *A Gorbals Legacy* (Edinburgh, 2000.)

chronicles Glasser's early life in the Gorbals and his escape from this after winning a scholarship to Oxford. It is noteworthy for the grim depiction of his personal struggle against poverty, anti-Jewish prejudice and the effects that a Gorbals childhood had on his later adult life. This book scandalised Glasgow Jewry when it was first published and remains controversial. However in the context of this thesis, it is a revealing example of personal testimony about the Jewish life in the Gorbals in the interwar years. In the analysis that follows, most of these works will be returned to, as indeed will some literature by less well-known authors. They are commented upon critically, and an appraisal of their use for historical interpretation is made.

Overall, despite a flowering of interest in the social history of Jews across the UK, and a clear ambition to depart from the straightjacket of traditional political history, the new engagement with social aspects of migration has left many fundamental questions unanswered. It has been said that Jewish history in Britain has continuously been a 'poor relation' to the history of Jews in other parts of the world.⁷⁰ This relative neglect is explained firstly by the fact that numerically fewer Jews settled in the UK as compared with the Americas; and in the context of Europe, although London provided the biggest urban Jewish settlement in Western Europe, there was comparatively little struggle over the acceptance of Jews into British society. The latter situation is accounted for by the 'liberal' tradition of modern Britain, which allegedly created less conflict for Jews, and so less curiosity about qualifications for citizenship.⁷¹ This amounts to rather glib justification and the case for looking at the 'ambiguous success' of Jewish integration has been made.⁷² Yet it is true that the most prodigious literature, at least on Eastern European migrants, has originated in North America

⁷⁰ Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.1.

⁷¹ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp.101-110.

⁷² Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*, pp.355-371; See also: Feldman 'The decay of liberal England'.

where more than eighty percent of all Jewish emigrants travelled in the period 1880 – 1914.⁷³

American historians produced work on the development of inner city Jewish settlements and applied theoretical analysis that took account of ethnic and gender identities amongst the Eastern Europeans; in the UK, there has been little exploration that has combined these themes. The result of this has been that only a small amount of work has been published specifically on Jewish women, or on changes in gender relations as part of the migration process. Certainly there has been no such work conducted in respect of Glasgow's immigrant Jews. It now remains to conclude this section with an abridged review of the literature on Jewish women in North America and continental Europe, mentioning some key texts and commenting on the small amount of similar research for England.

Jewish Women's History and Gender History.

The history of Jewish migration took a different turn in North America as compared with the UK. Briefly, exploration of ethnicity as a category of analysis became essential throughout the 1970s in a way that still had little purchase in Europe. The fact that various immigrant groups in North America felt comfortable in identifying themselves as both American citizens and in terms of an immigrant heritage was an outcome of the Civil Rights Movement, and this led to academic work which took account of this change in popular identification. Ethnicity became a central part of American culture and was celebrated. This development was certainly reflected in sociological study of Jewish communities and the journal *Jewish Social Studies*

⁷³ Gartner, L. preface to third edition of *The Jewish Immigrant in England* p.ix.

emphasised the case of Jewish ethnic identification.⁷⁴ Yet it must be said, that Jewish sociology in America paid little attention to gender issues.⁷⁵ And this situation was later reflected in Britain.

However, the feminist movement which was contemporaneous, eventually had a more marked effect on the writing of Jewish history. Unlike its more staid counterpart in England the journal *American Jewish History* did publish some articles on the history of Jewish women in the US.⁷⁶ American feminist historians were alert to the growing interest in both labour history and ethnicity prevalent throughout the seventies, and combined their enquiries about migrant labour with sensitivity to women's roles as workers, and as key actors within migrant families. Probably the first and most influential historical text to properly exploit the interest awakened in combining ethnic and gender studies in respect of Jews was *The Jewish Woman in America* published in 1975.⁷⁷

There is insufficient space here to explore all, or even most of the writing on American Jewish women, but a few key texts that are often cited deserve mention.⁷⁸ The first of these is Weinberg's *The World of our Mothers* (1988).⁷⁹ Taking its cue from an earlier publication on Jewish immigrants to the United States – *The World of our Fathers* (1976) – Weinberg sought to put women centre stage and mitigate the fact that its

⁷⁴ *Jewish social studies*, print began with vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1939).

⁷⁵ Davidman, L. & Tenenbaum, S. 'Towards a feminist sociology of American Jews' in Davidman & Tenenbaum, *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies* (New Haven, 1994) pp.140-168.

⁷⁶ *American Jewish History* (1893 to present) is contemporaneous with the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*.

⁷⁷ Baum, C. et al. *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York, 1975.)

⁷⁸ Bibliographies are available in a variety of printed and electronic sources, a fairly good and comprehensive bibliography is contained in: Hyman, P. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Seattle, 1995) pp.177-190. More recent bibliographies tend to be in electronic format, one example that has survived the test of time is the *Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Archival Resources on the History of Jewish Women in America*, which can be found at the University of Wisconsin library site.

⁷⁹ Weinberg, S. *The World of our Mothers: The Lives of Jewish Immigrant Women* (Chapel Hill, 1988.)

predecessor had discussed the experiences of mass migrants with little reference to women's encounter with America, or to differences created by gender.⁸⁰ In terms of migration patterns, Eastern European Jewish migrants consisted of women in more or less equal proportion to men, a trend that was less common in other sending groups and so was notable. In so far as it righted the wrong of female exclusion, Weinberg's book is lovingly executed and contains a wealth of detail both about life for Jews in the *Shtetlekh** of Eastern Europe, and in the major urban centres of the USA where immigrants settled. Most notably, the author made extensive use of oral testimony, which was at the time promoted as extremely useful for recovering the hitherto marginalized history of female migrants.⁸¹

In addition, forgotten and out of print fictions about Jewish life in urban America were rediscovered and used for the insights they provided about immigrant women. Given that many of these stories contained barely disguised autobiographical elements, they often proved valuable for illuminating aspects of female experience absent from more formal records. Notable amongst these was the work of Anzia Yezierska (c1885 - 1970). Yezierska's writing was popular during the 1920s, and in 1922 her stories were used as the basis for a Hollywood film depicting the lives of immigrants. There was never any doubt that Yezierska wrote from her own experience as the daughter of immigrants, and her prose style is peppered with Yiddish inflection and words. Most of Yezierska's work engages with the effects of acculturation, both positive and

⁸⁰ Howe, I. *The World of our Fathers* (New York, 1976)

*Plural of *Shtetl*, the Yiddish word for 'little town'. See Glossary.

⁸¹ Analysis was based on 46 interviews with women who had immigrated to the US between 1896 and 1925. See Weinberg, pp. 261-264 for methodology and description of interviewees.

negative. Her work had however, fallen into obscurity until feminist scholars awakened interest in it during the 1970s, since when it has been reprinted.⁸²

The growth of interest in ethnic 'roots' and in the social history of workers also encouraged the formation of oral histories archives. These allowed access to personal accounts about the ambitions, achievements and disappointments of immigrants; they provided admittance into areas of personal experience from the subjective stance of the migrant, rather than as was often the case in documentary records, the point of view of philanthropic bodies or government officials. Elizabeth Ewen for example, used archival testimony in her comparative study of Jewish and Italian female immigrants (1985).⁸³ Within this, she presented a description of women's engagement with American culture in terms of consumerism and leisure activities. This is a theme that will be taken up in the thesis that follows, and which provides access to the material changes inherent in immigrant acculturation. Similarly, and possibly the best of these types is Susan Glenn's *Daughters of the Shtetl* (1990).⁸⁴ Glenn's research provides an in depth analysis of the place of women's paid employment in securing a future for Jewish immigrants. The working lives of Jewish immigrants are significant in the context of North America, since it was Jews, including Jewish women, who provided labour for the huge ready-made garment industry, and their militancy has an important place in narrating the history of labour relations in urban America in the early twentieth century. A related exploration of this can be found in Frager's *Sweatshop Strife*, which examines the case of Toronto's Jews and their involvement in the labour

⁸² See Yeziarska, A. *Bread Givers: A Novel: A Struggle Between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New* (reprinted New York, 1975); *Hungry Hearts and Other Stories* (London, 1987.)

⁸³ Ewen, E. *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York, 1985); see also Friedman-Kasaba, K. *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian Women in New York* (New York, 1996.)

⁸⁴ Glenn, S. *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labour in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, 1990)

movement.⁸⁵ These influential texts have sometimes led the way, or at least influenced exploration of women's experiences in later migrant groups to the Americas, and they certainly alerted attention to the gaps in the historiography that existed with regard to Jewish women in Western Europe.

American historians also looked to European cases. For example, Kaplan has looked at middle class Jewish women in Germany and their role in woman's causes, as well as in the formation of a German Jewish identity.⁸⁶ Assimilation to 'western' culture has understandably been an important issue for all studies of Jewish migration in this period, and Paula Hyman has examined this in both the contexts of America and France. She has stated that her aim in doing so has been to move away from an exclusive focus on the male, urban, and elite historical paradigm.⁸⁷ Hyman's views, which will be examined later in this thesis, highlight the place of gender in the assimilation process. Yet despite her ambition to create more diversity in modern Jewish history, there is a question mark over Hyman's tendency to conflate the European case with that of American immigrants, thus creating an overarching 'Western model' for Jewish assimilation. She has not been alone in doing so, and although she has her defenders, it is the case that Jewish women's history has probably been badly served by this trend.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Frager, R. *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto 1900-1939* (Toronto, 1992.)

⁸⁶ Kaplan, M. *The Making of the Jewish Middle-Class* (Oxford, 1991); 'For love or money: the marriage strategies of Jews in imperial Germany' in Kaplan, M. (ed.) *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History* (New York, 1985); 'Redefining Judaism in imperial Germany: practices, mentalities and community,' *Jewish Social Studies*, 9:1 (2002) pp.1-33.

⁸⁷ Hyman, P. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: the Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle, 1995) p.4; and see also: 'Gender and the shaping of modern Jewish identities,' *Jewish Social Studies*, 8:2/3 (2002.) pp. 153-161; 'Feminist studies and modern Jewish history' in Davidman and Tenenbaum, (eds.) *Feminist Perspectives*, pp.120-139.

⁸⁸ See Dominique Schnapper's review of Paula Hyman's *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkley, 1998) in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25:4 (2002) pp. 676-700. Schnapper acknowledges the trend of American historians' involvement in writing European Jewish history, but refutes Hyman's culpability for conflating the two cases.

The 'western model' is worth questioning since ironically it can tend to obscure diversity in Jewish migrant experience, and it is the latter that arguably should be grist to the mill of this particular historical field. Some migrant destinations have been less well explored due to the smaller numbers involved, or as in the case of Scotland, the view that regional differences would make little difference to experience. Inevitably this has led to over generalisations and omission. The case of Jewish women in the UK has been particularly badly served in this respect because of the late entry of women's history into this area. This has meant that certain misinformation and generalisations have never been challenged. For example, although a great deal became known about Jewish women's involvement in the American factory-based labour market, their labour in predominately smaller scale manufacturing in Western European cities, remained a very neglected area. Nancy Green's work however, is a good example of this situation being rectified.⁸⁹ Green has also tried to contextualise the differences as well as similarities involved in labour participation, by looking at a variety of destinations and how these contributed to particular migrant experiences.⁹⁰ In so doing she has highlighted the way that ethnic identity interrelated with the class and gender identities of workers as they negotiated new environments and specific local economies; and that the particular intersections involved created a diversity of experience.

Such comparative approaches have proved to be popular for histories of Jewish women, either as studies which look at convergent immigrant groups, such as Italians and Jews, or by comparing immigrant Jews in different locations during the same

⁸⁹Green, N. (ed.) *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora* (Berkley, 1998) This is a valuable documentary compendium that includes commentary by Green on the cases of Jews in Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, London, Paris and New York.

⁹⁰ Green, N. 'The Modern Jewish Diaspora; East European Jews in New York, London and Paris' in Endelman, T. *Comparing Jewish Societies* (Ann Arbor, 1997.) pp.113-134.

timeframe. Perhaps because historians writing from a feminist perspective have looked to issues of continuity in female experience, as well as to the disruptions affected by the migration process, this has been a natural progression. For example, Kuzmack has written a comparative study of the Jewish women's movement in Britain and the United States for the period 1881-1933.⁹¹ She entered new territory in terms of the male centeredness of European Jewish history, but ironically, this was also rather old territory in that her work is exclusively concerned with middle class and elite women. Indeed, it is fair to say that a lot of the output on Jewish women in European cities has concentrated on the select few amongst mostly established families.⁹² For America on the other hand, there has been more of a balance between examination of women among the older and elite German Jewish immigrants and the later Eastern European influx to urban America. Any disparity in Europe may in part be attributed to the relative availability of sources. Elite women in western societies have of course left behind something of a paper trail, but there is so much less of this in respect of Eastern European women.

However, this imbalance has been addressed and attempts made to recover the history of women migrants who settled in Britain after 1870. In the UK the most cited author in this respect has been Rickie Burman. In parallel with what was taking place in America, Burman used oral testimony from a large project undertaken in Manchester in the 1970s.⁹³ This author made commendable use of this archive for a number of articles, but despite their novelty and popularity, this was the extent of writing on this

⁹¹ Kuzmack, L. *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States, 1881-1993* (Columbus, 1990.)

⁹² In the UK see for example Taylor, S. *The Role of Jewish Women in National Jewish Philanthropic Organisations in Britain from c1880* (Unpublished thesis, University of Southampton, 1995.)

⁹³ The Manchester Studies Unit, then based at Manchester Polytechnic undertook this project, which consisted of 450 taped interviews. The tapes are now housed in the Manchester Jewish Museum.

subject.⁹⁴ To date the only published monograph that tackles the condition of Jewish immigrant women has been Lara Marks' *Model Mothers*, which carefully analyses an important aspect of Jewish welfare provision that impacted on immigrant women and their families.⁹⁵ Again it should be noted that this study was based on evidence pertaining to London, but Marks has also written more generally on the dearth of published research on Jewish women in Britain.⁹⁶ Given that new publications on British Jewry are still forthcoming and several journals exist which either exclusively publish work on Jewish history, or regularly do so, it is difficult to know exactly why this situation persists.⁹⁷ Yet it is the case that while the history of Jews in the United Kingdom has flourished, there has been little work done specifically on women, and very little that takes account of gender as an equally essential category of analysis alongside class and ethnicity.⁹⁸

Throughout this thesis, recent scholarship on Scottish women will be referred to and therefore will not be discussed at length at this point.⁹⁹ In addition, some research in respect of working class women in England is pertinent. For example, Elizabeth

⁹⁴ Burman, R. 'Growing up in Manchester Jewry – the story of Clara Weingard', *Oral History* 12:1 (1984) pp.56-63; 'Women in Jewish religious life: Manchester 1880-1930' in Obelkevitch, J. *et al.* (eds.) *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London, 1987) pp.37-55; 'Jewish women and the household economy in Manchester' in Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, pp.55-75; and see also: 'Middle-class Anglo-Jewish lady philanthropists and eastern European women: the first national conference of Jewish women, 1902' in Grant, J. (ed.) *Women, Migration and Empire* (Stoke on Trent, 1996) pp.123-149.

⁹⁵ Marks, L. *Model Mothers: Jewish Mothers and Maternity Provision in East London, 1870-1939* (Oxford, 1994.) See also: " 'Dear Old Mother Levy's': The Jewish Maternity Home and Sick Room Helps Society 1895-1939," *Social History of Medicine*, 3 (1990) pp. 61-87; ' "The luckless waifs and strays of humanity": Irish and Jewish immigrant unwed mothers in London, 1970-1939,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992) pp.113-137.

⁹⁶ Marks, L. 'Carers and servers of the Jewish community: the marginalized heritage of Jewish women in Britain,' *Immigrants and Minorities*, 10:1 (1991) pp.106-127.

⁹⁷ For example see the following titles: *Immigrants and Minorities*, *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, and *Patterns of Prejudice*.

⁹⁸ An exception is: Srebrnik, H. 'Class, ethnicity and gender intertwined: Jewish women and the east London rent strikes, 1935-1940,' *Women's History Review*, 4:3 (1995) pp.283-299.

⁹⁹ See for example: Gordon and Breitenbach, (eds.) *The World is Ill Divided: Women's Work in Scotland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1990); Gordon, E. *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991); Gordon, E. and Nair, G. *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 2003.)

Roberts' work with oral histories has provided general insights into women's household roles and coping mechanisms in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ However, it is readily acknowledged that until comparatively recently, Scottish women's history has been camouflaged within the British experience and this context is in need of broadening.¹⁰¹ This situation is being redressed, but in the case of women within migrant groups there has been little headway. This is partly as a result of the many impediments outlined so far in respect of immigration history generally, but also because there is so much more that needs to be discovered about Scottish women's lives in the past. Added to this, is the undoubted requirement that gender should more readily be acknowledged as integral to the Scottish past.¹⁰² The latter also needs to be inclusive of marginalized groups - Jewish women fall into this category on two counts –by dint of their gender and ethnic identity.

Across the UK, the marginalization of Jewish women's lives in the past is accounted for by various factors. In the first instance, as Clare Midgley has pointed out, Jewish women's lives have regularly been obscured by the operation of stereotypes. These range widely, from the fulsomely repellent image of the neurotic Jewish mother to the undoubtedly more attractive, but no less imaginative exotic, oriental Jewess.¹⁰³ In addition, Burman has accused British Jewish history as being overwhelmingly, 'the history of the Jewish male.' Burman rightly claims that Jewish history has repeatedly placed emphasis on the male-centred arenas of political life and labour relations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, E. *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984); *Women's Work, 1840-1940* (Basingstoke, 1988); *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford, 1995.)

¹⁰¹ Midgley, C. 'Ethnicity, "race" and empire' in Purvis, J. (ed.) *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* (London, 2002.) pp.247-8.

¹⁰² Abrams, L. 'Gendering Scottish history: an agenda for change,' *Women's History Magazine* 40 (2002) pp.11-14.

¹⁰³ Midgley, 'Ethnicity, "race" and empire,' pp.248-9.

¹⁰⁴ Burman, *Jewish women and the household economy*, p.55.

When the historical case of Jewish women is placed in a relationship with that of Scottish history the outlook becomes even more obscured. Scottish history has similarly been characterised as locked fast within masculine discourses. However, the body of work that has emerged in respect of the 'gendering' of the Scottish past is now growing. And although onward momentum in Jewish women's history has been slow, the work of Burman and Marks has at least made a significant start towards addressing the situation of women's marginalisation. Yet women's history and any awareness of gender issues have been completely ignored to date in exploration of Jews in Scotland.

Typically there has usually existed an evolutionary process between the exploration of women's experiences in the past and progression towards an understanding of how gender has shaped all such experience. However, developments in gender history have shown that recovery is no longer sufficient in itself. Whilst recovering the history of Jewish women in Glasgow, this study has also engaged with the view, 'that the world of women is part of the world of men'.¹⁰⁵ And that understanding social relations between the sexes will reveal how changes that are often taken for granted in migration histories had an undeniably gendered dimension. Women and men did not experience the immigration and acculturation processes in the same way. Likewise social mobility impacted differently on the experiences of women and men. All of these processes operated with a framework of gendered ideas and discourses that had relevance for immigrants as they struggled for acceptance in Glasgow. Intrinsic also within this framework, was the certain existence of a gender hierarchy that privileged male experience over female. Even so, the relative lack of knowledge about Jewish women in Scotland represents a formidable hurdle to leap over. Therefore, for this

¹⁰⁵ Scott, J. 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis is' in Shoemaker, M and Vincent, R. (eds.) *Gender and History in Western Europe* (London, 1998) p.45.

study recourse to the initial stage of 'recovery' has been necessary, despite the fact that a prominent Scottish historian has, recently described such history as 'passé'.¹⁰⁶ If evidence were needed to refute this opinion, the cases of Scottish women generally, and of women from an immigrant background in the UK, sadly provide clear indications that the process of recovery is far from advanced. Having said this, although recovery is still a live issue so too is an appreciation that women's lives were lived alongside men, within a 'Jewish community' and in this instance, within urban Scotland. They cannot be properly appreciated in isolation from these contexts. It is hoped therefore, that the proceeding investigation will first of all make a relevant addition to the history of women and gender relations in urban Scotland, as well as a useful contribution to a sparsely gendered British Jewish history.

Outline of chapters.

Analysis unfolds following a broadly chronological route from arrival in Scotland through to the immediate post-war period at which point the Glasgow Jewish community were considered well established in this city. Each chapter covers key areas of investigation that will be briefly described here. Firstly, chapter 2 tackles arrival in Glasgow by referring to the context of international migration prevalent in the period and makes use of official records, which document this phenomenon. But more centrally, it also approaches migration from the point of view of the Jewish immigrants who made this transition to a city in a small, northern country. Hence this chapter makes use of personal testimony, and in particular a common narrative account of the origins of Glasgow Jewry. Chapter 2 looks at the experiences of people who for the most part left no written trace of their migrant transition. Enquiry into their lives is therefore necessarily dependant on other sources. However, official reports and

¹⁰⁶ This comment made by Professor Tom Devine in an article in *The Scotsman* 19/01/2005.

statistics are blunt tools for doing this, and what is principally available are the accounts passed on to their descendants. First generation immigrants, or those who made the transition from one country to another, left the imprint of their experiences on the second generation of immigrants. These Jews born in the UK, and who grew up in Glasgow are the repositories of the story of Jewish arrival in Scotland.

Chapters 2 and 3 do contain more analysis about the operation of memory due to the nature of their content; thus chapter 3, which explores the local Jewish settlement located in the Gorbals district of Glasgow, also makes use of the landscape of memory for discovering how Jews acclimatised to urban Scotland and made a home there. Given the almost mythical status that the Glasgow Gorbals has obtained over time it is fitting that chapter 3 is thematically concerned with the place of personal narratives and the position of myth in retelling the history of Glasgow's Jews. This chapter also moves more forcefully into specifically female experience by describing how the local environment impacted on material life for women.

Further to this, chapter 4 then looks more closely at the traditionally feminised area of everyday life that is contained in the environment of the home, and at patterns of family behaviour within the home. By this point in the thesis, it is hoped that gender, and changes to gender relations wrought by migration, will be clearly seen as important factors shaping the migration process. Chapter 4 will make use of multiple types of source material, from official documents to personal testimony, for the particular insights they can all provide in shedding light on what is often a hidden world. Most notably, the home and domesticity regularly functioned to conceal many aspects of women's economic involvement in a Jewish family economy.

Chapter 5 then concentrates on the economic activity of Jewish women. This was an aspect of everyday life which emphasised the changes that had been caused by immigrant integration in Scotland within a few decades. Descriptions such as integration, acculturation and assimilation are commonplace in migration histories but women are often left out of explanations about how these aspects of the migration process operated with a gendered agenda. For example, many second and third generation Jewish men became medical doctors and this is seen as both a measure of the integration experienced by the community, and indeed the acculturation at large within the community as it became increasingly well off and made up of professionals. Women also experienced occupational change, and the roles assigned to and, or, sought out by them, also had an important part to play in the social mobility experienced by immigrant families. Women became key players in warding off what were perceived as the negative effects of assimilation to Scottish norms as Jewish families became more accommodated within Scottish society. However, it is somewhat ironic that a measure of upward mobility for Scottish Jews involved many women relinquishing their traditional economic roles and assimilating to the role of suburban housewife.

One of the great benefits of economic and social integration is that it allowed Jews to be upwardly mobile. Chapters 6 and 7 accept that the trend towards social improvement that occurred for Jews throughout the UK also occurred in Glasgow, but this process contained specific features that were influenced by the local environment. The arrival of Jews in suburban Glasgow was the outcome of industry and success at the level of individual families; but at the same time it was the integrity of the group that created peer pressure on its members to be upwardly mobile. Such progress was

also a reflection of changed horizons made possible by the economic and social resources at large in Glasgow.

Chapter 6 will show how all of these factors impacted on Jewish women, and how the momentum of social improvement increased during the interwar years. Economic improvement allowed many Jewish families to escape slum life. The emerging pattern of relocation to the suburbs occurred from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards. However this development was not an even one, some Jews made their escape within the first generation and made a comfortable life, while others took three generations to achieve comparable improvements. Chapter 6 looks at the nature of this spatial shift and its implications for Jews within the wider context of Glaswegian housing standards and lifestyles. In popular imagination Glasgow is a city of tenements and this has meant that its leafy suburbs do not attract much attention. Historians have conformed to this position, but the relationship of women and suburban housing in the past is a formidable statement on a gendered world. Moreover, Jews throughout the UK became suburban dwellers par excellence; in this respect Glaswegian Jews were no different and this had repercussions for women within the group as the challenges of preventing assimilation became even more acute.

Chapter 7 then elaborates on the theme of suburban relocation by delving into the culture and politics of Glasgow Jewry, and the participation of women within these communal structures. The significance of involvement in communal activities during the interwar years, is a very under researched topic in women's history generally; it is certainly thoroughly neglected in British Jewish history. This final chapter examines the impact of upward mobility and the way that gender shaped the social, cultural and

political elements of Jewish life away from the Gorbals. It also looks at the ways in which, as it evolved, Jewish suburban culture helped maintain ethnic integrity.

Finally, the time span of 1880-1950 takes in several immigrant generations. According to the time of arrival of the first generation, and the speed of economic improvement encountered, discussion throughout may include the experiences of up to three generations of Jewish immigrants. In one sense this may create problems of temporal placement for the reader. However, it should be remembered that what is being discussed is a process of change that impacted in an uneven way at the level of individual experience. In the argument of this thesis there were no universal markers for charting acculturation or integration by way of individual generations. Studies that attempt to do this often run into difficulties in accounting for exceptions to the rule of generational change. Some Jewish families were less keen to take an interest in wider Scottish society and attempted to prevent their children from becoming involved with it; as will be seen this was particularly true for girls rather than boys. In a study that is mainly concerned with female experiences and the operation of gendered roles, it has been judged that levels of integration need to be measured by more complex elements than simple generational shifts. These had a part to play, but were not always the defining feature of many women's individual experience of being Jewish in Glasgow. The exploration that follows will attempt to recover some of the experiences of Glasgow's 'Jeanies' and will also explore the place of gender for understanding their part in Scotland's urban past.

Chapter 2.

Coming to Glasgow: gendering the migration story.

*Really, they'd wanted to reach America,
But never saved enough for the tickets,
Or perhaps it was just that their hearts were in the east,
And they could go no further west.¹*

Sometime in the late 1890s Mr. and Mrs Balkin travelled on a voyage, which would take them away from Lithuania, their country of birth, forever.² They are said to have disembarked at the port of Greenock, on the west coast of Scotland. A century later, their youngest son recounted this arrival: 'when they came here they had no idea where they were landing. But they thought it was America, they never even knew, hadn't a clue!'³ The Balkin family remained in Scotland, raised seven children, and maintained their Jewish identity. Although Mr. And Mrs Balkin often reminisced about the old country and mourned for life in their Lithuanian *Shtetl*, they nevertheless settled down to living in urban Scotland, and their children grew up with Scottish accents and a taste for what city life had to offer. For them, the Lithuania of the past that their parents spoke of constantly, was truly a foreign country, remembered in stories that recalled fear of poverty and an oppressive regime, and at the same time displayed the nostalgia, which is the hallmark of the exiled:

Oh yes they were always talking about it, always talking
about it! I mean they remembered everything you know,

¹ From 'Immigration' in *Collected Poems & Selected Translations of A. C. Jacobs*. Edited by Rety, J. and Rudolf, A. (London, 1996) p.30. Jacobs was born in Glasgow to Jewish immigrant parents, but lived most of his adult life in England and Israel.

² Lithuania was then a territory of the Russian Empire and not a sovereign country in its own right. However, Jewish families who have an immigrant background commonly refer to their national identity in terms of this origin, it will be used in this thesis where appropriate in preference to the alternative description of Russian nationality. Lithuanian and Latvian Jews formed the bulk of immigrants arriving in Scotland and the North of England. However, due to the fluidity of national boundaries in Eastern Europe over previous centuries, Jews who described themselves as 'Litvaks' might come from areas of historic Lithuania, which at different times had been part of Poland.

³ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913.

between each other they discussed everything that went on. And the way they spoke – sometimes they had some good times there too...It wasn't all bad sort of thing...It was just the privations I think mostly that made them come here in the first place...⁴

This opening chapter will make use of oral testimony concerning arrival in Glasgow in order to discuss many of the reasons why Eastern European Jews, both women and men, found themselves in the of Scotland. The first questions that must be addressed are why these Eastern European emigrants came here at all, and what this experience was like? However, an equally important part of this discussion concerns the gendered framework around which the arrival story of Glaswegian Jews is constructed. This is a story that often appears to render women invisible so that female responses to Scottish society are elusive. This particular aspect of the history of Jewish immigrants in Glasgow will allow an initial consideration of the place of oral testimony for examining the history of this group generally, and provide a starting point for identifying ways in which the story of how Eastern European Jews became Glasgow Jewry, is a gendered one.

Arriving at Glasgow.

Statistics collected during the early 1890s show the bulk of immigrant traffic to Britain had come via Hamburg to London. In 1891, 77% of Eastern Europeans arrived in London; in 1892, 74%; and in 1893, 70% with these numbers excluding known transmigrants who were going on to the Americas.⁵ Yet at the close of the nineteenth century, despite the continued centrality of London, Jewish immigrants were now

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Parliamentary Papers (PP). *Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration from Eastern Europe into the United Kingdom* (1894) Ref: C7406 p.10.

dispersed across many towns and cities of the UK.⁶ In Glasgow the census figures show a huge increase in the number of 'foreign born' enumerated between 1881 and 1901. Amongst these were the new Jewish immigrants. Glasgow census tables for 1881, 1891 and 1901 show figures for 'foreign subjects' enumerated, in other words those born abroad and not naturalised residents. For 1881 these numbered 1553 persons, in 1891, 2028 persons and in 1901 a massive increase to 6778 persons. It is reasonable to suppose that the majority of these numbers would have been made up of Eastern European Jews. This was undoubtedly the largest group of immigrants in statistics that would also have included smaller numbers of Italians and Lithuanian Catholics. English and Irish in-migrants were counted separately.⁷ When these figures are added to the numbers of Jews born in the UK and then resident in Glasgow, which is impossible to estimate accurately, it can be seen that the Jewish population had increased rapidly over these two decades.

An assumption is often made that for Jews migration is a condition of their very existence, since Diaspora forms a major part of Jewish identity. Ready acceptance of this undeniable situation, therefore allows the fact of Jewish migration to be described in ways which makes settlement in countries of immigration appear virtually seamless and inevitably triumphant in terms of upward social mobility and successful integration. The 'wandering Jew' makes a home wherever *he* finds himself, but can move on and transplant Jewish identity successfully in multiple locations. This is the classic immigrant success story that has emerged from this period of mass migration. Histories of Scots, Irish and Italian emigrants, more readily take account of homesickness, and this condition is recorded in memoirs, songs and letters sent home. Dislocation from home affected the behaviour and development of immigrant

⁶ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp.129-132.

⁷ Cunnison, J. and Gilfillan, J. B. S. *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, p.808.

communities, and certainly has influenced the way people have recounted their arrival in new lands. Jews are not an exception to this rule. Yet Jewish identity is also shaped in a multiplicity of ways by local conditions in places where Jews have settled for lengthy periods of time.

The Balkin family came to Glasgow sometime in the 1890s and in this example the city appears to have been a mistaken destination. This is a recurring motif in many oral accounts; it forms what may be termed a collective memory.⁸ Other life histories taken from second-generation immigrants explain that they simply do not know why parents came to Scotland. This appears to indicate the loss of individual family memory and perhaps demonstrates one of the reasons why a constructed collective narrative has emerged to explain an important experience. How and why these Jews made their way to a city like Glasgow is a question of fundamental interest for understanding the evolution of Jewish immigration and the different ways in which it impacted upon individual localities. Any such phenomenon, which involves something as fickle as human agency, can never be straightforward and it is unreasonable to treat Jewish immigration as a uniform process; it was far from this. No doubt sometimes individuals and families arrived in Scotland as a matter of contingency. Yet over time many more did set out on the emigrant path with Scotland as their known destination, and throughout this time Jews would relocate to Glasgow from other towns and cities in Britain, for a variety of reasons which will be explored throughout this chapter.

⁸ Discussion of collective memory generally begins by acknowledging the work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who proposed that memory of the past is socially constructed; see Cosner, L. A. for analysis of Halbwachs's legacy in *Maurice Halbwachs: On Collective Memory* (London, 1992) pp. 21-28; Amongst historians, the means by which memory can be used as pertinent evidence is a contested area, for critique of this see Gedi, N. and Elam, Y. 'Collective Memory—What is it?', *History and memory*, 8:1 (1996) pp.30-50.

Explanations of migration in the past generally rest on the existence of what are known as ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors.⁹ In the case of Eastern European Jews, the push factors are well documented in terms of increasing economic hardship and organised hostility, which were the result of endemic anti-Semitism. Although most Jews were not themselves subjected to actual violence or direct attacks, this touched them in a pervasive way. Leaving the homeland may have been a difficult choice but it was a logical one. Often it may have seemed the only option in circumstances that provoked constant anxiety, as the following testimony by a Lithuanian Jew in 1898 explains:

To take myself as an example, I did not leave my native country because I was expelled either for political or religious reasons; but nearly every day brought me news of fresh expulsions, or of new *ukases* against the people of my race, and I was asking myself, where is this going to stop? Whose turn will be next? And I decided to leave the country where I could get neither justice nor mercy...My case is typical of that of most Jewish immigrants.¹⁰

However in terms of chosen destination more possibilities existed. Here the ‘pull’ factors of the various locations where Jews settled require closer examination. By the end of the nineteenth century Glasgow provided many economic opportunities for the skilled and adventurous, and at a more pragmatic level, it was a large and expanding city wherein conditions attracted immigrant workers. Glasgow was already both a temporary or permanent refuge to other incomers, most notably the Irish. It had a track record of some standing for playing host to not just those with skills in demand, but

⁹ Drake and Pryce, ‘Studying Migration’ in Pryce, W. (ed.) *From Family history to Community History* (Cambridge, 1994) p.13.

¹⁰ Source: Dyche, J.A. ‘The Jewish Workman’ (1898) quoted in Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants*, p.22.

also the largely penniless army of rural in-migrants and foreign nationals who had only their labour to offer and a desperate need to earn a living. Yet it seems that potential Jewish emigrants did not dream of escape to Glasgow, at least until this great migration was well under way. Even within the context of the UK, Jewish immigration was late to arrive in Glasgow, really only gathering pace towards the very end of the nineteenth century. As we have seen, Mr. And Mrs Balkin were part of the exodus that alighted in this city.

Over successive generations the texture of individual migrant stories is easily lost to the past. Straightforward collective explanations for immigrant motives are a common and understandable response to this phenomenon. However, there is a danger inherent in any collective accounts that some experience will be marginalized and some voices suppressed. In Glasgow a standard narrative has emerged which has found its way into oral accounts of migrant family histories and equally into historical descriptions of Jewish arrival in Glasgow.¹¹ The latter fact might seem a little surprising, given that serious analysis of immigrant Jews usually seeks to dispose of what many view as pernicious myth-making. However, in the case of Glasgow's Jews both types of explanation appear to give credence to the idea that Glasgow was a destination not predominately favoured by immigrants and regarded largely as a sort of halfway house on the longer journey to North America.¹² This analysis provides a neat account of a complex process and as such it serves a useful explanatory purpose. However, it is not quite the whole story. Jewish immigrant histories across a variety of time and place are retrospective accounts, which commonly begin with the success and perseverance of

¹¹ Collins describes this story as a common anecdote; see Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry* p. 8; and also mentioned in *Second City Jewry*, p.71.

¹² Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.71.

the group. This act of remembering the past is affected by experience in the present, and Glasgow Jewry presents its own version of this pattern of events.

It might easily be assumed that oral accounts would provide more illuminating access to the variety of reasons why individuals and families chose Glasgow. However, it is in this aspect of interviews that oral evidence appears to most lack transparency.

Interviewees often provide what seems to be a collective narrative, in the form of a colourful story of ancestors who had been duped into landing in Scotland on the pretext that they had arrived in America. This is a tale which is quite impossible to verify or dispute for every case. However if we accept its status as a myth, it does provide a useful mechanism for understanding the place of collective memory in the course of immigrants taking charge of their own history over successive generations. In this context the term 'myth' is meant as an enduring story that may have little or no basis in fact, but has provided a symbolic narrative to account for past experience, and has thus been passed through generations as an oral tradition.

The vexed question of the place of myth in analysis of the past has dogged the place of oral testimony as a useful methodology and source for the writing of history. The anthropologist Julie Cruikshank has promoted one idea about the relationship of myth to social change, which seems most appropriate in terms of this particular analysis.

She argues that the place of myth in explaining life experience is utilized as a means of forming 'a bridge between past and present' in societies that have experienced severe dislocations.¹³ Myth in the form of story telling, passed from one generation to

¹³ A discussion of Cruikshank's thesis is included in Green, A. and Troup, K. *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth Century History and Theory*, (Manchester, 1999) pp.230-237. See also: Cruikshank, J. 'Oral tradition and oral history: reviewing some issues,' *The Canadian Historical Review* LXXV (1994) pp.403-418 and 'Myth as a framework for life stories' in Samuel, R. and Thompson, P. (eds.) *The Myths We Live By* (London, 1990) pp.174-183.

another, provides an imaginative interpretation of elements of a group's experience.

Oral testimony obtained from second and third generation Scottish Jews employs the myth of arrival in Glasgow as somehow an original error for a variety of reasons.

Chief amongst these is firstly, that it concurs with the official narrative of Glasgow as a stepping-stone on the transmigration route from the Baltic to North America. For Glasgow was indeed a transshipment centre. Secondly, it explains the pervasiveness of the American dream in the minds of potential Jewish migrants, as the following excerpt from an account of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, makes clear:

America was in everybody's mouth. Businessmen talked of it over accounts; market women made up their quarrels that they might discuss it from stall to stall; people who had relatives in the famous land went around reading their letters for the enlightenment of less fortunate folks...children played at emigration...[yet] scarcely anyone knew one fact about this magic land.¹⁴

Lastly, and most importantly however, it expresses a need rarely accounted for in immigrant histories, which has to do with a wish for respect to be accorded to the inheritors of this legacy. It is an explanation that seems to crave acceptance for this initially luckless immigrant group, by displaying the terrible plight that forced their flight, their successful perseverance, and the legitimacy of their claim to settlement because of these conditions.¹⁵ In this version of events Jews are not simply economic migrants, but victims of political discrimination and organised aggression, so much so that in their innocence they are washed up on the shores of Scotland and at the mercy

¹⁴ Quoted in Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, p.54.

¹⁵ Buelens, G. 'The New Man and the Mediator: (Non-) Remembrance in Jewish –American Immigrant Narrative' in Singh, A. *et al.* (eds.) *Memory, Narrative and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures*. (Boston, 1994) pp.89 –113. This exploration discusses amongst other questions, the issue of successful integration which is imbedded in most immigrant narratives.

of an unknown land. The sorry state of impoverishment that many Jews experienced is downplayed in favour of other factors, despite the fact that the overall reasons for Jewish migration were made up of a complex interplay of poverty and discrimination.¹⁶

Jewish migrants who arrived in Scotland, were cut off from the larger strand of migration to North America, where something approaching ninety percent of Eastern European Jewry emigrated.¹⁷ They may have perceived their lot as being one of a greater struggle to maintain a sense of a shared past and a collective identity. Success in doing so is used as a means to highlight triumph over adversity, and this is a quality which combines to underline strong communal identity and worthiness to Scottish residency. Stalwartness in the face of harsh realities is often stereotypically imagined as a Scottish virtue and valued as such. Thus the story of landing in Scotland by accident also has a public relations function. It is a story very much shaped by local conditions. Although at another level this tale can be seen as one strand of the overarching and better-known immigrant success story, common to Jews wherever they settled, it also performs a particularly effective role in presenting a coherent interpretation of immigrant motives for settling in urban Scotland.

Shared characteristics that go to make up the identity of immigrant communities are commonly believed to be created by the fact of shared origins. This kind of simplistic analysis then marginalizes the role played by local culture in receiving countries towards the shaping of a different or dual identity. If Glasgow was not a first choice for making a new home, then those people who overcame this prejudice and saw

¹⁶ Englander, *Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants*, pp.7-8.

¹⁷ Given the huge numbers involved, statistics for overall migration vary, but figures given for American immigrants are usually stated as over 80% or almost 90% of the 2 million strong total.

opportunities that others failed to see are then viewed as having triumphed in exceptional adversity. Despite the opportunities available in Glasgow, in the immigrant mind of the late nineteenth century Scotland was not so obviously a land of limitless prospects, at least for the initial period of migration. Glasgow was on a transmigration route to America, but really appears as poor competition with New York. Over time though, migrant settlers evidently found positive virtues in remaining in Scotland. This message also forms an important element in re-telling their story to a wider Scottish audience.

In his discussion of the usefulness of the term 'collective memory', Dan Stone proposes that the processes behind the forging of a collective narrative allow interaction between individual memory and the story of a 'group'. Where a painful course of events has occurred, this allows individuals who have no personal memory as such of the events they are describing, to come to terms with the past in a way that meets their own needs and provides a framework for explaining these to others.¹⁸ Immigrant communities are always confronted by the need to explain themselves; having a dual identity can be an uncomfortable position. However in the attempt to explain arrival in Scotland, and successful settlement here, the attractions of Glasgow do not loom large. The narrative constructed makes many issues concerning the choice of a new home of secondary importance to the issues of flight. Furthermore, women are not only peripheral in historical accounts of migration, this also seems to be the case in mythological accounts. The story of success is a gendered one where male experience is privileged over female. Female immigrants who arrived in Scotland from Eastern Europe were often illiterate, and if not, their writings have not been preserved.

¹⁸ Stone, Dan. 'The Domestication of Violence: Forging a Collective Memory of the Holocaust in Britain, 1945-6,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33:2 (1999) pp.13-29.

Moreover their experiences are marginalized in the particular version of the success story that is applied to Scottish Jewry.

In the case of the Balkins, the interviewee who recounted this family story makes specific reference to the fact that it was his parents who *both* found themselves arriving in Greenock, not New York! Yet, as the interview progresses, further reference is made to the fact that it was his mother in particular who wanted to move to America. There is an inference in this tale that the family's eventual destination seems to have been out of the mother's control, because in the end she did not get her wish. This element of the story makes sense in the context of Jewish migrant history generally, wherein the survival of families and their successful settlement in any locality is constructed around predominately male pursuits. Men became prominent in business, in the professions, in synagogue organization and in cultural pursuits. All of these have been viewed as the actions by which successful integration over time is measured, and indeed the overwhelming majority of published histories of British Jewish communities take this approach. By surveying the arrival of communal institutions like synagogues, charitable bodies and cultural interest groups, the means by which Jews prevent assimilation is highlighted, whilst not detracting from the narrative of equally successful integration with British life. Unfortunately the net result of such inquiries is to restrict any understanding of the recipients of charity, or those who stayed outside of, or were excluded from formal religious or cultural groups on the grounds of gender. These groups included many women who are effectively rendered absent from the narrative that is offered as proof of success. Immigrant women are constructed as merely arriving in the wake of immigrant men. The gendered dimension of the narrative of immigrant success is ignored in academic analysis because to stray beyond it would risk challenging

a version of events, which not only serves as an official historical narrative, but is also offered to the wider society as justification for acceptance.

Emigration however compelling, was a frightening experience. Feelings of dislocation and bewilderment were common. Parents may have tried to conceal their homesickness and unhappiness from children, although this pain may have been revealed in less direct ways.¹⁹ In the struggle to make a living and provide for children it is perfectly plausible that first generation migrants may have imagined that their fate might have been a little easier in some other place. For immigrants to Scotland this other place was commonly the United States –*Di Goldeneh Medina* –the Yiddish title, meaning literally, ‘the golden land.’ This was the pervasive dream which first generation immigrants carried with them from Eastern Europe, and which often continued to be nurtured in places far removed from the golden land itself. Thus a certain amount of conjecture is necessary in coming to an understanding of this process, as second and third generation immigrants who have no personal memory of this event, narrate the story of mistaken arrival in Scotland. What is intriguing is how the story came to be told in this particular way in regard to Glasgow.²⁰ Of the interviewees who gave personal testimony to myself in preparation for this study, all told the same story, either in respect of their own ancestors or as a more general explanation for the arrival of Jews in Glasgow. Only one female interviewee

¹⁹ Gay, R. *Unfinished People: Eastern European Jews Encounter America* (New York, 2001) Introduction pp.3-13. The author is a second-generation immigrant and discusses many of the tensions of immigrant experience in America that blighted family life.

²⁰ According to David Cesarani, Jews across the UK also tell this, or a similar story. Certainly the notion that many Jewish settlers would have preferred America is commonly found in official documentation such as parliamentary reports. Anecdotally I have been told that Welsh Jews lay strong claim to this story, but as yet no documented evidence of this has been found. See Cesarani, D ‘Social memory, history and British Jewish identity’ in Abramson, G. (ed.) *Modern Jewish Mythologies* (Cincinnati, 2000) pp.24-27.

commented that this might be ‘just a story’.²¹ For the overwhelming majority the literal truth of this account is rarely challenged. As such, it is a narrative that does require to be taken seriously, because its place as a bridge between past and present evidently continues to have resonance.

Despite its designation as second city of the Empire, Glasgow was not an easy place to get to during most of the nineteenth century, at least for Lithuanian Jews, who formed the majority group amongst immigrants. For those in the vanguard of mass migration, arrival in the United Kingdom more regularly took place in ports on the East Coast of England at Hull and Grimsby, or in London itself.²² From there, the new immigrants made their way to where opportunities were seen as greatest, or where family or *Landsleit* [kin or other members of a localised community] already resided. More usually this would mean London, and as the nineteenth century progressed, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool or Birmingham.²³

As migration from Eastern Europe gathered pace after 1881, shipping diversified.²⁴ This expansion, together with improvements in ocean going vessels meant that the journey from Baltic ports such as Libau in Latvia, and from Hamburg in Germany, now sometimes alighted in Scottish ports. Thus travel either directly to Scotland, or arriving in Scotland as part of the trans-migration passage to America became a possibility.²⁵ The two-step journey by sea from Europe to America, stopping off in the

²¹ Oral testimony of Mrs MT. Born: 1933.

²² Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p.32.

²³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴ In 1881 Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, this brought to an end almost twenty years of relative liberation for Russian Jews, thereafter emigration increased rapidly. See Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*, pp.64-68.

²⁵ Glasgow City Archives (GCA) ‘Table of foreign emigrants travelling from Glasgow, 1893-1903,’ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Sanitary Department of the City of Glasgow* (1902-3), Ref: DTC. 7. 23, p.10.

UK, was often cheaper than making the trip in one leg from a continental port. This situation was due to competition between British and other European shipping lines.²⁶

Government reports for 1894 give the number of persons arriving at Leith and Grangemouth over the year 1891 as 164. But this can be contrasted with Grimsby, where 1112 immigrants arrived in the same period. Clearly smaller numbers were arriving in Scotland directly, but nevertheless the figures are noteworthy if a significant proportion of these persons remained in the country.²⁷ According to one expert, transmigrants also transferred north to Glasgow from Hull or Grimsby, although the more usual transshipment port for North America in these cases would have been Liverpool.²⁸

In 1891 *The Jewish Chronicle* reported on the views of a Christian minister who was attending to the needs of new arrivals in the east coast port of Leith. The Rev. W. Paterson reported, '120 were landed, some very well off, and others extremely poor.'²⁹ According to the Minister, the immigrants were en route for Glasgow, although he does not specify if this was part of their trans-migration passage, or if they planned to settle in the west of Scotland. The article was headed: 'Christian Minister's Account' and this of course is meant to give weight to the reliability of this report. Yet the figure of 120 Jews disembarking suggests that Paterson's account is exaggerated, or more likely, that most were transmigrants and not intending to stay in Glasgow. This is an indication of the difficulties in this area for Scotland. Immigrants might have been en route for America via the west coast port of Greenock, and so would travel through

²⁶ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp.35-37.

²⁷ PP. C7406 *Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration from Eastern Europe into the United Kingdom* (1894) p.10.

²⁸ 'European transmigration through Scotland, 1879-1923' by Nicholas Evans (AHRB Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen.) Unpublished lecture, at Symposium on Jewish Settlement, Glasgow, 17/10/2004.

²⁹ *Jewish Chronicle* 14/08/1891, p. 9 of special supplement to that week's edition entitled: 'Darkest Russia'.

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Glasgow. On the way they might change their minds about journeying on, be rejected by health inspectors, or run out of money. At any rate, immigration statistics are an unreliable indicator of the numbers who eventually did settle. Evidence commenting on the condition of Jewish immigrants makes a clear difference between immigrants and transmigrants, both Jews and non-Jews, as the following account from 1896 indicates:

There is a material difference between transmigrants and immigrants as regards condition. As a rule, the transmigrant is pecuniarily [sic] better off, possesses more valuable effects, and is a cleaner and more respectable person than the immigrant... The majority of transmigrants are Scandinavians, while most of the immigrants are Russian and Germans, and include many Jews. As a rule, the poor Scandinavian is a more cleanly person than a Russian or a German Jew of similar social status.³⁰

Clearly there is prejudice at work in this commentary; nevertheless, the wretched state of many Jewish migrants may have encouraged some to put off travelling on, at least for a while, making intended transmigrants into longer settlers. Reverend Paterson appears to have been shocked by the distressing tales of expulsion which some new arrivals had to tell, and commented that:

It is hard to think that all this suffering is in the name of what is called Christian religion in Russia, the Orthodox Greek [sic] Church...It was a surprising thing for them to come into contact with our Scotch Christianity, and

³⁰ PP. Copy of *Dr Theodore Thomson's Report to the Local Government Board on the Methods Adopted at Certain Ports for Dealing with Alien Immigrants*, (1896.): 137, Vol. LXVII.729, p.2.

that a Christian minister was among them to express his deep sympathy. The prayers and blessings of that great broken-hearted company were something to have.³¹

Whether such migrants were encouraged by the ministrations of the likes of the Paterson or not, is hard to tell. In relating this event, the minister is more concerned to describe the awful conditions experienced by the Jews in Russia that propelled them to flee, and makes no comment on why they might wish to alight in Scotland. However, clearly Glasgow had entered the vocabulary of Eastern European migration either as a destination, or a stopping off point on the longer American journey. Paterson's comments infer that the Scottish tolerance extended was a new and wonderful experience, and therefore welcoming. The Reverend Paterson had introduced the potential new immigrants to an early lesson in dealing with emissaries from Presbyterian religions; by and large these individuals were seeking converts as well as showing appropriate sympathy. Moreover this was an early lesson for immigrants in showing appropriate gratitude for tolerance. Those who did settle would shortly discover that in the climate of Scotland at this time, religious difference was treated as a troublesome prospect.

Staying in Glasgow.

The perceived menace of Christian missionary activity certainly galvanized Jewish communal organisations, which developed as immigration gathered pace. This threat, as well as a will to relieve suffering, underpinned efforts to help new immigrants. In Glasgow in 1897, a Jewish organised *Strangers Aid Society* was established. This organisation, as well as other philanthropic endeavours, gave assistance to new settlers

³¹ *The Jewish Chronicle* 14/08/1891.

and to substantial numbers who then travelled on to America. The latter group was often given financial assistance to do so.³² In London, a 'Poor Jews Temporary Shelter' had been set up somewhat earlier in 1885, in response to this problem. Between the years 1896 and 1914, some 126 individuals lodged here who gave their intended destination as being Glasgow, indicating that at the turn of the century the immigrant path was now wending its way northwards, even amongst the most disadvantaged of a generally poor group.³³

Many new arrivals were indeed duped, not into mistaking London or Glasgow for New York, but out of the means to make that further voyage across the Atlantic. The route from the Russian Empire overland to ports of embarkation, and upon arrival in Britain, were awash with extortionists both official and in the guise of emigration 'enablers'.³⁴ Sadly, probably the majority of these fraudsters were themselves Jews, so it fell to the Jewish establishment to clean up this trade in misery, and much of this was especially directed at women travelling alone. In 1885, the Jewish Association for Protection of Girls and Women (JAPGW) was set up in London, in response to growing alarm about the so called White Slave Trade.³⁵ Such trafficking of young women was widely perceived at this time as a specifically Jewish problem. Moreover, the increase in female migrants was viewed as an even more worrying trend than that of male migration. Women and men were conceived of differently in terms of the likelihood of their becoming economically successful and integrated to western societies. The Jewish establishment in England were especially alarmed at the prospect of more single women arriving in the UK, and the bad reputation that their increasing visibility

³² Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.4.

³³ Transcript in SJAC, uncatalogued item. I am indebted to Harvey Kaplan for this list extracted from the records of *The Poor Jews Temporary Shelter*.

³⁴ Gartner, L. *History of the Jews in Modern Times* (Oxford, 2001) pp. 259-261.

³⁵ Marks, 'The luckless waifs and strays of humanity,' p.122.

might attract. This situation pertained because debates about moral degeneracy were often embroiled in anti-alienism.³⁶ Female immigrants who arrived unprotected by a male breadwinner were seen as being particularly open to corruption. In addition, many of the young Jewish women destined to enter prostitution elsewhere passed through the UK, on their way to the brothels of, amongst other exotic destinations, Buenos Aires and Cape Town. Overall, between 1885 and 1914 around 300,000 Jewish migrants passed through the UK on their journey to the new world. Notwithstanding, anxiety about single women amongst these huge numbers was still high, and much of the reason for this was that many transmigrants stayed on in Britain either temporarily or permanently.³⁷

Put simply, it was expensive to make the transatlantic voyage. Jews without the means to make that trip remained in Britain, perhaps travelling onwards at a later date. Many possibly decided that they had travelled far enough, and as more immigrants settled here, their presence set in motion the process of chain-migration, attracting relatives and *Landsleit* to do likewise. The latter groups must then have known to where they journeyed. Moreover, American restrictions on alien immigration meant that many migrants had no choice but to remain in the Britain. Potential emigrants were informed about American health restrictions, and medical examinations were much feared because of this. From 1891, contagious disease was determined as grounds for refusing immigrants to the USA. New arrivals in North America found to be suffering from infectious diseases, notably trachoma and tuberculosis, were rejected, and companies were forced to give these unwanted migrants passage back to their ports of embarkation. For this reason, shipping companies employed doctors to ascertain the

³⁶ Marks, L. 'Race, class and gender' in Grant, J. (ed.) *Women, Migration and Empire* (Stoke on Trent, 1996) p.38.

³⁷ Bristow, 'British Jewry and the fight against the international white-slave traffic,' p.155.

health of migrants, and Jews taking the trans-migration route through the UK were subject to medical examination here in the first instance. However, according to Collins, only small numbers of immigrants slipped through this net and were returned to Glasgow, and even fewer remained here; estimates reached a peak in 1913 at only 12 persons, and 9 of these returned to Eastern Europe.³⁸ However, such figures cannot account for the numbers who chose to alight in the UK because they anticipated rejection in North America, or indeed were restricted from journeying on because of poor health.³⁹

Immigrants sometimes stayed in their port of arrival for a short time, and then moved on to where employment seemed likely. In Scotland a small community was maintained over several decades in Falkirk, which is on the east to west railway line between Leith and Glasgow.⁴⁰ Evidently some Jews saw economic opportunities in this industrial town for a time. In giving evidence to the Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903, the Secretary to the Commission, who visited several of the ports of arrival, claimed that a great many of the poorest immigrants arriving at Grimsby were en route for Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow.⁴¹ And it is claimed that the figures for transmigrants through Glasgow were at a peak in 1893 at 10,500 persons.⁴² So although the great majority of Eastern European emigrants reached the Golden Land, sufficient numbers stayed on in the UK.⁴³ Thereafter, those immigrants who arrived after the initial wave, and the inmates of the Poor Jews' Shelter would likely be

³⁸ Collins, *Be Well!*, p112. See also GCA. *Annual Report on the Operations of the Sanitary Department of the City of Glasgow* (1901-2) Ref: DTC. 7. 23, p12.

³⁹ SJAC. Transcript of oral testimony of Moray Glasser. Born: 15/05/1898, interviewed by Ben Braber: 21/06/1988. Mr Glasser relates a good example of this case.

⁴⁰ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.39.

⁴¹ PP. *Minutes of Evidence Taken before Commission on Alien Immigration* Vol. II (1903.) cd. 1742: 2173.

⁴² GCA. *Annual Sanitary Report for the City of Glasgow* (1902-3) p.10.

⁴³ PP. *Minutes of Evidence Taken before Commission on Alien Immigration*. Evidence given by the Commission's secretary outlines the improbability that figures collected for transmigrants as opposed to immigrants were accurate. cd. 1742: 2173.

amongst these, generally came to Glasgow in full knowledge of at least the city's name and its rough location – who can know if this was really a source of disappointment for all?

The writer Chaim Bermant was a much later arrival to Glasgow. In his memoir of childhood in Eastern Europe, he describes his family's plans to move here in the early 1930s. His father, a Rabbi, unable to earn a living in his native country, was then offered a post as a *Shochet* [responsible for the slaughter of kosher meat] in Glasgow; a much-needed figure in what was by this time, a substantial community of around 15,000 persons:

...everyone envied us, not because we were moving out, not only out of Latvia but, so to speak, out of Europe, though some wondered why, since we were moving, we didn't make for America –as if we had any say in the matter. America, in the Jewish imagination was still *die golderneh medineh*, the golden land. England, at best, was the silver one, but silver or not it had a lot to commend it...I had heard of England mainly as the home of chocolate, shoes and *shtoff* – men's clothing material. Also until the rise of Hitler, there was a general feeling that the further west one went the better it was for the Jews, so that Germany was better than Latvia, France was better than Germany, and England was better still, so that I had a vague idea where it was situated.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Bermant, *Genesis: A Latvian Childhood*, p.151. Bermant's spelling of Yiddish terms is reproduced here, and illustrates the fact that there is no standardization of written Yiddish in translation, and even well known words and phrases may be transliterated differently.

Bermant describes a move to 'England' and here he is apparently recreating where he, and other Latvian Jews imagined Glasgow to be. However, the submersion of Scotland in England was a notion overturned upon arrival as Bermant himself has noted. A clear picture of what potential destinations were really like was unlikely for most emigrants, yet perceptions about possible destinations certainly existed, whether accurate or not. Still, as Bermant's testimony shows, making an informed choice from these was an indulgence that many emigrants simply did not have much of a say in. In the absence of good health or sufficient funds to travel to America, and the presence perhaps of kin who had settled in Scotland, Glasgow might have seemed the lesser of evils. And of course many may have hoped to travel onwards at a later date.

Immigrants who began arriving in greater numbers from the 1880s onwards received a mixed reception, and as noted, the plight of women coloured attitudes. Distribution of the increasing flood was deemed a sensible manoeuvre by the Anglo-Jewish establishment in London, who took various measures both to dissuade immigrants from coming to Britain or, when this occurred regardless, encouraged their settlement throughout the United Kingdom. A more definite dispersal could be achieved by encouraging onward migration to North America. Gartner has described the lengths to which the Jewish establishment in London was prepared to go in order to ward off negative views regarding Jews, which might be ignited by the mass arrival of these co-religionists. These included repatriation and the publication in Yiddish newspapers in Europe, especially at ports of embarkation, of propaganda that aimed to discourage immigration to the UK. Official channels were also often prevailed on to underline this message, for example, 'Her Britannic Majesty's Consul General at Hamburg has been instructed to cause it to be made public that destitute persons intending to emigrate to

Great Britain to seek employment are likely to be disappointed on arrival...'⁴⁵ In Scotland however, the numbers repatriated were by comparison very small. According to Collins 50,000 migrants were repatriated by the London Jewish Board of Guardians between 1880 and 1914 in comparison to 'a family or two' from Glasgow.⁴⁶ This implies that Glasgow was more compliant than its English counterparts. Whether this different situation north of the border reflects a greater level of tolerance however, is extremely doubtful. It seems more likely that immigrants arriving in Glasgow, perhaps as a place of secondary migration, or because they already had family here, were more easily acclimatised to the UK and therefore less likely to be bullied into a move back to Russia. Moreover, the small Glaswegian Jewish establishment undoubtedly did not have the resources of money needed to promote this option on a large scale, unlike its London equivalent.

In the Balkin family story, other relatives had made the journey to America and thus Mrs Balkin also set her sights there. Her son recounts that 'Two of my mother's brothers went to America...and *she* thought they were going to America...' ⁴⁷ In this family saga the individuals concerned evidently eventually overcame their disappointment at being landed in Scotland. Of the seven children who were born and raised in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, five remained in the city, but two of the sons eventually fulfilled the ambition in adulthood, to make the journey to the *Goldeneh Medina*. Interestingly one returned to Scotland after a few years. The Balkin family story portrays a micro-narrative, which is representative of Jewish Diaspora at this time. Unable to reach the golden land, Jewish emigrants settled where they could find

⁴⁵Quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle* 09/01/1891 p.9.

⁴⁶Collins, *Be Well!*, p.23. See also Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp.41-56. Gartner makes clear that a consistent policy of hostility did not exist over his period, and a variety of opinion existed, however on the whole the massive influx of Jewish immigrants did cause sufficient alarm to set such policies in motion. Discouragement of immigration did hold sway with brutal consequences for many.

⁴⁷ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913.

a living and a roof over their heads. More usually they would find these in places where kinship was provided by extended family, or acquaintances from the homeland.

In 1899, one observer noted:

...Strange as it may appear, the immigrant's future is more or less determined by the sort of trade done at the town where he lands or arrives. He may become a tanner or a dyer in Hull, and have a different ambition from what he would have if he had landed at, say, Liverpool, Glasgow or London... Their choice of a domicile depends on the friends or *lanzlard* [sic] they expect to see, and to whom they had probably previously written.⁴⁸

Choice of settlement was probably not quite as haphazard as this, although Jews undoubtedly made decisions based on the economic opportunities available in different localities. Immigrants with skills would naturally gravitate to centres where these could be exploited. Yet the unskilled often followed these trajectories also, enticed by any chance of making a living. Amongst the immigrants there were for example, many skilled tailoresses who could exploit the middle class market for bespoke ladies' clothing in large cities. Equally though, there were the unskilled who used ingenuity to work market stalls, selling clothing and foodstuffs to the working classes. The Balkin family story reveals that the fate of women was involved in the process of settlement just as much as that of men. Like many young migrants, Mr and Mrs Balkin set out on their journey as a young married couple, eager to make a better life for themselves and their future family. As will be seen, Mrs Balkin was a resourceful and successful contributor to the Balkin household economy, and Glasgow

⁴⁸ Smith, J. 'The Jewish Immigrant,' *Contemporary Review* 76:2 (1899) p.426.

presented her with the opportunity to achieve this in a way that capitalised on her individual talents, and fitted into the ‘economic opportunity structures’ of the city.⁴⁹

Like their male counterparts, women migrants whether single or married, selected places of settlement in terms of their economic and social prospects for making a successful life.

In 1888, under the auspices of the Imperial Tobacco Company, an Austrian Jew named Joseph Kramrisch, set up a cigarette factory in Glasgow. By 1903 this enterprise employed 160 men, who were all foreign Jews, and 100 women, half of whom were Jewish.⁵⁰ These people were recruited from abroad as well as from within the United Kingdom, cigarette-making being an occupation associated specifically with Jewish trade and one that commonly involved female labour. In similar vein, the furniture manufacturer, S. L. Abrahams brought Jewish workers to Duntocher in Dunbartonshire in 1900, where they were housed in a tenement block known as ‘Abrahams’ Land’. This self-contained community contained a synagogue.⁵¹ Both of these examples illustrate that there was a supply and demand feature involved in some Jewish immigration to the West of Scotland by the end of the century. Glasgow increasingly became a place of secondary migration; both male and female workers might be attracted by opportunities in the city away from other more congested Jewish labour markets in London and Manchester. In addition some coercion was involved in movement within the UK. Sir Samuel Montagu established a *Jewish Dispersal Committee* in London in 1903, in order to consolidate previous disparate attempts at dispersal from London. However such efforts often met with firm resistance on the

⁴⁹ Green, *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora*, p.235.

⁵⁰ Collins, *Be Well!*, p.26; Englander, *A Documentary History* pp.130-131; PP. *Evidence of Jacob Kramrisch before Royal commission on Alien Immigration* Vol. II (1903) cd 1742: 21714-21738.

⁵¹ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry* p.8 & p.121.

part of immigrant Jews.⁵² Immigrants resented being constantly uprooted. The desire to be settled was no less strong in them than in the wider population. Nevertheless some did arrive in Glasgow having been sponsored in this way, although no precise figures exist. In the Minute Book of the Glasgow Hebrew Congregation for 1910, an entry outlines co-operation with the London based organisation's plans to use Glasgow as a centre for dispersal in Scotland.⁵³ It does seem likely that the Jewish establishment in Glasgow felt obliged to be in agreement with a London Jewish authority, but in practice there was alarm at the possibility of more impoverished Jews coming to Glasgow.

In succeeding generations, further dispersal from major settlements might occur or not, depending on how well immigrants integrated with their new surroundings. For the Balkins settlement proved lasting and they became Glaswegian Jews. The conditions they experienced upon arrival must have encouraged them to stay, and over time other extended kin joined families such as them. The struggle to maintain some measure of continuity, which is so important to the Jewish experience of flight and dispersal, was achieved in this case. Russian Jews became Scottish Jews with their own unique identity. The latter often includes the legend that immigrant ancestors came here by mistake; a metaphor perhaps for the way that choice of destination was always mediated by harsh realities. It seems that mistaken destination or no, Glasgow did begin to achieve a reputation as a location that provided commercial possibilities, a Jewish community infrastructure, and more controversially a relative lack of social conflict. However, it did take at least a couple of decades for this information to become knowledge to Jewish migrants.

⁵² Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp.148-150.

⁵³ SJAC. *Minute Book of Glasgow Hebrew Congregation, 1896-1912*, entry for 29/05/1910. Ref: REL.GHC.

Immigration history also tends to present a gender stereotype of the typical immigrant. The latter is generally a young male. Other migrant groups in the same period, one example being Italians, did use this mechanism of sending the young able-bodied male ahead to prepare the way for others. Men made up 80 per cent of Italian immigrants to the USA.⁵⁴ In Scotland, Italian women often arrived as marriage partners and co-workers after significant periods of male settlement, and of course daughters were born in this country. Nevertheless, percentage figures of Italian immigrants show that by 1911 women made up only 32.5 per cent of the Scottish Italian population.⁵⁵ Return migration was also a feature of the Italian case, with immigrants making journeys back and forth to Italy before eventually establishing families in Scotland. The Jewish pattern of migration was very different to this, although unfortunately accurate statistics that give a precise breakdown of male and female immigrant Jews do not exist for Scotland.⁵⁶ In his description of arrivals at Leith, the Reverend Paterson gives an impression that families were predominant amongst the immigrants.⁵⁷ In the following excerpt from oral testimony, a similar narrative is involved:

So my dad said right, we'll go to America. I was 3 months old when I came here, so you could imagine. So they took a boat for America. But in these days captains of ships weren't such honest people, and when they got to, as they thought, America, the captain put them off the boat, and where he put them off was in a place outside Edinburgh –in Leith. So they thought they were in America, but however, they discovered they weren't,

⁵⁴ Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, p.51.

⁵⁵ Ugolini, W. 'The Italian Community in Scotland: Insights from oral history Research' in Rose, M. and Rossini, E. (eds.) *Italian Scottish Identities and Connections with a case study on Trentino* (Edinburgh, 2000) p.32.

⁵⁶ Statistics of this type for Scotland cannot be deemed accurate as Lithuanian Catholics, the majority of these male, are included in figures of Russian and Polish immigrants.

⁵⁷ *The Jewish Chronicle* 14/08/1891.

and they found their way to Glasgow where they had people who came from the same little *Shtetl* where they came from.⁵⁸

The more structured form of this narrative as compared to the excerpt from the Balkin family story is very revealing. Here, the family do not remain ignorant for long, and the presence of friends already established is acknowledged. It is overall, a more knowing account, although it still does not admit that Glasgow may have been an intended destination, or stopping off point all along. Yet it is similar to the Balkin story in equally important ways. Here the helplessness of the migrants is presented as an obstacle in them getting to their intended destination, and again it is a family who are arriving, indicating the likelihood of permanent exile, and less freedom than a single man might have had to determine this journey. Overall it is yet again a male directed version of events. The interviewee does not mention the place of his mother in this episode, although he does imply her plight by pointing out that he was only three months old. Jews, more commonly than other ethnic groups, travelled as families if this was at all possible; a fact that must have helped ensure continuity of their ethnic identity; at least for the initial generation of immigrants. This was an especially important feature in a group where links to home, maintained via repeated return visits, was very uncommon. Also in a time when large families were the norm, this increased numbers in the second generation considerably. Additionally, when young adults did travel alone, there seems to have been less of a gender bias towards men. Dire economic conditions and therefore poor marriage prospects meant that young unmarried women also took the emigration route, and the activities of such groups as the JAPGW indicate that the instance of young Jewish women travelling alone was

⁵⁸ SJAC. Transcript of interview (17/03/1989) with Mr A. Frutin. Born: 1903. Interviewer Dr. B. Braber.

widespread. It is clear that the gender balance of Jewish migrants was more even than in other migrant groups, a fact that is not reflected in the historiography of British Jewry. Immigrants came as family units; or both single men and women made the initial move, and were responsible for the subsequent move of other family members.⁵⁹

In 1913 all nine members of the Balkin family were living in a one room plus kitchen apartment in the Gorbals area of Glasgow [see map B, appendix 2] where the majority of new immigrants clustered. Their house did not have a bath or toilet. However their circumstances were by no means unusual, nor indeed amongst the most poverty stricken: ‘...they didn’t know any better, so they were content with that, didn’t know any different.’⁶⁰ It seems unlikely that Mrs Balkin could have been truly content with these conditions, although she evidently had to accept them for a while. A hardworking woman who had an aptitude for business, it is more probable that she had an eye on improving the family circumstances. This mother of seven children entered into the peddling trade, selling a variety of drapery goods. In her youngest son’s account, Mrs Balkin made a great success of it. A few years after the birth of her last surviving child, the family moved into a flat with two rooms and kitchen in a better part of the Gorbals, and this residence had an inside toilet: ‘That was a big improvement for us I can assure you. Still never had a bathroom!’⁶¹ Later still as the older children married and moved out of the family home, yet more improvement was achieved with a move to a house large enough to contain a stock room for keeping the goods sold through, what had become by then, a family business in retailing drapery. The final defining improvement was that this time it contained a bathroom. All of

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 52-3.

⁶⁰ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913.

⁶¹ Ibid.

these moves took place within the Gorbals district in the heart of Jewish Glasgow, the last of these being 'right next to the Synagogue and the Jewish Institute.'⁶²

The trajectory of social improvement described here, whilst not being untypical, was not universal, although the collective narrative of immigrant Jews usually displays it as such. Moving up in the world took longer for some families and as this example of the Balkin family shows, although the Gorbals achieved a general notoriety for squalor and overcrowding, a multiplicity of housing conditions did exist. Moreover, for newly arrived Jews on all points of the social scale, it did represent a semblance of home, a *Shtetl* in urban Scotland, which provided many of the features of a Jewish communal infrastructure. Not quite the golden land, but good enough it seems.

Nevertheless, the fact of this settlement appears to require justification for most second-generation immigrants, whatever their parents' motives might have been. Thus immigrant stories such as this one developed, celebrating triumph over adversity in a small, little known country, one that unlike the United States did not trumpet its attractions for immigrants. In Scotland, migration narratives are generally concerned with the fact of *emigration*, very often to North America. Indeed it might be concluded that Scots own a collective narrative regarding a Scottish Diaspora, wherein natives have been harried and harassed into leaving Scotland, but made a huge success of this sad situation by spreading Scottish values and culture across the world. As Jews arrived in Scotland, thousands of members of the wider society had already made their way, and were still making their way, across the Atlantic. Scotland was a country where the outflow of people far exceeded the inflow, a fact that was probably not lost

⁶² Ibid.

on the Jewish newcomers.⁶³ The latter may have had good reason to question their judgement in settling in Glasgow. The first generation immigrants had to strive for a living and learn to live with the fact that their exile was likely permanent; but in subsequent generations the story of arrival to Scotland mutated. The children of immigrants were a transitional cohort, Scottish by birth and often assimilated with much of Scottish life. Yet consciousness of a familial past was elsewhere, and in order to present a coherent identity in the present, these two elements had to be reconciled. The Scottish, Jewish immigrant success story is part of a collective attempt to do just this. Yet despite the fact that both men and women were engaged within it, women are supporting characters in this narrative. The way that this story is retold, uses a framework that is male-centred and makes women into ‘passive followers of the “real migrant” ’ who is generally conceived as ‘the male labor migrant or political exile.’⁶⁴

Accepting Glasgow

The narrative of Glasgow as an impostor of New York took flight, and this story has become a kind of shorthand version for making a success of settlement in circumstances that were not optimal. Glasgow must have seemed so near, and yet ironically so far away from the golden land. Being set squarely on the trans-migration route, those who did come here seem to have a need to explain their failure to make the longer journey. Mrs Balkin evidently made a success of this and it seems clear that the perseverance of the family was owed in a large part to her endeavours. During the course of her life she overturned the obstacle of having arrived in Glasgow, and exploited some of the limited opportunities that were available to women in working

⁶³ Anderson, M. and Morse, D. J. ‘The People’ in Fraser, W. H. and Morris, R. J. (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland 1830-1914* (Edinburgh, 1990) pp.13-22.

⁶⁴ Friedman-Kasaba, K. *Memories of Migration*, p.15.

class Scotland. However as a woman, she is not celebrated in the popular success story that is Glasgow Jewry or indeed in scholarly accounts of this.

Oral testimony can provide some of the most lively and pertinent evidence with which a challenge to this consensus can be made. However it cannot be utilised uncritically. Oral evidence presented as memory of the past involves asking questions of, 'what is being contained by a "fixed" story.'⁶⁵ Simply reproducing the story of Glasgow as a mistaken destination as a transparent truth, is potentially misleading; equally questioning the validity of it and assuming it to be merely a colourful legend, or a dubious anecdote, which intrudes on otherwise useful oral evidence, gets us no closer to understanding arrival in Glasgow for Jewish immigrants. The Balkin story of arrival in Greenock, does suggest that the couple were en route for America. This west coast port was indeed a point of embarkation for a variety of European emigrants. What exactly happened to Mr and Mrs Balkin, why did they remain in Scotland? Illness, lack of sufficient funds, or simply that the journey to America was far and hazardous and Glasgow seemed to represent a reasonable option? Any or all of these obstacles might have pertained, we will probably never know for sure. So the task of interpreting the story that exists, and is passed on through generations, becomes the only reference point from which to try and understand such experience.

To date, no one theoretical approach has achieved prominence for the interpretation of oral evidence. For historians who are committed to the use of oral history, the search for a theoretical position is often work in progress, involving the borrowing of approaches from literary theory, psychology and anthropology. In making use of oral

⁶⁵ Thomson, A. 'Anzac memories, putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia.' in *The Oral History Reader* p.302.

evidence for this particular study, it has therefore been impossible to adopt one predetermined theoretical stance for interpreting it. This chapter constitutes a beginning in more than one sense. It has been about understanding a story presented as the literal arrival of a successful communal group in Glasgow; it also represents a start in interpreting this kind of evidence using an oral explanation that might easily be rejected as myth, but in fact has a useful place in understanding how Jews responded to their arrival in Scotland. Moreover, oral accounts at least acknowledge the presence of women as flesh and blood travellers, even if they do not include insights into their motivations. In so doing they expose the way that such immigrant stories are gendered narratives.

The Balkin's youngest son has recalled the homesickness, which was experienced by his parents. Like millions of others, this couple wanted to get away from Eastern Europe, but this did not mean that they never looked back. Nevertheless, subsequent generations were rarely very tolerant of this nostalgia it seems:

...immigrants would look back with much sadness and refer wistfully to that poxy, Cossack-infested country as 'der heim' (the homeland, the old country). No doubt this was due to thoughts of loved ones, such as old parents destined to die alone amidst an apathetic people of a savage regime.⁶⁶

Glasgow was not the golden land, but it did provide the families with the chance to transform a perceived obstacle involved in their migrant process into a potential opportunity for improvement. Glasgow met the two main criteria of the Jewish

⁶⁶ Caplan, J. *Memories of the Gorbals* (Edinburgh, 1991) p.6.

emigrant, namely economic betterment, and religious and or political freedom. Later generations of immigrants naturally tend to feel more affinity with these facts, than with misplaced attachment to their European origins. The Balkins for example, were able to make a living. Progress in doing so is demonstrated in their family story. Mr. Balkin was a religious man, and he was apparently able to practice his beliefs without molestation. The children were not systematically debarred from receiving an education and compounded a sense of family security by eventually taking active roles in business. Mrs Balkin is described in oral testimony as being ‘indefatigable’, a woman who worked and made a success of this, despite the fact that she could neither read or write, or ever learned to speak English fluently. She also ensured continuity of Jewish identity within her family by maintaining a traditional Jewish home. It was in this way she hoped to pass on the traditions of Eastern Europe to her children. She did all of these things regardless of the fact that she evidently never wanted to come to Scotland, and it is now impossible to know with any measure of certainty if she overcame this disappointment at a personal level.

The Balkin family did however become naturalized, a fact which eventually allowed their youngest son, who was interviewed for this study, to assert his British nationality in a very visible way. During the Second World War he opted for the Air Force in preference to other armed services. This interviewee was immensely proud of his service during the war and a photograph of him looking dapper in uniform was visible in the room where this interview took place:

Now at that particular time I was conscripted...they were very fussy about who they were taking...if you weren't British, born British, or naturalized British you

couldn't get into the Air Force because it was considered privileged...I was born here but there were plenty of other chaps that I knew were born here and they couldn't get in...I would never have got in otherwise to tell you the truth, 'cos my father was naturalized he had the presence of mind to get naturalized...⁶⁷

Unfortunately we do not know how Mrs Balkin felt about this claim to British nationality. First generation immigrants undoubtedly had difficulty in identifying 'home' once severed from Eastern Europe; the story of mistaken arrival in Glasgow expresses this experience of dislocation. But the Jews who came to Scotland tried hard to recreate a sense of home in the urban setting of Glasgow and women were inextricably involved in this process. However, if women are excluded from having agency in the migrant's journey, their place in the historical reconstruction of Jewish settlement in Glasgow is equally ambivalent. It is precisely the identification of women with the privacy of the home, and the connection that domestic environments came to have with tradition that has meant their exclusion from histories that purport to describe Jewish settlement in the UK. Alongside men, Jewish women also had to make huge adjustments to Scottish urban society; for example, within two generations the Yiddish language was approaching extinction, the rhythms which had dictated Jewish life in Eastern Europe, like Sabbath observance for example, were widely disregarded in favour of making money from Saturday trade; and marriage out of the community became a regular feature which caused anxiety.

⁶⁷ Oral testimony of Mr MB. For examination of Jews in the armed forces in WW2 see Kushner, T. *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War*. (Manchester, 1989) pp.122-6. See also Ugolini, 'The Italian Community in Scotland,' p.37 where similar discrimination for Italian descendants is mentioned.

The subjective identity of second and third generation immigrants involves convergence between different cultural positions. Having no personal experience of life in Eastern Europe, or sometimes of movement out of this, successive generations have nevertheless been made responsible for keeping the memory of such life events.

They often recreate the experiences of their parents and grandparents in the form of stories, which dramatise lives in the past and are both informative and imaginative. In stories where links to an Eastern European past are deposited, women often appear as characters whose central role is to provide connection with the old country. Mothers and grandmothers were said to be slower to learn English, if they learned it at all.

Women also kept up their own forms of religious observance in the home and performed the duties of traditional Yiddisher wives. This treatment of the experiences of first generation women has had the tendency to turn them into ciphers, who if they embody anything, it is the attachment to an older and increasingly impenetrable way of life. Yet contrary to this image are the resourceful women like Mrs Balkin who entered into the life of Scottish society by becoming engaged in various forms of self-employment; and who needed no encouragement to realise the opportunities available for their families in Scottish society. These women were every bit as much pioneers as their male counterparts.

The new Scottish-Jewish identity was shaped much more by the conditions that immigrants faced upon settlement, than by any which they had left behind. However, the country of arrival also shapes the way that departing an Eastern European past is remembered. If it now seems that much of that past is mythologized, it is important to understand why this is the case; and it also important to understand how immigrant narratives privilege men's experiences over women's. It now remains necessary to explore how both integration with Scottish society and continuity of Jewish identity

were achieved, and what place women did have in this transformation. The next immediate areas to which attention is turned, are the material conditions that Jews experienced upon arrival in Glasgow, what its citizens felt about this incursion and how the course of settlement is remembered in the Gorbals district of Glasgow.

Chapter 3. Gender, ethnicity and the Gorbals story.

'Where do you come from?'

'Glasgow'

'What part?'

'Vilna'

'Where the heck's that?'

'A bit east of the Gorbals,

*In around the heart.'*¹

Mr. Taylor was a Gorbals boy; he was born in this area of Glasgow in 1903 and brought up amid urban squalor. In this excerpt from oral testimony he describes his household in a one-room apartment:

I, we, must have moved to Hospital Street when I was one year old or something...I'll tell you how many there were. There was my mother, and my father and my sister and myself, now –the family. And there was my grandfather, and my cousin Isaac. He was a lodger; there was six of us...²

The overcrowded condition of the Taylor home was not at all untypical in the Gorbals, and for this reason Gorbals life contained little privacy, either inside or out of the tenement homes in its busy streets. This chapter will approach the history of Jewish women's settlement in Glasgow by means of three routes. One of these is to explore the material conditions at large for first generation immigrants in the Gorbals district, and how these impacted on women's lives. Another seeks to make an examination of the interaction of Jewish immigrants with other Glaswegians, both Jewish and non-Jewish, using an analytical perspective which accounts for gender relations. However, yet a third consideration which must be included in a study that uses memory as an

¹ Jacobs, *Collected Poems*, p.35, poem entitled 'Place'

² Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born: 1903. See Map B for location of street.

analytical tool, is the very fact of *how* this community of Gorbals Jews are recalled, especially from within their membership. In this respect the Gorbals locality itself has become an essential prop in telling the history of Jews in the West of Scotland, for it is here that a sense of a Glaswegian Jewish community arose. The teeming life of the Gorbals might be assumed to contain a huge variety of working class life, but as with all narratives, the Gorbals story is constructed from the vantage point of the storyteller. Historical treatment of working class life in Scotland has most often been constructed from the standpoint of the male worker, thus women's lives are hidden. In interview, Mr Taylor had little to say about his mother's experience as a Gorbals dweller, but he did make one rather memorable statement in reply to a question about how his mother coped, he said she 'Didn't cope. My mother had a hell of a life.'

The twin disadvantages of a male centred perspective on what constituted a 'worker' in Scottish urban life, and the undeniable difficulties that working class women endured, often serves to render female agency in two opaque dimensions –either confined to the home and, or, invisible under the burdens of impoverished womanhood. Examination of the case of poor Jews is at least one way of revealing the diversity that existed in working class localities on the grounds of ethnicity. Another means is to show how street life was made up of more than simply the male industrial worker and his interests –women were also forced to live much of their life in the open – the Gorbals streets were not a gender free zone and were part of women's experience. To begin with however, we must provide a context to this environment, and look generally at the material conditions which bred the Gorbals woman.

For interviewees like Mr Taylor, the notion of a Glasgow Jewish community derives its origins in the Gorbals, yet this is also true for Glaswegian Jews who did not in fact

reside there at all, or who had a very short residence there. Growth of the Jewish population in the Gorbals involved transplanting essential elements of Jewish religion, work patterns, language, home life, food culture and sociability to the Gorbals environment. Jews who later moved on to the suburbs of Glasgow recall the Gorbals in ways that recreate this sense of a shared community, and these memories have been influential in continuing to shape the identity of Glasgow's Jews. Many oral history respondents are proud of being Gorbals born and bred. They recall both the vitality of Jewish life there, and the poverty at large, in very vivid descriptions. However, although the cramped and dismal conditions endured by Jewish families in the Gorbals are often revealed in oral testimony in a very graphic way, this has to be placed in the context of the general Gorbals environment, where the mainstream population were just as badly off. Although highly visible, Jews never formed a majority in this overcrowded district.³ For example, Irish migrants who were engaged in irregular employment and suffered because of prejudice often had a lot of similar difficulties. They too tended to form residential clusters in the poorest localities.⁴ Indeed many Irish settled in the Gorbals. This district was one of Scotland's first, if not *the* first multiethnic localities. Here, the Jewish quarter developed over the period between the 1880s until its eventual decline in the 1950s.

Settling down in Glasgow.

This section examines typical housing conditions for Jews, and illustrates the way that non-Jews received immigrants in working class Glasgow. In all of the towns and cities

³ Harvey Kaplan is currently undertaking a study of Gorbals Jewry within the 1901 census. So far he has estimated that out of a total population of around 95,000 less than 5000 can clearly be identified as Jewish, although it must be borne in mind that this study is not yet complete. I am indebted to Mr Kaplan for this insight from his research, which will be published by the SJAC upon conclusion.

⁴ Kinealy, C. 'Irish Immigration into Scotland in the 19th and 20th Centuries' in Scottish Association of Family History Societies, *European Immigration into Scotland: Proceedings of the 4th Annual Conference of Family History Societies* (Glasgow, 1992) pp.7-8.

in the UK where Jews settled, geographical clustering occurred in a highly visible way.⁵ In Glasgow the Gorbals district, situated just south of the river Clyde and close by the city centre, became home to a variety of impoverished newcomers. This area, which had developed from a village settlement of 'weavers, skimmers and wrights' in the seventeenth century, was gradually enlarged and then redeveloped during the early nineteenth century in order to house the emerging professional classes of Glasgow in wide streets of elegant tenement apartments.⁶ However, the incursion of industry into the neighbouring division of Tradeston curtailed this movement [see Map A]. After the mid century the new middle classes opted to follow the trajectory usual in large cities of the time, by moving away from the river Clyde and the congested centre.⁷

House building in areas such as the Gorbals became the product of speculative development as the city expanded, and was thereafter of the type standard for the labouring classes of Glasgow. Four storied tenements, with two or more individual flats on each floor were the norm. Private landlords owned either entire buildings or single flats, and properties were let to tenants through the medium of 'housing factors'. These middlemen had the responsibility of leasing and maintaining the building.⁸ Thereafter, sub-letting by the tenants themselves was commonplace, and lodgers taking one room, or more often the share of a room, was a usual domestic arrangement. As we have seen, the Taylor family managed this arrangement despite the limitations of their home. The spacious housing, which had begun this period of urban transformation, was also increasingly subdivided and it too was rented to the

⁵ Waterman, S and Kosmin, B. 'Ethnic identity, residential concentration and social welfare: the Jews in London.' in Jackson, P. (ed.) *Race and Racism: Essays in Social Geography*. (London, 1987) pp.254-267.

⁶ Eunson, E. *The Gorbals: An Illustrated History* (Ochiltree, Ayrshire, 1996) pp. 8-17.

⁷ Maver, I. *Glasgow* (Edinburgh, 2000) pp.95-100.

⁸ Sim, D. 'The Scottish house factoring profession,' *Urban History*, 23:3 (1996) pp.351-371.

working classes, often through another group of landlords known as ‘house farmers’.⁹ Profiteering at the expense of the urban working classes led to the exploitation of every available inch of building space. The areas to the rear and between tenement blocks were also built on. Here two storied and invariably sub-standard houses were erected and these residences, known as Backlands, then provided some of the worst examples of working class houses in the UK.¹⁰ By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Gorbals was already notorious for squalor, poverty and general lawlessness. Moreover, much of the deterioration evident to contemporaries was blamed on Irish immigration, which had been ongoing throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹ This was an early indication of the kind of scapegoating visited on immigrant groups, who struggled to meet the rent on low earnings from irregular employment.

Right up until the interwar years however, some residential diversity did persist. For example one stately row of housing in a street called Abbotsford Place was popularly known as ‘the Harley Street of Glasgow’.¹² This situation had much to do with early social improvement amongst Glaswegian Jews, as the sons of immigrants, and very occasionally Jewish daughters, entered medicine.¹³ Nevertheless it should be noted, that although technically Abbotsford Place was situated within the Gorbals, it was likely *in* the Gorbals but not *of* it. When describing her childhood home in this street, Mrs Rose corrected my assumption that her address was in the Gorbals and responded sharply that Abbotsford was not ‘actually in the Gorbals but on the edge’ and

⁹ *Glasgow Municipal Commission On The Housing Of The Poor – Report* (1904) p.3, gives description of this practice, which often became lucrative for its proponents. Accommodation was let on a nightly or weekly basis.

¹⁰ See Fyfe, P. *Backlands and Their Inhabitants* (Glasgow, 1901)

¹¹ Robb, J. ‘Suburb and slum in the Gorbals: social and residential change 1800-1900’ in Gordon, G. and Dicks, B. (eds.) *Scottish Urban History* (Aberdeen, 1983) p.135.

¹² *Ibid.* p.164.

¹³ Collins, Be *Well!* pp.147-148.

furthermore, it had ‘five rooms, a bathroom and hot and cold water!’¹⁴ Within this interviewee’s family, the second eldest son studied to become a doctor, and it is with families such as hers that the reputation of Jews in Glasgow as an upwardly mobile group is charged. However in the initial decades of immigration, such palatial accommodation would have been beyond the reach of the vast majority, and the reputation of the Gorbals, as a district which housed some of the poorest and most disadvantaged, was probably in most instances richly deserved.

By the end of the nineteenth century, housing was cheek by jowl with industrial and manufacturing buildings. In the tenements themselves, toilets situated on stair head landings could be shared by two to four flats housing thirty or more people between them.¹⁵ The environment of the Gorbals was detrimental to health in the exterior streets, and in the interior of the buildings. The majority of Gorbals residents suffered and struggled to survive in this overcrowded environment. In 1862, Glasgow City Council had devised what was called a ‘ticketing ‘ system meant to deal with overcrowding in the city’s swarming working class districts. This system was still in force as Jews began arriving in the Gorbals. Houses were labelled with a metal plate on the door detailing their cubic space, and consequent upon this the number of people allowed to reside there. These rules caused anxiety for tenants, but were largely unenforceable with regard to landlords. City officials and police visited homes on a nightly basis, and inspections often uncovered huge disregard for ticketing regulations, but short of causing mass homelessness among the already near destitute, relatively few prosecutions occurred. Night-time raids revealed the desperate plight of

¹⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs MR Born: 1909.

¹⁵ Eunson, *Illustrated History of the Gorbals*, p.45.

thousands, who would attempt to hide themselves in any available space. On one such visit reported in 1903, the following typical situation was witnessed:

...on several occasions two tiers of people had been found in one bed –one on the boards or on the mattress – the bed then flung over, and another living tier on top. In one case a son aged twenty-two, a young woman aged twenty, and a girl of sixteen were found between the bed and mattress. The father was lying above the son, and the younger members of the family were above the girls. The eldest girl was as naked as the hour she was born. The mother was on the floor having risen to open the door...but for the inspection, the probability is that the occupants would have been lying on shake-downs on the floor.¹⁶

This one room home was likely ‘ticketed’ to legally house a maximum of three persons.

Not surprisingly malnutrition, epidemic disease, and premature death were features of life for the inhabitants of such homes. Investigations of urban living conditions during the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, established a clear link between high-density housing and poor health.¹⁷ In the most densely overcrowded part of Gorbals the total death rate in 1871 was 25 per cent higher than the average for Glasgow city as a whole.¹⁸ This situation did not improve much over the remainder of the century. Furthermore, as can be seen from the extract above, the moral condition of the working classes, and in particular the vulnerability of women due to

¹⁶ *Glasgow Municipal Commission On The Housing Of The Poor*-Report (1904) p.5.

¹⁷ Chalmers, A. *Public Health Administration* (Glasgow, 1905) pp.147-323.

¹⁸ Eunson, *History of the Gorbals*, p.45.

such overcrowding, was the subject of alarm. Yet Glasgow was largely unable to make lasting improvements in housing. By 1916, 20% of Glasgow's population was still residing in one-roomed houses.¹⁹

Infant mortality rates, which are often used as a general marker for poverty levels, show that across the Gorbals district in 1911, the rate of infant death was still at a high level at 155 deaths per thousand live births. This can be compared to the adjacent area of Govanhill, a locality with a mixed population of working and lower middle classes in mainly tenement housing, where the rate was 76 deaths; and at the more salubrious end of the scale in Langside further south of the city centre, where the rate was 59 infant deaths per thousand. These better class areas will become familiar in later chapters as the suburbs where many Jews relocated. Finally, by comparison, in the west of the city, in the exclusive district of Kelvinside, the rate of infant mortality was the lowest, at 29 deaths per thousand.²⁰

It was into conditions that produced such inequalities that Eastern European immigrants arrived. The Gorbals provided rented accommodation for those with limited means. As will be seen, as the numbers of Jews increased, similar sentiments that had been attached to the Irish in terms of their propensity to live in squalid and overcrowded conditions, were also directed at the Jewish population. Immigration began swelling the numbers throughout the 1880s and more rapidly in the 1890s. These settlers began establishing their own ethnic enclave, providing reminders of home that in turn exercised an attraction for more newcomers. A brief examination of

¹⁹ Chalmers, A. *Health and Housing*, Paper read at the Scottish Housing Conference (London, 1916.) p.6.

²⁰ Cage, R. 'Infant mortality rates and housing: twentieth century Glasgow,' *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 14 (1994) pp.91-2.

material in the 1881 census already shows the distribution of ethnic groups in the Gorbals. Many streets already contained numbers of Jewish families. The following examples, while not definitively representative, nevertheless provide a ‘snapshot’ view of ethnic diversity. Random examination of residents in even one tenement building within a favoured street illustrates a usual pattern of diversity. At number 148 Thistle Street, Gorbals, eleven separate properties are enumerated. Of these, two are ‘uninhabited’. In the remaining nine apartments, the birthplace of the head of household is as follows: four were born in the Scottish Lowlands; one in the Scottish Highlands; two in Ireland; one in Poland and one in Russia. The latter families are almost certainly Jewish. For example, the Toffler family:

| Position in household | Name | Occupation | Age | Born |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|--------|
| Head | Samuel Toffler | Traveller | 46 | Russia |
| Wife | Sarah | — | 45 | Russia |
| Daughter | Jane | Tailoress | 17 | Russia |
| Son | Max | Traveller | 16 | Russia |
| Daughter | Bessie | [Not stated] | 15 | Russia |
| Son | Moritz | Picture Framer | 15 | Russia |
| Son | Henry | Picture Framer | 13 | Russia |
| Daughter | Elizabeth | Scholar | 11 | Russia |
| Son | Adolph | Scholar | 6 | Russia |

Table 3.1: Residents of 148 Thistle Street, Gorbals, 1881. Extracted from: *Index to the Census for Scotland*, 1881. Vol. 644 –12, enumeration district 41, p.17.

The Toffler family is made up of a married couple and their seven children aged between 17 and 6 years old. All of the children were enumerated as having been born

in Russia, indicating that large families of children were not necessarily an inhibiting factor for migrants. In fact, given that three of the children were economically active, this may have given an incentive to family migration. In the same building, the Abraham family from Poland also resided:

| Position in Household | Name | Occupation | Age | Place of Birth |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|-----|----------------|
| Head | John Abraham | Peddler | 30 | Poland |
| Wife | Mary | — | 32 | Poland |
| Daughter | Sarah | Scholar | 11 | Poland |
| Daughter | Lizzie | | 5 | Poland |
| Daughter | Fanny | | 3 | Poland |
| Son | Barrett | | 1 | Poland |
| Boarder | Jacob Cohen | Glazier | 30 | Poland |
| Boarder | Philip Goldberg | Glazier | 24 | Poland |

Table: 3.2: *Residents of 148 Thistle Street, Gorbals, 1881.* Extracted from: *Index to the Census for Scotland*, 1881. Vol. 644 –12, enumeration district 41, p.17.

Evidently, the Abrahams were recent arrivals, their one-year-old child having been born in Poland. The household contained lodgers, also immigrants. This kind of arrangement was common, and not only provided a necessary service for incomers but was also a means of income for women whose economic activity might be restricted because of young children. The occupations of the residents are equally instructive. These illustrate common jobs undertaken by Jews in Glasgow. They were ways of making a living in these initial years that needed little capital outlay and were not dependant on Jews becoming employees.

In quite a short amount of time, certain tenements and streets attracted concentrated enclaves of Jews, and this clustering promoted a feeling of community. However, this situation was also likely to be a reflection of anti-Jewish prejudice. As will be seen in chapter 6, house factors exercised variable levels of tolerance towards foreign tenants. These agents had ultimate power over letting properties and often refused to deal with Jews. Nervousness about their neighbours in the wider society, actual or potential hostility, and an inability to leave the past totally behind, meant that Jews cleaved together in the Gorbals. Although poverty compelled some social mixing, many first generation immigrants integrated with the wider population slowly to start with due to language barriers and mutual suspicion about foreigners.

In order to settle, finding employment and a place to live were the first requirements. Fairly new immigrant settlers often assisted this passage for raw newcomers. In Chaim Bermant's novel about Jewish immigration to Glasgow, the hero of this story arrives in Glasgow (via Riga and Newcastle) at the home of an old acquaintance of his father's. This fictional protagonist then uses his family's meagre savings to set himself up as a moneylender. He succeeds in this occupation and a long chronicle then ensues wherein this single immigrant establishes a large family of Glaswegian Jews.²¹ Described as a 'richly woven saga of one Jewish family's trials and triumphs' this fictional account does exploit dramatic licence. Nevertheless, some elements of it are written close to the reality of the immigrant settlement in Glasgow. Bermant was well acquainted with this himself. Newcomers expected to receive assistance from Jews who had a little experience. Ralph Glasser recounts that in the Gorbals environment a new arrival would listen out for Yiddish spoken in the particular dialect of whichever part of Eastern Europe was home. In this way contact might be made with a

²¹ Bermant, C. *The Patriarch* (New York, Ace Charter Books, 1982.)

Lansmann.²² Literally this description meant a Jew from the same locality in Europe, but more usefully it could be used as a form of address meaning 'friend'. In this way Jews identified with other Jews and clung on tenaciously to a little of the culture that had ostensibly been left behind. Glasser writes that 'With its rich written and oral tradition, Yiddish provided a buttress for identity.'²³

In streets where Jews took up residence and also began trading, Yiddish was commonly heard. The rate at which men and women of the first generation might learn to speak English varied enormously. Most certainly acquired a 'broken' English, but never learned to read or write in anything other than Yiddish. Women are generally thought to have been slower at learning any English and in the first generation it was true that day-to-day life might not require some female immigrants to converse much in the new language. One example of how Yiddish was sustained is demonstrated in the case of Jewish shops. Many Jews as a way of making a living quickly took up small-scale retailing. These provided foodstuffs and services that had the flavour of *der heim* – home. Women often took up these enterprises on their own initiative, this type of retailing having been a usual occupation in Eastern Europe. Shop keeping or selling from a stall was particularly popular amongst married women.²⁴ However, keeping shop could also be a family concern, with the women of households being responsible for dealing with customers. As well as being purveyors of such services, it was also women who tended to congregate around such places whilst going about the business of shopping. Jewish grocers, bakers, tobacconists and hardware stores stocked household provisions that were familiar, and transplanted a

²² Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, pp.18-19.

²³ Ibid. p.17.

²⁴ Burman, R. 'The Jewish Woman As Breadwinner,' *Oral History* 10: 2 (1982) pp. 27-37 and 'Growing Up in Manchester Jewry-The Story of Clara Weingard,' *Oral History* 12:1 (1984) pp. 56-63.

little of Eastern European culture.²⁵ Transactions involved with mainly Jewish customers, did not require a struggle with the new language; these shops and women's involvement with them became pivotal in creating something of a home from home and were important in the formation of Jewish working class culture in Glasgow.

Yet within the new Jewish community individuals had a varying thirst for knowledge and some women recognised that more effective settlement in Scotland required effort on their part. For example, Mrs Miller recounts that her Lithuanian mother made every effort to learn the new language in order to be able to communicate with her children's teachers.²⁶ Undoubtedly, some mothers would not wish to be embarrassed as a naïve newcomer in the sight of influential members of the community. Likewise, women who became peddlers depended on a non-Jewish client base and the sale of goods involved exchange of language. The more successful saleswomen learned to converse in the local vernacular. There is no evidence that in the early years of immigration anything as formal as language classes were provided specifically for women. The earliest example of a language class found in Glasgow was begun in 1892, but as reading and writing in English was taught at classes like these, it is unlikely that they were appropriate for most women who were illiterate in their own Yiddish language.²⁷ Instead, a Scottish version of spoken English was learned informally. Yiddish speaking mothers often relied on their children to teach them, or learned the local dialect via their neighbours or customers as in this example, 'Mother would talk about "going out for a wee donner" the Scottish word for walk.'²⁸ However, Yiddish remained the main means of communication within the home. Even as late as 1930,

²⁵ The SJAC holds a plethora of photographic evidence of these businesses, as well as newspaper advertisements from the Yiddish press.

²⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs RB. Born: 1920.

²⁷ *The Jewish Chronicle* 28/10/1892 p.19.

²⁸ SJAC. Transcript of interview with Ray Greenbaum and Ida Schuster (05/11/1987.) Interviewed by Dr. Ben Braber.

the head teacher of a local school reported that many children arrived in school unable to speak English, but that they quickly overcame this handicap.²⁹ Mrs Rosenthal recalls for example, that in her home 'my mother, my aunties they spoke Yiddish and we answered in English.'³⁰ Many in the first generation also had relative youthfulness on their side, Yiddish culture provided a safety net in the Gorbals but some curiosity about the world outside of this close-knit community certainly existed.

Outwardly friendly relations with gentile neighbours were sometimes established, a situation that assisted acclimatisation to Scottish language and customs. Oral histories and autobiographical sources provide plenty of evidence of these; however it can be concluded that such relationships were rarely closer than neighbourly politeness. Given that anti-Semitism was a daily reality in Eastern Europe, uneasiness about relations with non-Jewish society was to be expected. Moreover, despite the common factors of poverty and poor housing, the rhythms of Jewish life were very different. Strict adherence to a kosher diet restricted eating and drinking outside of Jewish homes, and the working week was different. Even sympathetic non-Jews conceded that immigrants did not mix much outside of their own society.

Inevitably Jews were forced to compromise some traditions, and one of the first to be subject to this was the Jewish working week. Mr. Taylor recalls that for his parents' generation in Eastern Europe the sacredness of the Sabbath had informed all aspects of life, and breaking the rules was taken seriously even for minor transgressions:

²⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 11/07/1930.

³⁰ SJAC. Interview with Fanny Rosenthal (25/01/2004.) Born: 10/05/1910. Interviewed by Harvey Kaplan.

Religion was paramount you know, it was kept. They kept it very scrupulous. There they would look a few times before they lit up a cigarette on a Saturday I think, oh aye to have a smoke.³¹

However, as the Jewish presence in the Gorbals became more visible and audible, the perpetuation of Jewish habit and customs were not always tolerated or politely received. In 1891 The London based national weekly newspaper, *The Jewish Chronicle*, reported on a move amongst Glaswegian Jewry to set up a Jewish Workman's Club. This had been instigated because as the article made clear, Jewish men often congregated on street corners on Sundays to talk, this habit attracted unwanted attention, and the groups 'subjected themselves to insults.'³²

In both Jewish and non-Jewish Scottish society it was popularly accepted that men required the society of other men.³³ In a cramped Gorbals single-end apartment this kind of gathering would have been impossible; moreover a common feeling was that this female space was inappropriate for social exchange between men. One or two room flats, crowded with a wife and children, and sometimes with the accoutrements of self-employment, was probably less appealing than the hurly burly of the street. Male gatherings on the street were likely enough commonplace, and yet the loitering of Jewish men on Sundays was evidently problematic in this period. It is likely that men had leisure time on a Sunday because of Scottish restrictions against Sunday trading. Many small entrepreneurs who began making efforts to improve their living, which generally then had to include providing services to the non-Jewish population,

³¹ Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born 1903. The act of lighting fire is prohibited on the Sabbath in Orthodox ritual.

³² *The Jewish Chronicle* 06/11/1891.

³³ Smout, T. *A Century of the Scottish People* (London, 1987) p.139.

were therefore economically compelled to trade on Saturdays. Moreover, men who worked on Saturdays could not worship in Synagogue, a traditional meeting place for them. Street corners on a Sunday were perhaps a poor substitute, but the only one freely available. Jewish trading on the Presbyterian Sabbath supplied not only a justification for economic grievances about working hours but also conveniently, a legitimate outlet for negative opinions about Jews.³⁴ This was to be a source of friction for many years to come. In Scotland, Saturday was one of the busiest trading days. This fact, as well as the general antagonism fostered by Sunday working, rapidly hastened Jews to break with their own religious tradition in the Glasgow environment. Women were equally subject to this kind of conformity if their paid labour had to be conducted in public. Female peddlers for example, would not be able to sell on a Sunday. However, the nature of many women's work probably circumvented this. Women took in lodgers, or tailoring work that could be done at home. If they kept shop in a part of their home, the majority of customers would be Jewish. In this respect the gender arrangements of work and leisure in Scotland had different outcomes for immigrant women and men. As will be seen in chapter 5, Jewish women's work was subject to acculturation in different ways.

Mr. Taylor's parents, and many like them, had to acclimatise themselves to these changes. Strict religious orthodoxy was one tradition of Eastern European life that quickly had to be compromised in Glasgow. Jewish children growing up within Gorbals society were aware of the middle ground that their parents trod, and sensitive to the fact that many sacrifices were made to improve the life chances of children. Yet as will be seen, for men like Mr. Taylor who were Gorbals born and bred, flouting tradition took different forms than those acceptable for women. The hardships of

³⁴ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, pp.112-3 & 153-5.

Eastern Europe did recede for the first generation and became stories told to the second generation about *der heim*. Families settled to overcoming the new hardships of raising children in the Gorbals, it was a question of survival.

Surviving in the Gorbals

This section looks to the documentary record of Jewish philanthropy in order to form some kind of picture of how families settled in Glasgow, and what the relationship was like between settled middle class Jews and the working class immigrants who later arrived in Glasgow. Although help to get settled was given from within the immigrant community, another safeguard known to immigrants was to be found amongst Jews who had a lengthier history of settlement in Glasgow. Nancy Green has argued that the Jewish establishment in Britain formed a powerfully attractive model for prospective immigrants. These wealthy Jews were famous for their philanthropy and so could be counted on to assist impoverished coreligionists. In her argument, the social position and prosperity of these Jews was an attraction that operated on the imagination of potential immigrants.³⁵ However, there is ample evidence that this opinion rather overstates reality for Jews in Scotland. Although the migration process contained its fair share of dreams and unlikely ambitions, those immigrants with their heads in the clouds were more likely to have had their feet brought firmly to the ground soon after stepping off the ship. Resistance to Christian agencies who delivered proselytising alongside philanthropy was one reason for established Jewry to assist newcomers, as was genuine sympathy for their plight, but there were other motives. The Jewish establishment across the UK had what can at best be described as

³⁵ Green, 'The Modern Jewish Diaspora: Eastern European Jews in New York, London and Paris,' pp.113-134.

an ambivalent attitude towards Eastern European migrants, but at worst this descended into outright hostility.

The plight of Russian Jews was widely reported in the press. The *Jewish Chronicle* regularly covered this topic and took varying editorial stances over the years. During the early 1890s it published a supplement entitled *In Darkest Russia* which was financed by communal authority. Occasionally quite sensationalist in content, it was intended to galvanise opinion on the state of Russian Jewry, yet did little to discourage calls for the repatriation of migrants.³⁶ Thus philanthropists regularly gave to causes that ensured potential immigrants did not land on British shores.

According to the 1831 Census Report, there were only forty-seven Jews residing in Glasgow.³⁷ This small community that existed prior to the later incursion was hardly in the same league as their London counterparts. Unlike the situation in England, there were no aristocrats like the Rothschild or Montagu families amongst Jews in Glasgow. However there was wealth, and a preponderance of families who might fairly be described as of the merchant class. They considered themselves integrated within Glaswegian middle class society. During the nineteenth century their numbers had grown, both by natural increase and new settlement. These were largely people who were in a position to take advantage of the burgeoning opportunities afforded by the 'second city'. Collins has shown how conditions allowed for growth of a Jewish community, which maintained a communal identity through synagogue membership, business links and philanthropic endeavour, whilst at the same time they integrated with urban middle class culture. The spatial settlement of this group in terms of their

³⁶ Cesarani, D. *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge, 1994) p.72.

³⁷ Cleland, J. *Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the city of Glasgow and County of Lanark, for the Government Census of 1831* (Glasgow, 1832) p.78.

business interests and living arrangements by mid-century, is illustrated in examination of Post Office Directories, synagogue membership lists and in burial records for the period.³⁸

It is difficult to be precise about figures, but based on numbers of births recorded in synagogue records, Collins estimates an established population of about 1000 living in the centre and west of the city by 1880.³⁹ Yet although numbers had grown significantly, the scale of later migration increasingly engulfed them. An uneasy relationship between already acculturated Jews and newly arrived was the pattern established first in London, and later replicated in provincial centres across Britain. In London the situation deteriorated to the point where:

There appears to be almost a stronger line of severance between the English and foreign Jew than between the English Jew and gentile. In habits, ideas and religion they are fundamentally distinct; and when they come into contact there is even mutual hostility and contempt...⁴⁰

Glasgow had different problems from those which beset London Jewry, but not that different. Certainly the Jewish establishment was smaller and more middle class than upper-class in character; and Scotland was further away from the political centre where agitation about foreigners was ongoing, but even so, immigrants in Glasgow also faced antagonism from some of their wealthier co-religionists. The balance of

³⁸ Post Office Directories over successive years reveal evidence of retail outlets and service industries, for example optical services, owned by proprietors with traditional Jewish surnames which can then be cross referenced using other records, notably cemetery records held in the SJAC.

³⁹ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.45.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Russell, C. and Lewis, H. 'The Jew in London, a study of racial character and present-day conditions' (1900) in Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants*, p.101.

difficulties was simply a little different. For example, there was perhaps less mutual antipathy on the grounds of religion in Glasgow than in London. Collins has commented that despite a high level of social acculturation, the established community still styled their brand of Judaism ‘strict orthodoxy’, which was at least nominally in accordance with the religious sentiments of the immigrant newcomers.⁴¹ However, there was certainly dissension on socio-economic grounds. The immigrants who arrived after 1881 did look in awe at the grandeur of those who were members of what they called *The Englisher Schul*, the splendid synagogue opened to the west of the city in Garnethill in 1879. This building is preserved and is a fine example of the ‘cathedral synagogues’ built during the Victorian period. It is the oldest surviving place of Jewish worship in Scotland and without doubt the most impressive. The title *Englisher* alludes to the different level of acculturation at large there and highlights the Yiddish speaking identity of the immigrants in contrast. This lavish synagogue was sited in a location which was near to the residences and businesses of most in the established group, but emphatically at a distance from the Gorbals where new immigrants were beginning to settle. Yet the site chosen was somewhat eccentric, even at the time of planning. It must have been awkward for many, being at the top of a very steep hill and a strenuous walk for any but the young and fit. In subsequent decades the location of the synagogue served to reinforce social boundaries for many of Glasgow’s Jews.⁴²

Poor Jews who were making their way to Glasgow, mostly from other British towns and cities, met with this clear social division. The established community of Jews in Glasgow had worked hard to gain tolerance and respect from their non-Jewish peers

⁴¹ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.12.

⁴² Ibid. p.40.

and this new wave of migration threatened the stability of Jewish respectability. Impoverished co-religionists who were viewed as backward and uncultured were decidedly unwelcome.⁴³ Taking swift responsibility for the welfare of new and impoverished immigrants was one means of taking the heat out of this potential crisis. Jews in Glasgow did have the model of London based philanthropy to follow, even if they did not quite have similar means. By the late 1870s, about 250 Jews were living in the Gorbals.⁴⁴ Indeed, examination of the surviving records of Jewish philanthropy in Glasgow for the 1870s show a preponderance of applicants already settled south of the river Clyde, and reveals the kind of struggle for existence experienced by many. The Minute Book of the Glasgow Hebrew Philanthropic Society sometimes gives the addresses of applicants for relief and these show clear clustering of poor Jews in certain areas of the Gorbals, for example, Thistle Street which we have already encountered as a place of Jewish settlement turns up many times in the Society's records. These impoverished applicants were in the vanguard of the Gorbals enclave and the written record of this organisation provides some insight into the means of survival for Jewish families.⁴⁵

The Minute Book records the aims of the society as being 'for the purposes of affording medical relief, aid in money, and other assistance to the resident and casual poor.'⁴⁶ The numbers applying for relief varied. For example, in the first two weeks in March 1876, there appear to have been no applicants, but in week three, twelve

⁴³ Williams, B. 'The anti-Semitism of tolerance' in Kidd, A. *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Manchester* (1995) pp.74-101.

⁴⁴ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.45.

⁴⁵ SJAC. *Minute Book of Committee Meetings of the Glasgow Hebrew Philanthropic Society 1875-1881*, Ref: SOC BOG 0004. The date of foundation for this organization is unclear, but seems to have been around 1866. The society was reconstituted in 1876 as: *The Glasgow Hebrew Congregational Philanthropic Society* and this renaming is recorded in the Minute Book. Philanthropy delivered via the synagogue and through the personal efforts of several of its worthy members who formed the Philanthropic Society was brought into closer association through this reconstitution. This was an early example of Garnethill's efforts to centralise charity.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Entry 23/04/1876.

transmigrants are given financial relief together with three local Jews.⁴⁷ Although aid in the form of money was given, loans were a more popular option for those who could provide some security. For those less fortunate, assistance was often given 'in kind' in the form of food, clothing, or goods, which could be peddled. Self-help was at the root of the society's philosophy as the following representative entry demonstrates:

On the recommendation of Mr. S. Morris the Society granted the loan of two pounds to Max Israel. They also agreed to become security to the Singer Sewing Machine Co. for the sum of [sic] Pounds on behalf of Morris Max Cohen to enable him to obtain a sewing machine. The Society afterwards gave A. Issacson the loan of twenty five Shillings on security.⁴⁸

The fortunate Mr. Cohen appears to have been given carte blanche to purchase by instalment the best that the Singer Company could supply, but others perhaps less keen to improve their own lot, were not dealt with quite so generously:

Application for relief from Mr. Sugarman. This was considered an urgent case but as the gentlemen present were not satisfied with the explanation of the applicant and there being no quorum they merely granted temporary relief and agreed to notify the Congregation regarding the case.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Entry 19/01/1876.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Entry 24/04/1876.

The Dickensian atmosphere of such judgements delivered from Garnethill's imposing accommodation can easily be imagined. The safety net of philanthropy, which may have been known to the immigrants before leaving Eastern Europe, was an unpalatable prospect in the reality of Glasgow. It is not unreasonable to assume that many newcomers went to any length to avoid asking for help, except in the direst of conditions. However, desperate circumstances did force many to beg from this source, and although it is difficult to assess the proportion of female applicants accurately, women were amongst those likely to find themselves in financial trouble. The record is occasionally illegible, and names are sometimes recorded without titles, making it impossible to establish the sex of the applicant; but for the purposes of consistency, using the year 1876, it is possible to establish that roughly one third of applicants are clearly recorded as female.⁵⁰ The relief given to women was also in the form of cash payment and loans. Since loans were usually granted for the setting up of some small business enterprise this does indicate that women were involved in commerce. For example Mrs Bernstein petitioned the Society in 1874, and the record states that she had 'resided four months in Glasgow but did not succeed in business.' A further comment was that 'The case is a particular deserving one.' This woman was granted thirty shillings in recompense for her failed efforts.⁵¹

One of the most persistent causes of application was for the payment of rent arrears. The Philanthropic Society records include the case of a Mrs Lesenheim who found herself in conflict with 'the party with whom she is living' who refused to 'keep her unless guaranteed a pound a week.' The Society deliberated on this woman's case and

⁵⁰ Ibid. For year 1876.

⁵¹ SJAC. *Minute Book of Council and General Meetings of the Glasgow Hebrew Congregation 1873-1874*. Entry 30 June 1874. Ref: REL.GHC -1873-87.

decided to send out a doctor to investigate her plight.⁵² Illness and also confinement appear regularly in the records as reasons for application. The extra expenditure involved in terms of medical assistance, and it can be assumed the loss of earnings due to the indisposition of one family member, whether male or female, could propel a family into absolute poverty. Scepticism about how deserving individual applicants were was sometimes tempered with a benevolent impulse and a wife's confinement usually seems to have elicited a reasonably generous response from the Committee. This delicate area seems to have been representative of one instance of giving, with no questions asked. Given the large families evident in the 1881 census, this must have been an ongoing problem.

Women who had to depend on their own resources such as deserted wives were a special problem, Jews commonly travelled as families, but this did not mean that the family always stayed together. The obsession with getting to America sometimes caused families who arrived in Britain, to spend their limited means on transatlantic tickets for the highest wage earners. In this way husbands or older children went ahead. Unfortunately some men saw an opportunity to unload familial responsibilities and disappeared.⁵³ The upheaval of emigration caused disruption in family relationships. It has been argued that when men found adjustment difficult, the constraints that would have inhibited them in Eastern Europe simply no longer applied.⁵⁴ Women in poor Jewish families were generally economically active anyway, but those who found themselves in the position of being abandoned and with sole responsibility for children, often had no option but to resort to charity. In the

⁵² SJAC. *Minute Book of the Hebrew Philanthropic Society 1875-81*, entry 13/07/1876 Ref: SOC BOG 0004.

⁵³ Baum, C. *et al.* *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York, 1976) pp.116-7; Friedman, R. ' "Send Me My Husband Who Is In New York City": Husband Desertion in the American Jewish Community,' *JSS* 44 (1982) pp.1-18.

⁵⁴ Seller, M. (ed) *Immigrant Women*, 2nd edition (New York, 1994) p.129.

United States, an agency existed to relieve this problem, and by the start of the twentieth century the *National Desertion Bureau* was handling as many as ‘twenty-five hundred cases’ a year, which indicates the scale of this familial crisis and the will to hold such men to account rather than solely meeting the needs of women.⁵⁵ The temptations of shaking off a Yiddisher way of life were always near and apparently more readily available to men.

In terms of the disapproval that they might attract from the wider Scottish society, deserted wives were an especially susceptible group. For instance in this Glasgow example recorded in 1874: ‘A Polish woman applied for assistance to emigrate with her daughter to America in search for her husband.’ This lady was successful and ‘granted one pound.’⁵⁶ In Glasgow’s case, the problem of desertion was known to be a persistent one, involving a necessary charge on communal philanthropy.⁵⁷ Scotland’s own deserted wives were not always looked upon with particular sympathy. Wives and children in this predicament would commonly find themselves in the Poorhouse.⁵⁸ This was a situation fraught with hazards for the image of Garnethill’s Jews, given the visibility of immigrant women should they be forced into parish poorhouses. So Jewish philanthropy judiciously expended in this way, meant that foreign Jews did not often become a charge on the Parish, and therefore likely to attract negative views about this claim on municipal charity.

The Irish had already suffered from such lack of public sympathy. Desperate poverty during the peak years of their immigration, led the Irish to apply for Poor Relief in

⁵⁵ Weinberg, *World of Our Mothers*, p.110.

⁵⁶ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Glasgow Hebrew Congregation*, entry for 30/06/ 1874. Ref: REL.GHC.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.153.

⁵⁸ Crowther, M. ‘Poverty, health and welfare’ in Fraser and Morris (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990) p.275.

considerable numbers. In response they were viewed as feckless and a drain on the public purse.⁵⁹ No doubt aware of this sentiment, the Jewish establishment in Glasgow emulated their metropolitan counterparts by taking charge of Jewish poverty themselves. Nevertheless, a few Jews did receive relief from the Parish. During the nineteenth century, 115 recognisably Jewish names appear on the Index to Poor Relief Applications for Glasgow; of these names 65 are women, making female application in the majority.⁶⁰ However, it seems fair to conclude that Jewish communal charity was largely successful in preventing the take up of this last-resort option; yet it should be remembered that a strategy underpinned this that often had little to do with benevolence. Moreover, most Jewish women did whatever they could to stay out of the hands of charity. The majority kept their heads above water, and earned money from a variety of unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. In traditional Yiddish culture a woman's ability to provide for her family, perhaps including a non-earning husband, was a highly regarded female skill. This gender arrangement did not have currency in Scotland and set Jewish women of the first generation apart from the Scottish gendered ideal. Experience at earning a living undoubtedly assisted many immigrant women, and prevented them from coming under the intrusive scrutiny of philanthropists. Inevitably though, some found themselves involved in more disreputable occupations.

Prostitution amongst foreign women in London, and Jewish organisation of this trade, became a focal point for agitation to restrict immigration in the decade preceding the

⁵⁹ Audrey, *Multiculturalism in Practice*, p.17.

⁶⁰ SJAC. Uncatalogued transcript of data extracted from the *Index to Poor Relief Applications to Glasgow, Barony and Govan Parishes* (GCA. Ref: D-HEW 10-17). Names are accompanied by country of origin, thus it is a reasonably accurate extraction of Jews. A few Jewish applicants may of course have been missed if they were born in the UK, and had abandoned their Jewish surnames, this is entirely plausible given the Index has more than 300,000 entries.

Aliens Act of 1905, and became even more potentially damaging afterwards.⁶¹ In Glasgow, sensitivities to this problem also ran high. It is a measure of the embarrassment that the Garnethill congregation experienced with regard to this issue that they avoided becoming involved in the London based Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (JAPGW) and instead sent a delegate to a local body – the Scottish National Vigilance Association.⁶² However, this was only after much deliberation. Collins comments that the Garnethill establishment kept a low profile on this issue in order not to attract attention to Jews in the city. Moreover, a historical consensus exists regarding ‘a low level of crime and drunkenness’ within the Glasgow Jewish community.⁶³ Implied in this assertion is that a low level of involvement in commonplace misdemeanours like prostitution also existed.⁶⁴ Reality was probably a good deal less positive, and it is certainly known that Jewish women in Eastern Europe were no strangers to the trade.⁶⁵ Prostitution in this period of Scottish history is a very under researched area and the question of whether Jewish women in Glasgow were indeed embroiled in this traffic is unanswered. The environs of the Gorbals were certainly home to prostitutes.⁶⁶ And foreign women who were impoverished and struggling to survive in an alien culture would be likely victims, as indeed they were in London.⁶⁷ Given their involvement in the garment making industry, which was extremely seasonal, and the known problem of desertion, it seems very unlikely that all Jewish women in the Gorbals could have remained immune to such pressures. Nevertheless, the Garnethill establishment were extremely conservative, and more liberal traditions that operated in London for direct intervention in social evils, were

⁶¹ Marks, L. ‘Race, class and gender: the experience of Jewish prostitutes’ in Grant, J. *Women, Migration and Empire* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1996) pp.31-50.

⁶² Braber, ‘The Trial of Oscar Slater and Anti-Jewish Prejudices in Glasgow’ pp.277-278.

⁶³ Collins, *Be Well!*, p.44.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.44-5.

⁶⁵ Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, pp.17-18.

⁶⁶ See Glasser. *Growing up in the Gorbals* for vivid descriptions of prostitutes, pp.130-132 & 190-192.

⁶⁷ Marks, ‘Race, class and gender’ p.39.

not as acceptable to Scottish Jews. It is fairly typical of their general outlook that when this subject was forced on them by London, they still decided to 'leave matters alone and watch the developments.'⁶⁸ The establishments in these two cities took different views about how to ward off anti-Semitism in this instance. On the other hand, Jewish prostitutes elsewhere were known to be less troublesome to the law. In 1908 the Chief of Police in Cardiff for example, wrote that Jewish prostitutes were more inclined to save their money and stayed away from pubs.'⁶⁹ This low profile may also account for their invisibility in Glasgow. However, as a means of survival, prostitution was a known resort for Jewish women, and not necessarily their last resort. Prostitution could be a lucrative alternative to sweatshop labour.⁷⁰ It is extremely unlikely that women in Glasgow escaped this fate entirely.

For immigrant newcomers surviving this Scottish environment meant finding any means to live first and foremost. Yet acclimatising to Glasgow entailed more than this, a fact that philanthropists recognised. Useful recreation was also deemed helpful in improving immigrant integration. It is unclear whose initial impetus it was to set up the Working Men's Club. It is possible this was an attempt by working class Jews to improve their own lot, and may have been an idea imported by Jews who had previously lived elsewhere and had experience of such societies in English cities.⁷¹ However, the move to get Jewish men off the streets in the Gorbals suggests the influence of Garnethill, and would have been motivated by a will to avoid confrontation with non-Jews. At any rate, it was planned to have two more functions

⁶⁸ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Glasgow Hebrew Congregation 1896-1912*, entry for 27/03/1910. Ref: REL.GHC.

⁶⁹ Cited in Bristow, 'British Jewry and the fight against the white-slave traffic' p.157.

⁷⁰ Marks, 'Race, class and gender,' pp.44-45.

⁷¹ *Jewish Yearbooks* throughout the 1890s record the existence of these in Manchester and Birmingham.

aside from 'useful recreation'.⁷² First of these was to provide a friendly society with insurance benefits for men and their dependants, and second was to set up a literary society. These steps were part of a general move to anglicise immigrants as quickly as possible. Literary societies provided English lessons and introductions to British culture. But another notion imbedded here is that wives should be dependant on the income of a male breadwinner. Measures like these were usually encouraged and sponsored by established elements of British Jewry. Thus the hand of Garnethill seems likely in this case.

Equally, this type of initiative underlines a stereotypical distinction between Jewish immigrants and for example, the Irish. Male society in the latter are said to have congregated in drinking establishments. This feature was helpful in portraying Jewish men as sober and industrious in comparison with the drunkenness thought to be an evil in Irish life. Poor, but sober respectability was a key aspect of promoting the acceptability of Jews. In the context of Scotland, the image of groups of men hanging around on street corners was one that was conflated with unemployment and fecklessness. Therefore the benefits of a friendly society helped Jews to help themselves, and assisted them in staying out of the public eye.

The presence of Jewish women in this period of settlement must have been equally visible on the streets of the Gorbals, but it does not seem as if this visibility engendered any early attempts to provide societies for women. The conflation of women with the home generally at the time seems to have precluded any special arrangements for female association. Women were expected to meet in their kitchens, or to have done without this society. In London the merits of extending social clubs to

⁷² *The Jewish Chronicle* 23/10/1891 p.16.

women, were recognised however. In 1893 Lily Montagu set up the West Central Jewish Girls' Club.⁷³ This institution provided multiple services including educational and social amenities as well as settlement accommodation for young women. Over time it extended additional help to married women.⁷⁴ Other interested parties in London and soon after in Manchester, replicated this initiative. The middle class wives and daughters of established Jewish families took up welfare issues and attempted to anglicise immigrant women. In this area, the 'Ladies' of the Jewish communities were emulating their counterparts in Christian society by providing welfare that also had a moral agenda.⁷⁵ In the case of Jewish immigrant women however, an extra mission was to encourage faster integration to British culture, language and domestic habits. Immigrant women, who as mothers would become the educators of a new generation of British Jews, were viewed as especially in need of such guidance in order that the habits of Eastern Europe would not be perpetuated longer than need be.⁷⁶

Philanthropy particularly directed at the welfare needs of women also engaged the attentions of Ladies within the Garnethill congregation in Glasgow. However, ladies of the *Englischer Schul* are a shadowy presence in the records of Garnethill. An impression is formed that despite having their own organisations, middle class Jewish women in Glasgow were seldom autonomous from male authority within the congregation. In all of the Jewish communities in Britain, divisions between the proper sphere of interest for male and female philanthropy were upheld, and these seem to have been particularly rigid in Glasgow until Zionism later provided a

⁷³Spence, J. 'Working for Jewish girls: Lily Montagu, girls' clubs and industrial reform 1890-1914,' *Women's History Review* 13:3 (2004) pp.491-509.

⁷⁴ Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause*, p.84.

⁷⁵ Burman, R. 'Middle-Class Anglo-Jewish Lady Philanthropists and Eastern European women: the first national conference of Jewish women, 1902' in Grant, *Women, Migration and Empire* pp.123 –149.

⁷⁶ For persistence of such initiatives see: Iacovetta, F. "Making 'New Canadians': Social Workers, Women and the Reshaping of Immigrant Families" in Iacovetta, F. and Valverde, M. (eds.) *Gender Conflicts, New essays in Women's History* (Toronto, 1992) pp. 261-296.

platform for women to exercise their own initiatives. Likewise, organised recreation for working class women arrived later, and a Jewish Girls' Club was not formed in Glasgow until the 1920s.

In 1890, the Philanthropic Society became known as The Glasgow Jewish Board of Guardians and Hebrew Philanthropic Society. This name change likely reflected the expansion of the Glasgow community, and its growing similarities with larger counterparts in London and Manchester, which also had established 'Boards of Guardians' in 1859 and 1867 respectively. Female Philanthropists in Glasgow who were known as the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, co-operated closely with the local Board of Guardians in attempts to fundraise for worthy Jewish causes and to provide for welfare concerns amongst the new immigrants.⁷⁷ This took the form of relieving 'the sick and unemployed with food and coals.' The organisation claimed to assist 'over 250 families yearly.'⁷⁸ In 1891 an Auxiliary Committee of ladies was also formed, the latter taking on more of the responsibility for fundraising.⁷⁹ A report of the meeting held to inaugurate this Auxiliary Society appeared in the London based *Jewish Chronicle*. In this article the arrival of immigrants is described as a 'large influx of destitute immigrants, numbers of whom have settled in the city and whose condition is deplorable in the extreme...'⁸⁰ This large influx provided more scope for Garnethill's ladies to become involved in philanthropy.

Although no local records survive of these female agencies in Glasgow, the mode of their activities can be inferred from records existing in Manchester. In the mid-1880s

⁷⁷ *The Jewish Yearbook* 1896-7 states that the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society was formed in 1879.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p.73.

⁷⁹ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.67.

⁸⁰ *The Jewish Chronicle* 18/09/1891.

the Manchester Jewish Ladies' Visiting Society apparently poached the services of a Health Visitor named Mrs Levy, who had reportedly done similar work in Glasgow. Mrs Levy visited homes in the immigrant quarter of Manchester checking on sanitary arrangements and levels of poverty. She also promoted 'habits of self-supporting industry' amongst the group.⁸¹ The employment of Mrs Levy in Glasgow, suggests that the ladies of Garnethill had been forward thinking about home visiting and were able to raise money for such schemes. However, a report in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1892 outlines the increasing burden placed on Jewish philanthropy in Glasgow by the rising population of immigrants. The report states that during this year 1,800 persons had been relieved and the Russo-Jewish Committee in London had given financial support in these exceptional circumstances. The Philanthropic Society's Treasurer is said to have 'attended daily to cases brought to his notice' indicating that small ad hoc payments were being made to distressed families.⁸² Jewish lady philanthropists in Glasgow were almost certainly more interventionist than existing records suggest, but more evidence is needed to ascertain just how far they operated in this area. That they fundraised on an increasingly fervent basis is clear however. In 1894 the first charity bazaar ever organised by the Glasgow Jewish community took place in public assembly rooms in the city centre. The success of this event was said to have 'far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its female promoters, and a considerable sum [added] to the funds of the institution.'⁸³

The involvement of middle class Jewish women in this kind of activity can be seen in the context of similar charity work done by Christian women.⁸⁴ In Scotland, missions

⁸¹ Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester c.1850-1914*, p.174.

⁸² *The Jewish Chronicle* 04/11/1892.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 04/05/1894.

⁸⁴ See: Taylor, S. *The Role of Jewish Women in National Jewish Philanthropic Organisations in Britain from c1880* (Unpublished Thesis, University of Southampton, 1995.)

to the poor engaged the efforts of female members of the Church of Scotland. The Scottish Presbyterian Churches had long been involved in delivering philanthropy as well as evangelisation to the poor at home and abroad. Moreover, a special interest of theirs was in delivering such missions to Jews in the Levant. A lot of this work was done both by, and for women. The Mission for the Christian Education of Jewesses being one example. Seeing a growing number of Jews settling on their home patch so to speak, both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland then turned their attention to Jews closer to home. Presbyterians set up Jewish missions in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. In Glasgow a mission run by the Church of Scotland was naturally centred in the Gorbals, and this was one of several smaller initiatives, which were either church sponsored or run by interdenominational Christian evangelicals.⁸⁵

The evangelising mission was delivered in the guise of welfare activity and a great deal of this was directed at immigrant women. Women were seen to bear the brunt of poverty and poor living conditions. Their plight presented the Christian missions with scope for delivering good works, which while they were much needed and could be viewed as laudable, had the aim of proselytising. The isolation and hardships experienced by immigrant women could render them sufficiently desperate to accept the assistance of the missions. But there was a high price to be paid for involvement with Christians. In 1900 the Church of Scotland recognised their special responsibilities towards women by appointing a 'Mission Sister' to attend to the needs of poor Jewish women. Miss Margaret Salkinson's reports to the Church included impressions of her female clients at this time:

⁸⁵ The aims and undertakings of the Jewish Missions run by the Church of Scotland can be examined in their published yearly *Reports to the General Assembly*. See also Collins, *Be Well!*, pp.155-172 for review of the various Christian bodies involved in evangelising to the Jews.

Twenty-six patients have been attended to in their own homes, and with their words of gratitude frequently surprise has been expressed that Christians should care enough for poor Jews to employ a nurse to look after them. The suffering caused by poverty is very great, and is not alleviated by Jewish friends if a member of the family is known to attend a mission hall. The women know, as a rule, very little English, and some have been in the country for years without having learned to speak it.⁸⁶

Contact with the missionaries, or any suspicion of apostasy could result in social ostracism and difficulty in returning to the Jewish fold for charity. The activities of Christian missions spurred on Jews, both from the Garnethill establishment and within the Gorbals itself. Given that welfare work done by the Christian Missions was often targeted at women and their children, Jews then attempted to meet these needs. The difficulties of sanitation, of feeding large families, of illness and confinement were high on the charitable agenda. These problems did not disappear quickly; rather they increased as the Jewish population of the Gorbals climbed. Collins cites contemporary estimates based on synagogue records of births and deaths, giving a population of between 6500 and 8000 persons at the turn of the twentieth century.⁸⁷ Growth was due to the young age of the immigrants and the large families prevalent amongst Jews. This made Glasgow Jewry the fourth largest provincial centre of Jews in the UK and by far the largest in Scotland at this point.

By 1911, in order to combat the increasing efforts of Christian missions, a Jewish Dispensary and Clinic was finally established. The latter institution was an initiative of

⁸⁶ *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland* (1900) p.490.

⁸⁷ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p101.

fundraising by the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, and a reflection of the continuing engagement of Garnethill women with the welfare needs of the Eastern Europeans.⁸⁸ In the same year the Board of Guardians eventually conceded the need to base their organisation within the main area of Jewish residence and moved away from the centre of the city to a new location in the Gorbals. Ironically this move may have been less of an encouragement to the impoverished of the Gorbals, than a disincentive. The acceptance of charity from the Board was an act of desperation that was often conducted in full public glare. When times were hard, queues were known to form that stretched into the street.⁸⁹ However, this move was an attempt to consolidate charitable activity that was becoming more diverse and being initiated by immigrants themselves.⁹⁰

Being in receipt of charity from the Board was a disgrace almost as hard to bear as poverty itself. Interviewees who remember hard times in the Gorbals concede that this was a safety net, but one reluctantly taken.⁹¹ In her memoir of the Gorbals, the writer Evelyn Cowan records that her immigrant mother who was a widow with eleven children was occasionally forced to resort to welfare, but her preferred route out of poverty, shared by many other Jewish women, was to find ways of earning money.⁹² Yet another way was to remake charity into a more palatable safety system of reciprocal assistance. In traditional Yiddish culture the giving of charity was considered an important responsibility carrying religious significance; even very poor individuals and families subscribed if at all possible. Anzia Yezierska's semi-

⁸⁸ SJAC. *Garnethill Centenary Commemorative Brochure*. (1979.) Ref: REL.GAR.0017b.

⁸⁹ SJAC. *Glasgow Jewish Board of Guardians*, Programme Booklet for opening ceremony of new Premises in Gorbals, (1926) Ref: SOC BOG 0006.

⁹⁰ Collins, *Second City Jewry* p.156-7.

⁹¹ SJAC. Oral testimony of Mrs Fanny Rosenthal. Born: 10/07/1910. Interviewer Harvey Kaplan 25/01/2004.

⁹² Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, pp.28-30.

autobiographical novel, *Breadgivers*, includes details of the many contradictions inherent in Jewish charitable giving. Here the wife and daughters of an immigrant family are ambitious to make good in America, but usually impotent in the face of a religious father who frustrates their efforts by giving family earnings to charity.⁹³ Yeziarska found a literary voice by writing about the many everyday indignities suffered by Jewish immigrants in New York's lower east side. Not surprisingly her stories often included aspects of life concerned with the giving and receiving of informal good works, and on occasion the ignominy of having to seek help from the formal charitable bodies. The success of Yeziarska's fiction is undoubtedly due to the familiarity she herself had with the process of acculturation. In her stories, women are more aware than men about the impact that western city life will have on the Jewish family. In Yeziarska's fiction, women are forced to meet these changing circumstances head on, whilst the men bury themselves in remnants of the old ways. Women struggling to meet the weekly rent and feed children find that the role assigned to them in Eastern Europe as wage earners, becomes even more important in the new world. However, by inviting in the prying eye of the charities, their autonomy as household managers is challenged and the status of the family is lowered:

I shivered to think how I would feel, suppose somebody from my friends should see me walking into the charity office with my children...have I come down so low as to be seen by the charities? But what's the use? Should I knock my head on the walls? I had to go.⁹⁴

⁹³ Yeziarska, *Breadgivers*, see for example p.117.

⁹⁴ Yeziarska, *Hungry Hearts and Other Stories* p.101-2.

This excerpt is from a story entitled *The Free Vacation House*, in this tale the mutual incomprehension of female middle class charity workers and immigrant women is deftly exposed in the charity office:

At last a lady comes to the desk and begins calling our names. I nearly dropped to the floor when over she begins to ask: Do you keep boarders? How much do you spend on rent? How much wages does your man get for the week?...for why should everybody know my business? At every question I want to holler out; Stop! Stop!...When she got through with me, my face was red like fire. I was burning with hurts and wounds.⁹⁵

The acceptance of charity was a disgrace keenly felt in a community where an individual family's hardships could rarely be concealed.

The Board represented the most influential and well-resourced public face of charity, but poor Jews did also tackle the charity dilemma in smaller and less obtrusive ways. As the Jewish Gorbals established itself, a multiplicity of agencies run by immigrants for immigrants, took up the challenge of more empathetic self-help. Jews who knew the day-to-day rigours of life only too keenly themselves, set about ameliorating the difficulties faced by their neighbours and co-religionists in the Gorbals. Friendly societies were the commonest route to economic security for families in times of hardship, and as Collins has explained, these multiplied often reflecting the *landsmannschaft* links maintained by immigrants from the same localities in Europe.⁹⁶

The Board of Guardians struggled vainly to centralise welfare and discouraged many

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.103.

⁹⁶ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.13.

individual initiatives. But as their numbers grew, the residents of the Gorbals increasingly had their own ideas about how to help themselves, without recourse to the humiliating prospect of approaching the Board.

More specifically orientated groups, sometimes associated with the friendly societies, but often independent, geared their energies up to a variety of welfare and social needs. A few examples of these should serve to illustrate their purposes. For example, the Glasgow Hebrew Boot and Clothing Guild founded in 1905, whose name describes their main purpose, also raised money to send needy Jewish children on two-week summer vacations to the seaside or countryside. The Boot and Clothing Guild took over responsibility for this from a smaller organisation set up for this specific purpose. These 'fresh air fortnights' were a boon to children in poor families but also likely a great assistance to mothers who were relieved of the responsibility of at least some members of their large families for a short time.⁹⁷ The Southside Ladies' Dorcas Society founded in 1913 likewise stepped in to provide clothing for poor Jews.⁹⁸ Gorbals based charities that proved lasting were eventually welcomed into the fold of the Board, but others operated on an ad hoc and less formal basis. The needs of poor women were high on the agendas of such home grown organisations, and moreover, many were initiated by women or had significant female input. Women were viewed as the means by which the integrity of the Jewish family would survive. Yet the need to seek charity from an agency, which in the process made a judgement about the respectability of the recipients was a slur on the efforts of the family and impacted particularly badly on the self-esteem of women. Informal giving for the relief of

⁹⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 29/06/1928 p.4 and 18/07/1930 p.5. In the latter, 130 children are reported to have gone on holiday.

⁹⁸ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook*, p.53.

particular families was therefore commonplace and meant the poor could bypass the Board of Guardians.

Ill health amongst the Jewish population was continuously problematic given the living and working conditions in the Gorbals, and the weight of the Board was required in this instance to combat the threat of Christian intervention. A new Jewish Welfare Centre was opened at the end of 1927 within the Board of Guardian's offices in the Gorbals. This centre gave antenatal care to women and medical attention to children.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the Glasgow Jewish Hospital and Sick Visiting Society (1899) was a more of a Gorbals initiative, but also instigated in response to Christian evangelisation. In a remarkable document preserved in the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, the founder of this Gorbals based organisation outlines the impetus behind it. Written quite literally on the back of an envelope, and showing evidence of a Yiddish speaker struggling to express himself in English, the following excerpt is recorded:

... the missionaries visited the infirmariys [sic] and they visited the house brought food and clothes and money when the patients came back home then they told the people tomorrow night will have a contact come and bring your children tea.¹⁰⁰

This organisation visited the sick when in hospital and made arrangements that their religious traditions were respected. It could also identify families in need of financial help due to the illness of a family member. In this way Jews took charge of their own

⁹⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 16/03/1928.

¹⁰⁰ SJAC. Written by Bernard Glasser on the back of an envelope postmarked 1954, this retrospective recording of the reasons why the society was started up by him is preserved in the archives, Ref: SOC SIC 0001.

needs in their own ways and saw off the missionaries. In time, the immigrant population were also able to dispense with the patronage of Garnethill.

The Jewish presence in the Gorbals became progressively more noticeable. Like other Jewish communities in the UK, Glasgow was affected by agitation to restrict alien immigration, and two prominent members of Glaswegian Jewry gave evidence to the Royal Commission of investigation.¹⁰¹ In the event the Aliens Act of 1905, which had the deliberate intention of restricting specifically Jewish immigration to the UK, did slow down the rate of this.¹⁰² However, Glasgow was more of a secondary migration settlement, and in this way it still attracted Jews from other towns and cities across the UK. At any rate, the Gorbals community continued to gain in numerical strength, and as time wore on became a more developed settlement. It took on an air of permanency. The Aliens Act probably had little effect on Gorbals life, instead the event that created more general awareness of a foreign presence in Glasgow was the First World War. This calamity tested the determination of the Jewish establishment in Glasgow to ward off anti-foreigner feeling.

Glasgow Jewry established the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council in March 1914 as a platform for interacting with agencies throughout the non-Jewish wider community. This organisation was made up of representatives from the pre-existing communal bodies such as the Board of Guardians, burial societies and loan societies and thus included groups from with interests across the existing social divide. The new authority's concerns were more inclusive and sensitive issues that had more resonance for the Gorbals population itself, such as housing discrimination, and access to

¹⁰¹ PP. *Royal Commission on Alien Immigration* (1903) Volumes 1-1V. cd 1741; 1742; 1743. Evidence given by Julius Pinto and Jacob Kramrisch in Vol. 11, cd 1742, session 1903. pp. 756-761 & 792-793.

¹⁰² Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp.160-161.

educational bursaries were sometimes dealt with. However, it was the pressures which war put on foreign Jews that cemented its success as a communal body. Exclusively male it nevertheless continued to engage the fundraising talents of women to emphasise the patriotic sentiment of Scottish Jews at this time of crisis. For example, on a Glasgow public holiday in 1914 'a large number of [Jewish] ladies assisted by the Jewish Lads' Brigade took part in a 'flower day'.¹⁰³ Flowers in the Jewish national colours of blue and white were sold to raise money for war relief. This very public demonstration of solidarity was conducted in railway stations, football grounds and street corners. A 'rich harvest' of several hundred pounds was raised.¹⁰⁴

Attention to the presence of foreigners was heightened in the climate of war. Mrs Green recalls that her parents' had to carry identity papers, and remembers leading her mother to the central police station in Glasgow, in order to register residence here during this period. Born in the UK in 1905, this interviewee assisted her Yiddish speaking mother with these necessary negotiations.¹⁰⁵ The Board campaigned strenuously to encourage foreign Jews to become naturalised with some measure of success. Thus many Jewish men subsequently became combatants in the British forces.¹⁰⁶ For foreigners who did not take up the naturalisation option, the future became insecure. The Clydeside area was prohibited for aliens because of the industry concentrated there for war effort. When conscription was introduced in 1917, further problems arose, as failure to become naturalised meant that foreign Jewish men were liable for conscription into the Russian armed forces. Overall, the effects of anti-alien sentiment made plenty of work for the new Representative Council.

¹⁰³ *The Jewish Chronicle* 20/03/1914 p.14.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born: 1905.

¹⁰⁶ Collins. *Second City Jewry*, p.190.

The First World War certainly made life harder for a lot of women with men away in the forces. But war work also fell to Jewish women as labour shortages impinged on public services. Mrs Simon's mother took employment on the trams whilst her husband was interned in a German prisoner of War Camp:

Glasgow Corporation didn't employ Jews...Then during the war my mother became a conductress...It didn't matter any more if you were Jewish. They were desperate to get people. She was a conductress all through the war.¹⁰⁷

Within this testimony the interviewee was at pains to point out that it was only the desperate situation of the war which made it acceptable for her mother to apply and be recruited for this type of public service work. By and large Jews, and Jewish women in particular, were not involved in patterns of employment which encroached on the territory of the general population. However, Mrs Simon's mother evidently needed this work to survive, and in the unusual circumstances of the war, her employers were forced to be less fussy. The war promoted further integration within Scottish society for women as well as men, some effects of which might have been welcome, and others not. Certainly, Jewish women who did war work came into closer contact with the wider Glaswegian world and all its attendant temptations away from religious orthodoxy.

The large families common amongst the first generation increased the Jewish population, but were a drain on the limited resources of many impoverished families. Moreover, the depressed economic climate of the 1920s and 1930s must have impacted badly on some Jews who were involved in small manufacturing and retail

¹⁰⁷ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914.

trades. Families like the Taylors seem to have weathered the storm. Mr. Taylor's father who tried his hand at a number of retail ventures suffered business failures due to a gambling habit, but was able to return to his trade as a baker and by this means he and his wife ensured the family's survival. The Taylors remained in Glasgow, and as the only son in a relatively small family Mr. Taylor was sent to Hutcheson's Grammar School - a prestigious local academy. For every family who sought assistance from the Philanthropic Society, there were many more who managed to eke out an existence. And Jewish immigrants, whatever their economic standing, began to make a home for themselves.

In the period following World War One there was a paradoxical element to Jewish life in Glasgow as it is recalled in memoirs and oral testimony, in that it was both colourful, memorable, and by reason of its curiousness, highly visible, yet at the same time it is depicted as being isolated within its own concerns. In fact, those who were most successful at making a living began to move away from the Gorbals to suburbs further south of Glasgow city centre in the years after World War One. Small Jewish populations were established in areas like Govanhill, Langside and Queen's Park [see maps C and D], a transition that will be further explored in chapter six. However the majority stayed and survived the Gorbals, and by degrees life changed. The pace of change for the better varied between families, with some achieving economic security at a faster rate than others.

The amelioration of ongoing poverty was kept in-house as far as possible and the experience of the war certainly dented confidence in a trouble free existence for Jews as foreigners. It is probably at this point that a recognition developed amongst the immigrants that they had to assert themselves as British subjects as well as Jews. The

problem of how to manage this transition without losing identity as a community had gendered implications. There were only two children in the Taylor family, but a good education, which came at a price, was mostly reserved for the boys. Naturally, Jewish girls were educated up until fourteen years in line with statutory requirements in Scotland, and this was a huge improvement in educational provision compared to what was by and large available for girls in Eastern Europe. As will be noted in later chapters, access to opportunities in religious as well as secular education increasingly tended to mirror gender and social class expectations at large in twentieth century Scotland. Young Jewish women were educated to be literate and numerate, but the benefits of further and higher education were less easily available to women until near the end of our period. Encouragement to take up the benefits of a secular Scottish education, learn more about the wider culture and get ahead economically was seen as beneficial in order to ameliorate any ghetto mentality amongst Jews.¹⁰⁸ However, such opportunities were not gender-blind and were very much more limited for girls. Philanthropy was certainly often directed at women as the mothers of future generations, but the benefits of acculturation are generally recalled within the parameters of male experience. To understand how change impacted on Jewish immigrants within a framework of gendered ideas it is necessary to look more closely at how the interwar Jewish quarter in the Gorbals is remembered.

Gendered memories of the Gorbals.

So far this chapter has looked at material conditions that impacted on families and at social relations between immigrants, established Jews and some elements of wider society up until the 1920s. However, it is difficult to isolate just how the Gorbals environment specifically impacted on women's lives. The reasons for this lie with the

¹⁰⁸ Collins. *Second City Jewry*, p.200.

way that Gorbals stories, and the story of Jewish settlement there, have been historically constructed to exclude a clear picture of women. This final section will examine the interwar period and the way that this era has been recalled as marking the zenith of Yiddish life in the Gorbals. At this point there were somewhere between 14,000 and 20,000 Jews living in Glasgow, the lower figure is perhaps an overly conservative estimate, but it would still represent phenomenal growth.¹⁰⁹ During this time the majority of Jews were still resident in the Gorbals and personal testimony about the atmosphere of Gorbals Jewish life is heady with the flavour of an 'Eastern Quarter'. Evocative descriptions paint colourful pictures of a close-knit society, bound together by poverty but stalwart nonetheless. Evelyn Cowan's memoir of growing up in the Gorbals records that: 'It was a world of poverty which, to me, was not misery, but rich and happy.'¹¹⁰ In Chaim Bermant's account the Jewish Gorbals is remembered lovingly for its Eastern European features:

There were Yiddish posters on the hoardings, Hebrew lettering on the shops...the Gorbals was somehow less intimidating than other parts of the town for it reminded me vaguely of Dvinsk. Jewish names, Jewish faces, Jewish butchers, Jewish bakers with Jewish bread, and Jewish grocers with barrels of herring in the doorway. The herrings in particular brought a strong whiff of home. One heard Yiddish in the streets –more so, in fact, than English...¹¹¹

This period represents the halcyon days of the Jewish Gorbals, or at least popular memories of the community depict this image. Wider Gorbals culture seems not to

¹⁰⁹ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.25.

¹¹⁰ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, p.14.

¹¹¹ Bermant, *Coming Home*, p.52.

intrude too much on this retrospective view. The grimness of life in the Gorbals is often absent in such recollections. Whereas in this excerpt from a semi-autobiographical work, a non-Jewish writer who grew up in the Gorbals paints a different picture:

Many tenement dwellers live indifferent to all this ugliness and those with some spirit, who are angered by it all, lose heart in their long unequal struggle against the tightfistedness of [housing] factors, and live on and die in homes too narrow for a fuller life, from which it seems there is no escape.¹¹²

Clearly, retrospective accounts of Jewish life in the Glasgow, whether these be oral accounts, autobiographical, or written through the mediums of fiction and poetry are affected by different influences upon individual memory and by the variety of individual experiences.

Many immigrant families suffered significant poverty but nevertheless managed to provide emotional security for their children. Others had immense difficulties acclimatising to Glasgow, and unhappy memories surface in personal testimony. Such highly subjective experiences create a wide spectrum of personal memories. However, in addition personal memory is affected by what has been termed 'public memory' or 'public representation'.¹¹³ By this it is meant that certain dominant images, and sometimes frankly stereotypical imagery, become central to the way that the past is

¹¹² Gaitens, E. *Dance of the Apprentices* (First published 1948; this edition Edinburgh, 1990) p.78.

¹¹³ Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory theory, politics, method' in Perks, R and Thompson, A. (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, pp.75-86.

reconstructed.¹¹⁴ These intrude on subjective experience and create narratives that weave both elements into their fabric. Often the picture that re-emerges in oral and written accounts requires careful scrutiny and sensitivity to the aspects of public memory that individual narrators select in order to tell their own distinct story. At the level of individual family stories, different types of memories find a place. For example, Jewish oral testimony usually does not flinch on recounting the many material difficulties of living in the Gorbals; these are well known from the public record. But Jewish life histories regularly balance accounts of poverty with aspects of life perceived as beneficial. Thus the existence of Jewish businesses, the proximity of the synagogues, and many Jewish social activities are depicted as life enhancing. The balance that is achieved shifts according to how people reflect on the past and how this has shaped their lives in the present.

Joselit has reflected on this phenomenon in respect of New York Jews and pointed out that, at its crudest, memories of the Lower East Side are sometimes recast, 'transforming its cluster of dingy, smelly mean streets into picturesque havens of domesticity.' She adds that, 'sentiment for the old neighbourhood increased exponentially the further one moved; in fact the further one moved, the better everything looked.'¹¹⁵ Joselit's argument concerns how the success story of American Jewry is bound up with the way that a vibrant Jewish community was created in a New York slum.¹¹⁶ To this end she does not examine the gendered nature of this transformation. Nevertheless her mention of 'havens of domesticity' is telling. The Gorbals has been subject to a similar recasting and in this, women inhabit such domestic havens, but they are difficult to spot in memories of the Gorbals mean

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p.76.

¹¹⁵ Joselit, J. 'Telling tales: or, how a slum became a shrine,' *JSS* 2:2 (1996) p.54.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 55.

streets. This exclusion can be attributed to the way that memories of the Jewish Gorbals are 'composed' within a framework of subjective experience and shared images.¹¹⁷

In her review of the usefulness of Composure Theory, Penny Summerfield also highlights that in the context of oral history, interviewees understand the fact that they are also 'delivering their stories into the public domain.'¹¹⁸ The interviewees involved in this Glasgow study were mostly surprised by the idea that academic research would have any interest in their personal memories of growing up in a Jewish household. However, no interviewee showed surprise that the same research was particularly interested in memories of the Gorbals. The issue of public memory and its relationship with personal memory is an important one in respect of the Gorbals; this area is not an unknown quantity, has entered into public discourse, and indeed has attracted notoriety. The way in which interviewees then compose their memories has a relationship with public representations of the Gorbals district.

Dominant public memories that have been constructed about Glaswegian working class life fall into two categories. First and most prominent of these is the narrative of bleak and inadequate housing, miserable poverty and high levels of violence. This version of Glasgow life is most famously displayed in the novel, *No Mean City*, which in fact concerns life in the Gorbals district. This notorious depiction published in 1935, has coloured public representations of the Gorbals, and of working class Glasgow generally.¹¹⁹ Despite having little literary merit, it is a book that achieved notoriety

¹¹⁷ Thomson, A. 'Putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia' in *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 300-319.

¹¹⁸ Summerfield, P. *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998) p.22.

¹¹⁹ McArthur, A and Kingsley, H. *No Mean City* (London, 1935.)

mostly because it purported to show the realistic Gorbals, complete with accurate geography and intimate descriptions of typical family life in the tenements. However, its central narrative concerns the violence and desperation inherent in working class Glaswegian society. For many, the imagery of *No Mean City* served to put flesh on what political, medical and religious commentators had long been saying about the relationship between moral depravity and the terrible conditions experienced by Glasgow's working classes. The opposite end of the spectrum consists of rosy reminiscences, which Joselit states are a 'willed creation' of the fortunate.¹²⁰ In Scotland, such memories have been shaped by cheery, nostalgic interpretations of working class communities in urban Scotland. Decried as the 'urban kailyard' version of the Scottish past, poverty is sanitised and a picture of racial harmony, and even more unrealistically, religious harmony is created.¹²¹ In respect of the Gorbals however, the former narrative of a hostile environment has had much more mileage than its kailyard counterpart, except that is, where Jewish life there is concerned.

In 1984 an exhibition was staged in Glasgow entitled '*A Scottish Shtetl: Jewish Life in the Gorbals.*' This title annexed a metaphor that had prevalence at the time, and involved idealistic rural images of Eastern Europe derived from such popular sources as the film *Fiddler on the Roof*. Ironically, economic hardships in Eastern Europe were made worse by the fact that Jews were subject to laws that enforced their residence in towns within the Jewish Pale of Settlement.¹²² Certainly some of these townships were quite small, but many were far from being the villages of imagination. In addition,

¹²⁰ Joselit, 'Telling tales' p.54.

¹²¹ The kailyard school of literature is a shorthand title for a much-despised genre of Scottish fiction that included novels which expound idealistic images of Scottish rural life. These kailyard novels are said to have not only deflected attention from narratives of Scotland's cities, but their literary motifs of sentimentalism and rigid morality eventually infiltrated fictional accounts of urban life. For a review of fiction about working class life, which includes both types of accounts see: Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel: A Complete Guide* 3rd edition, pp.26-41.

¹²² Lindemann, *Esau's Tears* pp.69 & 287-289 describes the infamous 'May laws' of 1882.

many settlers in Glasgow were secondary migrants from other British cities. Urban life was therefore not a new phenomenon for most immigrants, but the scale and level of industrialisation in Glasgow certainly made it a very different experience from the average *shtetl*. In such idealistic memories of the Jewish community in this period, Jews are a colourful foil to the dreary urban hideousness of working class Glasgow. In the interwar years when the Jewish Gorbals was still a flourishing community, this type of notion had already begun to have some currency. For example, Lewis Grassie Gibbon made the following comments in 1934, describing the Gorbals as:

...the most saving slum in Glasgow, and the most abandoned...it is not filth and futility and boredom unrelieved. It is haunted by an ancient ghost of goodness and grossness, sun-warmed and ripened under alien suns.¹²³

Jewish traditions and Eastern European customs could not always be confined to the home. First generation Jews in the Gorbals continued trying to live a fairly self-contained existence, as they had done in Eastern Europe. Dealings with wider society generally occurred through the necessities of commerce, or finding a home; or through often-unwanted encounters with Presbyterian missionaries. This was a habit of self-protection that was hard to break. Nevertheless, Jews could not stay entirely enclosed in an overcrowded area like the Gorbals. As we have seen, other ethnic groups such as the Irish, the Italians and the Highlanders, as well as Lowland working class Scots, shared the same tenement blocks. All of these societal groups were of interest to those who intermittently had occasion to look upon the denizens of this netherworld of poverty, from a stance outwith it, Gibbon being a pertinent example. In going about

¹²³ Gibbon, L.G. and MacDiarmid, H. *Scottish Scene Or, The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albion* (London, 1934) p.144.

their work, pursuing their religion and occasionally when at leisure, Jews soon became noticeable. Moreover as their numbers increased, Jews were perceived as Scotland's first easily recognisable community of aliens, with a different language, religion and customs. As a result they were understood to be exotic. This outsiders' view of 'strangers in our own midst' as one Church report described them, heightened their visibility.¹²⁴ This happened despite the minority status of Jews in terms of the overall Gorbals population. Actual hostility, or more often simply the perception that hostility existed in the wider society, encouraged Jewish immigrants to cluster. Yet ironically it was the fact of Jews congregating together in a specific area, which made them all the more noticeable and liable to negative attention.

Jewish men and women were subject to condemnatory descriptions from the wider population in equal measure, but when Jewish women ventured into public view, censure regularly focused on their perceived ostentation. This fictional illustration of Jewish women for example, indicates several negative ideas about the acquisitiveness of Jews in general, about the shamelessness of immigrant women in particular, and the way the presence of immigrant Jews in Glasgow ignited such sentiments:

...Oily young Jewesses from the Gorbals ambled along quite sure of themselves and perspiring under the weight of pearls and furs made out of pawnshops, old clothes and gold painted watches.¹²⁵

Jews were sensitive to perceptions of their behaviour and sometimes internalised this criticism. In a letter to the *Jewish Echo* in 1928, one writer displays this:

¹²⁴ *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1900*. p.489

¹²⁵ Campbell, R.W. *Winnie McLeod* (1920) p.24. Quoted in Elliot, R. *The Glasgow Novel* (Unpublished thesis, University of Glasgow, 1977) p.330.

The other day, while passing a particular street in the Jewish quarters, one's attention was drawn to a very large number of motorcars and taxis waiting outside the Synagogue. There was a considerable crowd of onlookers who were exchanging remarks on the occasion. 'It's a Jewish weddin', they must be well off!... We cannot blame our gentile neighbours for these comments as it is a recognised weakness of our people to make an extraordinary show of our marriage celebrations and similar functions.¹²⁶

The lesson of the Pale was to be as inconspicuous as possible, and this prescription had gendered dimensions. Jews formed themselves into an enclave and they looked after their own in order not to attract negative sentiments about their intrusion on Scottish society, yet at the same time they had to contend with criticisms regarding their perceived foreign flamboyance and inability to blend in. Women were especially subject to this contradiction. An important part of the process of settling in for immigrants was the sensation of having a better life. Consumption of life's small luxuries mattered therefore, but this was an area of life that seemed to put Jews, and Jewish women in particular, in the firing line of criticism. This situation developed because the issue of women in the Gorbals public eye was a problematic one, for both Jews and non-Jews. If Jewish men met with flack over their conspicuous spending power, women came in for even more damnation.

When questions about gendered behaviour are introduced in respect of the Gorbals of the early twentieth century, accepted wisdom is turned on its head because the

¹²⁶ *The Jewish Echo* 13/01/1928 p.5.

mean streets of the Gorbals are usually conjured up as a man's world, a place of pubs, brawling, gambling dens and gang culture. 'Nice' women do not fit within this profile. A gender hierarchy existed in Gorbals life that privileged male interests. In popular memory Jews are generally remembered as being easily recognisable, but still outsiders to this wider masculine Gorbals culture. In his celebration of multi-ethnicity, Grassie Gibbon declared the Gorbals was 'not even a Scottish slum...In the air the stench is of a different quality to Govan's or Camlachie's...' ¹²⁷ This assumption has actually served Jewish men well; they have been viewed within their own history as hard working, sober and peaceable, in spite of the Gorbals. Thus the inference is made that it was men who steered their families out of poverty – out of the Gorbals in fact. In a visit to Scotland in 1907, the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hermann Adler, pointedly made such a comparison by commenting on the efforts of Jews to keep their religion, whilst in the same speech remarking on 'faces sodden with drink and features sealed by vice' that he had witnessed in Glasgow's Saltmarket area. ¹²⁸ The Jewish establishment naturally preferred this image of immigrant men, but the reality of living in the Gorbals was less clear-cut than this. In 1928 the Jewish press in Glasgow issued this warning to its readers:

It is now common knowledge that when police raids were made on certain Glasgow clubs recently, nearly fifty percent of the persons arrested were of the Jewish faith. These persons have all been dealt with in the courts... ¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Gibbon and MacDiarmid, *Scottish Scene*, p.144.

¹²⁸ *The Glasgow Herald* 30/05/1907.

¹²⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 07/09/1928 p.4.

The clubs being alluded to were city centre gambling establishments, and evidently Jewish men did move in these non-Jewish circles.¹³⁰ The boundaries of the enclosed community shifted in time, particularly as the second generation grew up. However, it is a great deal more difficult to locate how shifting boundaries impacted on women in this environment of overwhelming masculinity.

At the level of the same streets, women had a necessary presence. In respect of first generation Jewish women, they were wage earners, they had to shop for the needs of large families, and young Jewish girls were sent to school along with their non-Jewish neighbours. As women in the second generation grew up, they took part in the leisure activities popular at this time for working class Scots. The dancehall and the cinema were as equally attractive to Jewish girls, as they were to wider Gorbals culture. An understanding of how women negotiated this world, so often omitted from examination of Jewish immigrants in Britain, can provide new insights into the prevailing conditions faced by these immigrants and the means employed to come to terms with them. However, there are two meta-narratives involved here. The first of these is that of Jewish communities; and the second is that of the Gorbals environment itself. Both are overwhelmingly masculine in the way they are recounted, so understanding both involves being receptive to why and how historical memory is gender sensitive.

In written work, whether this is fictional or autobiographical, it is difficult to locate first-generation women at street level outside of negative stereotypes. In slum life, both women and men dreamed of a better life; indeed the migrant experience itself might be conceived of in these terms. Men and women shared the

¹³⁰ Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born: 1903.

same expectations of economic improvement, and obtaining greater freedoms, but when women reached for these on their own terms, they often met with restrictive and or condemnatory responses. Useful recreation promoted by lady philanthropists for young immigrant women was designed to 'improve their tastes generally.'¹³¹ In 1902, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported on such philanthropic endeavours and included the comment that the girls' 'tendency to finery' had been 'toned down' in an effort to improve them.¹³² Lily Montagu's West Central Girls' Club certainly had this mission. Montagu believed young Jewish women were especially vulnerable to being led into immorality because of poor wages in the clothing industry and low self esteem.¹³³ In Glasgow, Mrs Rose recalls that as a young woman in an immigrant family 'you didn't have much freedom.'¹³⁴ Ostentatious dressing and behaviour amongst women was recognised by the Jewish establishment as appealing to anti-Semitic caricatures. Moreover, in the Gorbals such conduct was conflated with lack of respectability and immorality. Therefore Jewish families did try to control women and keep them away from non-Jewish influences. In this they were not always successful. The experience of attending school, even if this was only up until the statutory leaving age of fourteen years did alter traditional female horizons. Likewise, opportunities in terms of leisure activities and recreation brought women into closer contact with non-Jewish society. Mrs Rose was candid about her ability to by-pass rules about 'where you could go' and regularly went dancing with non-Jewish boys. The cultural impact of women's experiences and their presence in the general context of working class Glasgow is usually omitted in narratives of Jewish life in the

¹³¹ *The Jewish Yearbook* 1896-7 p.65.

¹³² *The Jewish Chronicle*, 14/03/1902.

¹³³ Spence 'Working for Jewish Girls' p.500.

¹³⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

Gorbals. In these women cannot be found in the street life of the area because they are represented as being at home keeping kosher.

The memoirs of Cowan and Glasser, which were introduced in chapter 1, again provide evidence of how the interaction of public representation with subjective recall are played out in Jewish narratives that are underpinned by gendered codes. Cowan's perspective on family life in the Gorbals overwhelmingly concentrates on female lives. Her memoir does contain a great deal of valuable insights into how Jewish women negotiated the Gorbals world and therefore it is not merely a rose-tinted tale. Yet she frames this using a popular construction of life in a Gorbals tenement, which does owe a great deal to the urban kailyard. Cowan could not have been unaware of her potential readership and must have been aware of the sensitivities of Jews. In delivering her story into the public domain she annexed a well-liked model for doing so that both a Jewish and non-Jewish readership could respond to. On the other hand, Glasser, as an educated exile from the Gorbals used a different set of popular images of Gorbals life. These images included violence, incest, religious bigotry and hopeless poverty; the latter was, in his view the basis for most of the social evils that prevailed. Moreover, he makes clear that Jews were not immune from these influences. Glasser's story is one which very deliberately seeks to avoid reminiscences of a close-knit Jewish community or the protective climate it may have provided. In his narrative, triumph over adversity is achieved in spite of the Gorbals, and despite his Jewish identity. However, he has difficulty situating women in this dark narrative other than as casualties of their class. It is difficult to see how Cowan could have used a similar framework for her story of Jewish life, which celebrates the interplay of working class and ethnic identity, and given that she appears to recall the Gorbals as a place which had a

positive influence on her life. In Cowan's account, the mean streets of the Gorbals do not exist; in Glasser's work, they are very prominent and exclude description of the domestic haven that is so dominant in Cowan's account.

The teeming nature of working class life in the Gorbals has been depicted in many written accounts, but the scene that often emerges in these descriptions is of a very masculine world from which reputable women are excluded. Equally, philanthropic efforts undertaken to assist immigrants emphasised the gendered dimensions of immigrants' perceived needs. Female responsibilities for the home and the welfare of children were catered to, and male centred needs were based upon men's presupposed roles as breadwinners. Young Jewish men were assisted to gain educational bursaries, but the same opportunities were not open to women. Nevertheless, by examining some Jewish memories of the Gorbals including oral testimony, a clearer female presence emerges. Moreover, the latter accounts provide insights into how popular remembrance of the Gorbals re-emerges in individual narratives. This interaction of public and subjective memory reveals that it is not so much that Jewish men and women led separate lives, with women creating a life at home and men encountering the streets, it is more the case that memories themselves are shaped by the intrusion of gendered public discourses. Thus in order to identify Jewish women's activities and their response to the Glasgow environment a pathway through many of the existing masculine public discourses requires to be uncovered. For example, the flamboyantly dressed young women who are derided in popular fiction, can also be seen as women who were in fact challenging the pressures put upon them to be inconspicuous. In describing memories of women's lives in the Gorbals, interviewees reveal a dynamic

relationship between individual memory and available culturally constructed memories, many of which are gendered.

Jewish women have often been written out of Gorbals story, because the way that it has frequently been narrated as a man's world contains no ideological space for them. Added to this is the particular way that an awareness of the need to fly the flag of respectability has impacted on the writing of many Scottish Jewish narratives. The latter require to be read against the grain of popular cultural constructions of what the Gorbals was really like, and also existing historical interpretation, which is designed around pursuits that exclude women and is therefore willing to accept that they had no status outside of the home. Examination of individual experience is perhaps the only way to accomplish this task and the fact that different and sometimes contradictory memories are produced is not necessarily problematic. Like autobiographical work, oral material does not invariably avoid uncomfortable memories. Most interviewees give affectionate portrayals of mothers which include memories of their pivotal roles within the family; nevertheless they also sometimes highlight the difficulties of their lives. Historical generalisation about immigrant localities such as the Gorbals, which seek only to survey the survival of ethnicity through the development of institutions and the collection of statistics, may be just as misleading as oral material that is uncritically examined and pronounced to be rosy reminiscences about idealised Yiddisher mothers. The reality of immigrant life had many more layers than either traditional analysis or popular observations have supplied and it is to the experience of the feminised domestic sphere that we now turn.

Chapter 4.

At home in the Gorbals: domesticity and women's cultural labour.

The meaning of home.

Mrs Miller's family were poor, but had aspirations that the coming generation would have a better life. In this aim they were successful. Five children were born into the family and they all made good use of their education and obtained white-collar jobs. The increased income that began to flow into the household as each child entered employment allowed the family to escape from slum life. Mrs Miller was second youngest in this household and so benefited incrementally from the efforts of her elder siblings. Likewise, this woman's immigrant mother was able to take on the role of a full-time homemaker because of the household's increased fortunes. The family progressed from a one-room apartment in the Gorbals, to a two-room flat that had an inside toilet. Eventually by the early 1930s, when Mrs Miller was attending secondary school, this family of seven moved out of the Gorbals to what felt like a palace in the suburb of Queen's Park. 'We were so delighted' Mrs Miller said in interview about this move to a three roomed flat, and indeed for this family, this step up must have been momentous.¹ However, these improvements in lifestyle involved sacrifices, not least of which was the hard work undertaken by Mrs Miller's mother. The unpaid domestic labour of women and the way that this was combined in Jewish homes with ambitions for successful integration placed women in a pivotal role as agents of upward mobility and cultural survival. This chapter will therefore examine what 'home' meant for women in immigrant families.

In Gorbals homes women were expected to make an investment in the well being of their families; this was a project that involved hard labour and some aspects of this

¹ Oral testimony of Mrs RB. Born: 1920.

will be looked at. In Jewish tradition this female ambition also carried religious significance.² Female religiosity was measured by how well a woman cared for her household and maintained religious laws that applied to material life; for example in areas of food preparation in line with dietary rules, and the strict observance of the Jewish religious calendar.³ However following migration, women took on an additional responsibility for ensuring that upward social mobility did not come at the price of loss of cultural identity. These two interlocking duties of domestic labour and the female contribution to integration reveal the meaning of Jewish women's role in the home, but for the purposes of clarity will be examined separately as far as possible.

A community of housewives

In the Gorbals, Jewish homes were habitually overcrowded, difficult to keep clean and as a consequence were a source of constant toil. The housing itself was often of a poor standard set amid a noisy, vermin ridden environment and regularly equipped with little or no sanitation. In addition, women shouldered all or most of the burden of parenting. This is the context to female labour within many Jewish homes in the first few decades of adjustment to life in Glasgow. Women's work was mercilessly hard and constant. Yet many women rose to this challenge. In interview Mrs Miller relates that she was born early 'owing to my mother trying to whitewash the ceiling and she fell. I believe that I was about the size of a two pound bag of sugar!'⁴ This story from family lore may of course be an apocryphal tale, but within it the mother's foolhardiness reveals an understanding about the lot of working class wives. As

² Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, p.34

³ Hyman, P. 'The other half: women in the Jewish tradition' in Koltun, E. (ed.) *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York, 1976) p.109.

⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs RB.

residents of a one room house or, 'single-end' as it is known in Glasgow, constant domestic toil could not be interrupted by a pregnancy; indeed repeated pregnancies were part of normal life in first generation immigrant families.

First generation families were typically large, so as well as coping with housework, women also gave birth to children and raised them within one or two roomed flats. An early example of the Jewish press in Glasgow provides evidence of apparently well-qualified Jewish midwives advertising assistance to mothers at home, indicating that this was a viable form of making a living for Yiddish-speaking midwives due to the prevalence of large families.⁵ The strain that this life placed on women must have been immense. For example, her son has described Mrs Balkin as 'indefatigable', and indeed she must have been. Oral evidence about these immigrant mothers nearly always places them at the helm of family life, and recalls their skills in managing the household and the future of children despite such obstacles. Mrs Rose commented on her mother that 'she monitored as it were, everything.'⁶

The whitewashing of tenement walls and ceilings was not an unusual task for women. Indeed, the prospect of an infant arrival would mean extra efforts at cleanliness to protect life at its most vulnerable stage.⁷ This interviewee's worrisome start in life meant that she remained delicate during childhood. However, the health of children

⁵ SJAC. *The Jewish Times*, 6/11/1903. Ref: NEW.TI.0001. This surviving issue of a weekly publication in Yiddish includes an advert placed by a midwife called Mrs Cantor. This newspaper was subtitled: 'The only Jewish Newspaper that circulates amongst all classes of Jews' presumably to distinguish it from the certainly more middle-class and anglicised *Jewish Chronicle*, and to emphasise its local character. I am indebted to Mrs R. Saccharin for assisting with translation from Yiddish. Advertisements for midwives were a regular feature of the later English language *Jewish Echo* from 1928.

⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

⁷ I am grateful to Rosa Sacharin of the SJAC for this information. She was a midwife in Glasgow during the late 1940s and witnessed the efforts of families in slum homes.

was undoubtedly a widespread problem in any case in Glasgow's slum districts.⁸ Mrs Miller had 'sun-ray' treatment as a toddler during the early 1920s, either because of, or to prevent rickets, which had been a common problem in early twentieth century Glasgow.⁹ Tenement housing and overworked mothers meant that young children were often confined to their one-room homes, and inadequate diets further undermined the health of both mothers and children.¹⁰ Preserving the health of children was a battle that women often lost; 32 per cent of all infant deaths in Glasgow in 1905 were of babies born into single-ends.¹¹ By the interwar period, Glasgow's infant mortality rate was still appallingly high, much higher than comparable industrial cities in the UK, including Liverpool and Manchester, and the link with poor housing and overcrowding quite clear.¹² Notwithstanding, many mothers made Herculean efforts to raise their children in dire conditions.¹³ But there can be no doubt that mothering in slum conditions was a daily battle fought against the odds.¹⁴

Historical changes within the working class home, and women's relationship with this have frequently been obscured by notions about the unchanging nature of the private sphere of home and family. However, a clear example of the limitations of the private and public dichotomy can be seen in examination of Jewish immigrant life in Glasgow. It is often within memories of immigrant women's reputedly private role in the interior landscape of the home that a clearer picture of their position within the public image of Gorbals Jewry emerges. As Shani D'Cruze has pointed out, the history

⁸ Maver, *Glasgow*, pp.269-271.

⁹ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, pp.123-4.

¹⁰ D'Cruze, S. 'Women and the family' in Purvis, J. (ed.) *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, (London, 2002) pp.62-3.

¹¹ Crowther, 'Poverty, Health and Welfare' pp.283-284.

¹² Cage, 'Infant mortality rates' p.80.

¹³ See Rice, M. *Working-Class Wives: Their Health and Condition*. First published 1939. (London, 1981) pp.141-142.

¹⁴ See Reeves, M. *Round About A Pound A Week*, (first published 1913, this edition, London, 1982) pp. 159-175.

of women cannot be accounted for solely in relation to the family, and ideologies that constructed the private world of family were in fact created publicly.¹⁵ The women who shopped for the best bargains in the Gorbals, made the journey to 'Steamies' (public laundries), and kept up some semblance of respectability by scrubbing their tenement closes have been historically constructed as housewives, and their domestic labour hidden in an opaque private realm. Yet their unpaid labour was often intrinsic to family strategies of survival and as a consequence did have economic value. Moreover it had a social value, because a good housewife commanded respect within the community. Mrs Miller recalls that her mother even went to far as to invite her daughter's teacher to tea; this immigrant home was humble, but clean and tidy, and so fit to be seen. During the visit, Mrs Miller's sister acted as translator for her mother who was still struggling with English.¹⁶ It is likely that this immigrant mother wished to demonstrate the respectability of her home to the local schoolteacher. In a family who wished to see their children do well, good relations with officialdom were helpful. Furthermore, this example illustrates how women, using their domestic skills, could be mediators for their immigrant community in its dealings with wider Glaswegian society.

These facts create complications for properly describing the role that many immigrant women, who might be styled as 'just housewives', had within the Jewish household economy. Here public and private boundaries are indistinct, but no less than for the general female population. In many respects the domestic labour of Jewish women was no different from that of their Scottish, Irish and Italian neighbours. The gender arrangement of Scottish families placed women in the role of having primary

¹⁵ D'Cruze, 'Women and the Family,' p.51

¹⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs RB.

responsibility for the home, and the gendered arrangement of the traditional Jewish family also followed this pattern. A woman who could successfully make ends meet did have status, and would have been accorded rewards for this. Reward might be personal in terms of a woman's good reputation as a wife and mother, or could be of a more tangible economic nature. Joanna Bourke has pointed out that successful domestic management could increase the likelihood that credit from shopkeepers, pawnbrokers and neighbours would be extended in times of need.¹⁷ Unforeseen illness, death or unemployment, were all circumstances that could plunge working class families into dependence on neighbourhood networks for help. For Jews who had only a short period of settlement in Glasgow, the assistance of their Yiddish-speaking peers was generally preferable to having to beg for help from philanthropic societies, or from the local Poor Law facilities. Thus women not only had to be good domestic managers in the privacy of the home, they also had to be publicly recognised as such, given that working class mutuality was an essential feature of life.¹⁸ Such support was not necessarily based upon close friendship, although it did not preclude this; but more upon ensuring survival in difficult times that might be just around the corner. The last resort was charity, but as we have seen in chapter three, this too was reserved for the deserving poor, and so premised upon the respectability of the family. Neighbourhood networks allowed immigrant women to help each other with mundane aspects of life such as childcare or assistance during confinement. These functioned as collectives for keeping up the good appearances of families and indicate how women experienced the framework of 'community' differently. Institutions that operated in the public sphere, such as trades unions, friendly societies and recreational clubs were part of Jewish

¹⁷ Bourke, J. 'Housewifery in working-class England 1860-1914,' *Past and Present* 143 (1994) p.181.

¹⁸ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, p.150. See also Ross, E. 'Survival networks: women's neighbourhood sharing in London before World War 1,' *History Workshop Journal* 15 (1983) pp.4-27.

men's social networks and outline a predominately male centred view of communality.

These tell us little about a family unit's day-to-day strategies for survival.¹⁹

Bedbugs and Aspidistras.

Managing the average tenement home in the Gorbals must have been a demoralising occupation, but nevertheless it was still one that required skill and energy. Here we look at the operation of Jewish household management in working class Glasgow. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Glasgow Corporation turned its attention on problems associated with poor housing conditions.²⁰ Awareness that such conditions were a shameful blight on the image of the city underpinned social concern however, and a great deal of the comment made on working class areas like the Gorbals apportioned the blame for squalor not on landlords, but on the tenants themselves. The Municipal Commission set up to investigate the problem, which reported in 1904, commented that:

Much evidence was given as to the existence in certain districts of the city of large numbers of tenants, particularly in ticketed and farmed-out houses, who exhibited uncleanliness of person and of the home...it was further stated that persons of vicious and immoral habits were usually associated with dirty and filthy houses, and that their chief vice was that of excessive drinking...Families in receipt of an income capable of maintaining them in comfort were found to be living under indescribably sordid conditions, while of those who took refuge in farmed-out houses 59 per cent

¹⁹ Ibid. Ross, 'Survival networks,' p.4.

²⁰ Butt, J. 'Housing' in Cage, R. A. (ed.) *The Working Class in Glasgow 1750-1914* (London, 1987) pp.29-55.

acknowledged that drink was the explanation of their being compelled to do so.²¹

There is a question mark over how accurate this kind of description is for the general environment of Glaswegian working class life. Middle class observers frequently lacked empathy with the stresses placed on women in particular.²² Moreover, it needs to be established if immigrants who lived in such environments also met with condemnation for low standards, or were to some extent set apart from them, as has been suggested.²³ The difficulties of maintaining some level of cleanliness, cooking, eating, and sleeping in the cramped conditions that existed, can only be imagined. Yet to gain an insight into life in the Gorbals we must try to do just this, and to see past the disapproving views expressed in much available documentation.

Elizabeth Roberts has examined women's work in the home for working class urban communities in the North of England. Using oral sources she concludes that women generally went to extraordinary lengths to maintain cleanliness in homes that were often lacking in indoor plumbing, and grossly overcrowded.²⁴ If general standards fell short of middle class expectations this is hardly surprising given the resources which women had at their disposal, and the relentless nature of such domestic toil. However, it is clear from Roberts' findings that 'standards' did exist, measured by local values for respectability, and working class women generally tried hard to meet these. In areas like the Gorbals, much of life that was ostensibly private was in fact subject to

²¹ *Glasgow Municipal Commission on the Housing of the Poor, Report and Recommendations*, (1904) p.9.

²² Alexander, S. 'Introduction' (1978) in Reeves, M. *Round About a Pound A Week*, pp. ix-xxi.

²³ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, pp.11-12 & 164-165; and *Be Well!*, pp.41-44. For arguments surrounding this issue see Harris, B. 'Anti-alienism, health and social reform in late Victorian Britain,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 31:4 (1997) pp. 3-34.

²⁴ Roberts, E. *A Woman's Place: An Oral history of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984) pp.125-135.

communal scrutiny. A woman's ability to keep a clean house was a measure of her public worth. For immigrant women there was even more at stake, for their housewifely talents were judged not only by their own communal peers but also by the wider society who might be only too eager to find them wanting.

In Britain, Jews were popularly condemned for being unclean in their habits and for being poor neighbours who brought the localities of certain streets into disrepute. Widely held prejudices about foreigners and their strange habits made them a useful scapegoat for general grievances about poor housing conditions. In London, the Commission on Alien Immigration (1903) considered such popular sentiments. Mrs Ayres, a midwife who visited Jewish homes London's East End gave voice to such prejudices and stated that:

They are such an unpleasant, indecent people...Some time, perhaps two months ago, I was fetched to a place; I found the door wide open, the place lit up, and the woman within an hour of her confinement; the husband and another strange man were in the room. You have the greatest trouble to turn the husbands out...and a heap of children, whereas among our people they would all be cleared out before you were sent for. They are utterly indecent; they are not fit to be amongst English people.²⁵

Jewish witnesses who gave evidence to the Commission were naturally at pains to counter such an impression. The Dutch born Jewish manufacturer Julius Pinto, who was a prominent member of the Garnethill Congregation, absolutely refuted that overcrowding in the Gorbals was either a result of Jewish immigration, or experienced to

²⁵ PP. *Royal Commission on Alien Immigration* Vol. 11 Minutes of Evidence: Cd 1742, session 1903: 9392-9448.

any larger extent by the Jews living there, as compared with the general population.²⁶

The contemporary public relations exercise of the time, exploited by the likes of Pinto, was to convey an image of immigrant Jews as sober and industrious, and immune from the working class scourges of drunkenness and casual violence. This aim was more or less secured by the interwar period.²⁷ Irish immigrants were a useful foil for this piece of helpful propaganda. Williams has pointed out that immigrant Jews were especially vulnerable to pressure on them to conform to this image, because of the potential and actual hostility directed at them.²⁸ In this respect the domestic habits of Jewish women were seen as a positive influence. Collins restates this impression of immigrant women when he claims that, ‘...poor Jewish women probably kept a closer eye on the family budget than did their theoretician husbands.’²⁹ This statement of course also alludes to what has been assessed as the typical gender arrangement for Jewish family responsibilities. Men could escape from the worldly worries of daily survival by immersing themselves in religious studies and communal politics, as opposed to drink, whilst women were expected to stay at home and cope with everyday struggles. A Yiddish folk song that describes this typical gendering of familial responsibilities conveys female frustrations that applied in Eastern Europe:

He runs to the synagogue
And reads all the laws,
He runs here and there
Growling like a bear.

²⁶ Ibid. Evidence of Julius Pinto: 20854-20998.

²⁷ See ‘Special Commission on the Jewish Mission Field in Scotland’ in *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* 1934, p.1112.

²⁸ Williams, B. ‘The anti-Semitism of tolerance: middle class Manchester and the Jews 1870-1900’ in Kidd, A (ed.) *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 1995) pp. 91-94.

²⁹ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.11.

To market she must hurry
 Wood to buy and worry
 Bread she must bake
 Kindling she must break;
 The children she must care for
 That's what she's there for,
 Put this one to bed,
 Smear up that one's head;
 Soothe this one's ache
 To the out-house that one take,
 And for measure full or near
 A baby every year.³⁰

In Scotland, Jewish women obtained a reputation of being capable wives and mothers. Various studies conducted in the early years of the twentieth century showed Jewish immigrants as having apparently better health than their non-Jewish contemporaries.³¹ This was put down to superior diet and hygiene standards, which were of course female responsibilities. This view intersects with the larger official line proffered by Jews, that as a religious and business group they were moral and upright.³²

Ambition to make a better life was a gendered issue because the parameters of a more comfortable, respectable, and upright position in Scottish society involved gendered aspirations. Such ambition was dependant upon Jewish men embracing a breadwinner role and their wives equally conforming to the role of thrifty housewives. More subtly however, it also involved compliance with Scottish ideals regarding general morality. Here the performance of women as skilled domestic managers was thought to be a good influence on potentially wayward male behaviour. At its most simplistic level, middle

³⁰ Quoted in Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.12.

³¹ Collins, *Be well!* pp.78-80.

³² Williams, 'The anti-Semitism of tolerance,' pp.74-77.

class commentators accounted for a great deal of the drunkenness amongst Glaswegian men by pointing out that the pub was more congenial than their ill-kept homes.³³ Good housewifery was deemed to improve the living standards and social behaviour of the working classes.

Thus in support of their acceptability in Scottish society, despite other strange foreign habits, both Jews and their non-Jewish supporters frequently raised Jewish sobriety and religiosity in comparison to the culture of alleged excessive drinking in slum areas. Evidence given by Mrs Ayres to the Royal Commission is tainted by her personal prejudice; nevertheless she did have some interesting comment to make on the subject of drinking:

They can take their share as well as other people, only they are quiet. They are more stolid. Brandy is their drink, and it is the first thing they will offer you. They would not offer you a nice fresh cup of tea or coffee, but in 19 cases out of every 20 they offer you a small glass of brandy. I do not take it myself, because I am life abstainer almost.³⁴

Mrs Ayres correctly detects a somewhat different approach towards the consumption of alcohol amongst Jews, as compared to the working classes in London. In Glasgow attitudes towards the deleterious influence of alcohol on the working classes were widespread, and fuelled the temperance movement.³⁵ Jewish patterns of liquor consumption were certainly less visible, but alcohol was part of Jewish life nonetheless. In Eastern Europe the necessary insularity of Jews ensured that social life

³³ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, p.139.

³⁴ PP. *Royal Commission of Alien Immigration* Vol. 11 Minutes of Evidence: Cd.1742: 9425.

³⁵ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, pp.139-148.

was conducted strictly within Jewish communities. In Scotland this was true also, at least initially. However, the examples of Jewish men attending gambling clubs, and in the second generation, of young women going to ballrooms does show that strict insularity did decrease over the first few decades of the immigration period. The public house had a central place in working class communities, but for the most part was a masculine environment. According to contemporary prescriptions for gendered behaviour, trips to the pub would have been out of the question for Jewish women, but in this respect they merely conformed to the pattern of female behaviour common to the respectable element of working class Scottish society. Respectable women were domestic and simply did not enter into, or condone this kind of behaviour, which was a male prerogative in working class social life.³⁶

On the other hand though, Jewish men do not seem to have had much interest in the pub either, despite the overcrowded nature of their homes. In this instance ethnic influences were more important than those of social class. The reasons for this are two-fold. Anti-foreigner feeling would of course have been more likely to surface in drinking establishments, many of which were already sectarian in their customer base; but in addition, Jewish consumption of alcohol generally *did* take place in the home in accordance with religious festivals and family celebrations. This pattern would shift over time, but in the early part of the twentieth century the absence of Jewish men from the pub, and the unacceptability and indeed danger, inherent in public drunkenness so far as Jews were concerned, proved handy propaganda devices in support of their respectable habits.

³⁶ Fraser, W. H. 'Developments in leisure' in Fraser, W. H. & Morris, R. J. (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland 1830-1914* (Edinburgh, 2000) pp.242-243; Finlay, R. *Modern Scotland 1914-2000* (London, 2004) p.147.

Whether accurate or not, this ideal of Jewish abstemiousness was commonly seized upon by the Jewish establishment as the means by which these poor immigrants could get ahead in life.³⁷ It followed that if Jews were not spending their money in the pub then they had extra income to invest in their home life, and in increasing their business activity. Jewish women were of course implicated in this debate, since as Collins remarks, they were credited with responsibility for household expenditure to a great extent. The question of the level of absolute control over money, which wives had, is of course another matter. Yet, as will be seen in chapter six, issues around Jewish patterns of sociability and consumption are recurring ones in respect of the overarching narrative of upward social mobility in Glasgow, particularly in respect of housing conditions.

Nevertheless, a reputation for temperance did not prevent the community from coming under fire for other anti-social behaviour, and here the domestic habits of immigrant women were subject to special scrutiny. A leading member of the house factoring profession in Glasgow asserted that much of the deterioration in many working class neighbourhoods could be attributed to the incursion of foreigners. Mr. Mathew Gilmour was President of the Association of House Factors in Glasgow at the turn of the century, and purported to speak for his members when he commented that:

They have a baneful influence wherever they dwell;
sanitation and cleanliness are to most of them things
absolutely unknown, and to be strenuously resisted... I
know that on the South Side, where my work is
principally situated, their number is very great, and
increasing considerably year by year, especially in the

³⁷ PP. *Royal Commission of Alien Immigration* Vol. 11, cd 1742 session 1903: 20854-20998, evidence of Julius Pinto.

Gorbals and Hutchesontown districts, and those districts have been very much seriously affected and very much changed in character. These parties will neither clean their stairs nor their houses, nor empty their refuse where they ought to... They are principally Jews, and I am exceedingly sorry to say with regard to them that they are very insanitary in their habits. I say it with regret.³⁸

Since this type of domestic responsibility was perceived as a female duty it is Jewish women who are coming under attack here. Indeed this same contributor, when speaking generally about the dirt at large in working class housing, roundly blames not only the alien community, but also the ignorance of women throughout working class communities in respect of ‘...house management and domestic economy – hence discomfort, ill-health, expenditure in excess of income, and poverty.’³⁹ Jewish wives were thus condemned on grounds of their class, gender and ethnic background. On the one hand they were painted as excellent moral guardians and good mothers by their supporters, but on the other, criticised as slatterns whose foreign habits were unacceptable even in a slum.⁴⁰ These stark and irreconcilable contradictions in the image of Jewish women, which co-existed at the turn of the century, perhaps accounts for the great regret expressed by Mr. Gilmour. Nevertheless, they are fairly characteristic of many of the contradictions inherent in anti-Semitism, and in the rhetoric of blaming slum dwellers for their own woes.

³⁸ *Glasgow Municipal Commission on the Housing of the Poor Vol. I* –Minutes of Evidence, 7399-7643 (1904) pp.346-360.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 7401, p.347.

⁴⁰ See Marks, ‘Carers and servers of the Jewish community,’ *Immigrants and Minorities*, 10:1 pp.106-127 for exploration of Jewish women’s reputation.

In this way it can be seen that reliable and unbiased documentary evidence for Scottish Jewish homes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is difficult to come by. Moreover, that which exists requires careful interpretation. However one interesting study, which ostensibly had no axe to grind with regard to either anti-alienism or slum housing, does create a more accessible and intimate picture of Jewish domesticity, albeit still requiring careful scrutiny. This study concerning the diet of the working classes in Glasgow was published in 1913. The exercise was modelled on numerous other similar investigations carried out in the UK, amongst these the work of Seebohm Rowntree, and on contemporary American studies.⁴¹ This work highlighted, amongst other things, the difficulties of rising rent levels for this class in proportion to wage levels, and consequent upon this the obstacles for families in providing adequate nutrition. The study included Jewish and Italian households. For the latter, few conclusions were reached, owing to difficulty with language and the apparent 'marked differences' in the lifestyles between the three Italian families involved.⁴² However for the five Jewish families, some remarks were made as to their style of living. In one family for example:

...the father earns 17s and this is supplemented by the earnings of his wife and son. The appearance of the house and the style of living is much the same as in the British houses, but the mother is, however, more grandly dressed. A lodger sleeps in the house, which has three apartments, but he has no meals there. There are ten children, all small and

⁴¹ Lindsay, D. *Report Upon a Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in the City of Glasgow, carried out during 1911-1912*. (Glasgow, 1913) p.10. Lindsay refers to the influence of 'Rowntree' but does not state which study she specifically means, it is presumed that she is referring to the work of Seebohm Rowntree in York at the turn of the century.

⁴² Ibid. p.25.

delicate looking; one of them with rickets was attending the invalid school.⁴³

Certain typical elements of Jewish family life, that is, the large family and the presence of a lodger are seen here. The assertion that the lodger did not ever take his meals in the home is frankly doubtful, and is probably an attempt to prove that food expenditure was always concentrated on the family. Female earnings are also mentioned, although we do not learn the full nature of these, but presumably they were in part derived from the provision of board and lodgings. As to the grandness of the wife's dress, the reporter evidently did not appreciate that this may have been designed to impress such official visitors! Of course this inference concurs with the stereotype previously cited that Jewish women were gaudy in dress, and the deduction is extended towards the furnishing of the home:

The Jewish houses were all larger than the British, and had at least three apartments: in [household] V11 there were four, and in V111 six –a top flat and attics. The kitchen as usual, is used as a living room. There is apparently a great deal of coming and going, and friends frequently come in the evening. The parlours are wonderful rooms, with full suites of furniture, photographs, crystal or china ornaments, antimacassars, etc.⁴⁴

The manner in which these families were selected is not known. However it is unlikely that the authorities financing the study (the University of Glasgow and the City Corporation) alighted upon five Jewish families indiscriminately. It is a

⁴³ Ibid. p.23.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.23.

reasonable surmise that Jewish officialdom were involved in this selection, and it is implausible that Jewish parties would reveal families likely to cast a poor image. All of the families involved in this study had to reside in working class districts, which included the Gorbals.⁴⁵ Yet what we can deduce is that by 1912 at least, some class distinctions were becoming apparent amongst Gorbals Jews, with families living in a variety of accommodation. For example in the same year that this report was published, the Balkin family of two adults and seven children had moved from their one roomed flat to a larger one with two rooms.

It also seems that Jews as compared with the other group of immigrants, the Italians, had achieved a greater level of integration. The researchers involved appear to have been perplexed by the foreign ways of the Italians, but found a more recognisable domestic culture amongst the Jewish families. Again, it is likely that the Jewish families selected for this study conformed to an acceptable level of closer integration; the apparent lack of difficulty with language was not replicated in all immigrant families. Oral testimony confirms that Yiddish was the main language spoken at home when second generation children were growing up. For example, Mrs Miller stated that her parents spoke Yiddish at home, and what English they did pick up was learned from 'listening to us.'⁴⁶ Schoolchildren were their parents' teachers and this was particularly true for mothers.⁴⁷ Mrs Miller's mother could neither read nor write; a language class would have been a formidable challenge for women such as her. Clearly no one source can survey the multiplicity of domestic conditions experienced by migrant families. Social stratification appears to have rapidly developed, and upward mobility was

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.11.

⁴⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs RB. Born: 1920.

⁴⁷ White, *Rothschild Buildings*, p.82.

demonstrated by a wife's abilities to manage the household and provide comfort that conformed to local ideals. Ownership of a comfortable and grand parlour was certainly a conventional native aspiration for the respectable working class, and demonstrates immigrant women's role as consumers who conformed to local ideals of luxury.

In her memoir of Jewish immigrant life in New York, Ruth Gay discusses the yearning that poor immigrants had for any small measure of splendour in their lives.⁴⁸ At the end of the nineteenth century conditions in Eastern Europe for most Jews were dire. Over and above this, in order to gather the money for tickets, visas, and bribes to Russian officials, Jews sold their possessions, however meagre they were. Most immigrants were of course keenly aware that return to Eastern European was unlikely, so disposal of possessions made sense even if the family had some savings or were sent tickets by a family member who had gone ahead. Having funds on hand could smooth the journey. Bermant has written of the entrepreneurial skills that his mother demonstrated in the sale of their domestic goods prior to emigration, skills that had previously been hidden whilst she performed the duties of a Rabbi's wife.⁴⁹ Upon arrival in countries of immigration small steps towards a better life were generally demonstrated by the acquisition of material goods. Here women embarked on yet another journey –one that trod a middle path between tradition and integration with aspects of local life deemed respectable and desirable. Yeziarska's fiction, which was discussed in chapter three, again demonstrates immigrant ambitions to prevail over poverty stricken conditions, even in very poor households:

⁴⁸ Gay, *Unfinished People*, pp.73-88.

⁴⁹ Bermant, *Genesis*, p.158.

Once when it was the night for the wages, Bessie came home with three packages, a new oilcloth for the table, a remnant from a lace curtain to tack around the sink, to hide away the rusty pipes, and a ten-cent roll of gold paper for the chandelier to cover up the fly dirt that was so thick you couldn't scrub it away...*Ach!* I was thinking to myself, if only we didn't have to pull out the torn bedding from its hiding place to sleep –the rags to dress ourselves –if only we didn't have to dirty up the new whiteness of the oilcloth with the eating, then it would shine in our house always like a palace. It's only when poor people begin to eat and sleep and dress themselves that the ugliness and dirt begins to creep out of their black holes.⁵⁰

The battle against dirt and dearth was a constant one, and when out in public, immigrant women also wanted to appear respectable. Ambition to conform to standards of appearance in countries of immigration was common. Depending on the age at which immigrant women arrived, a greater level of adventurousness was demonstrated in fashion.⁵¹ Photographic evidence of immigrants, which is available in the Scottish Jewish Archives, shows women who clearly had made an effort over their dress, as well as others who are clothed in the rather plain, old-fashioned styles that probably served in Eastern Europe. Dress and appearance were public gestures of increased levels of acculturation, and immigrant women aspired to demonstrate this level of sophistication.⁵² For example, none of the mothers of interviewees involved in this study wore *Sheitels*. These were the traditional hairpieces worn by married Jewish women in Eastern Europe. However, several interviewees recall elderly grandmothers

⁵⁰ Yeszierska, *Breadgivers*, p.37-38.

⁵¹ Weinberg, *World of our Mothers*, p.117.

⁵² Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, pp.160-161.

who wore the *Sheitel*. These women often joined families once they were settled in countries of immigration, but by and large did not acculturate. First generation women were evidently keener to dispose with traditions that marked them out as foreigners, and this is a contrary image to the one often painted of immigrant mothers as lacking in modernity and out of step with change.⁵³

Within the home, immigrants had to accumulate household goods, but again there was a keenness to prove successful settlement through household consumerism and the display of luxuries.⁵⁴ In Glasgow household adornments and ready-made clothing could be purchased on an instalment basis via a group of entrepreneurs known as ‘credit drapers’. A good many of these small entrepreneurs were in fact Jewish. Therefore speedy acquisition of some home comforts was possible, and within the means of even quite poor families. The credit drapery business will be further explored in chapter five, but this arrangement could account for the small luxuries in terms of household dressing apparent in the Jewish homes visited for Lindsay’s study. The style of living enjoyed by a family was also dependant on female skills. Women had to balance the budget in such a way as to be able to afford credit.

Nevertheless, even the bare essentials of life were beyond the very limited means of many, and an accurate picture of conditions at the most impoverished end of the scale occasionally surfaces in oral sources. In the excerpt from Yeziarska’s semi-autobiographical novel, bedding and sleeping arrangements are prominent features. Likewise within oral testimony, the memory that most often hints at the overcrowding

⁵³ See for example, article in *The Jewish Echo* 23/05/1930 entitled ‘Jewish mothers’, which provides an early example of this view being expounded.

⁵⁴ See Heinze, A. ‘Jewish women and the making of an American home’ in Scanlon, J (ed.) *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York, 2000) pp.19-29.

at large also concerns sleeping arrangements. In both of the following examples, the families consisted of two parents plus seven children. In Mr Balkin's home:

The house I was born in was a room and kitchen that's all, outside toilet. And it had these bed insets you see, carved out of the wall and you used to get in there, that's where the beds were.⁵⁵

Likewise, in the one room apartment where Mrs Miller lived:

The house was one large room...and it had a so-called concealed bed, which was sort of in the wall, quite a big bed. And the rest of it – now that bed held four...the other bed was made up of chairs, not the most comfortable for sleeping in!⁵⁶

There is a plausible reason why sleeping arrangements loom so large in memory. As the following passage from Glasser makes clear, there was simply no escape from the detritus of bedding:

In most of the houses we knew every foot of space was taken up by beds, mattresses on the floor, a few bare wooden chairs, a battered kitchen table. One or even two of the younger children commonly shared the parental bed, usually a mattress on planks resting on trestles in a curtained alcove in the kitchen.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Oral testimony of Mr MB Born: 1913.

⁵⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs RB Born: 1920.

⁵⁷ Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, p.77.

Clearly varying levels of domestic comfort existed for families. Not all immigrants found a way to make ends meet beyond basic survival. Lindsay's *Report on Diet* provides fascinating glimpses of the interior of Jewish homes, but perhaps not fully representative ones. Yet some aspects of working class culture persisted for the clearly upwardly mobile households described in the report, the main communal living space continued to be in the kitchen for example. This arrangement was common for ethnic communities in line with the behaviour of the Scottish labouring class. However, fine social distinctions and a certain amount of genteel pretensions were practised even within working class communities. Mrs Miller's family were desperately poor, but pride of place on the kitchen bed recess was a feather quilt brought from the Ukraine to Scotland, which had a cover edged with lace.⁵⁸

Evelyn Cowan, who grew up in the Gorbals during the 1920s describes her home, where despite overcrowding, her mother's collection of aspidistras had pride of place:

The plants were all over the house...Most of Ma's plants were aspidistras in large brass bowls mounted on tall mahogany stands which she picked up at second-hand furniture sales...The only exception to the aspidistras was the solitary tomato-plant. It stood on a narrow ledge just inside the kitchen window. That plant and its hardy stubbornness resembled my mother's struggle for survival.⁵⁹

Jewish families such as Cowan's appear to have quickly acquired insight into what made a Scottish house a respectable home. Arrangements for living that included a

⁵⁸ Oral testimony of Mrs RB.Born: 1920.

⁵⁹ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, p.15.

parlour (even if it doubled as sleeping accommodation) reflected the social status of families; and aspidistras set in brass bowls are undoubtedly a potent symbol of a lifestyle which is not devoid of aspiration. How immigrants dressed their homes was to a large extent dictated by their spatial arrangement and by the available resources that families had. In one-roomed homes of course, living space encompassed all daily activities at once. Nevertheless such genteel acquisitions as brass pots and plant stands, crystal and antimacassars, suggest social ambition – a will to transcend immediate reality. Caring for decorative plants took time and energy and implies that the female inhabitants of such homes thought this investment worthwhile in lives that were otherwise filled with daily grind.

On the other hand, memories of immigrant women frequently recall the huge efforts made to eradicate dirt in tenement houses, which were barely fit for human habitation. Daily airing of bedding was necessary to keep makeshift sleeping arrangements free of bugs; and scrubbing down tenement walls to prevent infestation by cockroaches was a backbreaking and regular domestic chore.⁶⁰ For many Jewish women this reality did not significantly improve as they struggled to nurture the next generation. However, despite the potentially wide gulf in standards of living amongst Jews, the question of whether Jewish homes in the Gorbals were in fact *generally* of a better standard than those of the wider population is raised by studies such as Lindsay's. The relative sobriety of Jewish men, and the efforts made by many women in immigrant families to provide comfort that reflected their status as good housekeepers, and as successful settlers who conformed to local standards, is seemingly apparent in much of the available documentation, including oral evidence. Such evidence supports an impression of Jews as upwardly mobile, and this is important in considering the

⁶⁰ Eunson, *The Gorbals*, p.46.

motives of immigrant families when the community began moving out of the Gorbals. Equally however, rapid improvement in fortunes is refuted in other oral evidence. It is certainly the case that a fairly wide spectrum of housing types was available, even within the boundaries of the Gorbals tenements. Jews resided at different points on this scale. The example of the progressive moves made by the Balkin and Miller families suggests motivation for improvement. Yet similarly there were numbers of families who failed to progress economically and continued as the subjects of philanthropic anxiety.⁶¹ Up until the interwar period, Jewish families do not seem to have been any more or less diverse than the general population –some homes were more characterised by their verminous nature than by any genteel arrangement of pot plants. What is clear however, is that if domestic betterment occurred, Jewish women were closely involved in this as homemakers and workers who aimed to do more than just survive. Domesticity was allied to upward mobility and this had implications for gender relations in the Jewish home. Kaplan has surmised that ‘Women mediated class values and class practice.’⁶² As will be demonstrated in chapter five, this meant that women who had ambition to climb the social scale in Glasgow became ever more firmly identified as consumers and homemakers regardless of their economic contribution to the household.

Ralph Glasser has written in a very uncompromising way about his experience of being a poor Gorbals dweller and the impression he formed about the effect this had on women. Glasser states that ‘it was the women, more than the men, who carried the burden of life, in unceasing toil in the home and the Steamie, and in heartache for their families when money was more than usually short for food,

⁶¹See *The Jewish Echo* 19/09/1930 article outlining the extent of poverty relief needed amongst Glasgow Jewry.

⁶² Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, p.231.

fuel, clothing, blankets, medicine.’⁶³ He implies that women were victims of social conditions in the Gorbals, but other evidence of Jewish women’s struggles suggests that they were also often protagonists of progress. Women who were aware of local standards for respectability and who successfully managed their households along those lines, gave their families a head start in successful settlement in Glasgow. Mrs Miller related that her mother achieved a high level of respect from teachers within the local school, because she managed a clean uniform every day for her eldest daughter, despite the deplorable conditions in which the family lived.⁶⁴ Female ambition to be a good housekeeper was nothing new, it was an objective carried over from Eastern Europe.⁶⁵ Yet it cannot be overlooked that it found fertile ground in working class Scotland. However, the gender arrangement of Jewish homes left women not only with the housework, but also with a new role as cultural labourers.

Set alongside the extraordinary efforts made by women to provide comfort in impoverished circumstances, which matched local standards of respectability, was the specifically Jewish atmosphere of the home. Here the prevalence of what Kaplan has called ‘domestic Judaism’ is important in understanding the fabric of Jewish family life in Glasgow.⁶⁶ Interviewees who were the children or grandchildren of immigrants all report women’s adherence to a prescribed weekly ritual on the Sabbath, and even in hard times, of the efforts made by women to keep up such traditions. The female role in the Jewish household represented the intersection of religious affiliation, traditional cultural identity and a new Scottish/Jewish identity. Not all immigrants were

⁶³ Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, p.55.

⁶⁴ Oral testimony of MrsRB. Born: 1920.

⁶⁵ Heinze, *Jewish women and the making of an American home*,’ pp.20-22.

⁶⁶ Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, pp.69-84.

especially religious, but continuity of Jewish culture is not necessarily dependant on piety. As we have seen, some Jewish men soon preferred the gambling club to the Synagogue. Migration often presented people with the opportunity to slough off religion, nevertheless Jewish tradition survived. In this area, shifting gendered responsibilities are a key factor in explaining the development and endurance of the Jewish community in Glasgow. Within the communal life, men may have monopolised the public face of successful integration as sober and industrious citizens. But female responsibilities were even more influential in establishing a balance between integration to new Glaswegian norms, and loyalty to an older way of life.

Gender, religion and domestic ritual.

Domestic ritual commonly surfaces in oral testimony but its significance is little acknowledged. This section therefore examines Jewish women's domesticity in a Scottish context. Kaplan has pointed out, where Jews are concerned, 'the public and the private, [needed] each other.' Jewish identity was passed on not so much in terms of religious knowledge, but in the lived experience of Jews. Religious observance has a domestic focus in addition to formal synagogue attendance. But in order to keep kosher, women had to interact with public facilities.⁶⁷ Jewish authority controlled when and where kosher food could be sold, and Rabbis set the standards for what was, and was not ritually acceptable. In addition, kosher food was (and still is) more expensive than non-kosher ingredients; women who maintained a kosher home had the added pressure of balancing a family budget and meeting the expensive requirements of religious tradition. This must have created conflicts of conscience for many women between rules and regulations determined in the public world of religious diktat, and the private world of the domestic which they had primary responsibility for. The

⁶⁷ Kaplan, M. 'Redefining Judaism in Imperial Germany,' p.4.

cooperation of women in this area became ever more important for sustaining Jewish identity because the lived experience of Jews did have to change following migration. Home life increased in importance with regard to transmitting Jewish culture to the next generation. The latter grew up in an atmosphere at once far removed from the Eastern European *Shtetl*, but also intimately connected to it through their parents and grandparents' memories.

Within the Balkin household, Mrs Balkin had seven children and undertook arduous employment, but on a Friday night she observed the ritual of welcoming in the Sabbath with the lighting of candles and the preparation of traditional food. Mr. Taylor's mother did likewise and according to this interviewee there was near universal conformity with this religious obligation:

Aye, yes my mother was devout oh yes, oh she helped. She used to light the candles –they all were, not my mother alone, most of the Jewish women always observed the lighting of the candles ceremony...Aye kept all the dietary, the kosher laws. There was never any semblance - you never saw any signs of eating *treife*, as we call it –non-kosher. No that wasn't on – period.⁶⁸

In Evelyn Cowan's Gorbals home every Friday night the same ceremony took place:

...my mother lit her Shabbos candle. Then she fixed them into brass candlesticks, newly polished by my sisters. Then she stood them on an old brass tray and

⁶⁸ Oral testimony of Mr, JT. Born: 1903.

placed the tray on the centre of the kitchen table, which was covered by a fresh bleached-white cloth. [Then] my mother covered her head with a small lace handkerchief, as a mark of respect for the Sabbath candles. She spread out her work-worn hands to the puttering flames of the candles and, being unable to read either Hebrew or English, Ma said in her own brand of Yiddish: 'Thank you God'...⁶⁹

This very romantic autobiographical memory can, however, be corroborated in many more oral accounts. However, its mode of narration indicates the way that women's domestic Judaism has been sentimentalised, and the real significance of it downplayed. Mrs Green, who was the eldest daughter in a particularly impoverished family, also recalls her mother's efforts to keep up the weekly obligation to provide a '*Shabbos*' dinner. As a small child this interviewee would be sent from her home in the neighbouring district of Calton, to purchase a hen from a kosher butcher in the Gorbals, a weekly chore she thoroughly disliked.⁷⁰ However, preparation for this ritual meal was woman's work and the job of fetching the traditional meat dish in the form of a koshered chicken was frequently handed to daughters.⁷¹ From an early age, girls were encouraged to emulate their mother's role in the household. After the sale of possessions that inevitably preceded emigration, the few items that immigrants kept and transported were frequently domestic accoutrements. Immigrant women brought candlesticks and tablecloths from Eastern Europe among these.⁷² Such items were much treasured, both as reminders of home and of Jewish continuity, and like the lace

⁶⁹ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, p.145. Note also, 'Shabbos' is the Scottish transliteration of the Yiddish word for Sabbath.

⁷⁰ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born: 1905

⁷¹ Balarsky, L. 'Operation Shabbos Dinner' in Collins, K. and Borowski, E. (eds.) *Jewish Arts Anthology: Magazine of the Glasgow Festival of Jewish Culture* (Glasgow, 1990) p.19.

⁷² Several interviewees supplied this information and, or, showed me such items. The SJAC have also preserved some goods transported from Eastern Europe by immigrants.

trimmed quilt, they became luxuries that brightened the dreariness of a tenement kitchen. The Sabbath ritual and women's role in this carried heavy symbolic significance for Jewish continuity.

In addition, creating a religious atmosphere was very hard work and it is evident that mothers expected their daughters to be involved. The good Jewish housewife would make sure that the home was cleaned thoroughly as an act of reverence to welcome *Shabbos*. Whilst men folk retreated to synagogue, the home was transformed:

...during the week the house might be a chaotic place from which he was happy to retreat, but come the Sabbath and festivals, there was a transformation. Even a man who lived in a hovel –as most Jews once did – would return from the Synagogue to find a palace – the table laden, the rooms gleaming, his wife and daughters in their best clothes.⁷³

Just how this weekly miracle was maintained in a cramped Gorbals tenement where women laboured at their multiple tasks begs many questions. The ideal of a thoroughly clean home and a peaceful family gathering was achieved at a cost, if indeed it always was achieved. Religious observance came under strain following migration as the temptations of the Scottish urban environment became available. Behaviour that was not in accordance with respectable ideals impacted on some families in the Jewish community no less than others:

Yes. My father's uncle, my grandfather's brother he used to get his wages on a Friday night, and his wife

⁷³ Bermant, C. *The Walled Garden: The Saga of Jewish Life and Tradition* (New York, 1974) pp.141-2.

never saw him until Saturday. It was all men in the clubs gambling. You'd go on a Saturday morning, there would be no money, no wages. It was quite common.⁷⁴

Clearly in this particular household although the wife may have had overall responsibility for the household's well being, she had little control over how income was spent, thus illustrating how ideal gender arrangements need to be examined through the lens of hard realities. Just how common the problem of male gambling was amongst Glaswegian Jews is a persistent theme throughout evidence of social activities in this community, although this is not to suggest that such disreputable behaviour was a uniquely Jewish problem. Problem gambling could readily be found throughout working class society. Rather it is the case that differences between the activities of some Jews who became more at ease with life in Scotland, and more insular members of the group developed. Not all Jews were devout even at the point where they arrived in Scotland, and their behaviour could have more of a free rein in Glasgow. Moreover, generational divisions began to appear in behaviour. Certainly, the gap between the social behaviour of the immigrant generation, and their children who were more acclimatised to negotiating non-Jewish society, inevitably caused tensions within the home. Children who arrived in the UK at an early age, or were born in Glasgow often had different ways of coping with being part of a foreign element in society. They presented a set of problems with regard to the balance that needed to be struck between being a citizen of the Gorbals and a Yiddisher Jew, and the solution was a gendered one. For the most part this meant that attachment to

⁷⁴ SJAC. Transcript of interview with Anne (Born: 23/07/1908) and Philip Berman (Born: 21/01/1914). Interviewed by Dr. Ben Braber 19/01/1989.

Jewish culture more and more came to be seen as a private concern, and a female concern.⁷⁵

Working on the Sabbath and the pleasures available at weekends caused dilution of the set pattern of the Jewish week. In less religiously devout families, the adult children of immigrants went to the cinema, dancing, and to play cards on a Friday night. Mr Taylor admitted ‘Oh yes, oh yes, I wasn’t so religious as not to do that. Oh yes we all did that in our young days.’⁷⁶ This no doubt helped create a cultural schism between generations in the immigrant community, and increasingly strict weekly religious observance gave way to more periodical observance at the important religious festivals. Even first generation mothers sometimes eventually succumbed. This reminiscence records family visits to the cinema:

In the early twenties, it was common for the *Yiddishe* people to go to the pictures once a week, and as most of them lived in the Gorbals...they went to the best picture hall there, which, was of course the Palace. And which day do you think they chose? You’re right a Friday! ...after a hard weeks work the audience would settle back, munching to enjoy a torrid drama – that is most of them...In several parts of the hall figures could be seen leaning sideways, as children began to tell parents the story of the film. For in those days many parents spoke fairly good English, but could not read the words flashed onto the screen... “Tell me, tell me,” my mother would say...As the film unfolded I would be pulled from side to side. “He’s telling his wife he doesn’t love her any more, and he is going to leave her.” “Vot” my mother snorted...

⁷⁵ Kaplan, M. ‘Redefining Judaism’ p.5.

⁷⁶ Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born: 1903.

“vot d’you mean, he doesn’t love her any more! Vot’s wrong mit his wife?”⁷⁷

It is clear however, that more freedom to escape tradition was allowed of boys. Like their Scottish contemporaries, in Jewish homes domestic work was a female responsibility.⁷⁸ Regardless of varying levels of piety, women kept up weekly ceremonials in the home as part of their domestic and religious duties. However, the Friday night feast also began to take on more secular functions. The carefully prepared family dinner was a means of reward for the labours of the working week. Immigrant women made adjustments to this tradition in order to accommodate change brought about by greater acculturation. Women part-exchanged a female religious duty, for what may be termed as the cultural labour of the immigrant Jewish home. Greater investment in household comforts was also increasingly matched by more lavish material attention to the remnants of Jewish ritual. Families who could afford to buy foodstuffs that created a holiday atmosphere on a weekly basis could rejoice in the bounties of their efforts. This proved some compensation for the rigours that emigration had created. A laden table, a scrupulously clean home, and the attendance of guests of course made more work for women. Thus the domestic role of women increased in tandem with the success of immigrants. Economic improvement, far from making an altogether easier life for women, seemed rather to increase the likelihood of more domestic toil. However, women themselves may have taken comfort from the fact that life was improving; they may have had to work hard but the rewards of life and labour were more immediately tangible compared to the hard life experienced in

⁷⁷ ‘Tell Me, Tell Me a reminiscence by Morris Slater’ in Collins, K. and Borowski, E. *Jewish Arts Anthology* p.20.

⁷⁸ See Jamison, L. ‘Limited resources and limiting conventions: working-class mothers and daughters in urban Scotland c.1890-1925’ in Lewis, J. (ed.) *Labour and Love: Women’s Experiences of Home and Family 1850-1940* (Oxford, 1986) pp.49-69.

Eastern Europe. The religious calendar that Jews adhered to had been of immense importance in maintaining Jewish separateness from the wider culture for centuries in multiple places of settlement. The need to preserve Jewish tradition, yet prevent any overt display of this had necessarily encouraged retreat into the privacy of the home. However the role performed by the home intensified after emigration from Eastern Europe, because formal religious piety decreased for many men.

The working life of men interfered with their traditional religious life, but as we have seen, some immigrant women engaged in business too. However, in the Scottish Jewish gender arrangement, the labour of the home still had to be managed in keeping with local standards of housewifery, and according to Jewish traditions. Here a communal safety net was often employed to assist with this. Women used facilities such as the public laundries, much in the way that local housewives did. They cleaned their tenement 'closes', and made sure that children were turned out respectably for school. However, the cultural labour of the home, which involved the preparation of food in the traditional way, and the prohibition of labour during the Sabbath, depended on inter-communal co-operation and sometimes services from the non-Jewish world. The latter often looked upon these with amusement. Nevertheless the Jewish proscription upon lighting fire during the Sabbath often provided casual earnings for non-Jews. The employment of a '*Shabbos Goy*' usually a neighbour, who entered the Jewish home to light the coal fire and, cooking apparatuses was usual even in quite poor Jewish dwellings. Occasionally this was done as an act of neighbourliness, but more often involved a financial transaction.⁷⁹ Elderly widows or young women commonly performed the role of *Shabbos Goy* and this practice might be replicated in

⁷⁹ This practice is mentioned in numerous works, both fictional and autobiographical as well as newspaper articles, and was common in all places of Jewish settlement.

several tenement homes thus supplying a regular weekly income. Whether or not the practice increased contact between the Jewish community and non-Jewish neighbours is entirely debatable. Inevitably there were some who looked upon the religious fervour of Jews with approval, but just as many who took this money while being perplexed or disapproving of the habits of such foreigners.

Other aspects of tradition were managed within the community. Jewish women used communal facilities in bake houses to prepare bread for the Sabbath; this practice often allowed women the opportunity to get together and ‘chat easily in the native tongue’ while children played at their feet.⁸⁰ A small charge was made for using the bakery when its normal business was over for the week, but some other services were provided free. The traditional stew known as *Cholent* for example required slow cooking. In order to prepare this, women transported their earthenware pots to the ovens of the local bakery where the retained heat of these facilities stewed the dish overnight in readiness for dinner on Saturdays. *Cholent*, which is variously composed of meat, fat, root vegetables and beans could be prepared in well in advance of the Sabbath by women and was often transported to and from the bake house by children. The preparation of food by busy women who had multiple responsibilities is reflected in the repertoire of Jewish foodways. Soups and stews, which were nutritious, relatively cheap, and could be made in large batches and prepared in advance of other work commitments, were regular features of mealtimes. Indeed traditional food was another way in which the life of Eastern Europe could be carried over to places of settlement, and it is to analysis of this that we now turn.

⁸⁰ See *The Jewish Echo* 29/09/1989 article entitled ‘Callendar’s Bakery’ by Lily Balarsky p.44.

Keeping Kosher.

This section touches briefly on some of the cultural implications of foodways and the gendering of domestic responsibilities in respect of these. At an experiential level, women made accommodations with the food available in Scotland. Many of the Jewish foodways adopted in Eastern Europe actually utilise local Slavic recipes, or were adapted from these to conform to kosher rules. For example, well known items such as *sauerkraut* or pickled cabbage, as well as pickled cucumbers, are indigenous to Eastern European cuisine as well as Jewish. In Scotland, traditional recipes were also adapted according to the availability of ingredients and in accordance with the local tastes that immigrants adopted. For example, traditional dishes like *gefilte fish* were made substituting locally available fish such as haddock, instead of the fresh water varieties that would have been used in Russia. There are many variations on this traditional recipe but basically it consists of minced fish, vegetables and seasonings shaped into balls; generally these are served as a first course within a meal. Moreover in Eastern Europe *gefilte fish* that would have been prepared by being poached began to be fried in accordance with the indigenous Scottish taste for fried food.⁸¹ Tradition was subject to adaptation, and removal to cities in the advanced industrialised world gave a new set of meanings to Jewish food and its interaction with Jewish social life. In Eastern Europe, *gefilte fish*, as one notable illustration of Jewish cuisine, was a celebratory dish served at weddings and similar functions, but in Scotland the availability of cheap cuts of fish made it possible to serve this delicacy at ordinary Sabbath dinners. Traditional food was a way of preserving group identity, which although consumed as part of the religious week, had a more powerful secular meaning. The regular consumption of food that had previously been reserved for holidays was one of the ways in which successful settlement could be celebrated,

⁸¹ Storrier, S. 'Jewish cuisine in Edinburgh,' *Scottish Studies*, 31 (1992-3) p.25.

without surrender of ethnic allegiance.⁸² Mrs Simon, who married a highly assimilated and non-religious partner, described her late husband as a 'culinary Jew!'⁸³ This example illustrates the huge importance attached to foodways which intensified following migration. Women had responsibility for buying, preparing, cooking and serving such food. The amount of work involved in this was monumental and also carried weighty symbolism. Increasingly acculturated and non-religious Jews consumed Jewish food as a way of reaffirming their ethnic identity.

Despite modifications in terms of ingredients and methods, many laws surrounding food for Jews are not flexible and must have been difficult to maintain in Glasgow.⁸⁴ *The Report on Diet* comments on the expense and time-consuming aspects of Jewish domestic cooking. In the five households examined by Lindsay, the energy value of Jewish food, and the efforts gone to in order to adhere to traditional foodstuffs are criticised as uneconomical.⁸⁵ These criticisms make sense in terms of Scottish middle class prescriptions for how the labouring classes could improve their health and welfare even on a low budget.⁸⁶ But of course such condescending commentary did not take in to account working class customs for the place of food in making life more bearable; or, in the case of Jews, the symbolic attachment to food which was crucial at this time. Lindsay comments on the apparent lack of understanding that Jewish women had for dietary economics by stating that in one less well off household the family of two adults and ten children 'sat down contentedly to a dinner of which half a chicken

⁸² Diner, H. *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (London, 2001) pp.179-219.

⁸³ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914.

⁸⁴ *Kashrut* would require lengthy explanation, these laws are elaborated in numerous publications, but a useful summary can be found in Storrier, *Jewish Cuisine*, p.21-22.

⁸⁵ Lindsay, *Report on Diet*, p.24.

⁸⁶ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, pp.128-129.

was the chief item.’⁸⁷ As chicken also formed the basis for another Jewish staple – chicken soup – this purchase was likely more economical than Lindsay appreciated. This small amount of meat probably did stretch this family’s budget, but chicken was the traditional Sabbath meal and severing this custom would have been even more costly to Jews than the sacrifices made in order to afford it.

Nevertheless, the temptation to sidestep religious rules and tradition was ever present. The Jewish press contains a mass of information on the anxiety that a lessening attachment to *Kashrut* [religious laws relating to diet] caused the more religious elements of Glaswegian Jewry. The very devout maintained rigorous dietary standards at great cost. However, beyond the first generation, and to some extent within it, a slackening off of such strictness developed. What seems to have happened is that immigrants developed dual standards with regard to *Kashrut*. Within the home standards of preparation and the food consumed conformed to kosher rules, but outside of the home less strict adherence prevailed. Mrs Green related with much amusement in interview that she and her friends would share penny ‘pokes of chips’ purchased from local food outlets, but had to be careful to avoid her mother finding out about this.⁸⁸ Fish and chip shops mostly run by Italian immigrants provided a staple of working class diets. So Jewish children were conforming to local Glaswegian patterns of behaviour outside of the home, but such food could not be consumed within the home. Food fried in lard was far from kosher! This standard of food consumption served to intensify the home as the last bastion of Jewish tradition and again, created high domestic ideals which chiefly impacted on women. Increasingly the home came

⁸⁷ Lindsay *Report on Diet*, p.24.

⁸⁸ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born: 1905.

to embody tradition and thus what remained of religious scruples, whereas the public world easily encompassed all that was profane.

Keeping a kosher home was one of the most significant measures of a Jewish mother's worth. Interviewees unanimously attest to the rigour applied by mothers in keeping strictly kosher, this was a domestic standard that women evidently felt duty-bound to try and adhere to. There is no available evidence that immigrant women overtly resented this imposition, although equally there is no compelling reason to believe that they *always* meekly complied. Mrs Green's mother certainly seems to have turned a blind eye to the activities of her children outside of the home. Moreover, Lindsay's Report comments on one Jewish housewife who preferred cleaning to cooking, and accordingly standards of economy suffered!⁸⁹ As compared with the problems Jewish women had encountered in respect of food in Eastern Europe, it may have seemed churlish to complain about this extra burden. Hunger and starvation constantly stalked Jews in Russia and the comparative plenty which increasingly became available in Glasgow as immigrant families settled, probably made women's efforts with cooking seem like a small price to pay. However, daughters who were encouraged to mimic their mother's time consuming domestic rituals could, and did, often resent this obligation:

Yes she made her own butter, because she said the butter she bought wasn't kosher and she wouldn't eat anything that she thought wasn't kosher. She was very, very orthodox. In fact sometimes it was a pain in the neck.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Lindsay, *Report on Diet*, p.24.

⁹⁰ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

Skills involved in transferring Eastern European recipes and maintaining a kosher home were highly prized because they came to symbolise continuity in the face of increasing acculturation within the next generation. This aspect of immigrant life was a gendered and ethnic concern. Food was now not only a transmitter of religious identity through *Kashrut*, but also of cultural identity.⁹¹ The presence of Jewish shops in the Gorbals that supplied traditional foodstuffs, facilitated this important contribution to ethnic continuity, and daughters were encouraged to keep up these religious and cultural traditions. The Glasgow Jewish playwright, C.P. Taylor, has depicted the gender antagonisms, which could result from the indoctrination of immigrant daughters with regard to kosher rules. Taylor was known to have rejected the confining traditions of being Jewish in Glasgow, and often expressed this in his work. Here female attachment to ritual provokes frustration in a male character:

And the bloody dishes and pots and pans you have. I mean... You've got four sets of dishes...and crockery and everything.⁹²

Taylor implies that women were less questioning of tradition than men. Certainly, attention to tradition was intensified in the home at the same time as religious rigour waned outside of it. Men might spend less time in the Synagogue and more time earning, or in typically male social pursuits such as gambling; but female attention to the domestic celebration of Jewish life increased. The burden that this placed on women simply had to be incorporated into their busy working lives. To do otherwise would have been to question ethnic allegiance, and reject traditional standards of orthodoxy. However it is certain that the latter also evolved in the context of Glasgow.

⁹¹ Storrier, 'Jewish cuisine in Edinburgh,' p.24.

⁹² Taylor, C. P. from the play *Me*, quoted in Taylor, A. 'Breaking free from 'a Scottish Shtetl': the life, times and Jewishness of C. P. Taylor,' *Immigrants and Minorities*, 21:1/2 (2002) p.165.

As men embraced the role of breadwinner, a woman's place became ever more firmly domestic. Immigrant women who dared to sidestep their traditional domestic roles were not only viewed as turning their backs on the traditions that sustained Jewish identity, they were also usurping their allotted gender roles as good wives. For the daughters of immigrants, such ideals for domestic life created a necessary burden of loyalty for some, but a crisis of conscience for others. The generational gap between a mother's experiences and her daughter's was coped with in varying ways. Women were probably no less questioning than men with regard to Jewish tradition; after all, young women went to school and were exposed to the non-Jewish world. However, it was undoubtedly more difficult for women to assert their doubts about the confines of the Jewish domestic world because they were influenced by dual gender and ethnic hegemonies. These were made up of Scottish prescriptions for female domesticity and from the pull of Jewish tradition.

The significance of women's cultural labour.

This section looks at some of the difficulties of greater integration for women. In Eastern Europe the management of the home, and of religious observance within the home was a female concern, but as we have seen, attention to this increased following migration. Problems associated with assimilation amongst young women in the second generation had long been recognised in the more established Jewish community in London. As early as 1891, London Jews felt that 'the ennobling effects of Jewish home-life' were not enough to encourage young women to 'Jewish feeling.'⁹³ In this same year religious services aimed specifically at the daughters of immigrants were begun. However, this move to institutionalise religion for women in immigrant families was contested. Correspondence to the *Jewish Chronicle* by one female reader

⁹³ *The Jewish Chronicle* 30/01/1891 p.11. The subject of the education of Jewish girls provoked much editorial comment as well as lengthy correspondence in the early part of 1891.

condemns the move to provide religious services and asserts 'example is better than precept...old-fashioned (not modern) orthodox homes are the main points for our girls...then may our Sabbaths be a delight and our table prepared, and all may eat and rejoice.'⁹⁴ Amongst the middle class readership of the *Chronicle*, the place of food preparation in ensuring continuity is clearly recognised. At the turn of the century in Glasgow, this message was no less potent. Working class Jewish women did not question the marginal place of women in formal religious attendance at Synagogue. Their place as devout Jews was in the experience of the home. And following migration, immigrant women were given an important responsibility for handing down this aspect of gendered knowledge and lived experience to children.

It is possible to interpret all of this evidence as being tantamount to oppression for Jewish women. Certainly the views and interventions of the Jewish establishment were often heavy-handed. Within this group, immigrant women were seen as being ill educated, superstitious, and likely poor communicators of the westernised lifestyle that the next generation needed to aspire to in order to become good British Jews.⁹⁵

Immigrant women had to tread a tricky middle path between acculturation to local values, and loyalty to the ways of tradition. Migration did not seem to present women with more freedom from domesticity in this respect, rather it seems to have increased both the weight of tradition and the often-competing need for local conformity.

Nevertheless, the possibility that all of the upheaval and heartbreak caused by emigration could have been for nothing must also have been a motivating factor for the toil involved. Success in settling in Glasgow was to a great extent measured by female efforts at creating a home for the family and securing Jewish continuity. This may

⁹⁴ *The Jewish Chronicle* 09/01/1891 p.13.

⁹⁵ Livshin, R. 'The acculturation of the children of immigrant Jews' in Cesarani, *Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, pp. 88-90.

have impacted on some women as oppressive, but on many others as motivating factors for their continued hardworking compliance. Loyalty to the old ways was a tangible link with the past and may have been a manifestation of personal homesickness, as well as a collective expression of nostalgia. Nevertheless, the place of gender in informing ethnic continuity is a known phenomenon in other ethnic groups. In a study of the Italian community in Britain, Medaglia has noted 'the ways in which gender and ethnic processes inform each other.'⁹⁶ The socialisation of children within the home is seen as an important part of such ethnic processes, as is the preservation of religious and cultural customs. These processes are generally assigned to women.

Successful integration in the Gorbals meant being as inconspicuous possible. By conforming to local standards of housewifery, and ensuring that children were respectably turned out for school, Jewish women achieved this. Within the privacy of the home, it is possible that women clung to some aspects of ritual that became burdensome and annoying for their children, more as an act of resistance, than of dutiful conformity. In the struggle to find a place in receiving societies, it is perfectly plausible that *some* Jewish women experienced greater power and status by aligning themselves with the domestic sphere. Contemporary Scottish society certainly applauded this, and the influence of tradition also demanded it.

Examination of domestic life cannot be tackled without recourse to issues of gender differences. The immigrant woman who arrived in Glasgow was often schooled in a system of household economy, which was dependant on a seemingly pre-industrial

⁹⁶ Medaglia, A. *Patriarchal Structures and Ethnicity in the Italian Community In Britain*, (Aldershot, 2001) pp.71-72.

model of collective endeavour where the home was central, and female labour an intrinsic part of family survival. Both Scottish society and the immigrants who arrived here identified the home as a female gendered space. In Scotland, the domestic labour of women had no overt monetary value, the meaning of women's work in the home rested to a large extent upon their role in supplying comfort for the male breadwinner and to children. If married women also took on paid employment, then this was seen as interfering with this ideal. Yet as will be seen, initially, the domestic labour of immigrant women was not underpinned by such a clear-cut ideology, since it was more acceptable for them to be both domestic managers and paid workers. Eastern European women were no less responsible for the usual domestic duties of wives and mothers, but their role in the home was often also extended due to the nature of Jewish employment patterns. Moreover, women coped with much of the burden of tradition in the form of cultural labour in the home. Jewish identity to a large extent became focussed on the female domestic role, creating a post-migration community whose continuity was a gendered project, dependant on women embracing the part of 'guardian of tradition', in respect of food and domestic rituals. Yet female compliance with this was an ambiguous project, part rebellion towards the new community and its foreign values, and at the same time a necessary step on the way towards achieving integration without the loss of cultural distinctiveness. Within the Jewish community in the Gorbals, women responded to the responsibilities allotted them by becoming a self-imagined community of Yiddisher housewives. This description of course serves to disguise the economic value of women's work, and its contribution within the process of integration.

The traditional gender arrangement of Jewish homes was reinforced in Scotland.

Young girls undertook responsibility for food preparation as part of the domestic

training needed by them for their place in society as wives and mothers. In his memoir of childhood spent in Latvia, Chaim Bermant wrote:

In religious households men and women lived in different worlds. They had a different upbringing, a different education, and were prepared for different responsibilities...By the time a girl was 15 or 16, she was thought of as *kaleh-meid* – bridal material – and if she was still single at 20, she was spoken of as an *alte-meid* –an old maid...⁹⁷

Oral testimony confirms that domestic work continued as the responsibility of women in Jewish households, but of course in Glasgow, Jewish girls did have access to secular education that would often have been denied them in Russia. Yet domestic work was women's work in Scotland no less. Here symbiosis occurred between the gender arrangements of two cultures, with this one important exception. Young Jewish girls now at least knew about the possible horizons available to women before marriage. Basic literacy and insight into Scottish culture reached working class Jewish girls. For young Scottish women, marriage and motherhood were the ultimate destinies they would pursue, but the period between leaving school and getting married had many more attractions than domestic enslavement. Jewish mothers did have to make some accommodation with these new circumstances and devise a path for their daughters to follow, which saw to their potential as wives and allowed for the changed circumstances in which families found themselves. This proved difficult for some, but in the contemporary climate of Scotland the domestic destiny of young women was little questioned in working class communities. New opportunities in leisure and work were available to young women, which will be further explored in chapters five and six. However, the role of mothers, and the gender arrangements of the Jewish home

⁹⁷ Bermant, *Genesis*, pp.55-56.

became important in this area for steering the journey towards greater integration in the right direction.

Chapter 5: Gender, family and work.

This chapter will look at further aspects of women's work, and the place of female labour in the process of settlement in Glasgow. Analysis in chapter four concentrated on the influence of immigrant women as household managers. Mothers and daughters were responsible for unpaid domestic labour; however occupations that seemed to fall into a gap between waged work and an extended domestic role were also within the experience of immigrant women. Taking in lodgers is one such example. Some women also took on other types of paid employment, which could be conducted at home. In this context, the garment making trade is particularly important. However, immigrant work patterns changed over time and this had implications for the expectations of women in the second and third generations of immigrants. This chapter will examine different types of home-based employment for women before moving on to employment outside of the home. In addition, as greater integration developed, some of the changes in women's work that took place will be touched on. However, analysis begins with a general examination of the way some Jewish household economies operated, using evidence extracted from one woman's oral testimony.

The immigrant family economy.

*Hurlin' the barra, goin' fur the barra, takin' the barra back.
Seein' if you'd the two shillins it was, I think it was,
tae pay fur the hire o' it.
Hard goin', hard goin'.¹*

The above extract is from the oral testimony of Mrs Green, who unlike most of the interviewees involved in this study was not a resident of the Gorbals. She is describing in an evocative, and even poetic way, the hard work involved for her family who were market traders. They lived in the Calton district, which is adjacent to the greater Gorbals area on the north side of the Clyde [see Map C]. Calton was every bit as poor as the Gorbals and according to Mrs Green, a small Jewish community lived there throughout her childhood. This family left Russia and came to Glasgow after a brief period of settlement in Manchester. Mrs Green was born in Calton in 1905.

Like the Gorbals, Calton provided low cost housing, and was within walking distance of facilities in the Jewish Gorbals. In the early twentieth century, Calton's one big advantage was its proximity to street trading on Glasgow's Broomielaw, the road which ran alongside the river Clyde [see Map C]. This evolved, and during the early 1920s relocated directly into the Calton area where it became a full-scale marketplace known locally as the 'Barras'.² This market's name is a colloquial corruption of the official name of Barrowlands, in reference to the hired barrows that traders sold from. Interestingly, the Barras was the brainchild of a female entrepreneur by the name of Maggie McIvor. The Barras have become part of Glasgow's recent folk history, and although Jewish involvement in market trading was commoner in England than in Scotland, as Mrs Green's family demonstrate, some Jews adapted to this part of the

¹ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born: 1905.

² Gaskin, M. 'Commerce' in *The Third Statistical Account*, p.366.

local economy.³ In the early decades of settlement, employment strategies that involved the whole family were not uncommon for immigrants. Market trading was one such strategy. For many Jews in the period following migration, the notions of work and home were hardly separable, and this was certainly true for married women in such families. The connections that existed between domestic and workplace environments in Glasgow reveal the gendered, as well as the ethnic dynamics of immigrant employment patterns.

Mrs Green's family found making a living very hard in the years following the First World War, and within her testimony it is clear that they suffered significant poverty. Of all the volunteers interviewed for this study, Mrs Green probably had the most impoverished upbringing and experienced the least upward social mobility. She recalls that her mother's domestic labour was part of their collective enterprise in market trading, 'Aye oh aye, she'd tae help out. Watch the barra [market stall] or make a pot a' soup and bring it down.'⁴ Within this immigrant household, all members old enough to make some kind of contribution were involved in a family economy based on selling second-hand and homemade goods. The success of this was tenuous, and every member's effort essential. Although the locus of the family's earnings was at the market stall run by the male head, the patchwork quilts which Mrs Green's mother made for sale, and the food cooked at home and then transported to the market for family consumption, were just as important in ensuring survival:

³ See Burman, 'Jewish women and the household economy in Manchester,' p.60.

⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs AG.

She just made up patchwork mats. That was how we started
up here was patchwork mats, we used tae go tae the mills
an' get the samples –for nothing.⁵

The home environment had a central place in this particular family's income. This was a form of work that straddled old-world methods of collective subsistence and also made use of opportunities at large in the new Glasgow environment. The family bought, and then sold, second hand furnishings from the barra: 'the boys sold the furniture, brass, brassware –old-fashioned stuff.'⁶ In the industrial setting of Glasgow The Barras was a marketplace that provided goods for the urban working classes to buy at prices that could be negotiated. No doubt there were many more non-Jewish traders who lived similarly. However, the flexibility of this type of employment meant that it presented an opportunity for Jewish families like Mrs Green's to earn a living without having to compete openly for available jobs. Mrs Green said of her parents, '[they] widnae get a job anywhere ...because they had tae huv identity books ...They were foreigners.'⁷

Commercial skills in buying and selling provided a living for many Jews whose employment prospects were limited. Occupations such as selling from a stall or peddling required little capital outlay. In the period following the enactment of the Aliens Act in 1905 and throughout the First World War, it became important for working class foreigners to be viewed as unthreatening. Work that was organised as self-employment and controlled from home, performed the function of keeping the profile of immigrants out of the xenophobic limelight. Having said this, anti-Semitic sentiment held that Jews were naturally inclined to acquisitiveness, which gave them

⁵Oral testimony of Mrs AG.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

unfair advantages in this area and led to their becoming wealthy by disreputable means.⁸ The example of the Green family who scraped a bare living easily contradicts such prejudice.

Considerable ingenuity and hard work was required to make this kind of enterprise barely pay. The type of Jewish home where the Green family resided was typically not a retreat from the cares of work, but was in fact a site of labour. Goods were made at home, unsold stock was stored there, and Mrs Green vividly recalls that a ‘bad buy’, which lingered around unsold, could create financial problems.⁹ Mrs Green’s brother would beg discarded fabric samples from local textile works; these were made up into patchwork quilts by the skilled hand of his mother, and then sold by whichever family member had a turn at the barra.¹⁰ These facts created a different dynamic in the relationship between female endeavours and the home. Homes that were also sweatshops will shortly be explored, but even those that did not perform this function of doubling as workplaces, were sometimes adjuncts to work conducted outside of the home. Immigrant women cooked, cleaned and cared for children, but they also often had wider domestic roles, which made an essential contribution to economic survival. Thus many Jewish strategies for earning a living ensured that the work and home divide were not clear-cut.

A further pertinent example concerns the wives of self-employed artisans or merchants who were variously unpaid assistants or, as will be explored later in this chapter, pivotal to the image of the business. When Chaim Bermant’s fictional hero – Nahum Rabinovitz – first arrives in Glasgow, he lodges with a Gorbals chicken merchant:

⁸ Williams, ‘The anti-Semitism of tolerance’ p.80.

⁹ Oral testimony of Mrs AG.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Moshe Moss – or Moss Moss, as he was known locally – “merchant of Glasgow,” was in fact a chicken dealer, who bought chickens, sold chickens, talked chickens smelt of chickens ...His wife, a shrill scold of a woman who felt a little hard done by the world - as indeed she was - berated everyone in sight, her husband, her daughter, her guests and failing everything else, *her* chickens. [My italics] ¹¹

In households like this, the wife had a hand in the business, and women had the care of lodgers in addition. This fictional portrayal effortlessly incorporates the otherwise hidden work of women.¹² Household income could be boosted by the presence of lodgers; women cooked, cleaned and provided laundry services for the latter as well as attending to the needs of their own families. In addition, women played a part in family businesses by serving customers or administering stock. Such strategies were not unknown to working class Glaswegians generally. The prevailing gender order meant that however vital, women’s work was considered subsidiary in family run businesses.¹³ However, the low profile of women’s work had added impetus for Jews who were constantly aware of outside scrutiny. Petty trading and work done in a domestic setting that capitalised on women’s skills were common ways of making a living for immigrant families. As will be seen, retail outlets also absorbed the labour of wives and daughters. However, the single most prevalent occupation amongst Glaswegian Jews was garment making.¹⁴ Female labour was an integral part of this trade, but one that has had low visibility with regard to Jewish women.

¹¹ Bermant, *The Patriarch*, p.11.

¹² Although there is no suggestion that Bermant based his characters on living members of the community, a real life Jewish poultry merchant can be identified doing business and living in Hospital Street in the Gorbals at around the time setting for Bermant’s fiction. See *Glasgow Post Office Directory* 1900-1901, p.1242.

¹³ Roberts, E. *Women’s Work, 1840-1940*, (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, Table 3, p.222.

Traditions of work.

In the existing literature about Jewish life in Eastern Europe much is made about the central economic role of women in traditional households and the freedom that they had in the public arena of work.¹⁵ The ideal arrangement for such households allowed the man to study religious texts and pray, whilst women attended to material concerns. The highest status was accorded to families where men could afford to spend all of their time in study. This privileged position might well be financed by the labour of women. In this scheme of things, female breadwinners were the norm rather than the exception, as existed in ideal family arrangements for much of the non-Jewish world. For Jews 'Learned people were more important than rich people and a girl would be happy to marry a boy that does nothing –that sits and studies.'¹⁶ However, this did not mean that domestic responsibilities were any less gendered. Jewish women were still fundamentally placed in a domestic role and appear to have perceived themselves as being responsible for the home regardless of their earning capabilities. Weinberg has summarised the position of such Jewish women as follows:

All women performed the traditional female roles of keeping a family together – caring for children, cleaning, sewing, and seeing to the religious atmosphere of the home. But in addition, a Jewish wife often contributed to the family's living by working outside the home if her husband was a scholar or made little money at his trade...To some extent this differentiated them

¹⁵ The classic text which describes life in the *Shtetl* and which almost always makes an appearance in the context of describing gender roles there is: Zborowski, M. & Hertzog, E. *Life is with People: The Jewish Little Town of Eastern Europe*. (1952). Essentially this romanticised analysis has created a long legacy of misinterpretation. See also: Weinberg, *The World of Our Mothers*, pp.2-20.

¹⁶ Quoted in Glen, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.10. Testimony extracted from interview conducted by the author in 1981.

from most European women at this time, who had little secular life outside their families.¹⁷

In the insular world of the *Shtetl* the world was divided into the religious and the secular. In the privileged realm of religion women were placed at best on the margins, they were excluded from religious study and segregated in the synagogue. A woman's place was mainly in the secular world of work and home. Women gained status by being good providers, even to the extent of supporting a husband. However, material life was, to a large extent, deemed less important than spiritual concerns for Eastern European Jews, so women were inferior in status to men regardless of their abilities as earners. In both Scottish and Eastern European societies women, and the duties of womankind were deemed in all senses subordinate to male concerns. Even so, a huge discrepancy clearly exists between the ideal gender arrangement of the Scottish family, where a male breadwinner supported the family and was head of the household, and the stated ideal for the traditional Jewish family wherein women were sole, or major contributors of income.

Yet this picture of the Eastern European household requires some qualification. In this context 'tradition' is a slippery term, because ideal arrangements for family life were also subject to change. By the end of the nineteenth century Jews were buffeted by economic shifts and traditional practices had to change in response to these. Indeed, it is clearly the case that emigration was the most disruptive reaction to such shifts, and its ramifications caused a definite threat to traditional family behaviour. Even in the most traditional Russian *Shtetl*, only a minority of men could aspire to spend all of their time in religious scholarship, and these formed an elite strand of society; perhaps

¹⁷ Weinberg, *The World of Our Mothers*, p.19.

in an analogous way to the manner in which the skilled male artisan formed an elite section within working class Scotland, and set an idealised standard for overall standards of working class respectability. The status of labouring families in Scotland might have been measured on how well the male breadwinner was able to provide for his family, including a wife who had no need to engage in paid work, but this was an unrealised ideal for many urban families. Equally the scholar husband of the Jewish *Shtetl* supported by a working wife was a similar type of ideal. Such families certainly existed, but could not really be described as typical.¹⁸

In urban Scotland by 1880, the economic behaviour of working class women was influenced by ideals of female domesticity. This paradigm was dependant on married women being supported by the income of a male breadwinner, whose earnings constituted a 'family wage'.¹⁹ However in addition to this ideal, women's work was also surrounded by a set of rules internal to specific communities, and highly differentiated according to economic circumstances. It is difficult therefore to speak of a general pattern for Scottish female labour. The ideal of domesticity affected some women more than others, and it is now generally accepted that regardless of the power which this ideology had, many working class women engaged in paid work in addition to their central domestic roles.²⁰ Historians of women's work in urban Scotland have clearly established that married women were economically active despite the prevailing and powerful ideology of female domesticity.²¹ And it was certainly usual for young women to work up until marriage and contribute to the household economy.

¹⁸ Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, p. 67.

¹⁹ Simonton, D. *A History of European Women's Work 1700 to the Present* (London, 1998) pp.170-175.

²⁰ Gordon, E. 'Women's spheres' in Fraser and Morris (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland*, pp.206-235.

²¹ See Gordon, E. *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991) pp.16-54; Albert, A. 'Fit work for women: sweated home-workers in Glasgow, c. 1875-1914' in Gordon and Breitenbach (eds.) *The World is Ill-Divided* (Edinburgh, 1990) pp.159-177.

Working class families in the Gorbals commonly struggled for survival within a poverty trap of irregular, and poorly remunerated employment. The dependence of the Glasgow economy on manufacturing and overseas trade made for a volatile employment market.²² In circumstances where male employment was uncertain, many married women bowed to economic pressure and took work regardless of views about a married woman's place.

Women's work generally had low status attached to it and was poorly paid. However, it had the advantage of being a source of cheap labour to employers when market competition was biting. Certain types of waged work had a more constant character – the traditional female skills of cleaning and cooking were always in demand, although remuneration for these might also fluctuate depending on the state of the local economy. Working class women contributed to the family economy after marriage as a matter of course, because their paid labour did have an important place in the larger economy in cities such as Glasgow, and it was often the means by which families avoided destitution.²³

Nevertheless, the moral climate of the time dictated that the ideal, respectable household contained a male breadwinner.²⁴ In this arrangement older unmarried children of either sex would be expected to contribute to the household income, although this did not preclude daughters assisting with domestic tasks in the home.²⁵

Married women, most especially mothers, who were forced by circumstance into paid

²² Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People* pp.109-118; Treble, J. 'The Characteristics of the female labour market and the formation of the female casual labour market in Glasgow 1891-1914,' *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 6 (1986) pp.37-38.

²³ Abrams, L. *The Making of Modern Woman: Europe 1789-1914* (Harlow, 2002) pp.188-191.

²⁴ Honeyman, K. *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870*, (Basingstoke, 2000) pp.95-114; Rose, S. *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England*, (London, 1992) pp.148-152; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, p.175.

²⁵ Jamieson, 'Limited resources and limiting conventions,' pp.49-69.

employment, were viewed with ambivalence by contemporary society. On the one hand their engagement in work was seen as an aberration in the natural order, and likely to lead to poor standards of childcare, a lack of necessary domestic regulation, and the general disintegration of family morality. On the other hand, there was tacit acknowledgment that without the income of these women, scores of families would be plunged into absolute poverty and become a burden on charity.²⁶

Working class women internalised this ambivalence.²⁷ The harsh reality of many women's lives was that working for money was a necessity, but maintaining family respectability was an equally powerful motivating factor, which influenced the behaviour of both male and female workers, even in localities such as the Gorbals.²⁸ The prevailing gender hierarchy influenced the code of conduct for respectability. Regardless of whether a man was unemployed he was still titular head of the family. Long term unemployment for men could have corroding effects on male self-esteem; thus even in times where a woman might be the sole or main breadwinner, her earnings were still deemed in some sense subsidiary and her status subservient. Women often tried to reconcile the contradictions in their lives between reality and an unrealised ideal. Thus married women who successfully managed both paid employment, and ran a respectable home where standards of cleanliness were maintained, children were cared for, and the man was, at least nominally, still master, set a different criteria for working class respectability. It is not beyond the bounds of probability that such women may have taken pride in their abilities to provide for their families, and been given respect for their efforts from within their community. As

²⁶ Albert, 'Fit work for women,' p.173.

²⁷ Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p.137.

²⁸ Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People* pp. 89-92.

Gordon has commented, 'Women's lives were much more complex than the images which pervade the period...'²⁹

The ideal of female domesticity was adapted to suit circumstance in working class communities. Life cycle experiences might dictate whether or not a woman was able to work; repeated pregnancies and large families did not necessarily inhibit some kinds of employment, many mouths to feed might indeed compel it. However, this type of situation would have been far from respectable if the man in the house seemed unable, or unwilling, to prevent it. Generally it was deemed very unacceptable for mothers of small children to be compelled to take paid work. At the bottom of the respectability scale were deserted wives and unmarried mothers, forced by circumstance into work. These women fought an unequal battle against middle class prejudices with regard to their morality, although their place as respectable women in working class communities was probably less straightforward.

In localities such as the Gorbals, being able to earn a living, stay out of debt, and provide adequately for children were key indicators of respectability. So level of income was bound up with family status to this extent. However being poor *and* respectable were not mutually exclusive conditions. Women who had greater ambition than merely keeping their families' heads above water might opt to earn money.

However, such behaviour was generally frowned upon. Married women who worked in circumstances where there was no absolute economic need risked opprobrium. The rules of working class respectability in Glasgow were rigidly designed to protect the status quo of male breadwinners, regardless of the fact that this was to a very real extent an illusory ideal for perhaps the majority of families in places like the Gorbals.

²⁹ Gordon, 'Women's spheres' p.207.

However the notion that some women may have defied such stereotyping of gendered roles, and taken pride and enjoyment out of their earning capabilities is obviously raised by examination of women's work.³⁰ Women's work had lower status and remuneration, but this does not mean that all women automatically gained more satisfaction out of being housewives or even saw this as their only means of fulfilment in life.

A general explanation of how family respectability operated in localities such as the Gorbals, or indeed Calton, is relevant to examination of Jewish women's work, not as a statement of comparison, but because female circumstances, in both receiving and immigrant communities are salient. In Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, nascent industrialisation changed traditional working practices. Economic survival became increasingly precarious and it was necessary for both men and women to earn in this climate, as indeed it was in urban Scotland. Thus many Jewish families who arrived in Britain were already well practised in a system of family economy where the labour of all able family members was necessary.³¹ In the *shtetl*, married couples sometimes worked alongside one another in retail enterprises, or women and men could run these independently. Both sexes could be skilled in sewing, but generally speaking did different types of tailoring work.³² Even in trades where men usually had tenure, for example shoemaking, male artisans often relied on wives and children to assist them with their work. Artisan crafts were commonly family

³⁰ Burman, 'Jewish women and the household economy in Manchester' p.62; Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p.36.

³¹ Burman, 'The Jewish woman as breadwinner,' p.28-29; Stampfer, S. 'Gender differentiation and education of the Jewish woman in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe' in Polonsky, A (ed.) *From Shtetl to Socialism* (London, 1993) p.196.

³² Jewish Women in London Group. *Generations of Memories: Voices of Jewish Women*, testimony of Mrs Rose Kerrigan (London, 1989) p. 69.

enterprises and frequently highly dependant on the expertise and labour of wives.³³ In terms of gender relations, the one continuous feature was that women had principal responsibility for domestic work and childcare.

On the whole it is more plausible to argue that disruption in gender relations due to the immigration process was experienced more by immigrant men than women, at least in the first generation.³⁴ If male scholarship as opposed to worldly gain had been the measure of a family's status in Eastern Europe, then this was certainly not the case in Scotland. Most Jewish men could not achieve this ideal anyway, even if they aspired to it. Yet the Jewish artisan who escaped from life's travails whenever possible by immersing himself in religious pursuits, is a powerful image of *shtetl* life. This was the overarching value that governed the Jewish social hierarchy; it was how family *yichus* was achieved. This Yiddish expression probably has no direct translation in English, however essentially it means a social standing whose conferment was transferable across generations, thus:

A man could be wealthy, but he wouldn't be held in high regard because he had all his money. But being descended from a family of saints or scholars would confer status which was sought after. It was a sort of aristocracy of learning.³⁵

This system, which had been maintained due to the isolation of Jews within Eastern European life, survived industrialisation to some extent.³⁶ Undoubtedly it functioned

³³ Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.14.

³⁴ Green, 'Gender and jobs in the Jewish community' p.39-60.

³⁵ Quoted in Burman, R. 'Women in Jewish religious life: Manchester 1880-1930' In Obelkevitch, J *et al.* (eds.) *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*. (London, 1987) p.38. Testimony extracted from oral history archive of Jewish immigrants in Manchester, mostly born between 1890 and 1910.

³⁶ Marks, L. *Working Wives and Working Mothers: A Comparative Study of Irish and Eastern European Jewish Married Women's Work and Motherhood in East London* (London, 1990) p.11-12.

for many Jews as an ambition rather than a common reality. However, the dislocation caused by emigration put this type of cultural expectation under severe pressure.

Immigrants were exposed to a very different set of rules for obtaining working class respectability. Essentially the old ways of religious scholarship had no place in a city like Glasgow where family status was premised very much around protecting the position of the male breadwinner. In Glasgow, would-be religious scholars might find themselves taking unskilled work as peddlers in order to support a family.³⁷ Of course some men responded badly to the pressures they found themselves under as breadwinners. Wife desertion was probably the commonest visible response in circumstances like these.³⁸ Less visible was the strain on family relationships caused by the disruptive effects of migration.

More continuity exists in the experience of immigrant women than men. First generation women were acclimatised to coping with the dual burden of unpaid domestic work and employment. However gender relations in the Jewish family did alter in the environment of Glasgow. Over time Jewish families felt the pressure of acculturation, and the Jewish establishment in Glasgow encouraged rapid conformity to Scottish ideals for the gendering of work. Authority in Garnethill was always keenly tuned to middle class notions of respectability. However the latter may not have had much mileage in the general climate of the Gorbals where harsh realities similar to those that had applied in Eastern Europe, impacted on immigrants who continued to struggle for daily survival.

³⁷SJAC. Oral testimony of Moray Glasser. Born: 1898. Interviewed by Dr. Ben Braber 1988.

³⁸Friedman, R. ‘ “ Send me my husband who is in New York City”: husband desertion in the American Jewish community,’ *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (1982) pp.1-18.

In Glasgow neither local working class mores, nor the views of the Jewish establishment would have approved of immigrant women working to support the unremunerated scholarly ambitions of a husband. However, the employment of women in areas that ostensibly did not interfere with domestic responsibilities and which assisted a male breadwinner in family survival was another matter. Immigrant men could not escape from their destiny as breadwinners, as it underpinned the whole process of Anglicisation, and in turn of upward social mobility. Bermant has commented that his religiously devout father was bemused by this turn of events in Glasgow, and concluded that Glasgow was an exceptionally hard-headed city, with little sentiment left over for religious learning.³⁹ In order for men to achieve the status of respectable citizens, their ideal role had to change to become one that embodied economic success. Women's labour, which was important for economic survival, was to a large extent hidden in order to protect the reputation of the immigrant community. The conundrum of the Jewish woman worker who took satisfaction out of earning money is thrown even more into relief by this shift in gender relations that took place. Mrs Balkin's son gives his opinion of the attitude that many immigrant women, including his mother, had:

[They] didn't think anything of it. I mean they revelled in it absolutely – wanted to work, that was their whole life working and doing all the cooking and everything – fantastic the amount of work [my mother] did, absolutely amazing...⁴⁰

³⁹ Bermant, *Coming Home*, pp.39-42.

⁴⁰ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913

There are of course many questions raised by testimony such as this. Notable within this statement is the central place given to domestic work. In addition to the paid labour, which this interviewee's mother engaged in, her domestic responsibility for 'cooking and everything' is singularly mentioned. Female labour that was undertaken within the domestic environment, or as part of an informal economy where women assisted men in their trades commonly goes unrecorded.⁴¹ For Jewish women there is also an added difficulty that due to the pressures experienced by Jews to conform to respectable Scottish ideals female labour may have been deliberately underreported.

However insurmountable such difficulties appear, the stubborn fact remains that women who were schooled to be economically active before emigration, and who met with poverty after it, would have been unlikely to submit immediately to a housewifely ideal which by the evidence all around, proved to be a chimera. Women workers were a reality of Glaswegian life, and Jewish women conformed to this reality. Moreover in respect of women's work, it does seem that one of the attractions of Glasgow may have been the extent to which it provided continuity of experience for female settlers. However harsh conditions were, the sensation of any degree of familiarity may have been viewed as a balm that soothed the frequently painful process of migration and settlement. Change in the role played by Jewish women as workers was not a uniform process. Families acculturated at different rates, and the level of conformity to local standards was often dependant on economic circumstances, as well as the degree to which individuals clung to the ways of Eastern Europe and resisted assimilation. The response of women, as well as men, to the changes wrought by migration is often absent in histories of settlement in Britain. Yet it can clearly be seen that major adjustments in gendered behaviour were required of many families. Immigrant women

⁴¹ Higgs, E. *A Clearer Sense of the Census* (London, 1996) pp.97-99.

who arrived in Glasgow added a new layer of complexity to the overall picture of when, where, how, and why women in Glasgow worked; and what the female contribution to a working class household amounted to.

‘Seams and Bo[a]rders’: the hidden labour of Jewish women.⁴²

Much of the information available with regard to the nature of female labour amongst Glasgow’s Jews is conflicting. This is especially true for married women, and pointedly so in the area of garment making ‘homework’, also sometimes termed ‘out-work’. Since a close relationship between home and work was a defining feature of many Jewish household strategies for survival, the involvement of wives and mothers was often integrated into a family economy. Hence sewing work that could be executed at home and which brought in an income might be supposed as fitting well with female domestic responsibilities in Jewish households. Yet the involvement of immigrant women in this type of employment has received no attention in existing work on Glasgow Jewry.

Albert’s study of homework amongst women in Glasgow clearly shows the difficulties of establishing how widespread this type of employment was over the period 1875-1914, or the degree to which families depended on it for survival.⁴³ This investigation is based on analysis of available source material with regard to sweated labour, a description covering all work done under poor operational conditions and for low wages.⁴⁴ Yet as Albert demonstrates, homework provided a large residual army of labour in the form of married women who had a desperate need to earn money, leading

⁴² This expression is borrowed from Green, N. ‘Gender and jobs in the Jewish community,’ *Jewish Social Studies*, 8:2/3 (2002) p39, which explores Jewish work patterns.

⁴³ Albert, ‘Fit work for women,’ pp. 158-177.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 158.

to the conclusion that this was indeed a major area of female employment. The extent of female labour involved in this type of work is regularly omitted from official data, notably census material, because of its seasonal and casual nature. Its execution in the privacy of the home increased the likelihood that it could be conveniently ignored in many official records. However, Albert argues that although homework was considered morally undesirable since it chiefly involved married women, at the same time it was implicitly understood that this work was a lifesaver for many impoverished families. Moreover, it survived because there was an economic benefit to be gained from it by employers.⁴⁵ Indeed it has been claimed that sweated homework was far from being a remnant of proto-industry but was instead an 'appendage of the new factory system.'⁴⁶

Two key sources inform much of what is known about Jewish garment making during the first decades of settlement. The first of these is a report of investigations made on behalf of the medical journal, *The Lancet* in 1888.⁴⁷ The second was undertaken twenty years later in 1907, by a 'Lady Inspector' named Miss Meiklejohn who was employed by the government's Chief Inspector of Factories at a branch office in central Glasgow.⁴⁸ Miss Meiklejohn appears to have been energetic in her work in the 'principal manufacturing towns in Scotland' and completed several reports.⁴⁹ Amongst these was a 'special report' conducted upon the *Employment of Alien Jews in*

⁴⁵ Albert, 'Fit work for women,' p.173.

⁴⁶ Schmiechen, J. *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labour: The London Clothing Trades 1880-1914* (London, 1984) p.3.

⁴⁷ 'Special Sanitary Commission on the Sweating System,' *The Lancet*, 30/06/1888, pp. 1313-1314 & 07/07/1888, pp.37-39.

⁴⁸ PP. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the year 1907*. cd 4166, (1908) pp.187-188, hereafter referred to as: Meiklejohn.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Glasgow.⁵⁰ The *Jewish Chronicle* also reported on Meiklejohn's work.⁵¹ On the basis of this newspaper evidence, Collins has asserted that that there exists 'little evidence of the Jewish women in the same work patterns as their gentile neighbours and there was little evidence at all of home employment of children on any regular basis.'⁵² This statement rather implies that Jewish women in Glasgow were somehow excluded from this exploitative form of work and this suggestion needs to be explained more fully than it has been to date.

There are many known facts about immigrant family life that suggest Jewish women were unlikely to have been so thoroughly excluded from sweated homework. Immigrant families were often impoverished and women within them suffered no less from being made widows, or as we have seen, being deserted by their spouse. It is also true, that large families of young children increased the burden on households and could restrict women's economic activities outside of the home. However, the most persuasive point to be made is that tailoring work, which was the main form of homework in Glasgow, was a common occupation amongst Eastern European women and as will be explained, married women in Jewish families preferred to do this kind of work at home. Countering this accumulation of known facts is the Jewish system of charity, generally utilised as a coverall explanation for the supposed rescue of families from destitution. Jewish authorities always tried to present a public image of British Jewry as respectable in line with prevailing British ideals. Married women who were seen to be working for wages were unhelpful towards this aim. Indeed, maternal and

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.187. Meiklejohn's 'Special Report' is discussed in the Chief Inspector's introduction to his Annual Report, and described at length on pages 187-188. However Meiklejohn's individual inquiry, if published, appears not to have survived –a source of great frustration to myself! However, that which exists and is contained in the Annual Report is sufficient to give a flavour of its contents.

⁵¹ *The Jewish Chronicle* 31/07/1908. p.19.

⁵² Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.153. Collins comments on the article published by the *Jewish Chronicle*, presumably following the release of the annual report.

child welfare initiatives were often a vehicle for imparting this kind of acculturation.⁵³ However, it has already been noted that many Jews were wary of accepting scrutiny by philanthropic bodies.⁵⁴ Moreover, in Eastern Europe women's labour was accepted as part of household economic strategies. Although the pressure to conform to ideals of respectability was indeed great, some reasonable doubt may be cast on the assertion that women in poor Jewish families conformed more than the Scottish working classes to prescriptions for domesticity. Amongst married women, sewing at home for money was common, as indeed were other forms of similar out-work, for example shoemaking, that took place in major industrial cities in the UK.⁵⁵ Taking in boarders was certainly widespread.

Albert's study demonstrates that homework needs to be included in the study of female labour because its practice was so widespread, despite its hidden status in many official records.⁵⁶ The concealed status of such female work creates difficulties for historians, and in the case of immigrant women these problems have resulted in the exclusion of much female labour from overall analysis of the immigrant economy in Glasgow. In addition, uncritical examination of available source material has also served to preserve an idealised image of the Jewish homemaker. Yet as Green has pointed out, 'Jewish women's work can clearly help us understand the problem and weaknesses of positing separate spheres between home and work.'⁵⁷ Moreover, greater

⁵³ Tannenbaum, S. 'Making good little English children: infant welfare and Anglicization among Jewish immigrants in London, 1880-1939,' *Immigrants and Minorities* 12: 2 (1993) pp. 176-199.

⁵⁴ See testimony of Mrs Taylor quoted in Rodgers, M. 'Glasgow Jewry' in Kay, B. *Odyssey: Voices from Scotland's Recent Past: The Second Collection* (Edinburgh, 1982) p.115.

⁵⁵ Smeichen, *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labour*, p.52.

⁵⁶ Albert, 'Fit work for women,' p.159.

⁵⁷ Green, 'Gender and jobs in the Jewish community,' p.52.

understanding necessarily involves being sceptical about the 'no occupation' category applied to many Jewish women.⁵⁸

We work where we live?

In the following two sections an alternative reading of sources is presented with the intention of suggesting that Jewish women's work in home-based garment making may actually have been quite common, as indeed it was in working class life for non-Jews in Glasgow. In the United Kingdom a factory, or large workshop-based economy in garment making, comparable to that in North America, perhaps only existed in the North of England. Here clothing manufacturers, developed their smaller scale workshops into larger enterprises to meet the needs of the ready-made garment trade. This occurred most notably in Leeds, which had a large Jewish community and where clothing factories owned by Jews were major employers of Jewish female labour.⁵⁹ In Glasgow at the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of Jewish labour was again concentrated in clothing, but the nature of its manufacture was on a different scale, and had a different economic character. Part of the attraction of Glasgow for Jews who settled here, was almost certainly the persistence of small-scale manufacturing in the form of domestic workshops and out-work. Via these businesses, individuals could gain a foothold as minor entrepreneurs with little capital outlay. Moreover, Jewish friendly societies often provided the small loans that were necessary to get started in this way.⁶⁰ Competition was on an altogether different scale to that which developed in northern English cities. Indeed, source material that includes discussion of Jewish

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ For description of the different features of the tailoring industry in Leeds see Honeyman, K. *Well-Suited: A History of the Leeds Clothing Industry 1850-1990*, (Oxford, 2000) pp. 20- 53; Krausz, E. *Leeds Jewry*, (Cambridge, 1964) pp.28-32; Morris, J. *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, (Aldershot, 1986) pp. 49-61.

⁶⁰ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, pp.67-8.

garment making over this period in Glasgow, often mentions competition with Leeds and the perception that Glasgow lost business to factories there.⁶¹

Tailoring was the majority occupation of Jewish workers who settled in the Gorbals. Although difficult to measure accurately, Collins has estimated that 33 per cent of Jewish residents were engaged in the tailoring trade in 1891.⁶² Unsurprisingly these figures are not gender specific, so it must be presumed that they include male heads of households. However, it is reasonable to speculate that clothing manufacture would also have attracted the majority of female workers. *The Lancet's* review of sweated labour in Glasgow included visits to Jewish sweatshops. At one of these, the inspectors asked questions about the use of a domestic dwelling as workspace, in response the sweater remarked that 'they live where they work.'⁶³

Employment in tailoring was plainly often conducted within domestic dwellings and the involvement of Jewish women in sewing work needs to be seen in this context. Some Jews engaged in garment making on a small scale and evidently found this preferable to becoming employees in larger workshops or small factories. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the description of a 'workshop' covered a great variety of environments. A workshop might be formed out of a collective of a few people working in a tenement flat, which also doubled as a house for some or all of the workers; or it could have been a domestic dwelling given over to industry only and containing many more employees. Yet again, a workshop could be a fairly large concern, and contained in property exclusively rented for this purpose. Legislation

⁶¹ PP. *Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System – Proceedings of the Committee*, HCP –169, p.lx.; *Morris, Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, p.54 also notes this phenomenon.

⁶² Collins, *Second City Jewry* p.223.

⁶³ 'Special Sanitary Commission on the Sweating System in Glasgow,' *The Lancet* 07/07/1888, p.38.

designed to increase local authorities' jurisdiction over working conditions in factories and workshops, meant that a great deal of domestic production evaded reforms.⁶⁴ By 1908, the Chief Inspector of Factories conceded that this was still the case, and that due 'to the migratory character of this class of employer and the frequent location of workrooms in backrooms and attics of private houses' it was unlikely that most infringements would be detected.⁶⁵ In Glasgow, workshops domestic or otherwise were supposed to be legally registered and were subject to inspection by the Sanitary Department of Glasgow Corporation. In reality, the seasonal nature of garment making made it more than likely that many temporary workshops were never registered or identified by the authorities. In fact in 1907, Meiklejohn hinted at this problem when she commented enigmatically on the 'shifting population' of Jews in Glasgow.⁶⁶ Jewish workshops proliferated in Glasgow, and Meiklejohn again comments, that most of these were based in domestic dwellings; a true reflection of the poverty experienced by Jews operating on a small scale in this trade.⁶⁷ Within such families, women worked at sewing as part of the female contribution to the family economy. The 1891 census shows the presence of household servants in some Jewish homes, a situation that freed up women and older children to do tailoring work, though how common this was is difficult to judge.⁶⁸

Workshops existed by taking in orders for the ready-made garment industry as well as the bespoke trade, which made clothes to order for individual customers.⁶⁹ The work

⁶⁴ Morris, *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, pp.171-177.

⁶⁵ PP. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the year 1908*. Cd 4664, p. xxxiii & p.12.

⁶⁶ Meiklejohn, p.187.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Collins, *Be Well!*, p.37.

⁶⁹ Butt, J. 'The industries of Glasgow' in Fraser, W. and Maver, I. (eds.) *Glasgow Vol. 11: 1830-1912* (Manchester, 1996) p110; see also PP. *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords*

done by them could produce whole garments, or as was increasingly the case, piecework elements of the latter. Larger manufacturers commonly put out such employment to smaller workshops to cut down on fixed overheads. In the *Lancet* example of a Jewish sweatshop, the owner/worker was clearly tailoring in his home, and inspectors described this:

A sort of bed had been made up of wooden cases covered over with dirty rags and bits of cloth. Here some unwashed children sprawled about in a state of semi-nudity. In the back of the shop there was a bed, though hardly any other furniture. There was no closet...⁷⁰

This particular encounter with sweated labour in a domestic dwelling uncovered a high level of poverty. The account then goes on to describe the fact that not only does the family live and work in the same space, they also supply sleeping accommodation for lodgers! The *Lancet* report includes several illustrations of Scottish and Irish, as well as Jewish establishments, therefore there is no inference that sweated labour done in domestic dwellings was an especially Jewish problem in Glasgow. However, they do comment that the ‘special feature’ of Glasgow sweating is the proximity of its execution to ‘degraded localities’. Poor housing and the sweatshop system of labour did often go hand in hand with drunkenness, squalor and prostitution. As we have seen, the inhabitants of working class Glasgow often fought an unequal battle not only to be clean, honest, and respectable citizens, but also against the prejudices of middle class commentators.

on the Sweating System –Minutes of Evidence, evidence of Daniel McLaughlin (ex President of the Scottish national Operative Tailor’s Society.) Ref: HCP—331, p.4.

⁷⁰ *The Lancet*, 07/07/1988 p.38.

The defining feature of sweating was the low level of remuneration to be had from it by operatives, the majority of whom were female workers. Tailors who tried to improve their lot by becoming owner/managers of workshops had to conform to this pattern of paying low wages and operating out of substandard accommodation in order to turn over a profit. Sweatshop owners may have been responsible for exploiting workers, but they themselves were also exploited within this system.⁷¹ The *Lancet* report comments on the allegation that it was impoverished Jewish sweaters who were driving down wages for women out-workers by their increasing competitiveness. The terrible circumstances of these women are clearly described, but so too is the allegation that women sweatshop workers and out-workers were largely made up of Scottish and Irish, with Jewish female employees very much in the minority.

The number of Jewish women in the employ of tailors is very small, but there are countless Scotch and Irish girls whose industry and eagerness to work is cruelly exploited.⁷²

The language used in this report is often provocative and clearly designed to invite condemnation of sweating on the grounds of public health and morality. Women employed in workshops, tended to be young and unmarried; their work was not considered highly skilled and was poorly paid. Married women generally did sewing work as out-workers, working in the home alone or in small groups gathered together in a domestic dwelling; these women were even more poorly remunerated as the piece-work done by them was considered to be at the lowest end of the scale in terms of skilfulness. Where then did Jewish women fit in this general scheme of things?

⁷¹ Maitles, 'Attitudes to Jewish immigration,' p.50.

⁷² *The Lancet*, 30/06/1888 p.1313.

In the wake of the *Lancet* report there was increased condemnation of sweating and particularly the exploitation of women as employees. The following year the House of Lords conducted enquiries into sweated labour. It is clear from the evidence contained in this enquiry that the ethnic origins of workers in the garment making industry was of special interest, since a general belief that foreigners were widely involved in this trade coloured negative views of it. Evidence was taken from most of the major centres for sweating, and includes commentary taken from several Glaswegians. One Glaswegian manager of a small domestic sweatshop, admitted to having several employees, 'Four; myself and my wife make six –all the employees are women.' When asked if he is responsible for keeping these *five* women at work, this sweatshop owner replies pointedly 'four women.' Evidently the work of his wife within this enterprise did not count as employment.⁷³ As Lynn Abrams has commented, this was a way of 'squaring the circle' where women's work was concerned, it allowed female contributions to the family economy to remain officially invisible.⁷⁴ Williams has described how a 'Whig Anglo-Jewish historiography' has distorted analysis of much that was material in immigrant Jewish life.⁷⁵ In the literature concerned with Glasgow, a similar bent has glossed over women's invisible role in domestic production. The rhetoric of superior health, sound housewifery and mothering, however accurate this is, has more or less eclipsed women's economic role in Jewish upward mobility. The assertion that Jewish women did not engage in 'the same work patterns as their gentile neighbours', at least where sewing work is concerned, needs to be qualified.⁷⁶ Jewish

⁷³ PP. *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating*, evidence of Thomas Carey. Ref.-HCP—331 p.25.

⁷⁴ Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, p.187.

⁷⁵ Williams, 'The anti-Semitism of tolerance' p.92.

⁷⁶ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.153

women frequently did not need to seek employment in a sweatshop, because the sweatshop came to them.

Jewish women and the needle trade.

The position of Jewish women within this trade is important for understanding how traditional work practices evolved in the context of Glasgow. Susan Glenn has described the hierarchy of trades, which existed for Jewish women in Eastern Europe. At the top of this list was sewing.⁷⁷ The skilled seamstress was assured of a livelihood and as a result made a desirable wife. In Eastern Europe the ability to earn a living, possibly as the main breadwinner, was a highly prized attribute in a potential wife. However, since all women's ultimate aspiration was to become a wife and mother, it was accepted that after a woman married her level of engagement in paid work fluctuated with each stage of the life cycle. The fortunate amongst young Jewish women would learn the needlework trade before marriage; following this and the arrival of children she could carry on earning by taking in homework, which combined well with family responsibilities. This form of employment was considered much more desirable than factory work, and skilled female artisans who could earn a living from home were highly regarded.⁷⁸ Glenn cites contemporary figures which show that amongst the trades engaging Jewish women, including lace making, baking, cigarette production and numerous others, garment sewing was the most popular, and presumably the most lucrative. Across the Jewish Pale of Settlement in 1898 fully 70 per cent of registered female artisans were engaged in sewing and this is likely an

⁷⁷ Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.16.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p.19.

underestimate if women who did not register themselves with the authorities are accounted for.⁷⁹

During the initial stages of the period of mass migration, the Russian economy was in the early stages of industrialisation. This meant that the putting-out system in textile trades was still lucrative and provided a steady trade for home-workers. Women who learned the needlework trade were thus assured some level of independence even within the gender arrangement of Jewish communities, which rendered women as subordinate. As the Russian economy gradually developed, the industrial system that had supported home-working and small Jewish workshops began to change further. Unemployment and poverty for many families emerged as a result of a shift to factory based, mechanised employment. This was often the compelling reason for emigration.

However during the 1880s and 90s Jews who arrived in Glasgow, would have found much that was similar in the garment trade to their former way of life. In industrial Glasgow small workshops and out-working still existed, employing many women. Terrible working conditions regularly attracted opprobrium from social reformers, yet for newly arrived immigrants who already had experience of dire conditions, this form of employment must have represented a real opportunity. If the majority of women workers in Russia were engaged in tailoring, it is reasonable to speculate that the majority who arrived in Glasgow were similarly skilled. Why then would they not have used this means to earn money in a city, which was regularly acknowledged as the centre for Scottish homework in the garment industries?⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.19.

⁸⁰ Albert, 'Fit work for women,' p.159.

Further evidence from the House of Lords enquiry underlines the changing nature of garment working at this time. Master tailors who could make a garment from start to finish increasingly gave up on this work, as it was uncompetitive. Employment of female labour became the means by which cheaper goods could be manufactured. One Jewish manager of a workshop commented on the decline of male workers:

It [is] very little that you find of that among our people; they can do it, but they have not the patience to do it when they can get the girls to do it for them.⁸¹

The ever-increasing employment of women in garment making, coupled with outrage at their working conditions brought about the employment of lady inspectors like Miss Meiklejohn.⁸²

The fact that Jews were still moving in and out of Glasgow to other locations, as well as settling permanently in numbers creates the usual difficulties for estimating the total population, but also makes it hard to measure their occupational profile. Moreover, this mobility increased the likelihood that Jews would continue to use their homes as workshops rather than taking on the commitment of a separate rental. In the Chief Inspector's summary of Meiklejohn's investigation she is quoted as making a point of the fact that she had great difficulty in pursuing accurate information because 'a large number of the women I visited had a very imperfect knowledge of English and were very unwilling to answer enquiries.'⁸³ Yet when reporting Meiklejohn's impressions,

⁸¹ PP. *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System*, evidence of Hyman Samuel. Ref.—HCP—331, p.37.

⁸² Women Factory Inspectors formed a separate department of the Inspectorate in 1896. Beginning with 5 Lady Inspectors, the numbers of these were added to rapidly and by 1906 there were 27 of them operating across various locations in the UK.

⁸³ *Meiklejohn*. p.188.

the *Jewish Chronicle* were more selective in their choice of quotation, citing Meiklejohn's remark that she had 'found very little evidence of work given out to homeworkers, who seem to be chiefly employed by shops.'⁸⁴ Sophistry by the press is of course not a new phenomenon, but this example alerts our attention to the way that the *Chronicle*, as an organ of the Jewish establishment, presented distorted views of immigrants to suit its own purposes.

Certainly some changes to the occupations engaged in by Jewish women had likely occurred by this time. Between the late 1880s and the outbreak of war in 1914 female sweated labour came under concentrated enquiry.⁸⁵ It has also been argued that following the intense industrialisation that took place during the nineteenth century women were more rigorously excluded from waged work by a variety of institutional and ideological factors.⁸⁶ In addition, this was also a time where the position of immigrants was generally subject to intense scrutiny in Britain culminating in the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905. All of these factors in combination help explain why out-work probably became less popular, and garment making became more concentrated in factories and workshops. Yet these factors also suggest reasons why out-work that persisted, was further hidden from official scrutiny. All of these contemporary aspects influence the reasons why Jewish women still working in the sweated trades are absent from view. Small workshops did not entirely disappear, and the conclusion that all or most Jewish women ceased sewing-work under such pressures needs to be weighed against the known economic problems that many Jewish families were still experiencing. Jewish women's work needs to be viewed in the light of other evidence, for example oral testimony, which indicates the degree to which

⁸⁴ *Jewish Chronicle* 31/07/08 p.19.

⁸⁵ Morris, *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, pp.177-182.

⁸⁶ Humphries, J. 'Women and paid work' in Purvis, *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* pp.85-105.

married women even after immigration continued to view themselves as integral to household economic strategies. As Meiklejohn noted, when there was plenty of work larger workshops gave out-work to smaller domestic units, which constituted their 'outworker's lists.'⁸⁷ It is more than likely that in these the wives and daughters of tailors, themselves perhaps skilled seamstresses, continued to sew as part of the contribution made by women to a family economy. These women were not considered employees, and therefore not accounted for in records collected by Glasgow's Sanitary Department, which regulated such establishments. Moreover since these women were working within domestic workshops, which served also as their home – this makes them technically both workshop employees and out-workers. The solution of course to this conundrum both at the time, and subsequently, was simply to ignore their labour altogether.

In Census records, married women's work is notoriously under recorded, either omitted or, as in the following example, rendered ambiguous. In the 1901 Census, Harris Ancell who had been born in Russia was living at No. 77 Thistle Street in the Gorbals. He is described as a tailor, also as an employer, and his place of work is recorded as being outwith his home. His wife is described as a 'tailor's wife' a description that defines her by her domestic and marital status. This type of definition where women were subsumed within a husband's occupation implied that the household was a productive unit, but according to Higgs it was removed at the time of the 1881 census.⁸⁸ By 1901, women like Mrs Ancell were usually not assigned an occupation; nevertheless in this case, some level of employment alongside her husband is denoted. Mrs Ancell had four children all less than eight years of age, and a boarder

⁸⁷ Meiklejohn, p.188.

⁸⁸ Higgs, *A Clearer Sense of the Census*, pp.158-9.

staying with the family in their two-roomed flat. It is certainly likely that any tailoring work she undertook was executed at home rather than in her husband's workshop.⁸⁹

Jews, who were sensitive to officialdom, would have been unlikely to offer such information unless pressed for it, and the enumerator seems to have made an interpretation of this woman's status. Conversely, in the same tenement block, the Abraham family are employed at tailoring within their larger four-roomed home. Here, the head of household and the eldest two children are doing tailoring work, but Mrs Abraham is given no occupation within a house that doubled as a workshop.⁹⁰ These examples are illustrations of the fickle nature of records with regard to female labour.

Some married women who were skilled at sewing, also circumvented being the employees of sweaters by capitalising on their own skills and a local customer base. The making of quilts was a traditional skill brought to Scotland from Russia. As we have seen Mrs Green ingeniously manufactured these at home, for sale at the market place. The following excerpt also describes a woman who made quilts to suit the needs of Jews:

My mother made quilts – every Jewish girl had at least one when she got married. They were special –called *Perinas* –like duvets now. They came from all over Glasgow to buy them from my mother.⁹¹

Although sewing was a common means of livelihood, the majority of women could not have made a living in such specialist areas. Miss Meiklejohn comments on the nature

⁸⁹ Census of Scotland 1901, Glasgow, enumeration district 31. Entry for 77 Thistle Street.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Mrs Woolfson in Hutt, C. and Kaplan, H. *A Scottish Shtetl: Jewish life in the Gorbals 1880-1974*. (Glasgow, 1984.) no page.

of garment manufacturing amongst Jews and states that this takes place largely within workshops rather than factories, and is 'the principal employment of Jews.' She estimated the number of registered Jewish tailoring workshops as eighty in all mainly based in domestic dwellings, but conceded that it was impossible to ascertain this with complete accuracy.⁹² This number is almost certainly an underestimate. Even if unregistered domestic workshops, which conceivably made up the majority, are excluded from this figure, it still seems much too low. The City of Glasgow Annual Report for 1908 gives the number of all workshops registered and operating across the city as being 4,465. Of these, 574 are described as 'dressmakers' wherein 59 men were employed, 593 young persons aged 14 – 18 years, and a staggering 3,040 adult women. In addition are the further 688 workshops described as 'Tailors and Clothiers', in these 3,143 men are employed, 555 young persons, and 1,976 adult women.⁹³ Taken together, all registered garment making workshops number 1,262 in Glasgow for this year, and women clearly make up the majority of employees, especially since the figures for employees under eighteen years likely contained more young women than men. Moreover, the highest concentrations of workshops are in the three districts known to have been the places where Jews lived and worked. These were the Gorbals, Calton, and the area of the city-centre bordering the Clyde. Despite the fact that it is readily acknowledged that Jews were by no means the only, or even the majority ethnic group involved in the clothing trade in Glasgow, Miss Meiklejohn's assessment of 80 clothing workshops out of a potential 1,262 still seems doubtful given Jewish concentration in this trade. Added to this, the Meiklejohn report states that only 220 Jewish women are employed in these workshops and an estimated 200 – 300 men. The vagueness of the latter figure as compared with the precision of the number of female

⁹² *Meiklejohn* p.187.

⁹³ GCA. *The Corporation of the City of Glasgow Reports 1908-1909*. Section on 'Factories and Workshops' Ref: C2.1 (9) pp. 567-601.

Jewish employees again raises suspicion about the degree to which Miss Meiklejohn accepted the word of informers who had an agenda of concealment.

Meiklejohn asserted that, 'she found no home-work amongst the married women' and this claim is certainly suspect, since she admits that officials from the Board of Guardians and the President of the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society gave this information to her!⁹⁴ And of course she herself was unable to get this information from reluctant immigrant women. Miss Meiklejohn seems to have been prepared to accept such blanket assurances, however this is a poor excuse for historians also accepting such evidence at face value. The fact that the *Jewish Chronicle* devoted a lengthy article to this study underlines its usefulness at the time as a positive piece of self-congratulatory news. The *Chronicle* rarely gave such a large amount of space to news from 'the provinces'. Nevertheless the Meiklejohn record is very illuminating, but more for what it reveals about the sensitivities surrounding Jewish involvement in sweating, and in particular the employment of women in this trade. The *Chronicle's* attention to it certainly exposes the Glasgow Jewish establishment's concerted efforts to counter any criticism of Jewish workplaces. Miss Meiklejohn was given to understand that:

...the difficulty seems to be to get the women who are left destitute to work and support themselves. They seem to live partly by charity, with support from the Board of Guardians, or the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, or in some cases from the parish i.e. till their children are old enough to work. When the married women or widows do work, it is not generally at a regular trade.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Meiklejohn*, p.188.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Many married Jewish women seem to have been damned if they did work, and damned if they did not. It is little wonder that they were placed in an invidious position with regard to this and their actual labour is difficult to identify. This report does highlight however, that some married women were involved in retail. In a final effort at showing Glaswegian Jews in a good light the *Chronicle* reported that Miss Meiklejohn accepted that ‘however little money a Jew is making, his wife does not go out to work as the gentile woman does.’ But of course, many Jewish women did not need to ‘go out’ to work, since their workplace was in the home and often included sweatshop production. Meiklejohn further commented:

That the men seldom work at home alone, but rather employ or work with one or two others, thus constituting a workshop. I have been told that this is due to the fact that a Jewish tailor (excepting the master tailors) can generally do only one particular part of the work, and so works with others who specialise in other parts.⁹⁶

There is a definite inconsistency in this evidence since we know from other sources, such as the House of Lords’ investigation, that this type of piecework was commonly assigned to women who were paid at a lower rate.⁹⁷ Miss Meiklejohn also comments on the fact that she found few Jews working for gentiles in clothing factories. The fact that she believed aliens preferred combining ‘for mutual support’ within their own Yiddish speaking company supposedly accounted for this, and may in this instance have had some truth in it. In addition, the labour of Jewish women undoubtedly would have increased efficiency of production, which was crucial in this trade. Turning out

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ PP. *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System*, evidence of Hyman Samuel. Ref.—HCP—331, p.37.

garments for a fickle and seasonal trade was fiercely competitive. Sweated workers could only depend on staying in work if their speed and competence was proved.

On the other hand, as the *Lancet* report attests, the female employees taken on by Jewish sweatshop owners were reputed to be mainly Scots or Irish. It is the case that the gender balance of Jewish employees in tailoring was perhaps a little different from that to be found in non-Jewish establishments where increasing amounts of work were being given over to cheaper female labour. Amongst immigrant men, tailoring was still a major type of employment and it is probable therefore that a greater concentration of male labour would be found in Jewish workshops. Moreover, the labour of female family members was not, as we have seen, counted as regular employment. When Jewish workshops required additional cheap labour they did look to the non-Jewish population of women.⁹⁸ There may have been multiple reasons for this, however the one given by Morris is that employment of Jewish women in sweated work allegedly conflicted with 'the strength of social custom.'⁹⁹ It is difficult to know what is meant by this vague explanation, but presumably it alludes to the fact that during busy times women would have had to work on the Sabbath. Oral testimony confirms that Jewish sweatshop workers did indeed transgress in this way.¹⁰⁰ It is possible that some sweatshop owners may have had scruples about expecting Jewish women to do this; yet, this is still only a partial explanation.

⁹⁸ Butt claims that Jewish subcontractors used female labour in the production of cheap ready-made garments. See 'Industries of Glasgow,' p.110.

⁹⁹ Morris, *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, p.64.

¹⁰⁰ SJAC. Oral testimony of Mrs Fanny Rosenthal. Born: 1910. Interviewed by Harvey Kaplan 25/01/2004.

In a study of 'Women's Work in Tailoring and Dressmaking' done around 1900, Margaret Irwin also gives the impression of family involvement in sweating. Irwin comments that:

The Jewish sub-contractor lives only one degree less miserably than his wretched employes. [sic] He and his family work side by side with them in the shop, and as I have been told by them, they 'all have to slave bitterly',¹⁰¹

Again the distinction between female employees, and female family members is taken for granted, although Irwin did seem to be sympathetic to the fact that Jewish sweaters were themselves subjected to an inequitable system of labour. Irwin was concerned to improve the lot of women workers within this trade, and could not have been expected to take a positive view of largely unregulated, non-unionised Jewish sweatshops.

However, she does give the example of one non-Jewish worker who stated a preference for working in Jewish shops and had done so for eleven years, giving her reason as being that employment 'for the good hands was fairly steady' despite their being 'very hard worked.'¹⁰² The method of manufacturing exploited by Jewish sub-contractors involved severe undercutting of prices. So that as Irwin remarks, a man's tweed jacket could be made up for 1/6, whereas even in a lower class non-Jewish, but unionised shop, the same, ready-made clothing would cost between 7/9 and 8/- to make.¹⁰³ Evidently Jews paid lower rates and required a faster pace of work. Naturally this reputation for sweating did little to improve the reputation of Jews and was a key element in anti-Jewish sentiment at this time. It may well have contributed to the

¹⁰¹ GCA. Irwin, M. *Women's Work in Tailoring and Dressmaking: Report of an Inquiry Conducted for the Scottish Council for Women's Trades*. (no date) Ref: C3/2/28/6. p.16.

¹⁰² Ibid. p.16.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.7

reason why similar use of female family members was left out of the equation whenever the Jewish system of sweating was exposed. More anti-foreigner mileage could be made from showing Jews as ill-using indigenous women. Irwin graphically describes that in Jewish shops:

One frequently sees the employers either mounting guard in the centre of the shop or walking up and down among the workers ready to check the slightest cessation of labour on their part, while the workers appear afraid to lift their heads and are nervously apprehensive of being addressed on the subject of their work.¹⁰⁴

Sewing for a living in a sweatshop may have lacked attraction for many. Nevertheless other forms of work for Jewish women had contracted at this time. Cigarette manufacturing which had been a large employer of women had largely become mechanised, leaving still fewer options open.¹⁰⁵ By the 1920s, according to Mrs Green, the employment of young, unmarried women in sewing was absolutely the most common form of work for Jewish girls. She describes:

They were a' in the tailoring trade, they a' started taking bastings, suits and things like that. But they were a' in the tailoring, the Yiddeshe ones, most o' them were in the tailoring.¹⁰⁶

The case of immigrant women in Glasgow illustrates how abrupt change in the form of emigration, may not necessarily have ushered in immediate concomitant change in the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.16.

¹⁰⁵ *Meiklejohn*, p.187.

¹⁰⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born: 1905.

gender roles assigned to men and women. For many women, there was little separation between home and work. However, the acculturation process may have been responsible for longer-term modifications in the gendering of work. It is such longer-term change that certainly influences the way that cumulative modifications are described historically. The role of women in the Jewish family economy was not subject to overnight transformation in the context of Scotland, and historians need to account for how closer integration with domestic ideals was in fact managed at the level of family experience. Dependence on sources, which describe what contemporary commentators *said* Jewish women did as workers, or more importantly what they did not do, seems to be an unreliable indicator of probable lived experience. Such sources require to be approached with caution. The labour of mothers and daughters within domestic workshops is to a large extent invisible within available documentary sources. Yet given that garment making was a form of employment which remained common amongst Jews until the interwar years, it is much more likely that female labour at sewing was a major contribution to income within the family economy. For example, Mass Observation reports for 1938 include evidence on the continued involvement of Jewish women in garment making in such centres as Leeds and London. Unfortunately very little of this material applies directly to Scotland; however there is no reason to believe that the situation in Scotland changed more rapidly.¹⁰⁷ Workshops that managed to weather the economic storms of the garment making trade, and provided regular employment, undoubtedly did make jobs for both Jewish and non-Jewish women. However the poor remuneration to be had from sewing, and some diversification in employment trends likely encouraged women who had the opportunity, into other areas of work. These will now be explored in greater detail.

¹⁰⁷ See Mass Observation Report and Surveys on Anti-Semitism in 1938: File no A12.

Female entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is often considered as an outcome of the migration process.¹⁰⁸ However, women's role in this is generally neglected. Evidence about the skilled nature of the seamstress's work in Eastern Europe may have made sweated garment making unattractive to some Jewish women who could earn higher wages doing different types of needlework. Skilled seamstresses did have an alternative to sweatshop working –they could set up on their own account. Post office directories for the period confirm that many women set themselves up as dressmakers. Jewish names do appear in such records.¹⁰⁹ Those with greater ambition to deliver a high-class service might also style themselves as 'Couturiers'. *The Jewish Echo* from its inception in 1928 ran advertisements for the services of such women. Again these enterprises were often run from domestic dwellings and varied in size. This type of enterprise was a step up from workshop employment, where women might become employers instead of employees, and if conducted from home it required minimal capital outlay. In this period sewing machines could be leased, and warehouses often supplied materials on credit to individuals deemed trustworthy. Couturiers who established a regular clientele could make a living at this trade, despite its seasonality, and it is a trade that illustrates how skills that were traditional to Jewish women combined with local trends in small-scale female entrepreneurship. Jewish dressmakers formed an especially female expression of upward mobility when Jews moved out of slums and into the suburbs; these self-employed women were often in the vanguard of such movement.

¹⁰⁸ Finnegan, R. 'Entrepreneurship, business and outsiders: some questions' in Golby, J. (ed.) *Communities and Families*, (Cambridge, 1994) 59-62.

¹⁰⁹ Note that this would not be a reliable indicator of the full extent of Jewish women's involvement as immigrants often changed their surnames to British sounding ones, particularly when entering into business.

A further area of traditionally styled work for women was in relation to retailing. Women commonly became identified with shops that were family enterprises. The following excerpt comments on testimony by a male descendant of a celebrated Jewish baker and grocer in Glasgow:

...Ma Fogell spent most of the day in the shop when her daughters were at home; housework [was] usually left to daughter Jean, but after the girls' marriages, his mother spent less time at home. He remembers the gas cooker being kept on a low light from the beginning to the end of *Shabbos*.¹¹⁰

'Ma Fogell' was identified with the family shop. Within this type of enterprise, continuity of experience following migration can be detected in the work of Jewish women. And of course within this arrangement wives do not appear on official documentation as workers. Nevertheless, the input of such family matriarchs was important enough to be facilitated by live-in domestic help, or the help of daughters.

Family based enterprises easily included the labour of women, served the needs of the local community, and allowed for continuity of a lifestyle imported from Eastern Europe. Immigrant mothers within this type of commerce do not appear to have been anchored to the home and may very well have seen their role as more central to business. However, their labour was perceived in a different way from that of married women who 'went out to work' to earn a wage in non-family businesses. Such women were employees as opposed to being doyennes of small retail enterprises. The atmosphere of sociability also evident in Jewish retail outlets undoubtedly made them a more attractive prospect for some women than staying home to cook, clean, or sew.

¹¹⁰ 'Reminiscences of the Gorbals' in *SJAC Newsletter*, 11:1 (1999) p.5.

Thus some immigrant women probably exercised a level of choice in their lives, which is not normally accorded to them historically.

Some women were even more enterprising and set up on their own account. Mrs Rose's mother is one such example.¹¹¹ This family were unable to depend on income from the male head's business in shoemaking. Following failure of the shoemaking business in the aftermath of the First World War, this woman then started up on her own account by purchasing drapery goods on credit from one of the many wholesale warehouses that existed in Glasgow at the time. She took these goods from door to door, selling items of personal clothing and household items to Glaswegian housewives. This system depended on the peddler extending credit to the housewives who purchased goods. Payment was usually made on a weekly instalment basis that included a small mark up on the non-credit value of the goods. In this way a profit was made, which enabled the wholesale warehouse to be paid, and any surplus thereafter was income. This form of trading was a means of making a living for many Jewish immigrants, both men and women, and often supplied the capital for immigrants to open up a shop. In this family two shops emerged. While Mrs Rose's mother opened a draper's shop, her father diversified into a shoe repair shop that also retailed leather items like school satchels. In this household, husband and wife had their own separate business interests, which certainly lessened the economic risk for the family if one form of trading failed for any reason.

Hawkers like Mrs Rose capitalised on the need existing in working class families for affordable goods that could be purchased even on an unreliable income. Little capital outlay was needed to start up this kind of enterprise; only the good reputation of the

¹¹¹ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

peddler was a prerequisite to obtaining credit from the warehouse. This form of work was common in Scotland long after it had ceased to be a viable career amongst Jews south of the border.¹¹² The later arrival and settlement of Jews in Scotland in part accounts for this, but so too does the differing nature of the Scottish economy and the effects that this had on working class life. Peddlers sold the necessities of respectable living such as – clothing for school children; and the small luxuries that went to make up a more amenable existence in working class localities – bedding, window drapery, and antimacassars! Mrs Rose made a success of it. In a short time she was able to open a drapery shop, which provided employment for her daughters, and the family lived a comfortable life first of all in an above average tenement, and later in a suburban bungalow.

Female credit drapers who lived in Glasgow plied their trade widely throughout the small mining towns of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire. Within these localities Jews established their own territories and sometimes a loyal clientele. Mrs Balkin whose story is already familiar in this examination, was also a peddler. Her son again recalls his mother's achievements in the following excerpt from oral testimony:

Now she used to go out to the country you see... Well she used to go to these houses and she would leave stuff –she would show them the case with clothes in it, and she would leave them stuff and then she would give them a pay book you see, and they had to write in what they gave her and what goods she left them, and what goods she took back. And when she came home in the evening, she'd tell my oldest brother ... He'd ask her now 'what did Mrs So and So – how much did she give you?' And she remembered.

¹¹² Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*, p.60.

‘And what did you leave her?’ ‘I left such and such a thing’
 ‘And what did she give you back?’ And she knew
 everything! Although she couldn’t read or write.¹¹³

Door-to-door hawking became a viable alternative to sweated sewing work for many women. Women who went far and wide for business had to manage the household with energy and ingenuity. Mrs Balkin had seven children and carried her infants with her on her journeys. In turn as the children grew up, they were expected to help with the business of making a living and maintaining the home. As well as depending on daughters’ help with housework, the informal employment of children of both sexes was common in retailing enterprises and certainly took place in the Balkin family. Evelyn Cowan’s widowed mother ran a grocery delivery service during the festival of Passover. Cowan recalls that the younger children, including herself, delivered specialist Passover foods to the well-heeled homes of Jews resident in middle class districts outside of the Gorbals.¹¹⁴ In 1922 this employment of Jewish children had tragic consequences for one twelve year old girl who was murdered for the two pounds that she had collected on such an errand in the district of Whiteinch, several miles away from Jewish areas of residence.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless the safety and supervision of children in Jewish households had to be weighed against economic survival. Mrs Rose imagined that the employment of her daughters in her own drapery shop circumvented many of the temptations which lay in wait for young women. According to one of her daughters, Mrs Rose believed firmly in self-employment for Jews, ‘She believed in being your own boss...she thought if we lived, and didn’t have a boss we would have a freer life. But that wasn’t the case.’

¹¹³ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913.

¹¹⁴ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, pp.31-34.

¹¹⁵ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.153.

Here the respondent is referring to the restrictions that such a life imposed on the adult daughters of immigrant women, confines that were part of a gendered system of protection against assimilation. Mrs Rose had eight children, and within this family different opportunities were offered to sons and daughters. The three boys had the chance of taking over the business, or of studying. But for the five girls a more restrictive future was envisaged:

...my mother never paid much attention to our education, she didn't think it was important because she says [sic] you get married and you have families and what good is your education and that was her philosophy if you can call it that... Well, I don't know. I'd have liked to have stayed on at school. I'd have liked to have done commerce, even teaching, which I think I had a good chance because I wasn't silly. I mean I was clever enough you know, I wasn't brilliant but I was clever enough to pass any exams, and that was that. But you took it, your mother said you do this and you did it.¹¹⁶

In this example the girls all left school at the age of fourteen years, despite the fact that the family, although not wealthy, managed to achieve a comfortable standard of living. Daughters within this family continued to work in one or other of the family businesses until they married and became mothers.

Miss Meiklejohn commented on evidence of such shop keeping in 1907, 'In some cases a woman keeps a small shop while her husband is employed at some other work.'¹¹⁷ In the 1901 Census further evidence can be detected of this trend. Isidor Thal who is described as a 'Jewellery Traveller' headed the Jewish family living at No. 6 Caledonia Road in the Gorbals. His wife Rasa ostensibly has no occupation, which of

¹¹⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

¹¹⁷ *Meiklejohn*, p188.

course is usual on the Census, but his three daughters are all usefully employed. The eldest –Lina –is described as a dressmaker who works at home; Rebecca is the owner of a tobacconist's shop, and Rachael is an assistant in a tobacconist's shop – possibly that owned by her elder sister. All of these women were in their early twenties and born in Russia, and it is likely therefore that their education was minimal. Yet notwithstanding this they seem to have been able to find the means of a livelihood beyond the confines of the sweatshop.¹¹⁸

For the majority of women, ethnicity, gender, and class interacted to influence economic behaviour. In the first generation, many women did not have the luxury of choice about whether or not to earn money, and in any case life as an economically dependent housewife may not have been culturally familiar to them. Enterprising women like Mrs Rose who made a success of their business had a huge influence on the upward mobility of some Jewish families. However, between the first and second generations it was recognised that upward social mobility had different implications for young men and women in the second generation. In Russia, the education of girls was not common amongst the working classes.¹¹⁹ Learning a skill, such as sewing however was viewed as advantageous and if able, families would make sacrifices so that daughters could be apprenticed as seamstresses. In Scotland, there was certainly less of a cachet attached to this. Young women who sewed might well be condemned to low wages and poor working conditions. Retail work was a respectable and perhaps attractive alternative to this for upwardly mobile families. However, the main career ambition for immigrant daughters was to marry.

¹¹⁸ *Census of Glasgow 1901* Enumeration district 29, registration district 644,12.

¹¹⁹ Stampfer, 'Gender Differentiation and Education of the Jewish Woman in Nineteenth Century Eastern Europe' pp.187-211; Weissman, D. 'Baiss Yaakov: A historical model for Jewish feminists' in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, pp.139-148.

Marriage and integration.

This section is included in this chapter on work because marriage was an economic strategy for Jewish families, and the destinies of children in terms of education and work were often bound up with marriage aims. Like all her brothers and sisters, Mrs Green left school at the then statutory leaving age of fourteen years. In this family, staying on at school was not an option, even for the boys. They were just too poor. Work was always available on the barra, but this way of earning a living was very precarious and so was sometimes subsidised by the children taking on more formal employment as it became available. To this end Mrs Green went to work in a local carpet-making factory. According to her testimony, she was the only Jewish employee in this well-known textile manufacturer.¹²⁰ However she claims that she had ‘no bother’ with the non-Jewish employees, many of whom she described as ‘my pals’.¹²¹ Mrs Green acknowledges that this was an unusual occupation for a young Jewish girl; however, there is a clear indication in her testimony that the second generation of Jews in Calton sometimes interacted socially with non-Jews. This had ambivalent outcomes. Mrs Green was the second oldest of eight children and among her siblings, three married non-Jews:

Well to tell you the truth I canny tell you much about them,
because they married out...and they never kept up at all,
they went their own way.¹²²

This was a family tragedy for the immigrant parents:

¹²⁰ Oral testimony of Mrs AG. Born 1905. The factory in question is Templeton’s carpet factory, no longer producing, but the building survives and is a well-known local landmark at the edge of Glasgow Green.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

Well what they done, they sat Shiva [ritual week of mourning after a death] Shiva as you know. Well they sat Shiva – for that’s them dead.¹²³

For the women who had come from Eastern Europe the imperative to marry had been absolute. An unmarried woman had no worth in Yiddish culture. For the new generation of women born in Scotland, marriage was still the most important element of their personal future. In the late 1930s a society still existed in Glasgow to assist ‘needy Jewish brides’.¹²⁴ The *Hachnasath Kallah* Society had its traditional origins in raising funds to enable women without a dowry to marry. By this period, the help it gave was probably more ordinarily pragmatic through supplying a wedding trousseau and facilities for the celebration that followed a marriage.¹²⁵ Now the decision about when to marry and whom to marry, entailed options for young Jewish women in the second generation that had not been widely available in Russia. In this important life choice for young women, mothers carried the heavy burden of responsibility for continuity of an entire community. If daughters went astray and failed to marry, or perhaps worse, chose a non-Jewish partner, this was regarded as both a familial tragedy and a collective one. Some elements of Eastern Europe tradition persisted for a time in respect of female destinies. Strict arrangement of marriages accompanied by a dowry system, did not survive long in Scotland; however neither did it come to an abrupt halt. In this matter, issues of ethnicity, social class and variable rates of assimilation to Scottish norms interacted to dictate the pace of conformity with marriage arrangements based on romantic love.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1938-9. p.52.

¹²⁵ See *The Jewish Echo* 03/03/1978 article entitled ‘Nostalgia for Gorbals’.

Many immigrant women left Eastern Europe already married or betrothed. However some left their homelands precisely because of the lack of a suitable partner. Part of the legend of migration for women included the possibility that in the western world a poor girl could make a good match without the benefit of either a dowry or a *schadchan* (matchmaker) both unthinkable in Eastern Europe. Again Yeziarska chronicled this aspiration in her fiction:

I was a poor Melamid's (teacher of Hebrew) daughter in Savel, Poland. In my village, a girl without a dowry was a dead one. The only kind of man that would give a look on a girl without money was a widower with a dozen children, or someone with a hump or on crutches...Then came the letter from Hannah Hayyeh, Zlata's daughter, that fired me up to go to America for my lover. "America is a lover's land," said Hannah Heyyeh's letter. "In America millionaires fall in love with poorest girls. Matchmakers are out of style, and a girl can get herself married to a man without the worries for a dowry."¹²⁶

Like Yeziarska's heroine, immigrant women who arrived in Glasgow may have already been exposed to ideas, which they soon came to recognise as normal social life in the Scotland, where marriage arrangements changed under local conditions. In the Russian Pale a Jewish man's status was dependent on the degree of religious learning he and his family had, but a woman's standing was fundamentally determined by her married status. A good match was thus made when a woman married a man of learning and had an appropriate dowry as well as the necessary skills to support him. In Scotland, married women were expected to have a much more subsidiary role economically. This fundamental shift impacted on Jewish men in terms of their social

¹²⁶ Yeziarska, *Hungry Hearts*, pp.114-5.

aspirations, but it also impacted on women within a marriage arrangement. Migration had a profound effect on expectations of marriage for women. In Scotland, Jewish women who wished to make a good match, and conform to local behaviour, would be keener to seek a man who had skills as a provider for the family.

Furthermore, the widespread prejudice that immigrant Jews were only interested in making money and increasing their business influence cast a shadow over traditional systems of arranged marriages that involved a financial transaction. Betrothals settled this way lacked respectability in Scotland, as the following letter to the *Echo* in 1929 makes clear:

Sir, - Your article 'the modern Schadchan,' once again brings to light that cancer of Jewish social life, namely the dowry system. I realise I am attacking an age old Hebrew tradition and convention, but antiquity does not mitigate the vileness of this practice...it degrades both the man and the woman, and in her case strikes a mortal blow at her pride and self respect, for she cannot get away from the humiliating fact that she is buying a husband...In conclusion, if Jewish parents would decline to offer monetary reward to a man who will take a surplus daughter off their hands via marriage they would thereby eradicate that odious character –the dowry hunter.¹²⁷

The persistence of arranged marriages owed much to personal circumstance; some girls might be unlucky and fail to meet a partner by the usual routes at Jewish social engagements. However, the stage of acculturation achieved within the family generally dictated if a marriage arrangement was considered appropriate. If Jews moved out of

¹²⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 03/05/1929.

absolute poverty and felt more comfortable with the Scottish environment they usually accepted that the old ways were not necessarily the best. Formally negotiated marriages based upon an economic agreement became less popular; instead, arrangements that ensured prospective partners were introduced to the right kind of people, took its place. This shift in tradition might still involve a financial payment to a matchmaker, but had the advantage of allowing the woman and man concerned to make up their own minds –romantic love was not out of the question. It also made certain that the partners were both Jewish. This was an entirely respectable solution which was acceptable to more integrated Jews who were keen to keep their children Jewish, but not stay wedged in the past. As a young man Mr. Taylor created plenty of business for *Schadchans*:

Oh heavens almighty I was introduced to umpteen by these Schadchans – in no time at all I would give them an engagement ring, and in no time at all I would leave them and forget about the ring – keep it! And they gave me a gold watch, which I kept!¹²⁸

According to this interviewee such matchmaking was prolific in his youth, yet given the evident lack of seriousness attached to it by the new generation of Jews, some parents may have found older interventionist traditions more reliable despite their lack of Scottish respectability. This is evident in the following advertisement from 1930:

Young lady of well-known respectable family, clever and of attractive appearance, experienced in business and smart at housekeeping, desires the acquaintance of a suitable young gentleman (local or from the province),

¹²⁸ Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born: 1903.

who runs his own business (in which case a substantial sum would accompany the lady), or would like to join the business of her parents. Most genuine proposition in strictest confidence.¹²⁹

All the traditional attributes of a good Yiddisher wife are on display here. Immigrant women who had accepted this role in Russia or soon after arriving in Scotland then often had the impossible task of convincing their daughters to carry on this tradition. This created a dilemma for young women in the second generation. Education to a life beyond the confines of a traditional role took various forms. Exposure through schooling to non-Jewish friends and later on the pleasures of the dancehall, which was the main vehicle for social interaction amongst young working class Glaswegians, introduced Jewish women to a Scottish urban culture.

The Jewish establishment at Garnethill certainly recognised that young women in the slums needed a helping hand to resist some of the temptations available to them and invited them to join the Jewish Girls' Social and Recreational Club. At the point where religious education probably ended, if indeed it had ever begun, Jewish girls could meet up three nights per week to learn skills which could be of use to them in their working lives and in their future life as wives and mothers; they likewise could socialise with their Jewish peers in a safe local environment. The club was begun in 1923 and Mrs Rose recalls her experience of membership as 'a very happy time.' However, she was under no illusions about the purpose of the venture:

¹²⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 18/07/1930 p.5.

They were the ladies patronising the poor girls (laughs).
But never mind we enjoyed ourselves, it was nice, but I
was well aware of the background.¹³⁰

The protection of young women workers was part of the agenda of the Girls' Club movement.¹³¹ But this had an added impetus for Jewish communities. Jewish girls like their Scottish counterparts were subject to an education that stressed their domestic and marital destinies, this future included the aspiration that after marriage, women would not take part in paid employment. Young Jewish women in many ways were presented with a packaged future as housewives, which given the experiences of their mothers, may have appealed to them as lessening the burden of work in their lives, but ironically gave them fewer choices outside of the home. Mrs Green had non-Jewish friends and she worked for a while in a distinctly non-Jewish environment, but according to her testimony, she never considered marrying out. Loyalty to her family was given as the reason. Nevertheless, compelled by poverty, she trod what many would have considered a risky path, one that many Jewish families worked actively to avoid. Although education was usually thought of as less important for girls, there were some kinds of employment which were considered unsuitable for Jewish women in Scotland, or were viewed as inviting trouble. Some examination of examples of these is necessary before ending this analysis of work.

Gender, work and integration.

Two types of service work commonly undertaken by women will be examined here. These are domestic work and nursing, types of employment that are at opposite ends of a hierarchy of women's work already in place by the start of the twentieth century.

¹³⁰ Oral testimony of Mrs MR Born: 1909.

¹³¹ Spence, J. 'Working for Jewish girls: Lily Montagu, girls' clubs and industrial reform,' *Women's History Review* 13:3 (2004) pp.492-3.

These serve as examples of the way that gender influenced opportunities for women, but ethnicity also intervened in this process even as a second generation of women became more integrated within Scotland. It is alleged that Jewish women were especially disdainful of domestic employment, which was seen as a last resort.¹³² This is probably a fairly true reflection of sensibilities amongst Jews. Young women in immigrant communities, however impoverished, would have balked at the prospect of living and working in a non-kosher household. Moreover, Jews did not view paid domestic service as a good preparation for marriage in the way that non-Jewish society saw this as training in domestic skills. Paid domestic work performed outside the home was of little future use to the unmarried Jewish woman and might bring her into contact with unwanted influences. The different domestic rhythms and practices of the kosher household would also have been alien to non-Jewish employers. Nevertheless as Glenn points out, many immigrant women who arrived alone in places of settlement did become servants if they had no other skills to offer. This option might at least allow them to save money for a dowry and escape from servitude into marriage.¹³³ However, widows and deserted wives often did not have this luxury of choice. These women did engage in domestic service. Census returns for the Gorbals in 1901 contain many examples of Jewish widows employed as washerwomen and charwomen. For example, in one short section of Crown Street, which was a central area of the Jewish Gorbals no fewer than five such women engaged in domestic employment can be identified.¹³⁴ In this instance even a generally unreliable record of female employment

¹³² Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, pp.16-18; Marks, L. 'The luckless waifs and strays of humanity: Irish and Jewish immigrant unwed mothers in London, 1870-1939,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992) pp.129-130.

¹³³ Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.17.

¹³⁴ Area including and between nos. 12 and 30 Crown Street, enumeration district 32, Census of Glasgow 1901.

reveals that the established narrative of Glasgow Jewry inadequately describes the complex reality of Jewish women's working lives.¹³⁵

In oral testimony, the employment of domestic help by Jews does surface. Jewish families who had the means did employ live-in maids. This happened even in the Gorbals and allowed married women who had large numbers of children, to carry on wage earning as shop-keepers, peddlers or tailor's wives. However, in these cases the young women employed were usually non-Jewish. This situation is doubtless a reflection of the poor remuneration to be had from domestic service, and the low status that Jews attached to this work. In Glasgow, char work and laundering done by Jewish women seems to have occurred more commonly amongst widows or married women who were in the direst of circumstances having been deserted.

Like domestic service, nursing was also a job seen as an extension of women's natural capacities. Before the late nineteenth century however, it was not deemed respectable work. The professionalisation of nursing that occurred from this time onwards transformed this status, and by the early twentieth century it had become one of the more desirable occupations for girls who had a little education.¹³⁶ In Scotland, working class women from good homes, and the daughters of the lower middle class, might aspire to become nurses. Young women from professional middle class homes also aimed for this career. Things were rather different for women in immigrant families. Nursing was not seen as a desirable job, and it took some time for this attitude to even begin changing. The idea of a job that might take a girl away from home, entail working on the Sabbath, and that was associated with spinsterhood and or Christian

¹³⁵ Collins, *Be Well!*, p.37. Here it is claimed that the small number of Jewish women working as domestics were generally the unmarried relatives of householders.

¹³⁶ Abel-Smith, B. *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London, 1975) pp148-154.

religious orders, was a deeply unattractive prospect to Jewish families. While medicine was positively encouraged as a profession for young Jewish men, nursing lacked any redeeming features for girls. Ethnic pressures allowed this situation to persist until well into the twentieth century, and although some girls may have bucked this trend, they may well have paid a high price for it by becoming alienated from their families. Of the small number of Jewish women who did enter nursing in the early twentieth century, most appear to have done so as a route into midwifery.¹³⁷ The latter was evidently considered more respectable, and was probably more lucrative.

This is not to suggest that acculturation did not have major effects on the status of Jewish women as workers in Glasgow, but changes have either been neglected, and, or misunderstood. In Scotland women were defined primarily by their married status and this was a measure of their attachment to the workplace. Married women first and foremost, were expected to be domestic and defined as such by being wives and or, mothers. This allowed Jewish women whose status had also always been conferred by marriage, to slip easily into this societal order. However, Jewish women in Eastern Europe had been accustomed to accepting a parallel life of work, and their status as workers was undoubtedly eroded in Scotland. At a material level however, the hard work entailed in running a home, mothering children and being in business may not have seemed such an attractive option to acculturated daughters. And it would also seem to be the case that some mothers also hoped for an easier life for their daughters. Rickie Burman has noted this strange 'personality transformation' that is assumed to have taken place after immigration, and has also shown it to be misleading.¹³⁸

The rapid upward mobility of many Jewish families, and the hidden nature of women's work have allowed an unspoken assumption to be perpetuated. This consists of the

¹³⁷ Tropp, A. *Jews in the Professions in Great Britain 1891-1991* (London, 1991) p.51.

¹³⁸ Burman, 'The Jewish woman as breadwinner,' p.28.

notion that immigrant women were in the main, homemakers. The exodus of Jews from slum localities to middle class suburbs has undoubtedly coloured the retrospective view of women's work, but as the following chapters will explain, suburban housewives were not an overnight creation.

Chapter 6: Jewish suburban life.

Polly Shulman was born in 1893, and as a young woman lived at a good address in the Queen's Park district of Glasgow, a well-heeled Victorian suburb some two miles from the Gorbals. The Shulman family were certainly not slum dwellers.¹ She married in 1915, becoming Mrs Winicour. Her husband was a Gorbals man who lived at one of the better addresses in the Laurieston segment of the area, and is described on their wedding certificate as a 'London manager'.² Mr. Winicour was the son of a 'soft goods hawker', which was a typical first generation occupation, making him a prime example of second-generation, upward mobility.³ It is evident though, that this man had made a good match in marrying Polly, whose family had already advanced to the suburbs. The couple settled at an address in the Crosshill district, close by the Shulman parental home. This family saga demonstrates the kind of occupational mobility experienced by some immigrants across two generations and the residential relocation that accompanied this. Polly Schulman's father was described as a 'master cabinetmaker,' but given the up-market address of the family home and Polly's own pre marital occupation as a 'clerk', it seems likely that this family had their own furniture-making business that provided a comfortable living.

The example of Polly Shulman introduces a known phenomenon of Jewish life in Western Europe and the New World, that of immigrant upward mobility. This chapter will examine the part played by women in movement away from the Jewish quarter in

¹ SJAC. Uncatalogued item, genealogical database, and available for consultation there.

² Extracted from: *Registrar General for Scotland, Marriages in the district of Gorbals 1915*. Polly's marriage took place at the South Portland Street Synagogue in the Gorbals on 29/07/1915. The exact nature of his managerial job is sadly illegible, however it is known that this man became a cinema owner in later life, so his profession is likely to have been in the entertainment industry. I am grateful to Harvey Kaplan, Director of the SJAC for providing this information.

³ Ibid.

the Gorbals, and how this apparently commonplace event was both a reflection of changes in class and gender relations, and at the same time served further to shape such change. For Jewish women, the exchange of a two-roomed apartment in the Gorbals for life in a Glasgow suburb could be as big a step in the migration process as stepping off the ship in a British port. The Jewish Gorbals was an 'open ghetto' wherein movement out was an ongoing development for those individuals and families who strived for a more comfortable life.⁴ This drift of families from the familiarity of the Gorbals resulted in new centres of Jewish residence and commerce springing up across the South Side suburbs of Glasgow, a process that has never been examined from a historical perspective. Indeed, at a more general level, the experience of twentieth century suburban living is under researched in Scotland.

Suburbia has become captive to a plethora of contradictory collective images. On the one hand it is seen as home to the socially ambitious and well off, on the other, it is damned as the seat of all that is rigidly parochial and lacking in appropriate urban sophistication. Outwith Scotland, and to a large extent even within it, a popular view also exists which sees suburbia as being somehow – elsewhere – and peculiarly un-Scottish. West of Scotland collective images of suburbia usually conjure residential sprawls in the south east of England, or mythical images of North American bungalow living that owe much to Hollywood portrayals. The close association of Glasgow with its industrial past and with congested tenement living has doubtless contributed to this prevalent misconception. Scottish cities did in fact suburbanise, and Glasgow in particular provides an interesting case study of the history of British suburbanisation from the nineteenth century onwards. It is the somewhat different style and smaller

⁴ See: Werbner, P. 'Avoiding the ghetto: Pakistani migrants and settlement shifts in Manchester,' in Drake, M (ed.) *Time, Family and Community*, (Oxford, 1996) pp. 240-260.

scale of Glasgow suburbs that set them apart from the English and North American cases. Secondary literature on suburbanisation generally has little to say about Glasgow, save to note that the tradition of tenement living continued into nineteenth century suburbs and that this is a peculiarity.⁵ Although the remit of this thesis does not permit detailed examination of this process, it has been recognised that Jewish immigrants were assiduous in pursuit of the suburban 'good life' and that this forms part of their history of adaptation to both British and American societies.⁶

An upwardly mobile redistribution of the Jewish population, from an urban core to suburban periphery, occurred in all UK cities where there was settlement. This rapid social mobility is generally remarked upon as characteristic of Jewish immigrants.⁷ In Glasgow, the significance that this relocation obtains is heightened because of the massive problems experienced in the city with regard to housing provision. The fact that poor immigrants were able to make this transition is especially notable. It is the adaptation of women that will be examined here, beginning first with some discussion of general motivations for moving to the suburbs.

"We want more room"⁸

Glasgow's Medical Officer of Health made a plea for 'more room' in 1916. No doubt this comment echoed the frustration many Glaswegians felt at the seemingly inexorable problems of the city's overcrowded slums. Yet without doubt, housing

⁵ Clapson, M. *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA*. (Oxford, 2003) p.14.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 107-124.

⁷ A general consensus that this trend was universal existed in the sociological work done in the 1970s see Cromer, *A Comparison of Jewish and Non-Jewish Family Life*, (Unpublished thesis, Nottingham, 1973) p.173. For challenge to this consensus see Carrier, J. W. 'A Jewish Proletariat' in Mindlin, M. & Bermant, C. (eds.) *Explorations: An Annual on Jewish Themes*. (Chicago, 1968)

⁸ Chalmers, A. K. *Health and Housing* (London, 1916) p.13.

conditions worsened even further for many Glaswegians after the Great War. Popular memory of the interwar years often consists of images of unemployment and growing poverty levels. Indeed within Glasgow, industrial unrest and housing shortages form powerful and lasting memories of the time. However, this picture needs to be treated with caution, as there is another image of Glasgow in these years that is less often examined. Alongside urban squalor, the Glasgow of comfortable suburbia and conspicuous consumerism also burgeoned for the more fortunate. Immigrant Jews who had made a success of settlement in the city increasingly found themselves part of the latter scenario, and it is during these years that they were motivated to move away from slum living in growing numbers.

Mrs Simon's immigrant grandparents had settled in different parts of the UK. Thus her father grew up in Edinburgh and her mother in Leeds. The couple began their married life before the outbreak of the First World War, and due to business opportunities relocated to Dundee. However, Mrs Simon's mother could not settle in this city:

My mother had come from a very comfortable family in Leeds...[She] had never seen Dundee... I think it was a room and kitchen up a close and she was horrified, she hated it! And there was a Jewish community there but they were all older, she was only nineteen. She didn't like it.⁹

This family moved on to Glasgow and bypassed residence in the Gorbals altogether by settling in the suburb of Govanhill, an area immediately south of the Gorbals. This example again highlights that the Gorbals settlement was not entirely socially and culturally enclosed, and suggests that by this point Jewish settlement was starting to become more fluid. Govanhill was a respectable district with a higher standard of

⁹ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914.

accommodation than most Jews enjoyed. A move from the Gorbals to Govanhill would have been a step up in the world for most Jewish families, and so regarded as highly desirable. However, Mrs Simon's mother rejected this limited ambition:

So they moved to Glasgow...and she still didn't like living there because she had been used to a big house... She couldn't understand how a whole family could be in one room...she couldn't understand all this, the living different.¹⁰

By 1920, the family had moved to Kelvingrove in Glasgow's West End. The Scottish tradition of tenement life, where so much depended on communality of interests, was a new and unwelcome experience for Mrs Simon's mother. At the same time, the new flat in Kelvingrove was still in a tenement. No doubt, despite being a newcomer, she had learned that in Glasgow not all tenements were the same. They were certainly not the preserve of the working classes; instead tenement living was highly stratified according to area, size of the apartment and the amenities surrounding it. Likewise, not all Jewish communities were the same. Jews in the west of Glasgow were part of the Garnethill congregation, and generally this attachment had more cachet. Mrs Simon attended school in the west of Glasgow, and obtained her religious education at Garnethill where she mixed with her West-End peer group. This family were determinedly upwardly mobile. The new accommodation was larger, there was room for a maid, and Glasgow's prestigious Kelvingrove Park was on the doorstep. Moreover, this aspirational move seems to have been instigated by female ambition for a better life.

Mrs Simon's parents were fortunate. Evidently they had the money to afford this

¹⁰ Ibid.

upwardly mobile move, but in addition, they also had the confidence. Moving to the suburbs and out of working class life is assumed to be a turning point in Jews achieving a sense of confidence and closer identification with Scottish life. Yet this may be a misleading belief as the Gorbals did afford a sense of security for many Jewish immigrants, despite its slum status. This was possibly even truer for women in the community. Women whose domestic and working lives revolved around their own home, those of their neighbours, and the local shops and workshops, came to be familiar with this milieu. Moreover, knowledge of life lived in the streets where their children played undoubtedly increased this familiarity. The Gorbals streets may have been grime-filled, but this does not preclude the fact that immigrants cleaved to what had become a fairly established home for many.

However, although Jewish families in their Gorbals may have experienced an emotional sense of permanence, in reality this was a transient society. Jews moved on, as they became economically more secure and achieved the level of optimism needed to take this step. Many women were highly motivated to follow this path. For some immigrants, Scotland itself was really a staging post in a longer process of step-migration. During the 1930s the *Jewish Echo* included regular advertisements for shipping companies, which carried families off to Canada, the USA and Australia. Glaswegian Jews apparently joined the larger stream of Scottish emigrants steadily leaving this country for a better life elsewhere. Nevertheless, the majority evidently felt that they had travelled far enough, and aspirations to move on became fixed on making the best of what was available locally. Increasingly there was a great deal of housing available in Glasgow, if families could afford this. Moving out of the slum was the next logical step in putting down Scottish roots, and a first step on the local upwardly

mobile ladder that often had differing implications for women and men.

Far from being passive actors in this move, there is evidence that women negotiated a new social space for themselves; one that adopted many of the norms of suburban life, but allowed them to retain their Jewish identity and in many instances, a continuing economic role. Jewish women were beneficiaries of the move to suburbs in terms of health, comfort and educational opportunities for children. Nevertheless life in the UK's interwar suburbs has generally come to represent the zenith of traditional gender relations, before the Second World War intervened to disturb this. Within this representation the middle classes are a socially and spatially segregated group and much of this segregation is predicated on the identity of women as economically dependant housewives. The case of Jewish families in the Glasgow suburbs is a good example of how a common perception does not in fact mirror a universal reality. Suburban relocation did not always divorce women from the local Jewish economy. For instance, although families did take an upwardly mobile route to the suburbs, the economic role of women was not always relinquished immediately, or indeed over the medium term. Evidence will show that for Jewish women there was not an inevitable symmetry between moving to the suburbs and becoming 'just a housewife' with all the implications for secondary status that this description implies. However, as was the case in the Gorbals, female economic activity was often concealed in family enterprises. Moreover, at this point women also began to take a more prominent position in many communal enterprises and an active, as opposed to passive interest, in local Jewish politics. The latter aspects of women's lives will be taken up in chapter 7, but it is necessary to note that upward mobility did not always signal either relinquishment of ethnic identity, or the acceptance of idealised gender roles, in

exchange for the norms of Scottish suburban middle class life. The changes in behaviour that did occur were provisional and negotiable, as opposed to forming an abrupt watershed.

So far this study has given much attention to the relationship between women and their local environment. Clearly the way that immigrant women adapted to the slum district of the Gorbals, and found ways to make a life there is an important element in this examination. The exchange of an overcrowded slum dwelling, for the many comparative advantages of housing in the suburbs signified not simply a geographical shift, but a social and cultural transformation also. In this context, Wasserstein has alerted attention to the scant recognition that cultural adjustments have been given in studies of immigrant Jews in the UK, but he does claim on the other hand, that social change 'has been carefully mapped and studied.'¹¹ This is true, but only up to a point. Within such studies the fact of the upward mobility of the Jewish group is usually taken for granted in Britain. Even the most recent general history of British Jews states that 'In the interwar period, the number of Jews who rose into the lower-middle and middle class increased substantially.'¹² Yet however much this belief is repeated, it still fails to explain fully why this happened. Numerous sociological, as well as historical studies have counted and catalogued evidence of the remarkable upward social mobility of immigrant Jews, but beyond rational statistics there is little attention given to how this passage was experienced at the level of the everyday. Most particularly, there has been no focus on the impact of this on women in immigrant families. The most obvious evidence of Jewish social mobility is demonstrated in house moves from inner city slums to suburban spaces. Having 'more room' signalled

¹¹ Wasserstein, B. 'Children of Magnolia Street,' *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 38 (2002) pp.171-181.

¹² Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p.196.

not only an escape from overcrowding, but a change in social relations for Jews.

Women, who worked towards their own relocation and that of their families, knew this. It seems clear that they felt confident enough to negotiate such change. However, in the context of the West of Scotland escaping from slum life was an unrealised dream for many families for reasons that will be examined next.

In search of more room.

The most obvious reason why families would move from the Gorbals was of course for better housing. The history of Glasgow's housing problems is a sorry tale by and large. The phenomenal growth of the city during the nineteenth century, coupled with a general belief that bad housing was the accepted lot of the feckless classes, meant that Glasgow never made sustained improvements in housing provision during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Despite an expansion in middle class housing on the city's periphery, various attempts at slum clearance in the inner city had little lasting impact, as each demolition was simply replaced with more housing set to become the slum of the future. The plea for 'more room' is certainly a comment that recognised this phenomenon. In the wake of the First World War however, a more determined attitude emerged. Dependence upon private enterprise was deemed to be the culprit in the creation of Glasgow's inner city slums.¹³ Encouraged by legislation enacted nationally, the City Corporation decided to be more interventionist in this perennial crisis.¹⁴ Municipal involvement with house building and letting did not mean that the private landlord disappeared though, and the majority of working class families

¹³ Pacione, M. *Glasgow: The Socio-Spatial Development of the City* (Chichester, 1995.) pp. 154-158; Pooley, C. G. 'Patterns on the ground' in Dauntton *et al.*, *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Vol. 3, pp. 453-465.

¹⁴ Beginning with The Royal Commission on Industrial Housing Report in 1917, successive Acts between 1919 and 1938 served to encourage Glasgow Corporation in their attempts to improve housing by municipal schemes. For summary of legislation see: Cramond, R. *Housing policy in Scotland a Study in State Assistance 1919-1964* (Edinburgh, 1966) and Pooley, 'Patterns on the ground,' pp. 429-465

in the interwar years still depended on one or two-roomed tenement housing in the private rented sector as the following table of housing statistics for Glasgow shows.

| <i>No of Rooms</i> | <i>Population no.</i> | <i>Percentage no.</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Roomed house | 115,490 | 11.0% |
| 2 | 467,725 | 44.4% |
| 3 | 267,814 | 25.4% |
| 4 | 101,191 | 9.6% |
| 5 | 43, 548 | 4.1% |
| 6 | 17,744 | 1.7% |

Table 6.1. *House size amongst Glaswegian population: source Census 1931. Reproduced from Mooney, G. *The State, Housing and the Reserve Army of Labour Glasgow 1850-1939* (Glasgow, 1983) p.24.*

Jews for the most part still lived in areas of the highest population density. Moreover, overcrowding impacted heavily on women trying to raise families, and who sometimes took on paid employment in the home. In reality many slum areas were left untouched by interwar municipal ambition. By and large the new council housing schemes became home to those citizens trusted by the city fathers to take care of the properties and able to pay rents, which although subsidised were still relatively high.¹⁵ New estates such as those at Mosspark in the south of the city, and Knightswood in the west, housed the respectable working classes and lower middle classes in properties that were of good quality and comparatively generous proportions.¹⁶ These homes were a reflection of the ‘cottage architecture’ favoured at this time for the improvement of the

¹⁵ Melling, J ‘Clydeside rent struggles and the making of labour politics in Scotland, 1900-1939’ in Rodger, R. *Scottish Housing in the Twentieth Century*, (Leicester, 1989) p.76.
¹⁶ Begg, T. *50 Special Years A Study in Scottish Housing* (London, 1987) pp.5-17; Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, p.55.

labouring classes.¹⁷ However, the unskilled, the regularly unemployed, and those without the wherewithal to pay higher council rents were left to fester in their tenement single-ends.

In the West of Scotland, slum dwellers either had no hope of moving away, or pinned their hopes on the beneficence of the municipal authority. Buying a house was really not a widespread option. Indeed Smout claims that Scots have always been ‘unwilling historically to spend so high a proportion of their family income on housing as their southern neighbours and most Europeans.’¹⁸ This was despite the fact that momentum in this economic sector meant house purchase was increasingly an alternative to renting within the UK.¹⁹ In relative terms, suburban growth in the owner-occupier sector always lagged behind in Glasgow as compared to all other UK cities, and even other Scottish cities. The latter situation was certainly due in part to the efforts of Glasgow Corporation in concentrating on building homes to let.²⁰ Moreover, amongst Glaswegians, financial barriers in terms of uncertain employment and higher local taxes levied on private housing, seem to have been equalled by psychological barriers against borrowing – taking out a mortgage was not necessarily the done thing.²¹ Nevertheless, in contrast to the majority of working class families in Glasgow, many Jews evidently did not see themselves as life-long tenants.

¹⁷ Maver, *Glasgow* pp.259-260; Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, pp.54-55.

¹⁸ Smout, *Century of the Scottish People*, p.36.

¹⁹ Begg, T. *Housing Policy in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996) pp.37-39.

²⁰ O’Carroll, A. ‘The influence of local authorities on the growth of owner occupation 1914-1939,’ *Planning Perspectives*, 11: 1 (1996) pp.55-72.

²¹ Reliable figures for the rate of owner occupation and the nature of this in different locations in this period are rarely available, and so this subject has remained a matter of conjecture. See: O’Carroll, A. ‘Tenements to bungalows: class and the growth of home ownership before World War II,’ *Urban History*, 24:2 (1997) pp.221-241.

In the interwar years, the Jewish population steadily increased, but even so, Jews still formed only around 1 per cent of the overall city population. Despite this, the proliferation of Jewish establishments away from the Gorbals settlement clearly indicated an upwardly mobile shift in housing terms. Prejudice in the rented sector, together with the fact that this was one convention of Scottish life that they had not grown to accept as inevitable, meant that in relative terms Jews seem to have strived to become home owners at a much greater pace, and in much larger numbers than non-Jewish Glaswegians. However, initial moves from the Gorbals slum usually took place within the private rented sector, and were to tenement homes. But even finding privately rented accommodation outside the slums was often a struggle. In 1928, the *Jewish Echo* reported on the difficulties experienced:

Our attention has been called to the difficulties which Jews encounter in the way of obtaining houses...We know a number of respectable Jewish families who live in districts which are far out of accord with their intellectual and social standing, but are compelled to stay there...There are others who live in hopelessly overcrowded houses... is there any justification for the attitude towards out people, taken up by both landlord and tenant? ²²

Such comments reveal the desire of many Jews to be upwardly mobile and escape the inner city, but also the difficulties they faced in doing so. Within the Jewish Gorbals social stratification had rapidly developed, with the well off moving to the largest and most comfortable of Gorbals flats. An enclave within the enclave actually developed; a minority were fortunate to live in commodious flats that had indoor plumbing and were

²² *Jewish Echo* 08/06/1928. Editorial p.3.

large enough to accommodate domestic servants in relative comfort. Problems only developed when such families became sufficiently ambitious to want more. The wealthiest Jews had long been bypassing local antipathy by renting or buying houses in nineteenth century suburbs in the south of Glasgow, such as Queen's Park and Pollokshields. Like Mrs Simon's family, some actually crossed the Clyde and moved to the West End of the city. The west had higher status, and Jews who lived here might become part of the older established congregation in Garnethill, so this was a deliberate act of social climbing. In these instances the colour of money seemed to outweigh racist objections on the part of landlords or sellers. For example, Polly Shulman's family appear to have settled early on within a Victorian suburb, but families whose fortunes had taken a little longer to improve, and who had lived for long enough in the Gorbals to absorb the identity of their locality, had bigger problems. On the surface of things, such discrimination was double-faced, being made up of anti-Semitism and wariness about the suitability of slum dwellers. Underneath the surface however, Jews experienced the anti-Semitic strand of this prejudice as more acute.

Braber claims that 'the wish to gain an independent economic status and to better oneself stimulated social mobility. This took place in the framework of Glasgow's economy, with a traditionally strong commercial element and opportunities for small business.'²³ Jews were commonly self-employed. If business went well this may have encouraged them to buy rather than rent. Property ownership became an additional investment for people already accustomed to taking risks with small amounts of capital. This situation differentiates Glasgow Jewry from its English counterparts. In England house purchase by lower income families was much more common than in

²³ Braber, *Integration of Jewish Immigrants*, p.229.

Scotland.²⁴ So that working class Jews in England who became homeowners were not differentiated from their non-Jewish peers in the same way as applied in Glasgow. Moreover, Glasgow Corporation's initial enthusiasm for building high quality municipal housing was soon tempered by the economic realities of the 1930s. Central government did not continue to increase subsidies for this as the economy experienced depression. Yet at the same time, Glasgow struggled even more to get on top of their slum-housing problem. This meant that spacious garden city schemes soon gave way to new, densely populated tenement housing. Altruism simply lost out to utility, and some of the 1930s housing schemes such as Blackhill to the east of the city centre and Possil in the north, later became amongst the most notorious slums in post-war Europe.²⁵ This type of public housing increased the Corporation's share of the housing market to 17 per cent by 1939 but was undoubtedly a less attractive option for those prospective tenants who wished to be upwardly mobile.²⁶ It seems in this instance that Glaswegian Jews did not conform to local working class behaviour, but had their sights set on better things. Yet arriving at the point where house purchase was possible did take time. The *Echo* noted the trend:

The Jews are a thrifty people and are gladly investing their little savings in acquiring a home for their families. We notice with pride the growing number of possessors of the tiny houses and cottages in the suburbs of Glasgow. Yet as is the case with other people, the majority of Jews are, and always will be, depending on the landlords for houses...²⁷

Jews moved from the Gorbals in steady numbers throughout the interwar period, but

²⁴ Pooley, 'Patterns on the ground,' p.445; O'Carroll, 'The influence of local authorities,' p.58.

²⁵ Adams, I. *The Making of Urban Scotland* (London, 1978) pp.173-175; Maver, *Glasgow*, p.260.

²⁶ MacLennan, D. & Gibb, A. *Glasgow, No Mean City to Miles Better* (Glasgow, 1988) p.4-15.

²⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 08/06/1928.

usually first of all, to a rented flat in a Victorian suburb. Evidence in chapter 5 clearly shows that Jewish women were involved in commerce; the spending power that female industry enabled did perhaps allow women to exercise their ambitions in this area.

Moreover housekeeping skills were also implicated, as tenants had to have good references from their factor in order to move up the housing ladder.

Feminist scholarship has often asserted that suburbia is a lifestyle choice that suits men better than women, and inner city living may in fact be preferable for women.²⁸ This argument states that men still have access to the resources of the city by travelling to work there, and are less confined within suburbia because of the needs of children.

However, within the context of Glasgow this type of analysis sits uneasily, because it does not properly account for the very real difficulties presented in inner city slums for women, nor does it engage with the overwhelming advantages of the Glasgow suburbs in comparison. In Glasgow having more room mattered a great deal to women and the suburbs presented many material benefits that were considered liberating.

Yet movement out of the Gorbals had wider implications than merely providing more space and comfort. Indeed many suburban houses built in the 1930s undoubtedly had less actual floor space than the larger Gorbals flats. Evelyn Cowan has recounted that among the many objections her mother made to moving from the Gorbals was the relative size of a suburban kitchen.²⁹ This move was a big step for working class Jewish families and Cowan's mother evidently was anxious about taking it. The first hurdle was to find a house factor sufficiently enlightened to permit Jewish rentals in

²⁸ For review of literature in this area see: Wekerle, G.R. 'Women in the urban environment,' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 5: 3 (1980, supplement to issue) pp.s188-s214.

²⁹ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, p.154.

areas outwith the Gorbals. Sometimes this involved a little duplicity:

Before the First World War it was very, very hard for a Jew to get a house. One landlord after another: 'No Jews!' If your name was Finkleberg then he'd say, 'No'. So you just changed it to Faulkner or something and if you didn't have a Semitic nose then you might get it.³⁰

Mrs Simon recounted a similar story, citing the example of married friends who employed such tactics. Here, the wife conformed more to the image of a local, and she organised the let with the factor.³¹ A practical act of duplicity occurred in most cases rather than a denial of ethnic identity. Prejudice against the movement of Jews to the suburbs was so widespread that many families felt they had little option. The Glasgow Jewish Representative Council discussed the ongoing problem of house factors refusing to let to Jews in 1934. As was usual with sensitive issues such as this, the Council ducked the issue and opted to make no protest. They optimistically stated that the situation was 'righting itself'.³² But at the level of the Gorbals streets many Jews were yet to be convinced of this. Discrimination in the housing market is a recurring theme in oral histories. Mr. Taylor experienced this problem when he tried to move from the Gorbals during the 1930s and approached a factor:

I wanted away from there...I went to McFee who had a house to let in Govanhill and he point blank says he believes in the Jews being together –he rebuffed me, aye. McFee established himself, he gave

³⁰ Quoted in: Rodgers, 'Glasgow Jewry,' p.115.

³¹ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914.

³² SJAC. Minute Book of the *Glasgow Jewish Representative Council*. Minutes of meeting on 29/11/1934. Ref: SOC. REP. 0018.

himself a name for that because others could do it with more finesse, in a more polite way, but he was – he made no bones about it you know what I mean, and nobody liked him – the Jewish people in Glasgow – an anti-Semite number one you know...³³

This factor was evidently alert to the ethnicity of applicants. Intolerance shown by factors may have been a result of individual bigotry, but it also might have been a reflection of wider societal prejudices about Jewish neighbours, the issue is debatable. As shown in chapter 2, the house factor was often a fearsome figure in working class people's lives, and particularly women's lives, as their housekeeping abilities were under constant scrutiny. However despite this, many Jews circumvented prejudice and moved in steady numbers away from the slums. Moreover, in a competitive market where there was an increase in council housing, many factors probably had to put aside such prejudices in order to lease suburban properties that inevitably had higher rents than those in the inner city.

Jewish families who made this move may of course have encountered hostility from neighbours once their identity became known, but this appears to have been couched in genteel distaste more often than not. The periphery of Glasgow's South Side had seen widespread residential development in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth. [These districts are displayed in Maps C and D.] Fishman has pointed out that this period of suburbanisation is dissimilar from what came before, because of the impetus to expand the city in a way that met the needs of a middle class as opposed to an elite.³⁴ This development can certainly be seen in Glasgow. Districts such as

³³ Oral testimony Mr JT. Born: 1903.

³⁴ Fishman, R. 'Bourgeois utopias: visions of suburbia' in Fainstein and Campbell (eds.) *Readings in Urban Theory* 2nd edition (Oxford, 2000) p.28.

Govanhill, Crosshill, Langside, Pollokshields and Shawlands, were built mostly in the latter part of the nineteenth century and provided privately rented housing for all sections of the middle classes. In the case of Govanhill, much of this housing was actually meant to serve the artisan classes.³⁵ Govanhill was eminently suitable for Jews who had ambition, but limited means. Overall, these were congenial localities, the residents of which could travel to work in the city by tramcars and local railway lines. Work and home were absolutely separate for most suburban inhabitants so above all the residential nature of the streets must have been the most striking difference for Gorbals Jews. However, South Side suburbs were supplied with local shops, and there were schools, branch banks, tearooms, public halls, churches and parks in great abundance. Within the context of Britain, no city could lay greater claim to the term 'leafy suburbs' than Glasgow.³⁶ These districts combined the best of both worlds; they were (and are) quite opposite to the usual image of urban grime identified with Glasgow, and they are almost bucolic in their proximity to green open spaces. Yet the centre of Glasgow is within thirty minutes travelling time.

In the 1930s and 1940s another commonplace move from the Gorbals was to Langside for example (see Map D), and this particular shift must have been a real shock to the system -a pleasant shock perhaps-but no less a jolt that involved changes in lifestyle as well as changes in physical space. Absent from view were many of the landmarks of industry characteristic of the Gorbals. Although only a couple of miles from the Gorbals area, Langside is adjacent to parkland and at the time was almost exclusively residential. Alternately, the adjacent suburb of Shawlands provides another example.

³⁵ Pacione, *Glasgow: The Socio-Spatial Development of the City*, pp. 95-6.

³⁶ Cunnison, J and Gilfillan, J. B. S. (eds.) *Third Statistical Account of Scotland: Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1958) pp.569-571 and 628-630.

This suburb had a larger commercial area than most suburban districts and provided a range of shops, banking, solicitors' offices and the like, yet it was orderly and clean in a way that the Gorbals was certainly not. Shawlands also had many places to meet, such as tearooms, dancehalls, and from the 1920s onwards, several cinemas. Evident also were a few pubs, but even so, nothing like the bustling commerce and industry of the Gorbals. From here, numbers of Jewish families then followed a common trajectory, by moving further south as new suburbs sprang up during the 1930s and early 1940s, in districts such as Giffnock, Clarkston, Whitecraigs, and at the southernmost edge of this sprawl, Newton Mearns. These more southerly moves into new housing were often facilitated by house purchase, freeing Jews at last from the problems of anti-Semitism in the rented sector.

By 1931 a third of Glasgow's population lived south of the river.³⁷ And in 1937, the city was significantly extended on all sides, with the addition of some 10,000 acres of land. This territory was annexed from several surrounding counties, including Renfrewshire to the southwest of Glasgow. Glasgow justified this extension on the grounds of the necessity for more residential building land.³⁸ Yet some of the most popular suburbs where Jews eventually settled technically remained in Renfrewshire rather than Glasgow city, despite regular proposals for the city to take possession of this commuter belt.³⁹ By this point, commuting to work in the city from residential suburbs on the South Side had become fairly commonplace. For all practical purposes, Glaswegians, including Jewish Glaswegians, had no apparent difficulty in moving between municipal areas. Physical barriers created for administrative purposes did not

³⁷ Robertson, D. 'Population, past and present' in Cunnison, J. and Gilfillan, J. B. S. *Third Statistical Account of Scotland: Glasgow*. pp.62-3.

³⁸ *The Glasgow Herald* 14/08/1937.

³⁹ Baird, R. 'The machinery of Local Government and Justice' in Cunnison, J. and Gilfillan, J. B. S. *Third Statistical Account*, pp. 419-422.

constitute psychological boundaries.⁴⁰ Areas that expanded significantly in the 1930s thus became suburbs of Glasgow in the minds of most, despite their official county status outwith municipal responsibility. Giffnock for example, remained a territory of East Renfrewshire but absorbed many Glasgow families eager for a more comfortable life in a less congested area that adjoined the city. In the period between 1925 and 1936, no fewer than 1,700 homes intended for sale were built in Giffnock.⁴¹ This situation was doubtless a reflection of the available supply of land which could accommodate lower density semi-detached and terraced housing in this area, but also provides an indication of the demand for this type of suburban residence that surfaced in the 1930s. As suburbia grew and Glasgow expanded, the character of existing suburbs changed in relation to new development. Those nearest to the centre sometimes acquired more commerce in the form of cinemas, hotels, and office space, and became less rigidly residential. Later suburbs, as they expanded south and further away from the centre then took on this mantle of strictly residential districts, where there was little commercial activity save for limited local shops.

The first nineteenth century suburbs usually contained a mixture of housing styles. Crosshill, Langside, Pollokshields and Shawlands all contain many streets of tenement housing as well as detached, semi-detached and terraced villas. Some of these tenements contained small two-roomed apartments and were intended for the respectable working classes; others were very spacious and grand in their proportions boasting perhaps two reception rooms and three or four bedrooms as well as indoor

⁴⁰ The city boundary has at times crossed some popular areas of Jewish residence; some Jews were therefore Glasgow city dwellers and their immediate neighbours were residents of East Renfrewshire. Currently, the majority of the Jewish population are in fact residents within the latter because of the increasing tendency of Jews to move into suburbs further south of the city.

⁴¹ GCA. 'Proposed Extension of City Boundaries', report prepared by Glasgow's Town-Clerk, dated 27/04/1936. Ref: A3/1/342.

bathrooms. This heterogeneity amongst tenements does indeed distinguish Glasgow's housing from residential trends in other large UK cities at the time. Attachment to tenement living was a long lasting feature of Glasgow's housing market.⁴² However, later suburbs which mushroomed from the 1920s onwards tended to give way to terraced housing and villas, reflecting both public health measures that damned tenement living and the greater desire by some for owner occupation. More choice became available in terms of physical space and cost for potential residents. Jewish families often made successive moves in a southerly direction as their fortunes changed, beginning with locally conventional moves to two bed-roomed flats.

Choice of location was of course governed by considerations of cost in the first instance, and by whether or not a family continued to rent or felt bold enough to go ahead and buy. But there were many other factors involved that were determined by lifestyle issues. For women, such issues mirrored changes in gendered roles and the lived experience of Jewish families. Women had to be brave enough to negotiate such new territory in the first instance. The area that a family lived in was a potent marker of status, and immigrants quickly learned the operation of unwritten rules with regard to this. These rules then informed their behaviour, which in many instances seem not to have become the captive of Glaswegian working class norms, but instead took a cue from the example of other Jews who were seen to be making upwardly mobile moves.

The Shulman family were evidently early representatives of Jewish suburban status in Glasgow's South Side during the 1920s. An example of conspicuous consumption and improved living can be seen in their adaptation to a regular pastime amongst the non-

⁴² Baird, R. 'Housing' in Cunnison, J. and Gilfillan, J. B. S. *Third Statistical Account* pp.449-450.

Jewish middle classes.⁴³ Working class people in Glasgow commonly took day trips 'doon the watter' during the annual Glasgow trade holiday in July.⁴⁴ However, the middle classes had the wherewithal to do this with more style and for longer periods. Polly Shulman and her friends and relatives engaged in this kind of activity. Some of her postcard correspondence has thankfully been preserved.⁴⁵ Polly's correspondents sent picture postcards from Clyde coast resorts, to her address in Glasgow, and to many different temporary locations where Polly herself was holidaying. Such evidence indicates that this was a fairly usual pastime. The following transcript reveals the ongoing pattern:

To Mrs P. Winicour c/o Younger, Mill Street, Millport.

*Here till end of August [at] Ellisland Prestwick. Dear Polly, this is a gracious house having a good time. Aby's down every evening. Regards Sophie.*⁴⁶

The sender of this card was enjoying a holiday in an Ayrshire coastal town, and further correspondence reveals that this was not a one off event. Another card from a different house in the same town states the following:

Dear Polly, have arrived down here with my staff and everything is lovely down here. Having a royal time of it. Regards, Sophie.

⁴³ Maver, *Glasgow* pp.190-191.

⁴⁴ 'Doon the watter' is the colloquial term for a boat trip along the Clyde coast. This might disembark at various locations, but Bute and the North Ayrshire coastal resorts were particularly popular. The colloquial term 'steaming', which means intoxicated through drink, is derived from this pastime which often incurred drunkenness as part of the general holiday spirit.

⁴⁵ SJAC. Polly Wincour nee Shulman received this series of postcards from roughly 1914 through the 1920s. The postmarked dates on the cards are mostly illegible, but where they can be read, they indicate dates within this period. Ref: Per W.0001.

⁴⁶ Message on reverse of picture postcard showing Prestwick beach, Date of manufacture 1917 but date mark of postage illegible. I have transcribed this as faithfully as possible.

Clearly the sender of this card enjoyed a middle class lifestyle far removed from the experience of most working class Jews in the Gorbals. Polly Winicour had children, and the health giving benefits of the seaside appear to have been an attraction for families. In 1921 another card was received from an address in the popular holiday location of Rothesay:

10th March 1921 To Mrs Winicour, 119 Albert Road.

*We are here until the end of March. Plenty people and beautiful weather. The boys look well. How are the children, shall be pleased to see you. Kind regards Eva.*⁴⁷

Such evidence reveals how far many Jewish families had come in making substantial improvements in lifestyle. Nevertheless, the position of these families, as Jews, and as immigrants, was not entirely forgotten. Polly received the following card at a holiday address in Millport:

*Dear Polly, Thanks for P.C. received. I hope you are having a nice time. Yarzeit [anniversary of a family member's death] is on Monday first so light a candle on Sunday night. Sheeman received word that his father died in Russia & will be sitting sheva [sic –week of ritual mourning] all week. The weather is fine nothing special to write about. Regards to all, Simon.*⁴⁸

⁴⁷ This is an example of a card where a date is helpfully included in the script. Transcription is as close as possible to original, but not a direct copy.

⁴⁸ It is a Jewish custom to light a candle and keep this burning on the *Yarzheit* or anniversary of a family member's death. Prayers are said alongside. *Shiva* or *Sheva* as it is spelled here, is the week of ritual mourning following a death.

In the seaside towns along the Clyde coast a new business opportunity for many Jewish women emerged via the provision of kosher boarding houses and hotels.⁴⁹ Jewish parties stayed in kosher guesthouses, or, sometimes for lengthy holidays, they rented houses where extended family and friends were able to join them. Glaswegian Jews who had the disposable income holidayed for one, two, or even month long stays. Less rigorously orthodox Jews also availed themselves of the general provision of holiday guesthouses and hotels in coastal and country locations.⁵⁰ During the 1920s and 1930s single and married women frequently made this trip in the company of children and female friends. Men stayed on in the city during weekdays to take care of business and travelled down the coast to join their families at weekends.⁵¹ The yearly pilgrimage to the coast celebrated the economic security that made such leisured activities possible, and in addition, had apparently freed women from ongoing business commitments.

Polly Winicour can be traced through membership lists of Jewish organisations and died in 1942 at an up market address in the South Side of Glasgow.⁵² Her life was evidently one of reasonable affluence and representative of some Jews who had made an early start on the road to upward mobility and integration with middle class lifestyles. At the level of individual experience, many women's lives do not fit the stereotype of hard times in the interwar years; however, neither do they always prove a journey of seamless upward mobility. The transition from slum to suburb was often an uneven process. For most Glaswegian Jews, upward mobility took place over a period of years and might involve successive house moves through suburbs that stretched

⁴⁹ The Jewish Press in Scotland and England contain regular advertisements showing the proliferation of these. In Scotland, the Ayrshire coast had many such establishments.

⁵⁰ See for example: *The Jewish Echo* 03/08/1928 on Jews holidaying in village of Strathaven.

⁵¹ Walton, J. 'Towns and Consumerism' in Daunton, *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p.738.

⁵² SJAC. Mrs Winicour's membership of the local women's Zionist organisation provides data of home address. See *Financial Statements and Reports of GWZO*, Ref: POL. WIZ. 0002.

ever southward from Glasgow into what had previously been countryside. By the 1930s, new suburban development in Glasgow allowed increasing numbers of Jewish families to become homeowners. In Scottish society this was a more important turning point in the journey towards a middle class identity. And it is certainly the case that this is the class identity that Jews have nurtured in Glasgow since this time. Moreover, it was a transformation that had gendered implications for the community.

Since the domestic life of a community is confined to the home, it is gendered female and private; often it is thereby considered outwith the bounds of historical interest in immigrant histories. In so far as geographical movement of Jewish communities are described, this usually takes the form of enumerating the opening of synagogues and institutions, which primarily embraced the interests of men. Yet again this is a reflection of how traditional ideas of 'community' are really gendered constructs.⁵³

Scratching the surface of these reveals that women are largely excluded from the communal institutions thought important for posterity. And yet it is unlikely that many families moved principally because of the institutions available on their new doorsteps. Until at least the late 1940s, the Gorbals still had the majority of these anyway. Moving house came about for reasons that were superficially simple: families wanted a nicer place to live, but underneath this were also quite complex individual motivations that are difficult to generalise about. Some families may have been more transparent than others about the desire to move up the rungs of the local Jewish social ladder. Moreover, this evident desire to demonstrate upward mobility by dint of where one lived was not gender neutral.

⁵³ Davidoff, L. 'Adam spoke first and named the orders of the world' in *World's Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 231-237.

The following example of an advertisement placed in the *Jewish Echo* in 1940, illustrates that as Gorbals Jewry began to shrink in size due to suburban relocation, the issue of where one lived did greatly matter to women. Accommodation was a shorthand reference to social status:

Refined, attractive young widow (34) residing in own villa, with fair capital, would like to meet gentleman with view to matrimony; personal replies only please; sincere and absolutely confidential.⁵⁴

By this point, attractive and well-heeled young Jewish women increasingly did not live in the Gorbals, but this advertiser evidently wished to underline her refinement.

Ownership of a suburban villa served the dual purpose of establishing both economic and social advantages. Yet the attitude of women towards such changes in outlook must have varied, because although moving out of the Gorbals community presented net gains, these required social adjustments and a willingness to relearn many aspects of everyday life. In an age where home ownership usually meant male ownership of property, this woman does seem fortunate. But her case also illustrates that the road to upward mobility required more than just bricks and mortar. It is notable that despite her obvious personal advantages she is keen enough to find a husband by advertising for one. Suburbs were family orientated spaces, and a woman alone would have had to be fairly well-heeled to afford this kind of life. During this period of immigrant relocation, marriage as a strictly economic arrangement was superseded by Scottish companionate ideals –but as this advertisement demonstrates, this was perhaps not yet a universal adjustment. In any case, the benefits of the suburbs were geared towards a particular ideal of gender relations. Even so, women who had a view to the fortunes of

⁵⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 16/02/1940 p.7.

their children were likely to be at the forefront of any decisions to move onwards and upwards.

Room to move.

An abiding image of suburbia has been that it contains and isolates women in their own domestic spaces. Friedan's seminal book on the malaise affecting suburban women in post-war America brought this issue emphatically into the feminist arena in the 1960s.⁵⁵ Yet, it must be said that the first suburbs built on Glasgow's South Side do not conform to this image of 'comfortable concentration camps' where the 'spirited New Woman was replaced by the Happy Housewife'.⁵⁶ Nearly all of Glasgow's suburban areas built from the nineteenth century through to the 1930s had large open spaces locally accessible. Glaswegian suburbs provided different kinds of public space where women were free to move. All were on tram and train routes to the city centre, and most had shopping areas. These suburbs were contiguous with the character of Glasgow city itself; traditions of construction did not alter significantly, buildings were fronted with sandstone as they are in the inner city, and for the most part constructed in close proximity to one another. Finally, as already noted, the housing was still predominately in tenements. The feeling of having more space came from the greater number of rooms in individual dwellings, the specific arrangement of these in terms of their designated use, and access to parkland and streets that were not swarming with commercial and industrial activity.

However, availability of space does not preclude social isolation. The spatial

⁵⁵ Friedan, B. *The Feminine Mystique* (First published 1963, Penguin edition, 1982.)

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.60 and p. 293.

arrangements of suburban environments were generous and undoubtedly more attractive. Moreover, these were healthier places for women to raise families, but living in these districts did require adjustments, whether welcome or not. Elizabeth Roberts has noted how working class women who were fortunate enough to obtain material advantages sought out more privacy as a way of bolstering their independent status and respectability.⁵⁷ We should be wary therefore of assuming that women always missed the neighbourliness of the Gorbals, which often easily spilled over into oppressive obtrusiveness and was regularly a symptom of economic and social interdependence rather than friendliness.

In terms of ethnic and kinship ties, most Jewish families followed a southward path out of the city and were increasingly sustained by their numbers. Residential redistribution did not occur in a random way, but instead took place in adjacent sectors, a condition that continued to influence the ethnic identity of the group.⁵⁸ As more Jewish families moved into a locality, Jewish food stores opened exploiting this potential to trade. Jewish children enrolled in numbers to local schools and so became less cut off from their peer group. Women also quickly got together within various social and cultural activities, as will be seen in chapter 7. Even so, the old cheek by jowl neighbourliness of the Gorbals was impossible to recreate in the suburbs. The coming and going so characteristic of working class life in the Gorbals was not part of the local landscape. Here appointed times existed for visiting that conformed to middle class lifestyles. Jews must have become aware of this etiquette. Bermant relates an amusing story in his autobiography of how as a new immigrant, he misinterpreted patterns of acceptable

⁵⁷ Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp.212-216.

⁵⁸ See Newman, D. 'Integration and ethnic spatial concentration: the changing distribution of the Anglo-Jewish community,' *Transactions of the British Institute of Geographers* 10 (1985) pp.360-376.

visiting and quickly came to understand the absence of an open door policy for this.

After calling on his aunt at a socially unacceptable time in the morning several times,

he was told to 'Get on your way.'⁵⁹ Bermant wrote that he and his father compiled a

satirical glossary that interpreted local suburban manners:

'You must come and see us' (Keep your distance.)

'Make yourself at home' (Keep your grubby hands off the furniture.)

'Do stay' (Are we never going to get rid of you?)

'You must come again.' (That's the last we've seen of you –I hope.)

'You shouldn't have bothered.' (Is that the best you can do?)⁶⁰

The communal spaces where women could congregate in working class neighbourhoods, such as the Steamie and the plethora of Jewish shops were either non-existent or much more limited in middle class suburbs. Moreover the different spatial character where work and home were *supposedly* separate was a reflection of expectations about female lives. McDowell reminds us that suburbs are representative of how 'the anti-urban ideal and the ideology of community are used by the state to ensure and reinforce the legitimacy of [the] sexual division of space and labour.'⁶¹

Suburban growth in Britain reflected a historically specific moment in the development of ideas about gender and class. Within the middle classes, women were expected to be home-centred. At the level of individual experience, outward conformity to prescriptions for such social etiquette really mattered in the suburbs because to do other called into question unwritten rules for local respectability. These rules were of

⁵⁹ Bermant, *Coming Home* p. 45.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.51.

⁶¹ McDowell, 'City and home' p.157.

course a reflection of a wider consensus on the privatisation of the female domestic space as against the masculine world of paid labour. Thus unlike working class women, suburban women were only supposed to congregate in public spaces when conspicuously at leisure, perhaps pushing their prams through the park, or settled in a local tearoom, or on holiday at the seaside. There is no evidence that Jewish women did not indulge in these pastimes as enthusiastically as their non-Jewish neighbours, and the experience of Polly Shulman confirms that conformity to more lavish pastimes did exist for some. Nevertheless, this was not the lot of all Jewish 'housewives' who managed to escape the Gorbals, and we should be wary of forming generalised opinions from such experience. Instead a steady journey towards upward mobility is a more accurate way of seeing changes in women's lives. Yet in order to become middle class, immigrant families had to conform to the 'polite cordiality' at large in suburban areas, the pace of movement indicates that this was a price that was worth paying for the relative advantages involved.⁶²

Once moved, the domestic drudgery involved in caring for a one or two-roomed Gorbals flat was to some extent alleviated for women because of the decrease in overcrowding evident in suburban tenements. A typical two-bedroom flat in Govanhill would still have a sizeable kitchen and the all-important 'front-room' for receiving visitors. Even more luxurious, would be the addition of indoor plumbing and a lavatory. Depending on the age of construction, such houses would also have a separate bathroom. This meant that a somewhat slower transition to suburban standards could be negotiated. These homes still provided the large kitchen so central to Jewish family and social life as it was lived in the Gorbals, but without the stress of this being

⁶² Roberts, *Women and Families*, p.200.

the only, or main room, a condition that involved much demanding and repetitive labour. On the other hand, there was no alleviation in other burdensome aspects of tenement living. Stone staircases in buildings of perhaps four storeys still had to be climbed; this might involve many journeys up and down every day while carrying infants, shopping, and laundry to be hung out in the yard at the rear of the building. It is important therefore not to make *too* much of such initial moves. No doubt it was a source of pride and relief for many families to get away from the urban squalor of the Gorbals, but for women many material aspects of domestic life were little changed. In flats like these, domestic life was still centred on the kitchen for instance, and these kitchens still had sleeping accommodation. No doubt in larger families kitchen bed-recesses were still in use. Improvement in interior domestic comfort was sometimes marginal therefore, but improvements of other kinds were perhaps more tangible. Jewish families could increasingly afford these, and the more Jewish families moved to such areas the more specifically Jewish amenities followed them. In any case, the Gorbals itself was not that far away, so the isolation that some women would experience in later suburban development was not really an issue here. Moreover, visiting the Gorbals was now voluntary rather than an inescapable day-to-day reality.

Jews also found homes in more up-market suburbs. In Langside for example, a great deal of the housing was still contained in tenements, but on a much grander scale. This Victorian development stalwartly maintained its middle class status. Chaim Bermant's family lived in the Battlefield area, a locality within the suburb of Langside. Here Bermant describes his home in the area:

In the Gorbals one ascended to one's flat up a dark stairway smelling of urine. In Battlefield all was light and cleanliness with a slight touch of Dettol in the air. The close, as the entrance to the flats was called, was lined with cream and green tiles; there was a large window on every landing which looked out on to a small back-green...The buildings, four-storeys high ...were flanked by small privet hedges and ornamental cast iron railings, and they looked on to a small garden ringed with trees...Our flat with its large kitchen, hallway, two bedrooms and lounge (or 'big room' as we called it) was palatial compared to anything we had known previously.⁶³

Langside quickly attracted Jewish families and Jewish institutions followed, including a new purpose built synagogue. This synagogue, which only closed its doors in 2003, is impressively large and so evidently meant to house an expanding congregation. It gives little easily identifiable sign of its purpose, and blends discreetly with its surroundings.⁶⁴ The respectable, suburban ambience of Langside is clear in Bermant's description. Regardless of the numbers of Jewish families that settled here, the atmosphere of an enclave was left behind in the Gorbals. Areas such as Langside had their own specifically genteel, middle class virtues and Jews generally tried to merge with these. For women who did experience isolation, the momentum of Jewish relocation saved the day, by creating a new Jewish neighbourhood network. The latter was less visible, but certainly operated at a low-key level that conformed to suburban standards of gentility.

⁶³ Bermant, *Coming Home*, p.53.

⁶⁴ At present it is planned that the Queen's Park Synagogue building will become social housing operated by a Jewish Housing Association.

On the other hand, just how far women were able to make friends of non-Jewish neighbours is a difficult area to quantify, so much depended on individual circumstances. However it is certainly the case that this development was not perceived as common, despite the persistence of tenement living. The pattern of inter-group relations that had developed in the Gorbals was to a great extent maintained elsewhere. Polite reticence on the part of Jews to mix with their non-Jewish neighbours did not disappear. Moreover non-Jewish suburbanites acknowledged this distance as part of the natural order and were unlikely to seek the company of Jewish families. Bermant has commented of the Glasgow suburbs that there 'is no palpable barrier, no open notice to keep out, but both sides are aware of frontiers.'⁶⁵ Even amongst children, these demarcation lines were maintained. Jewish and non-Jewish children might play together at school and in the public areas of the suburbs, but did not visit each other's homes.

We went to the pictures and football matches together, and played football in the recreation ground over the road from Queen's park. And on sunny days, we took sandwiches and bottles of Barrs Iron Brew [sic] and had day-long picnics in the park itself, yet they never invited me back to their homes and I never invited them back to mine. It never occurred to me that they should, for if *goyim* were friendly I did not expect them to be that friendly.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, once sufficient numbers of Jews had made the move into a particular locale, the infrastructure of the community certainly followed in the form of shops and synagogues. But much of the most distinctive elements of Jewish life – those that had made Gorbals Jewry so visible - essentially had no place in the suburbs. Jewish shops

⁶⁵ Bermant, C. 'Anatomy of Glasgow' in Mindlin, M. & Bermant, C. (eds.) (1968.) p.105.

⁶⁶ Bermant, *Coming Home*, pp.81-2.

that opened for business also tended to merge discreetly with their surroundings. The clientele of Jewish grocers may have been predominately Jewish, but there was little outward sign of this – hallmarks of Eastern European ethnicity were neither fashionable nor desirable – so Yiddish lettering largely disappeared. In accounting for Jewish upward mobility, it is again mostly assumed that such developments indicated greater levels of integration with local norms. Certainly such change functioned as a demonstration of integration, but this does not mean that proof positive exists of a general motivation to be more Scottish and less Jewish. This area is more complicated than this because, embroiled in both conscious and unconscious desires to integrate, is the presence of an equal desire to be inconspicuous that owes much to the need to ward off anti-Semitism.

Room for improvement?

Despite attempts at discretion, suburban anti-Semitism had a similar gendered pattern to that found in the Gorbals, and some further analysis is pertinent. Rapid conformity to the uniform of the middle class housewife was obviously sought-after in terms of smart hats and accessories because during the interwar years, the hatless and gloveless woman was easily identifiable as a working class woman. Evelyn Cowan has depicted her childhood journey from the Gorbals home where she was born using a literary description that summarises many of the lifestyle adjustments women had to make:

And so I waved a last goodbye to the vanishing streets of the old Gorbals. As the van rode on its way, grimy tenements disappeared. Neat red sandstone buildings replaced them. Shawled and aproned little housewives were left behind. And walking round the shops, I could see ladies

in smart coats wearing fashionable hats.⁶⁷

In the Gorbals Jewish women had inhabited the same public spaces as their non-Jewish counterparts. In these streets women had attuned themselves to the local dialect; here they had witnessed models of ways of behaving and comporting themselves.

Immigrants learned the rules for respectable and disreputable behaviour. Moving up in the world to the suburbs meant learning a new set of rules that were visible amongst suburban women. Such women did not leave the house without the correct attire and did not wheel pram loads of laundry to the local washhouse. The demarcations between respectable behaviour and its opposite were just as rigidly drawn as they had been in the Gorbals, but they involved a new set of standards and aspirations. Suburban women dressed for leisure when out in public.

Yet accusations of flashiness did not disappear and these functioned as a gendered measure of the social distance between Jewish suburbanites and their non-Jewish neighbours. Mass Observation also found this common prejudice operating in the East End of London. In 1938 they conducted a lengthy survey concerning anti-Semitism, which involved researchers living in the Jewish area and both observing and interviewing residents.⁶⁸ In this excerpt, the interviewee discusses local views of Jewish women in the East End, but also refers to differences between inner city and suburban Jews from Hampstead:

⁶⁷ Cowan, *Spring Remembered* p.155.

⁶⁸ Mass Observation Archive (MOA), *Anti-Semitism Survey*, (carried out in the East end of London, December 1938.) Ref: FR A12.

And then the Jews dress better than the others. The men are often connected with the clothing-trade. The girls take a lot of trouble with their appearance. A Jewish girl will stay at home, and make her own clothes, she'll spend hours over it, and then she'll paint, and on Saturday evening she'll go out, say to Lyons Corner House [sic]. And you get the people saying, "Where's she got those clothes from?" Maybe she only got £2 of clothes on her back, but she looks as though she'd £20. And then perhaps a family has relations in Hampstead, they come down in cars and the women wear fur coats, and that attracts attention.⁶⁹

Removal from slum life did nothing to temper this prejudiced impression about the ostentations of Jewish women. As Jews made incremental upwardly mobile moves in Glasgow, through Victorian tenement suburbs to 1930s bungalows, the same prejudice followed them. Conspicuous consumption is certainly demonstrated in the way that women were able to display their taste and refinement in dress. A tradition for craftsmanship in sewing was of course part of the Jewish landscape and Jews were commonly associated with the world of ladies' fashion. Many women in the second generation continued to make a living from this, or at least had skills in sewing that they put to use within the home and in their clothing. In addition, Jewish women often lent their commercial expertise in the ready-to-wear retailing of fashion. Many Jewish-owned ladies' outfitters appeared in suburban locations in Glasgow during this period. The definitive example of this symbiosis between Jewish business enterprise and middle class women's fashion are fur garments.

Women were so much more open to withering scrutiny than men, because a woman's

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.34.

status was more obviously measured in terms of personal appearance. The fur coat is perhaps the most memorable accoutrement of the leisured middle class woman in this period. Jewish women who were the proud owners of fur coats were merely conforming to a contemporary suburban demonstration of gendered materialism, but yet again this attempt to demonstrate 'doing well' could work in a negative way against them.⁷⁰ As the Mass Observation interviewee highlights, fur coats were a demonstration of material comfort that got noticed. This meant that their wearers were noticed, with the same detrimental results that had applied in the Gorbals. This kind of prejudice really illustrates the very marginal class position that Jews had, despite their hard won escape from the slums; it underlines the fact that in the suburbs, they were no less outsiders. For well-dressed Jewish women, the dress code of suburbia was a battle that could not be won when faced with anti-Jewish discrimination. Women, who adopted the latest fashions and demonstrated their disposable income in the wearing of fur coats, were viewed as flashy by British middle class standards.⁷¹ Being Jewish also brought the tarnish of being *nouveau riche* if appearance evidently cost money as well as effort. In the pattern of prejudice that existed at the time, it was apparently acceptable for Jews to manufacture and retail such garments, but the wearing of them was a different matter. This is quite a common contradiction found in anti-Semitic rhetoric. For example, Jews were often thought of as feckless and lazy, but when evidence of them being materially well off was demonstrated, they were simultaneously accused of acquisitiveness and exploitation. Women who originated in the Gorbals often again found themselves in the crossfire of local unwillingness to accept them on the grounds of gender, ethnicity and class.

⁷⁰ The SJAC has a large stock of photographic evidence showing the dress of men and women in this period. In these the fur coat is regularly in evidence. See Appendix 3.

⁷¹ Carrier, J. 'A Jewish Proletariat' in Mindlin, M. & Bermant, C. *Explorations*, p.122.

To make matters worse, fear that anti-Semitic sentiment directed at more recent immigrants would somehow percolate and affect all Jewry was common. Antipathy from more acculturated Jews persisted despite several decades of settlement. A Mass Observation volunteer, who happened to be Jewish, and whose loyalties were evidently divided, contributed the following comments in response to a questionnaire:

Willesdene Green [sic] and Brondsebury happen to be districts thickly populated with Jewish people mostly of the wealthier class. Being a Jewess myself it is rather difficult to look impartially upon the position of the Jewish people in the district...when a certain class of our race make themselves conspicuous by their dress and behaviour, it is then that the more refined class of Jew feels definitely uncomfortable and ashamed of his race. Unfortunately these people cannot be made to realise what harm they are doing to cause anti-Semitism, and although they interfere with no one it is their showy clothes, independent air and loud manner that distinguishes them from others. Personally I find them far less objectionable than the lower class of Christian who is invariably conspicuous by his drunkenness.⁷²

There can be no doubt that this Observer found it difficult to reconcile her Jewish loyalties with her social class prejudices.

As was the case in the Gorbals, this negative view of Jews and of women in particular, also extended into the home. In a humorous way meant to disguise embarrassment, Mrs Rose described in interview how her mother had a washhouse built on to the side

⁷² MOA. *Specimens of Various Attitudes from 2000 Part-time Observers*, FR. A12, p.61.

of her new semi-detached bungalow in Giffnock during the early 1930s:

She couldn't forget she was a peasant. (laughs) That's the attitude; she had to do things the hard way.⁷³

This immigrant mother apparently had no qualms about spoiling the appearance of her smart new home with attached garage. The latter was of course a visible appendage in the new suburban life, meant to house the motorcar, or at least having the potential to house this latest material aspiration.⁷⁴ However, tiny kitchens in this type of suburban housing created difficulties for laundering, and in the absence of a Steamie this woman made what seemed to be a practical move. She was evidently unaware of the social *faux pas* involved here, or disregarded the fact that middle class housewives did not advertise such involvement in heavy domestic drudgery, even if they did sometimes indulge in it. Instead, they sent out washing to commercial laundries, or hired the services of a washerwoman.

In 1939, Mass Observation conducted a survey of women's laundry routines in the town of Bolton.⁷⁵ It was found that the majority of these women preferred home washing compared to sending laundry out. Most of the respondents involved were working class and naturally the commonest objection given against the use of commercial laundries was expense. However, the researchers appear to have been struck by the fact that only nine per cent of their sample gave expense as the *only*

⁷³ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909

⁷⁴ Bentley, I. 'The Owner Makes His Mark' in Oliver, P. *et al.* (eds.) *Dunroamin: the Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (London, 1981) p.149.

⁷⁵ MOA. File Reports 1937-1941: *Interim Report: Home Wash V Laundry*, June 1939. Ref: FR A18. (Report based on 60 interviews with Bolton housewives.)

reason for not using laundries. Mass Observation commented that objections to commercial laundering were reinforced by:

...habit and tradition, "washing" and "home" have come to be associated. Monday washing day is part of the order of things. The greatest argument against washing at home is the drudgery involved. Yet the Bolton interviews clearly showed the pride and pleasure which a great many working-class housewives feel in their washing.⁷⁶

Having become accustomed to Scottish working class standards, Jewish women may have had equal reluctance to surrender all that was held dear about the good housewife's role. Even so, in the new bungalows that sprang up the facilities available were built with middle class sensibility in mind. Houses therefore had separate dining/living rooms, formal lounges for entertaining, and tiny sculleries designed for the needs of smaller families.⁷⁷ These women were not expected to launder anything but small articles of clothing; labour intensive laundry was routinely sent out. Commercial laundries were in fact a common feature of most Glasgow suburbs. One such was the Castlebank Laundry. Bermant recalls the ubiquity of these services and the advertising catch phrase of this particular local example, clearly aimed at female users: 'Mother, here comes the Castlebank man.'⁷⁸ Immigrant women and their daughters who had grown up with the standards of the Gorbals had to adjust to the standards of suburbia. Adjustments were gradual, but potential social blunders owed as much to class origins, as they did ethnicity. Unfortunately prejudice usually operated by annexing the latter.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.11.

⁷⁷ Jackson, A. *The Middle Classes 1900-1950* (Nairn, 1991) pp 42-50

⁷⁸ Bermant, *Coming Home*, p56

The step-by-step moves that many families made often allowed time for acclimatisation. Govanhill for example, still had public laundries and a public bathhouse. A move here brought some improvements in terms of space and general residential order, but certain aspects of working class communality were maintained. Likewise Mrs Miller, whose experiences were discussed in chapter 4, recalled that when her family moved to the Queen's Park area in the 1930s, one of the biggest benefits that her mother found was the tenement's communal washhouse in the yard at its rear. This saved her the journey to the Steamie that had been part of her Gorbals experience. Further moves into suburbia would however change this aspect of life and make an everyday chore more discreet.

Discriminatory views about Jews demonstrate something about the way that anti-Semitic sentiments operated in the UK. Prejudice was low key, rarely demonstrated in outright hostility, but palpable nonetheless. This situation doubtless encouraged some Jews to be at pains not to attract attention and encouraged women to conform as housewives. Unfortunately if attention was drawn to Jews, the view taken could be negative. This reality did not decrease in the suburbs and seems to have impinged sharply upon women. Restrained neighbourliness and respect for privacy were part of suburban mores, yet effort at keeping out of the limelight was not always easy to pull off particularly in terms of personal appearance. In addition, there were some areas of experience where both class and ethnic identity continued to set Jewish women apart from their neighbours and these highlight the gendering of prescriptions for suburban behaviour.

The uses of more room.

In the early seventies, the sociologist Tova Benski discovered that after almost a century of settlement in Glasgow, Jewish suburban women who were descendants of Eastern European Jews were still more likely to be in employment than their non-Jewish counterparts.⁷⁹ Benski did not question whether the reasons for this were purely economic, indeed she appears to assume from other evidence about the economic status of Jewish suburbanites that they were generally better off than non-Jewish peers. Instead she bases the reasons for female economic activity on historical evidence about the nature of the Jewish community in Glasgow. Benski cites the fact that Jewish women in the Gorbals had an economic role in families that was often continued after marriage. Movement to the suburbs did not alter this pattern because of the preponderance of Glaswegian Jews to be self-employed.

Using a sample of 280 Jewish residents of Newton Mearns and 221 non-Jewish, Benski looked at various aspects of lifestyle, economic activity and neighbourly relations to assess the degree of inter-ethnic mixing in this Glasgow suburb. In the 1970s, the demographic profile of Newton Mearns was quite interesting in the context of Glasgow. The area had been a rural village that expanded significantly from 1930 onwards to meet the previous suburban boundaries of Glasgow.⁸⁰ The type of housing on offer was quite different from the usual type available in Glasgow, that is, there are no tenements in Newton Mearns. It was both exclusive and expensive, houses were meant to be owner occupied and its distance from the city (about seven miles) meant a motorcar would have been required for commuting to work. The latter features almost

⁷⁹ Benski, *Inter-Ethnic Relations in a Glasgow Suburb*, (Glasgow, 1974)

⁸⁰ McCallum, A. 'Parish of Mearns,' in Moisley, H. A. *et al.* (eds.) *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland Vol. 11: Counties of Renfrew and Bute*, (Glasgow, 1962) p.391.

certainly meant that its Jewish residents were much more likely to be employers than employees, and certainly amongst the better off. This profile could not necessarily have been replicated so uniformly in other suburbs, so Benski's judgement about women's occupational role does need to be qualified before applying it to Glasgow Jewry across the board.

However, it is an interesting feature that differentiates Jewish women from other women in Newton Mearns of the time, the majority of whom were housewives. Figures for Benski's sample indicated that 44.3 percent of Jewish women were economically active, compared with only 27.7 percent of the non-Jewish women.⁸¹ Jewish wives in Newton Mearns were commonly involved with family businesses. However Benski also identified some women who were in business on their own account. In addition, it was found that Jewish women with children were still more likely to be in employment, and in this group the figures were 42.5 per cent as against 19.4 percent in the non-Jewish group, clearly a much higher figure.⁸² Some 49.6 per cent, and the overwhelming majority of Benski's Jewish cohort, were second-generation immigrants, with 28.2 per cent from the third generation.⁸³ These figures for Jewish women in Newton Mearns do seem to indicate that something of the tradition for working wives had carried over generations and survived transition to the suburbs. However, another important issue that Benski failed to address was some measurement of the relative input of women's economic contributions. If Jewish families were generally amongst the wealthiest in Newton Mearns, it is fair to speculate about how the continuance of women's economic activity contributed to this. These families were

⁸¹ Benski, *Inter-Ethnic Relations*. p.37.

⁸² *Ibid.* p.39.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p.25. Benski's group contained over 10% first generation immigrants the, reason for this mix is that Newton Mearns attracted more of the newer settlers who had arrived from Germany during the 1930's this issue will be examined in more detail in chapter 7.

not dependant on the income of a single head of household, but could count on the business acumen and expertise of their women members who worked either in sales, or providing indispensable clerical and secretarial assistance.

This raises questions about the notion of a more leisured suburban lifestyle for women. Nevertheless, as Jews in Glasgow increasingly became suburbanites in the 1930s and 1940s, perceptions certainly existed within the Jewish community at the time, that women now had more leisure, were less confined by their domestic responsibilities, and had moved wholesale towards a more liberated way of life that conformed to local norms:

But times are different and so are circumstances. The status of the Jewish woman has changed along with the status of her non-Jewish sister. The daughter of Israel is now a woman of the world. She plays her role in business, in communal work, in social life. Gone is that fascinating atmosphere of the Jewish home... ⁸⁴

The inference here is that the advent of a more comfortable life supported by a good income, and the use of new labour saving equipment had freed Jewish women to be less domestically orientated. As chapters 4 and 5 have shown, this image owes much to the stereotype of the good Jewish wife, and little to the reality of women's working lives. There is of course a heavy irony involved in this perception, since the common ideal of suburban life was of course that women's role was absolutely domestic. Jewish women seem to have been placed between a rock and a hard place then, with Jewish commentary accusing them of deserting their post at the domestic helm and at the same

⁸⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 16/04/1939.

time, unlike their non-Jewish counterparts, these women were still involved with business and increasingly in communal work. This is certainly a conundrum that is difficult to reconcile.

However, a change that certainly did impact on second-generation women's lives was the fact that most now had smaller numbers of children. Across the UK, and in all social classes, Jews appeared to be having smaller families than their non-Jewish counterparts.⁸⁵ This trend was revealed in 1928:

The most remarkable fact which presents itself to the visitors to Whitechapel, which is the Jewish quarter of the borough, is the great drop in the birth rate amongst Jewish families. Dr L. Thomas for thirty years medical Officer of Health for the borough, said in an interview with the "Daily Telegraph". Whereas up to 1897, he said, the birth rate was rarely less than 40 per 1000, and remaining at 30-40 per 1000 up to 1912, it has now dropped to 13 per 1000 as shown by the statistics of 1926...Possibly no part of London shows such a great drop in the birthrate. On the other hand, in other parts of the borough, in Limehouse, Shadwell and Wapping, particularly Wapping where there is a large Roman Catholic community, the birth rate has averaged for many years, 30-40 per 1000.⁸⁶

It does seem that the upward social mobility of families was to an extent dependant on the rejection of the large Jewish family of tradition. Family income was less stretched if women did not spend most of their childbearing years being economically inactive.

⁸⁵ See Kosmin, B. 'Nuptiality and Fertility Patterns of British Jewry 1850-1980: An Immigrant Transition' in Coleman, D.A. (ed.) *Demography of Immigrants and Minority Groups in the United Kingdom* (London, 1982) pp. 245-26.

⁸⁶ *The Jewish Echo* 13/01/1928 p.8.

And fewer children were certainly less of a financial burden. This was a matter over which women had some control; the desire to limit their families in opposition to Jewish tradition therefore played a major part in enabling greater purchasing power in terms of homes and lifestyles. Yet concurrently, the move to smaller families may also have been a reflection of greater integration with middle class norms and so was perceived as being emancipated because of this.⁸⁷

The move to smaller families among the middle classes that took place over the interwar years was also a concern of Mass Observation. After the war this concern was undoubtedly accentuated. In 1945 an investigation based on interviews with 1000 women of childbearing age was undertaken. An interesting aspect of this investigation's findings is that a definite tendency among 'the better off' to 'limit the size of their families' was identified. Mass Observation also commented on the notion expressed by this group that having more than two or three children was disreputable and decadent.⁸⁸ Mr Balkin was evidently bemused by this fact of smaller families in his generation. In interview he commented on the falling birth rate of his generation and the next, at several points. Finally he revealed:

Well there you are, I only had the one daughter that's all, my wife didnae want any more children. She said she didn't want any more. Well all right if that's the way you feel about it.⁸⁹

As with all such areas of individual experience it is impossible to be definitive about the influences upon women at this time. But the move to smaller families does seem to

⁸⁷ Neustatter, 'Demographic and Other Statistical Aspects of Anglo-Jewry' pp.79-88 on 'size of family'

⁸⁸ MOA. *Report on Smaller Families*, September 1945. Ref: FR 2285.

⁸⁹ Oral testimony of Mr MB. Born: 1913.

be implicated in upwardly mobile trends. Nevertheless, Benski's later discoveries do raise questions over the provenance of earlier perceptions that women who were having fewer children, and enjoyed the benefits of a more comfortable life automatically had more available leisure. Advertisements placed in the *Jewish Echo* throughout the period of movement from the Gorbals confirm that some patterns of female economic activity were not abandoned for the sake of suburban conformity. Many women continued to supply board and lodgings in the suburbs and there was evidently a sufficient enough demand for this for landladies to be specific about the type of clients preferred. The following examples from the *Echo* in 1940 illustrate this case:

Private House can accommodate one or two gentlemen;
every comfort and attention given; near trams –126
Tantallon Road (Langside) [26/01/1940]

Shawlands –two furnished rooms in Modern House. Suit
students; full board 35/- weekly –Goldberg 200 Kilmarnock
Road. [09/02/1940]

Lady with main door flat overlooking Queen's Park, would
make lunches and High Teas for two or more Gentlemen;
first class cooking and table appointments;
lounge.[01/03/1940]

The example above illustrates that Jews who had moved to suburbs further out of the city, and who could not travel home at lunchtime were a business opportunity for some women who could provide kosher meals. It also shows women making practical use of their time and the facilities of suburban homes. Women also continued to sew for a living in the suburbs. Although, more suburban propriety was evidently required in

order to engage the following skilled seamstress:

Down quilts Recovered; Tapestry, Embroidery done;
write for appointment to Mrs Weber, 16 James Gray
Street S1⁹⁰

Equally, those who had earned a living as dressmakers continued to do so in suburban localities. Even single women who were presumably most dependant on this income managed to be able to afford the suburbs, indicating that this was a viable form of making a living, perhaps made more lucrative in better surroundings:

First class Dressmaker, Miss Poritz, 102 Forth Street
Pollokshields; Continental Cut; reasonable prices.⁹¹

And in true celebration of feminine, suburban ideals, the following type of business also advertised in the *Echo*:

Miss Trixie Kay. Permanent Waving and Beauty
Specialist. Wishes to announce the opening of her new
premises at; 3 Dixon Avenue Crosshill.⁹²

Features of life which gave rise to the image of suburban women as 'ladies of leisure' are writ large of course in such outlets as dressmakers, beauticians and clothes shops, but it must also be remembered that these activities presented business opportunities for many women. The same pattern occurs in the case of Jewish holidaymaking and in the retail of fur coats and couture fashion. There was a symbiotic relationship in the

⁹⁰ Ibid. 16/02/1940.

⁹¹ Ibid. 09/02/1940.

⁹² Ibid. 15/02/1935.

growth of both production of such activities and their consumption.

Benski's survey also reveals that Jewish families made many more house moves than their non-Jewish neighbours over their lifetimes.⁹³ It is impossible not to see such patterns as a deliberate attempt at upward mobility. Nevertheless these successive moves from a Gorbals flat to larger tenement homes in better locales; and finally for many, the move into a peripheral new build suburb and bungalow living, all allowed time for acclimatisation to middle class life. Lifestyles certainly altered in the face of what were unarguably more pleasant surroundings, but not all at once. Jewish women may have been availing themselves of beauty parlours and seaside holidays, but their lives were not made up entirely of leisure. Indeed female involvement in economic activity persisted and no doubt contributed to the more comfortable lifestyles enjoyed by many families. Conformity to housewifely suburban ideals was evidently more negotiable and gradual than has been recognised. It must also be remembered that much of Jewish social life still remained in the Gorbals. Families may have been moving with increasing momentum, but as their invisibility in the suburbs increased, the remnants of Jewish visibility stayed centred in the Gorbals. Moreover, a sizeable number of families were still living there until the start of the post-war period in the 1940s. Even greater numbers commuted there to work. The next section in this chapter will look at the evolution of a relationship between the Gorbals heart and the suburban Jewish communities, and how this affected women.

Out of the Gorbals and into the world

The following sections will explore aspects of the growing gulf between urban and suburban Jewish life by concentrating on the suburbs that sprang up from the late

⁹³ Benski, *Interethnic Relations*, pp.29-31

1920s and through the 1930s; these became attractive to many Jews who had outgrown tenement life after a spell of living in a Victorian suburb, and wished to become homeowners. As we have seen, those prospective suburbanites, who were fortunate enough to make their first move away from the Gorbals in the years after World War One, often achieved only marginal improvement in their class status. Moreover, these suburbanites lived a life of to-ing and fro-ing to begin with.

Although some commercial supports to daily living eventually followed in the form of Jewish food stores, other aspects of social life continued apace in the Gorbals. Thus regular visits to family and friends, collective gatherings that celebrated either religious or social events, and more serious purchases – like the koshered Friday night chicken – still took women back to the heart of Jewish life in the Gorbals. Despite the fairly constant stream of families moving away, some sense of loyalty also continued to exist. Shops that had faithfully given credit to hard-pressed women during difficult times did not always lose their custom. The fact that substantial numbers of the population continued to live in the Gorbals was a factor that pulled families back into the fold at regular intervals. As we have seen in the example of the Balkins, some families, despite economic improvement, preferred to stay on in the Gorbals, but in one of the larger flats in streets that provided more desirable addresses. In addition, there were families who simply gave up in the face of prejudice. Moreover, a move away was not an option for substantial numbers due to their continuing poverty. There were advantages to remaining in the Gorbals, not least of which was a general feeling of ‘better the devil you know.’

However, there was undoubtedly a momentum that gathered pace during the 1930s. As communal structures multiplied in the outer city districts, it cannot have escaped some

Jews in the Gorbals that they were in danger of being very much left behind. Jews who had settled in areas still within walking distance to the Gorbals area, such as Govanhill, or at least a short tram ride away like Pollokshields, still had attachments to the Gorbals heartland, and were not so disengaged from this. However, the attractions of the outlying suburbs still needed some specifically Jewish augmentation in order to appeal to the nervous. The *Jewish Echo* reported this in 1935:

Many Jews have wisely taken advantage of the facilities offered by the many housing schemes in the city, and have left the Gorbals and other dull districts in order to settle in the suburbs. In King's Park, Giffnock, Merrylee, Clarkston and Netherlee there are now considerable numbers of Jewish residents...The modern Jew...gladly abandons the massive and old-fashioned flat to replace it with the tiny modern home with its multifarious improvements and amenities. But this migration from the old established Jewish quarters in the south-side of the city to the suburban districts brings in its train a number of specifically Jewish problems. There is the supply of kosher food, and contact with Jewish communal life, synagogue attendance, and the Hebrew education of children.⁹⁴

A number of interesting aspects of Jewish life in Glasgow during the 1930s are raised in this source. Firstly it alludes to the general sense of commendation awarded to Jews who were making a success of their settlement in Glasgow, demonstrated in the will to move onwards and upwards. This fact undoubtedly changed the minds of many who were more timid. We have seen too in the example of Polly Shulman's husband, a socially advantageous marriage might involve relocation. Yet moving out likely set up

⁹⁴ *Jewish Echo* 01/02/1935 editorial p.3.

resentments amongst the still considerable numbers who had not made such a success of settlement in Glasgow. The old divide between an established community in the West End, and the new immigrants in the South Side, fragmented even further.

Multiple divisions began to emerge, based not just on geographical settlement or culture, but the economic segregation reflected in this. The 'dull districts' mentioned likely included areas like Govanhill, which although of a better class than the Gorbals had begun to lose the allure of the new as suburbia enlarged.

The comforts and domestic accoutrements of suburban life presented the lure of easier household management. Moreover, mothers often wanted the benefits of the suburbs for their children. Better schools and fresher air were among the chief attractions. And in addition, children were not exposed to some of the ruder aspects of urban life – drunkenness, prostitution and street brawling. Jewish mothers recognised that by moving to the suburbs they altered their own class status, but perhaps in only a marginal way as some of the Gorbals had inevitably rubbed off on them. However, the prospects for children were more markedly optimistic in terms of life chances. Another clue to how the land lay in the 1930s is contained in the phrase, 'old-established Jewish quarters'. It had taken less than sixty years for the Gorbals and the area immediately north of this on the other side of the Clyde, to become seemingly fixed points of Jewish work and residential settlement. Psychological adjustments were needed to override the 'ghetto mentality' that had grown up because of this. Jews themselves recognised that in making such changes, a bit of their own history was being left behind, and this fact has had important implications for the way that the Gorbals is remembered. As discussed in chapter 3, in terms of the gendering of memories, the visibility of Jewish women within the Gorbals is low. However more

worryingly, the move to the suburbs did little to raise the profile of women in the ongoing public history of the Jewish community.

Domesticity and upward mobility in 'Jewburbia'.

Clapson has commented on the importance of suburbanisation for the self-image of immigrant communities. He uses the description 'Jewburbia' to highlight the way that Jewish communities willingly adapted themselves to a different style of living that reflected upward mobility.⁹⁵ But as well as changes in social class identity, behind the lace curtains of suburbia gender relations within the Jewish family also underwent adjustment. When Jewish families moved to Glasgow's suburban areas, their sights had already been altered. They had become more secure economically often assisted or because of the female contribution to the family income. Moreover, women were motivated quite as much as men to improve their children's life chances as compared with their own, by ensuring that sons and daughters did not become captives of the usual image of the immigrant. This image is encapsulated in the urban world of slums and workshop labouring. A move to the suburbs was just one way that greater integration socially to Scottish middle class norms was overtly demonstrated because suburban life operated in contrast to the slum world. In the suburbs home and work were separate; education was valued; cultural activities were home centred or attached to local middle class pastimes that did not include drunkenness and street fighting. In order to secure this, many understated and incremental changes happened along the way. Women controlled a great many of these changes but are rarely celebrated in the success story. Part of the reason for this has to do with the way that social class is often measured, predicated on male incomes and occupations. However another

⁹⁵'Jewburbia' was a description coined in 1970 for culturally distinct parts of UK suburbia where Jews clustered. See Clapson, *Suburban Century*, pp.109-110.

difficulty lies with the fact that Glaswegian Jewry was more stratified than housing patterns suggest. Many second-generation Jews in particular had not yet entered professions and families, women included, were still at work in small commercial enterprises. These families lived in middle class areas but did not yet have middle class jobs, or perhaps fully middle class habits.

The majority of suburban families were of the second generation, but not exclusively. Mrs Rose's parents who were first generation migrants, moved to Giffnock in the early 1930s taking newly married sons and daughters with them:

Don't forget you got quite cheap houses in Giffnock; there was these wee 4 apartments that were £600. We started small but we were happy. We all lived beside my mother, 5 of us, she wouldnae have it any other way. As soon as we got married she had them planted in Giffnock facing her. They used to laugh, the builders used to laugh.⁹⁶

Within this testimony the determination and ambition of this first generation mother is evident. Not only did Mrs Rose's mother move to Giffnock, she ensured that her children's sights were also set upwards in terms of social mobility. These neat suburban houses perfectly accommodated the smaller families common in the second generation. Mrs Rose who had two children remarked 'Well, they couldnae afford any big families.'⁹⁷ This statement makes light in a way, of what were definite breaks with Jewish tradition and a further clear aspect of the process of upward mobility.

The new interwar suburbs attracted Jewish families at different ends of the aspiring middle class spectrum. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s these presented new vistas to

⁹⁶ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

many aspiring working class Jewish women and suburban proliferation brought them into the reach of increasing numbers. Distance was not necessarily an object. For example, the tramcar went to Giffnock as early as 1905 and it is reported that this tramline was amongst the busiest in Glasgow. On Sundays some ten to fifteen thousand Glaswegians regularly took the tram out into what was then open countryside with little residential development save for some large villas owned by the very well to do.⁹⁸ Many urban dwellers got a childhood taste of these districts in their leisure time. For young married women, the prospect of a house in these localities must have been dazzling because these homes were not just bricks and mortar; they were a lifestyle choice that had many ramifications for women and for the future of families.

In 1934 in Glasgow Jewish Representative Council commented upon the declining Jewish population of the Gorbals and the fact that some synagogues there were redundant.⁹⁹ Many families who moved away to areas such as Pollokshields and Langside maintained synagogue membership in the Gorbals out of sentimental attachments, but the onward and upward march probably curtailed this. By 1936 it was estimated that the suburbs of Newlands, Merrylee, Giffnock and Whitecraigs contained no fewer than 160 families who had joined a new local congregation for Jewish worship, with a further 40 such families in the nearby Netherlee district.¹⁰⁰ [For location of these districts see map D.] Housing development put paid to the south of Glasgow as countryside, yet something of the bucolic attractions of this still attached to the suburban sprawl. 1930s suburbia was the perfect synthesis of domestic sophistication with 'olde worlde' clean living. The new 'dream home' was specifically

⁹⁸ Blair, D. W. *Long Slope, Small Hill – the Story of Giffnock* (Glasgow, 1973.)

⁹⁹ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council*. Minute of meeting held 30/04/1934.

¹⁰⁰ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council*. Minutes of meeting between the Executive Committee of the Council and Representatives of the Giffnock Congregation 16/02/1936.

promoted at women as consumers. These new homes had all mod cons in terms of plumbing and electrics, but on top of such appeals, the challenge of kitting out a home presented many new possibilities and this challenge was marketed as being a decidedly feminine one.¹⁰¹

John Gillis has alerted attention to the way that 'homemaking' became gendered in the nineteenth century.¹⁰² By the interwar years, homemaking was not only gendered the preserve of women, it had also become alloyed to a gendered project in terms of consumerism. Upon the return to 'normal' life after World War Two the relocation to suburbia that had been a feature of life across the UK again motivated commercial enterprise. In 1946 a 'Modern Homes Exhibition' was held in London and Mass Observation not surprisingly took an interest in this. Their comments include note of the long distances that many people had travelled to see this, including some visitors from Glasgow. But most interesting among their comments is the following:

During the week about three women visited the exhibition for every two men. Young people predominated in a ratio of about 5 to 4. The middle-class was adequately represented, the artisan class considerably over-represented, forming the majority of the audience. The unskilled working-class was heavily under-represented.¹⁰³

Mass Observation's comments on social class are impressionistic, and probably do need to be treated with caution, nevertheless, they give an indication of the level of interest that there was in home comforts, and the interest in particular of women. They

¹⁰¹ Ehenreich, B. & English, D. *For Her Own Good: One Hundred and Fifty years of the Experts Advice to Women* (London, 1979) pp 161-3; 212-3.

¹⁰² Gillis, J. *A World of their Own Making: Myth, Ritual and the Quest for Family Values* (Oxford, 1997) p.122.

¹⁰³ MOA. File Reports, *Modern Homes Exhibition* March 1946. FR. 2361 & 2362.

also note that kitchens are 'far and away the most appreciated exhibit, followed by utility furniture, followed by the one room flat, whose appeal was almost exclusively for women.'¹⁰⁴ Were women taking a peek into a possible escape route from semi-detached suburbia! Unfortunately we do not know the answer to this, but female interest in new domestic comforts and devices can be linked to the new consumerism that had grown up before the war. This underlines the fact that home and housework cannot be divorced from the wider economic context of the time. And that most private of realms, the home, was despite all an area of concerted public attention.

There is historical debate over the impact of twentieth century domestic comforts and labour saving devices for women.¹⁰⁵ However, when compared to the work involved in keeping a two-roomed flat in the Gorbals clean, the prospect of living in even the average suburban terrace must have seemed a breeze, with hot and cold running water quite literally on tap, and for the better off, the luxury of domestic help in the shape of a 'daily'. Young Jewish women were clearly able to see the difference between their own lives and those of their mothers. More distant still was the miserable existence of many women in Eastern Europe. Yet as Wajcman has pointed out, there is no cause and effect relation between the mechanisation of homes and changes in the volume and nature of household work.¹⁰⁶ Suburban homes had more rooms, but suburban standards meant that at the very least, public rooms had to be kept in a constant state of tidiness and cleanliness. These standards were to a large extent a reflection of the differentiation between ideals of middle class status as compared with the perceived disorderliness of working class life. In addition, these homes came with gardens that

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cowan, R. *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, 1983) pp.151-191.

¹⁰⁶ Wajcman, J 'Domestic Technology: Labour-Saving Or Enslaving?' in Kirkup and Keller (eds.) *Inventing Women, Science Technology and Gender* (Cambridge, 1992.) pp. 238-254.

had to be tended; and the adornment of homes needed to be such that they were not found wanting against a fairly strict code of middle class neighbourhood respectability.¹⁰⁷ The charge of bringing the neighbourhood down was regularly made against Jews, even in the Gorbals. Benski's study shows Jewish women were not rid of such attitudes in the suburbs, and catalogues many instances of anti-Jewish sentiments, especially with regard to perceived feminine deficiencies in domestic management and personal behaviour, for example:

They are compulsive noisy horn-tooters. Don't get out of their car to ring the doorbell when they come to collect friends but keep tooting the horn. Brash, don't look after gardens. If the gardener does not turn up they don't bother. Don't care about the external appearance of houses. They are untidy. Their dustbins get filled with sanitary towels. They are thoughtless.¹⁰⁸

And even more overtly:

They are aggressive. You only need to go to the shops to find out. To be blunt about it, Jewish women are cheeky bitches.¹⁰⁹

Efforts to be inconspicuous do not seem especially prominent in these comments and attention is focused on negative attributes, real or imagined.

The domestic workload of women in the suburbs may not have lessened compared to the inner city, but it did change. The vision of Jewish womanhood that had survived transition from Eastern Europe to the cities of the West was still that of wife and

¹⁰⁷ Oliver, P 'A lighthouse on the mantelpiece: symbolism in the home' in Oliver *et al.*, *Dunroamin'* p.191.

¹⁰⁸ Benski, *Interethnic Relations*, p.132.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.131

mother. The meaning of 'home' for Jews during and after this particular migration often became bound up with this image. Mother in the kitchen, kosher food and domestic ritual became powerful signifiers of continuity in the face of sometimes disturbing change. But the experience of Jewish women as migrants shows that their lives were not static, even if certain vested interests conspired to maintain an image of this. This shift in material experience is clearly seen in the different aspects of everyday home life for women between the first two generations. The Yiddish-speaking mother who was in charge of the tenement kitchen in the Gorbals lived a very different life from her suburban daughter. In this respect gendered roles were hugely implicated in upward mobility.

Most suburban homes had at least two bedrooms and two public rooms. The usual size of these homes built in the 1920s and 1930s was between 750 and 1000 square feet, with the largest amount of space usually found in non-working spaces such as the lounge and the main bedroom.¹¹⁰ By comparison, the kitchen space in such homes was small, designed for work but not to be 'lived in'. The standard stereotype of the Jewish woman who spends her life nurturing the family from her place at the stove and kitchen sink is quite simply out of place here. Evelyn Cowan described her mother as, 'in command at the kitchen table', in her Gorbals tenement.¹¹¹ In contrast, most suburban kitchens would not have accommodated such furnishing. The separation of kitchens from the act of dining was another factor of suburban middle class manners. The work that went into supplying food became hidden, and mealtimes then symbolised a social activity, divorced from the labour involved for women of sweating over a hot stove. Meals were taken in a separate dining room that had to be kitted out

¹¹⁰ Hole, W. & Attenburrow, J. *Houses and People: A Review of the User Studies at the Building Research Station*, (London, 1966) pp. 49-50.

¹¹¹ Cowan, *Spring Remembered*, p.24.

for this purpose. The standard semi-detached or terraced home of the period in Glasgow usually had a lounge that was larger than any other of the public rooms and a smaller living/dining area.

Contemporary advertising material illustrates the furnishings recommended for these rooms.¹¹² The Wylie and Lochhead furniture store in Glasgow for example, recommended a suite of oak furniture for the living room of the 'modern bungalow'. This included a sideboard, a pull out table that could be extended for mealtimes and four small chairs, a fireside armchair, a 'dwarf' bookcase, an oak window table and, a tea trolley and a hanging mirror. To complete this picture of comfort, curtains with valance, and an Axminster carpet with linoleum surround could be included in a 'complete price' of sixty two pounds and ten shillings – a considerable sum at this time when many of the houses themselves cost as little as six hundred pounds. The size of the carpet on offer is something of a giveaway as to the average size of these rooms. Carpets on offer were a standard ten feet six inches by nine feet.¹¹³ In fact the usual size of interwar living rooms was no more than twelve feet square and the congestion created by such furnishing was considerable. However life became more compartmentalised in the suburbs.

Different spatial arrangements impacted on the usual living arrangements of families. Smaller families did mean more private space; children had their own bedrooms and the streets became places to move along, not public spaces where young people played and hung about in an effort to escape overcrowded homes. As the experience of Mrs Rose's family shows, most Jewish women evidently desired suburbia for themselves

¹¹² GUA. Advertising Brochure for *Wylie and Lochhead Ltd*, entitled: 'Furnishings for the modern bungalow or modern flat' (no date but c 1930s) *House of Fraser Records* Ref: HF57/7/3/1/8.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* *Wylie and Lochhead Brochure*.

and their children. Jewish women embraced this shift in their fortunes not as passive consumers of change but as active agents in making a new life for themselves. It is extremely doubtful that women in any way lamented being unchained from their image as kitchen slaves, and did not see the alternative image of the smart suburban housewife as positively liberating. But men may have perceived this differently. The most potent signifier of the Jewish home, that is the traditional mother at work in the kitchen, was definitely altered when women took to the suburbs in numbers. Suburban women did not have an image steeped in motherly tradition; instead in order to meet with the approval of Jewish and non-Jewish peers, a brave new breed of brisk and efficient domestic technicians emerged.

In order to keep a nice house, the purchase of furnishings and new domestic technology was important. Indeed twentieth century suburbanisation can easily be viewed as a triumph of consumer culture. The production and consumption of mass-market goods was certainly a phenomenon that accompanied urbanisation.¹¹⁴ The availability of relatively cheap housing in suburbs during the interwar years, coupled to the fact that the emerging Jewish middle class had smaller families, all encouraged these new suburbanites to purchase home comforts. New technologies said to be transforming the workload of women in the home arrived in the shape of electric vacuum cleaners as lino floors were replaced with more luxurious carpet. The latter was affordable for smaller suburban rooms.

Again, the involvement of Jews in wholesale and retail trades influenced aspects of specifically Jewish consumerism in Glasgow. Successive house moves often involved the acquisition of a variety of household accoutrements that were needed to

¹¹⁴ Walton, J. 'Towns and Consumerism' in Daunt, *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, pp. 715-744.

accompany increasingly genteel surroundings. Most of what was available in interwar Glasgow was already being made in the Jewish furnishing trade, and, or, sold by Jewish retailers. Numerous Jewish 'Warehouses' had emerged in Glasgow. These had begun as wholesale outlets that supplied goods to peddlers and small retailers. Out of this, grew the Warehouse trade. Probably the most celebrated of these was Goldberg's Warehouse. Like others, Goldberg's diversified and began trading direct to the public, also offering extended credit terms. On the basis of this, Goldberg's developed into a huge department store that was a landmark in Glasgow, and went on to become a nationwide chain of shops.¹¹⁵ Its former Managing Director noted the origins of Goldberg's as:

...rooted in the working class, but they were enjoying such a high standard of service that I do believe the company played a major part in raising the aspirations of working-class people in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. It was probably better service than the so-called upper class was encountering in the more fashionable areas of Buchanan Street and Sauchiehall Street. The unique credit system was further enabling those same people to buy better goods than they would normally have afforded and that, too, was raising their aspirations.¹¹⁶

Evidence such as this does seem to confirm Mass Observation's impression of an interest in home improvements among what they describe as 'the artisan class'. It was precisely this group who were able to obtain credit for stores like Goldberg's. The latter was patronised by Jewish and non-Jewish customers alike, with of course the latter in the majority. The aspirational aspect of having a Goldberg's account was a

¹¹⁵ Goldberg's went into liquidation in 1990, before which it owned and ran 100 stores across the UK.

¹¹⁶ Webster, J and Young, A. *The Goldberg Story 1908-1988*. (Edinburgh, 1988) p.21.

part of the company's success. For families who had ambition, the means of dressing oneself, the family and the home were widely available in Glasgow by way of retail outlets such as Goldberg's. The core customer base of such stores was the Glaswegian housewife who had an eye for affordable quality goods, and these became ever more available in the interwar years via credit, and in spite of economic depression, in a group who seem to have been less affected by this. It is impossible to ignore the fact that by having such close ties to manufacturing and retail enterprises, Jewish artisan families were already closely in tune with this general tenor and had good access to such facilities. The aspirational allure of consumer goods was well within the horizons of Jewish housewives. Indeed Heinze has argued that to a greater extent than occurred in other immigrant groups, for example the Irish, Jewish women had authority over household expenditure and as a result greater acumen in respect of effective consumption.¹¹⁷ This is an opinion that is perhaps overly dependant on comparison between stereotypes of drunken Irish men and passive Irish women, as compared with sober Jewish men and pushy, aggressive Jewish women. Certainly in Glasgow, credit from warehouses was extended on fairly generous terms to all customers, those who were reliable with payments. And Warehouses such as Goldberg's afforded good quality items of clothing and household equipment to sections of the population who did not quite have either the means, or yet the courage to shop in the 'upper class' stores an example of which is Wylie and Lochhead. As noted, Jews newly moved to small suburban houses were, very much, in this marginal class position and many undoubtedly were more comfortable with shopping on credit from Jewish-owned businesses. However more settled Jewish suburbanites would also have been able to

¹¹⁷ Heinze, A. 'Jewish women and the making of the American home' in Scanlon, J. (ed.) *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York, 2000) pp.20-22.

avail themselves of the swankier stores like Wylie and Lochhead, who also gave 'extended terms of payment.'¹¹⁸

Coupled to the availability of new suburban housing and household equipment, is another important feature of consumerism for women in the interwar period. Unlike many of their mothers, young women in the second generation could read. Women's magazines and the women's sections of newspapers became available as more or less vehicles for the marketing of consumer goods. Moreover there was a huge expansion in this type of reading material aimed precisely at women in the aspiring working class and the middle class. Publications such as *Woman and Home* and *Woman's Own* all emerged over these decades. These weekly and monthly magazines obtained a large reading audience and reinforced the domestic role of the new suburban woman as a worthy ideal that required skills.¹¹⁹ The daughters of immigrants had been educated and were literate; they too would have had access to magazines.

There is not space to explore the ideological import of such developments for women generally at this time, but it is fair to say that Jewish women were no less immune to the kind of social pressures affecting all suburban housewives. As immigrants and relative newcomers to the villas and bungalows of suburbia, they may indeed have experienced this pressure to conform even more. However in addition, Jewish women also had the baggage of tradition to bear, as well as the stresses of contemporary femininity. Advice books for Jewish women that aimed to encourage them in the maintenance of a kosher household proliferated, as indeed did women's supplements

¹¹⁸ GUA. Wylie and Lochhead brochure.

¹¹⁹ White, C. *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London, 1970) pp.93-119.

in certain newspapers.¹²⁰ In both the UK and North America there was evidently anxiety that greater integration, and geographical mobility away from urban centres of settlement would lessen women's attachment to tradition.¹²¹ As with all prescriptive literature, it is difficult to gauge how far women really adhered to such instructions, but the production of such initiatives highlights the general air of anxiety that existed about the waning of traditional religious values and these books evidently placed the responsibility for stopping the rot with women by claiming: 'men harried by economic needs have neglected their traditions...it is therefore the woman's responsibility to fill that gap in Jewish life, to provide her home with the Jewish spirit which is too often lacking in our homes.'¹²²

Despite the overall impression of increasing upward mobility that is made for Glaswegian Jews, there was diversity of experience at the level of individual families. And at the same time as many Jews arrived in their suburban bungalow, many women were still battling with the grime of a Gorbals tenement. Suburban Jews were not insulated from this despite their rise in status – growing up in the Gorbals was not an experience easily sloughed off. The struggle to escape it pursued the consciousness of many despite their cosy suburban environment. Moreover, the same environment impinged on many women in a negative way. They had to keep up high standards, which met local ideals for suburban life. At the same time there was the standards of local Jewish life that also demanded conformity. The advance of extended families

¹²⁰ See for example: *The Jewish Guardian*, published in London and aimed at a middle class readership. A 'Women's section was begun in 1926.

¹²¹ It has proved difficult to trace surviving copies of this type of prescriptive literature. However, one that has come in to my possession is: Goldin, H. *The Jewish Woman and Her Home* published in New York in 1941 it is nevertheless a good example of the genre and includes detailed instructions for a kosher home, religious holidays and family life –written by a man!

¹²² Ibid. p.19.

into the suburbs, and the system of family businesses all meant that suburban privacy was very much a relative affair in many instances.

Upward social mobility was not seamless for Glaswegian Jews. The empirical evidence of how this was experienced is usually missing from accounts that merely seek to count the numbers of second and third generation immigrants who made it into the professions and are supposed to have disappeared behind the leafy trees of suburbia. If anything, the one factor that accounts for the upward mobility of Jews in Glasgow more than any other, is their own peer group pressure. It is clear that in Glasgow Jews did not take their cue from their working class neighbours about what constituted reasonable ambition; other Jews inspired them instead. The leapfrogging house moves and conspicuous consumerism were moreover, managed quite as much by women as men. And within the second generation women had more, not less, to gain by this by and large. Missing also from the usual catalogue of perfect progression from slum to suburb is just how this transition was paid for. It is clear that many Jewish women made their own financial investment in this journey, by continuing to work in family businesses or on their own account. And the Jewish suburban woman needed to be a good manager of resources as well as disposing of these through leisured activity. The domestic role of Jewish women had been a central feature of their identity before migration from Eastern Europe, and this image of domesticity did not preclude female widespread involvement in commerce. Therefore it is a mistaken belief that in reaching for a higher place in the social ladder, Jewish women always relinquished their place at the centre of their own domestic economies.

The image of the Jewish suburban housewife is indeed a good deal more complex than simply that of an economically dependant and leisured woman. And for Jews,

conformity to a norm of middle class life did not necessarily mean wholesale adoption of the latter image, and the powerlessness that is assumed to accompany this. Social mobility was a gendered concern – it is not unreasonable to assert that many Jewish families would not have benefited from this material advancement without female energy and ingenuity – this is an alternative image to the usual one of the passive suburban woman. Nevertheless, as is always the case, assertions about what constituted the general experience of women in immigrant families must always be provisional. Pressures exerted by the experience of a slum childhood, the need to conform to norms of conspicuous consumerism, and achieving a balance between assimilation and Jewish loyalties were part of most Jewish women's experiences in the suburbs, but individual responses to these varied. And suburban life was not uniform. Certainly by the outbreak of war in 1939, substantial numbers of Jews were now living in owner occupied, single dwelling homes, in areas such as Netherlee, Giffnock and Clarkston. But many were still advancing through the local property ladder and still resided in tenements in Glasgow's Victorian suburbs. Women in the second generation often had varied personal experiences from childhood to adulthood, of life in a slum and life in the suburbs. Running alongside this were the different social and cultural values that accompanied rising expectations, and a variety of outlets through which changes to personal class, gender and ethnic identity could be expressed. It is to these that discussion now turns.

Chapter 7.

Gender and culture: communal activity and suburban identity.

*Behold yon dame wi' weel bred voice
Pursuin' charity wi' passion,
Bejewelled in her braw Rolls Royce
Noo that Zionism's the fashion.* (Avrom Greenbaum)¹

In 1928 a group of women formed themselves into a 'Ladies' Section' of the Glasgow Zionist Organisation, and their undisputed leader was a woman named Selma Mann.² One year later this group consolidated itself by becoming affiliated to the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO), and again the instigator of this was Mrs Mann. WIZO groups quickly became significant activist forums for Jewish women in Glasgow, and by 1939 there were six of these in the city, reflecting the geographical mobility of Glasgow's Jews.³ These groups concentrated on the female contribution within the Zionist cause that previously had been male dominated. Through such ventures, women achieved greater autonomy and the chance to flex their political muscles within Glasgow Jewry, which was fast becoming a stronghold of support for a proposed Jewish State.⁴

This chapter will look at facets of Jewish women's lives that were outside of their domestic or business roles, although these regularly shaped the character of female activities. Included in these ventures are diverse pursuits such as: education; female involvement in communal and Zionist politics; and women's participation in Jewish societies and clubs. The analysis applied here will try to re-evaluate the meaning of

¹ Greenbaum, A. 'Yom Ha Rabbie Burns,' *The Jewish Echo* 26/01/1962. Evidently meant as a satirical view of contemporary Jewish life in Glasgow, written in the manner of Burns, and published around the annual celebration of Burns's life that takes place on 25th January.

² Re Selma Mann: *The Jewish Echo* 10/02/1928, and obituary of Mrs Selma Mann, 17/03/1989; see also SJAC. unpublished discussion paper by Mrs Mamie Shenkin, Ref: PER.S 006.

Re formation of WIZO see: Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause*, p.163.

³ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1938-9.

⁴ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, pp.19-25.

these experiences over the succeeding immigrant generations living in Glasgow during the 1930s and 1940s, and separate the significance of female roles from existing popular stereotypes of suburban women. Although much of this activity might well be designated as falling into the category of cultural and leisure pursuits, this does not mean that it should be treated as frivolous; a less judgemental approach is required and this approach is exemplified in much of the feminist history that has tried to recover women's past. Feminist historians have tried to understand how types of leisure were gender-segregated and how some forms of purposeful female activity were constructed as leisure because they provided an alternative from domestic life. This construction occurred alongside the fact that men's communal and political activity was conversely treated as serious work. Within this gender hierarchy the different activities of men and women highlight what appears to be the relative powerlessness of women.⁵ For example, female activities like knitting and sewing done for good causes by such as the Southside Ladies' Dorcas Society involved labour that ostensibly did not interfere with domestic expectations and might be enjoyable. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that these groups also contributed towards a specifically female culture that brought women into contact with one another when they met in each other's homes to organise such communal work.

Regardless of whether the withdrawal of married women from the world of paid work was in fact a reality, it was assumed to be so at the time. For the sake of appearances suburban women were universally conceptualised as housewives whose potential as workers was unnecessary because of economic improvements that were coterminous with suburbanisation. Many Jewish women were able to leave the world of paid labour behind, but this was regularly replaced by unpaid, but necessary labour, on behalf of a

⁵ Green, E. *et al.* *Women's Leisure, What leisure?* (Basingstoke, 1990) pp.38-56.

variety of welfare groups and educational or political causes. Jews themselves recognised this, and women were encouraged to use the time that would once have been spent in the marketplace in worthwhile interests on behalf of their community. In 1938 the following newspaper appeal for the Glasgow Jewish Board of Guardians outlined this sentiment:

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Sunday 13th instant, at 4 o'clock. Tea will be served. The change of hour has been specially arranged in order to suit the convenience of the community, but particularly to enable the ladies, even though they are not subscribers, to be present. It is felt that there are a great many ladies in the community, young and old, who are qualified for welfare work among the families of the poor and a cordial invitation is extended to all who are interested to attend the above meeting.⁶

By the 1930s, the gap had certainly widened between comfortably off residents of the new suburbs in Newlands and Giffnock, and those still struggling to make ends meet in the Gorbals. During Passover in 1938, the Board estimated that: 'four tons of matzos and meal' would be required for poor families unable to bear the expense of special Passover food.⁷ Ladies were evidently required as slum visitors who could identify families in need, and distribute what was required. The qualifications necessary are not specified, but it can be assumed that the Board had in mind the allegedly leisured women of the suburbs who were not busy with young families. This included either young women who had not yet become mothers, or older women whose families were grown up. Clearly, the Board were in need of this female labour, yet there may have been many Jewish women who still felt uncomfortable about

⁶ *The Jewish Echo* 11/03/1938.

⁷ *Ibid.*

distributing the Board's charitable largesse to the Gorbals poor. Their own families' escape from poverty was, after all, quite recent. And within an emerging Jewish middle class, confrontation with a life left behind cannot always have been easy.

Notwithstanding, evidence certainly shows that many Jewish women were both aware of and active within many of their community's concerns. Nevertheless the gender dimensions of community do not seem to allow women to vaunt their political commitment over the recreational aspects of belonging to charitable and communal organisations. While men took charge and were the official face of projects, women busied themselves in the background, apparently occupying their free time in feminine pursuits such as catering for charity functions or raising money for worthy causes.

Without doubt, the activities in which men and women were engaged were often different and governed by prescriptions for gendered areas of expertise but this should not lead to a conclusion that women's civic work was of lesser importance. This would be a false construction of female commitment, ingenuity and indispensability within the Jewish communal framework in Glasgow. Jewish women had to work within the restrictions that were placed on them because of their gender, but this does not mean their purpose or presence was marginal, or their understanding less, only that it has often been historically reconstructed as such. Indeed men's involvement with communal politics had an equal social purpose that brought them into the company of other men. The Jewish community in Glasgow worked hard to foster organisations that provided cultural, political, and leisure pursuits for two important, but somewhat paradoxical reasons. They firstly functioned as the respectable public face of assimilated Scottish Jewry, and they also provided a bulwark against Jews losing touch with their religious and ethnic identity as they became better off, and able to afford the

benefits of secular leisure and recreation. As will be seen, differential gendered ideals became an integral aspect of these competing aims.

Mrs Mann might well be seen as something of an early role model for the writer Avrom Greenbaum's blackly humorous 'well bred dame.' Although whether she was sufficiently well heeled to be chauffeured around Glasgow in a Rolls Royce is doubtful. Nevertheless, Greenbaum was aiming a satirical blow in this verse at what he perceived as the frivolous interest in fundraising taken by many well off Jewish women, like Mrs Mann. Greenbaum's politics were left-wing so this antagonism is perhaps not surprising, but it is in many ways an unfair assessment of the involvement of suburban women in political matters.⁸ Hostility of this type has consequently meant that the implications of middle class women's involvement in communal work have been inadequately explored, even though much of British Jewish history is concerned with communal institutions. Women were heavily involved with these, making the fact that their work has been ignored into a hefty omission. Women's activities as charity workers and members of political societies are generally consigned to a very marginal place in histories of British Jewry. The existing historiography of Glasgow Jewry is a good, but by no means unique example of this. While mention is often made of the money raised by women's committees, and acknowledgement given that women were involved in Jewish groups, men have occupied the main stage in terms of offices held, prestige accorded and names remembered by posterity.⁹

⁸ Greenbaum is remembered principally as a playwright and as the director of the *Glasgow Jewish Institute Players*. This theatre group had a long association with the Unity Theatre in Glasgow, which was a group of left-wing performers who were based in the Gorbals. Greenbaum was born in Poland in 1903 and died in Glasgow in 1963.

⁹ See Collins, *Second City Jewry*, pp. 67, 69-70, 99 & 158 for examples of the fleeting mentions made of women's societies and communal work.

As Jews became more settled in Glasgow, and many became gradually more middle class in outlook, men continued to represent their community to outsiders as businessmen, synagogue office holders, and as the front men for all kinds of Jewish organisations. The appropriate role for women was of course to support such men in their public roles, by being exemplary wives and mothers. Selma Mann was one such woman who fulfilled the role of supporting her medical practitioner husband in his professional and communal life.¹⁰ But she was a political organiser in her own right. Mann was not only the founder of women's Zionism in Glasgow; she also took a leading role in several other religious and political societies. Not least of these was her spearheading of aid to German Jewish refugees, as a result of which many Jewish children were settled in Glasgow during the 1930s.¹¹ Regardless of this, no mention is made of her work in the existing literature on Glasgow Jewry. Despite her many successful endeavours, she too has been consigned to the ranks of middle class women who made tea and entered into communal work only for the social experiences it provided.

To be sure, finding information about this woman's activities has involved many patient hours of search but this is perhaps no less than she deserves as a forgotten champion of Jewish activism in Glasgow.¹² The potential that communal organisations had for politicising women should of course be recognised. However, the fact that debates and discussions often took place within women's homes appears to have neutralised both their political content, and women's intentions. Mrs Mann certainly

¹⁰ Mayer T. Mann was the son of a Jewish clergyman. He studied at Edinburgh University and graduated in 1913. He became one of four practising Jewish doctors in Glasgow at this time. See Collins, K. *Go and Learn; The International Story of Jews and Medicine in Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1988.) p.82 & p.85.

¹¹ *The Jewish Echo* 06/01/1939.

¹² The forthcoming *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* will include an entry on Selma Mann. (Edinburgh, 2006)

did take part in activities that were sex stereotyped. For example, in 1938 she organised a bazaar to raise funds for the Jewish National Fund.¹³ This type of activity was generally the province of women. However, this particular occasion was done on a grand scale and included attendance by the Lord Provost of Glasgow. Usually a man would at least have fronted a civic occasion of this magnitude. Sure enough this turns out to have been the case, but interestingly his Joint Convenor was none other than Selma Mann. Mrs Mann was evidently not the type of women to take a back seat to any man, when it was in fact more than likely she who did all the hard work for this fairly major social occasion.¹⁴

In Glasgow in 1939, there were six women's Zionist groups listed in the *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook*; six more charities run by women, four women's friendly societies; and two female youth organisations.¹⁵ This list is by no means exhaustive of women's activities, because in addition they took part in many mainstream Jewish organisations in Glasgow, as members of Ladies' Committees.¹⁶ Sadly, documentary records for many of these organisations appear not to have survived. However, information about the work of women like Selma Mann is spread across a diverse range of sources, including oral testimony, newspaper articles and commemorative literature. Making the usual charge that it is difficult to recover women's history, in need of some

¹³ This fund was founded in 1920, and had the specific remit of raising funds for the colonisation of Palestine by emigrant Jews, thus bringing disparate fundraising ventures under one umbrella organisation. *Keren Heyso'd* was another organisation noted for this work, See Laqueur, W. *The History of Zionism* 3rd edition (London, 2003) pp. 470 & 474.

¹⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 25/03/1938. This edition contains a 'Souvenir Magazine and Bazaar Programme.' The event took place on 29th and 30th March 1938 and was held in the McLellan Galleries in Glasgow. Mrs Mann was joint convenor of the event, together with a well-known male communal leader and Zionist enthusiast named Fred Nettler.

¹⁵ At present no records of women's friendly societies are held by the SJAC, presumably none have survived.

¹⁶ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook 1938-39*. Described in the preface as: 'A comprehensive handbook of the Glasgow Jewish community, its organisations, institutions and societies' This Yearbook was published from 1938 until the 1950s, but not every year. For example, there seem to have been none issued during the war. Only a few copies from selected years have surfaced.

qualification in this case. Any paucity of surviving records in no way reflects the less active involvement of women. In the records that do survive of Jewish Women's Guilds and Zionist groups in Glasgow, it is obvious that the members had a strict attitude towards accurate record keeping.¹⁷ Regardless of this, women have been left out of accounts about these important parts of Jewish social and cultural life in the first half of the twentieth century. Thus the history of the community has been rendered more or less the history of men, and the manner in which communal activity was gendered is left unacknowledged. Worse still, it has meant licence being given to an image of women that owes much to Greenbaum's amusing, but highly inaccurate portrayal of women activists, an image that needs to be disposed of.

Image and reality in Jewish suburban life.

Greenbaum's rather hideous image of the leisured and wealthy Jewish woman is of course a known suburban stereotype that frequently surfaces. The image of such women is often made to look ridiculous because they stood as a challenge to the boundaries of public and private that were imbedded in the domestic role assigned them in suburban life. In addition, a problem of community history is that it tends to treat the experience of all members as homogenous. Chapter 6 revealed that although there were some very wealthy women within Glasgow Jewry, the majority of suburban women were not as affluent; moreover, many were not unhappy with their lot as 'housewives' or indeed perceived themselves as without influence. There were even

¹⁷ The SJAC holds an increasing number of Minute Books and ephemeral documents of women's societies, some of which came to light during the course of this research. But compared to the volume of material of male dominated societies, the difference is enormous. It is hoped that more will be donated as the importance of these is recognised within the community.

some who did not marry or have children, and many married and unmarried women who were engaged in business.¹⁸

Yet stereotypes generally derived from literary sources are often all that exists to represent the lived reality of suburban women in place of sympathetic historical analysis. Kidd and Nicholls have pointed out, for example, that suburban women were often derided in newspapers and periodicals at the start of the twentieth century.¹⁹

Mockery of this type has continued to pursue them, so it is important to try and understand why this situation could have arisen. In the case of Jewish women in suburban Glasgow, literary interpretations do illustrate the fact that female suburbanites are generally presented as unsympathetic characters. Greenbaum's charitable dame is one example, and another common one is the pitiable victim of suburban ennui. The latter is exemplified in Evelyn Cowan's novel of suburban Jewish life. In this work Cowan examined many themes that she had evidently been unable to approach in her autobiographical writing. Cowan was herself a suburbanite and the claustrophobia of suburban Jewish life for women is the theme of her only published novel – *A Portrait of Alice* (1976). Although this novel is not autobiographical in any sense, Cowan must have drawn on the experiences of some of her contemporaries, as well as on the popular psychology of the post-war period.²⁰ The story is set in the up-market, South Side suburb of Whitefords.²¹ For Cowan's protagonist – Alice B.

¹⁸ For example, amongst the many Zionist organisations which flourished in Glasgow was one whose membership was made up of business women, named the Professional & Business Group, these women evidently felt the need to become engaged with Zionism within a forum of like minded peers. Unfortunately no records of their society have surfaced.

¹⁹ Kidd, A. & Nicholls, D. (eds.) *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940*. (Manchester, 1999) p.130.

²⁰ See *The Glasgow Herald* 08/12/1976 'A Portrait of Evelyn' by Anne Simpson, p.9.

²¹ Cowan, E. *A Portrait of Alice* (Edinburgh, 1976) *Whitefords* is a barely disguised fictionalisation of the real 1930s built suburb of Whitecraigs. The latter remains one of the most up-market locations in Glasgow.

Gazoont – a certain amount of guilt stalks her life. She is unhappy but knows, or feels, that she has little right to this misery as the following excerpt reveals:

Without exaggeration, I can say I never walk into my comfortable home without pleasure. I am always glad and grateful, often remembering the origins of my Polish parents who had struggled to survive in the old Jewish community of the twenties. In the course of our married life, Abe and I had made the conventional Jewish progression from cluttered city streets to the nirvana of Whitefords. This garden suburb was not a barracks of semi-detached boxes. Every house on the estate was tailor-made to individual requirements. My home was a housewife's dream come true. Even after all those years, the private bathroom and dressing room attached to our master bedroom gave me a thrill; but disturbingly, also conjured up memories of my parents' single-end apartment with the lavatory out on the public stair landing.²²

Alice has just been released from hospital at the start of the novel, having suffered a period of severe depression, the cause of which becomes evident as the novel progresses. Along the way, her dissatisfaction with her marriage, her family, friends, and the burden of keeping up suburban appearances are evident. Every housewife's dream has become a personal nightmare for Alice. Written in the mid-seventies when the facts of 'suburban neurosis' had long been documented, this novel attempts to provide insight into the phenomenon from a particularly Glaswegian and Jewish point of view.²³ Alice does not have enough to fill her day and becomes heavily involved in

²² Ibid. pp. 5-6.

²³ Betty Freidan's feminist treatment popularised this in the USA (1963), but sociologists in both America and Britain had become increasingly interested in the mental health of housewives, not only in middle class suburbs, but also in overspill estates and new towns during the post war period. See Giles, J. *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain 1900-1950* (London, 1995) pp.78-85, & Clapson, *Suburban Century*, pp.125-141.

Jewish women's organisations, especially Zionist ones. In the novel this involvement in communal politics is portrayed as an escape route from domestic troubles. Yet Cowan also makes clear that Alice has deeply held convictions about the issues for which she campaigns and fundraises. However the heart of the novel lies with the protagonist's relationship with her family. Her children are grown up, and prove to be less attached to suburban, Jewish proprieties than Alice anticipated. They are a source of anxiety that domestic comforts and good works cannot provide a balm for. And thus Alice feels herself a failure in the role that is supposed to her most important – that of a Jewish mother. Cowan's novel paints a bleak view of suburbia and does wallow in stereotypes that were very much a creation of this time. On the other hand, it also bravely questions some aspects of Jewish suburban life and reveals how subsequent generations of immigrants had begun to question these.

The character of Alice is shown to be a complex woman desperately trying to come to terms with her past and find meaningful ways to confront her present. It is suburbia and its conventions that appear to stand in her way. This rather rigid view of suburbia has had a long legacy that has dogged analysis and obscured the role of female agency within suburban society. Women's political, charitable and social groups did indeed provide an escape from the day to day routine of work and family, but were also perceived by many women as having an essential part to play in the wider concerns of Jews. Moreover, not all women accepted the restrictions placed on female activity because of their gender, and chafed against these while carving out a social space that met their own needs. The educational, social, and cultural pursuits of Jewish women in Glasgow were often enjoyable at a personal level, and provided fulfilling roles for women at a communal level. For example, Mrs Rose who retired from paid employment after the birth of her first child and lived in Giffnock, states:

I went to the *Henrietta Zole* [A Branch of WIZO in Glasgow] there were different branches of it. We used to go on a Monday night. I enjoyed it. Well they made bazaars and fetes and moneymaking things for Israel and it was nice – but you enjoyed the company. I enjoyed it. It was a happy time, there wasnay a lot of money but it was happy. And then your children were growing up and you were interested in them and how they were getting on...²⁴

Mrs Rose's recollections of being a suburban housewife stand in stark contrast to the negative stereotypes of such women. These somewhat more positive and realistic experiences of women of all ages will be examined in the remainder of this chapter, beginning with changes in the lives of young women.

Suburban youth.

Of course the model representative of the suburban woman, whether she is as wealthy as Greenbaum's satire suggests, or making do and mending in a 'Dunroamin' semi, is married and middle-aged; so a pertinent reality check should recall that the female population was more diverse than this. Although many young Jewish women in the 1930s may have been born in the Gorbals, they often entered adolescence and adulthood as suburban dwellers. The experiences of this generation in terms of educational aspirations and cultural horizons were changed by the fact that their families were evidently better off. The classic ambition of respectable and ambitious working class people is that children will supersede the struggle of parents. Mr Taylor put this matter succinctly:

²⁴ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

...all Jewish people saw the value in education...my sister was my father's girl, and I was my mother's blue-eyed boy...A Yiddishe mama, you've no idea what they –you're their son and to be a professional man that was the goal...²⁵

A family's ambitions generally had gendered implications. In the case of Mr Taylor, he did not make it to the professions as his education was cut short due to the family's lack of means, a salutary reminder that economic mobility was more gradual across generations than it is often depicted. Even so, more economic security and improved lifestyles produced conventional aspirations that a daughter would be able to disengage from paid work after marriage and have a nice suburban house. For sons, going up the ranks of social class meant becoming, if not a professional, at least a reliable breadwinner whose status was measured by the fact that his wife did not have to work in order to support a family.

The transition from slum to suburb, and from poverty to relative economic security included shifts in personal perceptions of both class and ethnic identity. Yet it is difficult to know with any measure of certainty how young people of the second and third generations saw themselves in terms of the contemporary social hierarchy. Indeed the class awareness of what has been termed the *petite bourgeoisie* is something of a historical problem generally.²⁶ A more difficult problem is the class awareness of women in this group. Women like Mrs Rose, who relocated to the suburbs as a young adult, had known some hard times when her father's business failed. Equally, as a young wife during the war she still had to struggle financially in

²⁵ Oral testimony of Mr JT. Born: 1903.

²⁶ Mayer, A. 'The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem,' *Journal of Modern History*, 47:3 (1975) pp. 403-436.

order to meet mortgage payments.²⁷ So we should avoid bracketing suburban women as universally well off and middle class. However, a study using data extracted from death certificates of Jews in 1961, which compared the social class structure of the deceased with the class structure of the general population, came to the conclusion that Jews in England and Wales were disproportionately found in social classes II and I as compared with the general population. The figures obtained are outlined below:

| Social Class | Jews | General Population |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------------|
| I: Professional | 4% | 2% |
| II: Intermediate | 34% | 14% |
| III: Skilled | 46% | 46% |
| IV: Partly Skilled | 14% | 22% |
| V: Unskilled | 0% | 13% |
| Unoccupied and Unclassified | 3% | 3% |

Table 7.1 *Comparison of occupations amongst Jews with non-Jewish population of the UK.*²⁸

It is a reasonable deduction that the majority included in this sample were first and second-generation immigrants. Comparable analysis for Scotland at this time does not appear to have been conducted.²⁹ However, it is again reasonable to conclude, that the differential would have been broadly similar.³⁰ The preponderance of Jews in social class II is certainly a result of the numbers who were involved in small businesses and as employers. In Glasgow commercial predominance was even more marked than in

²⁷ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

²⁸ Statistics for general population from the 1961 census based on Registrar General's index of social class by occupation of head of household; lists of deaths in 1961 sent by Jewish Burial Societies to the Office of the Registrar General. Reproduced in: Prais, S. & Schmool, M. 'The Social-Class Structure of Anglo-Jewry, 1961,' *JJS* 17:1 (1975). p.8. See also: Cromer, 'Intermarriage and Communal Survival in a London Suburb,' *JJS* 16, (1974) p.156. Cromer found a similar differential in his study of Jews and Non-Jews in the suburb of Wembley.

²⁹ The *Jewish Echo* 02/04/1964 carried an article outlining plans for a 'Social Survey' of Glasgow's Jews to be conducted by a local Jewish academic. This work if completed, was never published. The academic in question, Paul Vincent, is now deceased and it appears from papers that were submitted to the SJAC in 2004, that his work might have been part of a PhD thesis, which was never submitted. At the time of writing, Mr Vincent's research papers are not yet available for consultation and so could not be accessed for this study. Vincent did publish at least one article however, see Vincent, P. 'Glasgow Jewish Schoolchildren,' *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 6: 2 (1964) pp. 220-231.

³⁰ To the best of my knowledge this is the case, however, Benski's fieldwork conducted in the early 1970s found the Jewish residents of Newton Mearns to be designated overwhelmingly in social classes II and I, because of the numbers who were self-employed. See Benski, *Interethnic Relations*, p.50.

other centres of Jewish settlement.³¹ Yet even after suburban relocation many Jews still ran businesses in the Gorbals and maintained synagogue membership there; they may not have divorced themselves from the class identity of the immigrant completely. Personal perceptions of class identity may be very different from the apparently objective conclusions of statistical analysis.

In terms of ethnic identity, many British Jews had come to see themselves as British citizens who practised the religion of Judaism.³² For young Jews with no personal memory of Eastern Europe, little contact with the vagaries of life in a slum, and who had participated in the assimilatory experience of the Scottish education system, there is every reason to suppose that they did consider themselves Scottish and Jewish, as opposed to Jewish and Scottish. Yet events on the European continent and the establishment of the State of Israel would mark a watershed in this state of stability, an issue that will be taken up later in this chapter when Zionism is discussed. This is a good example of how individual subjectivity is capricious, and can be affected by events beyond the horizons of the personal, familial, and even the local community.

Personal perceptions of ethnic identity are difficult to pin down or quantify, and quantitative data about social class may be misleading where subjective notions of social class position are concerned. The most likely scenario that demonstrates changes in these is that a generational gap emerged, with young men *and* young women being more at ease with the ropes of suburban life than their parents. Certainly it was expected that young women should try to get a good job before getting married,

³¹Benski found this to be the case when comparing her data on occupations with Krausz's data for Jews in Edgware. See *Interethnic Relations*, p.55.

³²Schmool, M. 'The ethnic question on the British census: a Jewish perspective,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, 32: 2 (1998) pp. 65-71.

and the type of work thought suitable could not be found in workshops. It is also clear that girls enjoyed the activities available for the young at the time in Glasgow. On the other hand, immigrants of the first and second generations who had spent a lengthy period living in the Gorbals *shtetl* probably stayed more attached to the social life of their peer group. Patterns of sociability that had been formed in the Gorbals, such as visiting friends and family at home, were continued in the suburbs. However, the young often had their cake and ate it by taking part in Jewish socialising, while still having access to recreation outside of this. This suggests that youth were more comfortable with a dual ethnic identity and this provided a greater sense of individual freedom.

The types of activities that young, Jewish women of the suburbs indulged in may reveal something of their personal perceptions of identity. In chapter 3, some of the activities available to Gorbals youths such as dancing, and cinema going were mentioned. Suburban youth had equal, if not more access to such pursuits, because of their increased affluence and the economic choices that accompanied this. Young women whose wages were no longer needed for the basics of survival were certainly drawn to these, and spent their disposable income on many of the leisure choices at large in interwar Glasgow. Mrs Rose dodged her mother's surveillance sometimes and went dancing, a common pastime for the working and lower middle classes, but one that had inherent danger for Jewish girls who might of course meet the wrong kind of partner there. Indeed this interviewee freely admits that she socialised with non-Jewish men. She also recalls personal experience of the kind of dilemma presented by this, when she became involved with a young man that she met in a dancehall who was not Jewish:

...I was very broken hearted. You're talking about it –it happened sixty years ago, but I was broken hearted because I really liked this chap and of course he liked me and we would have been married, but I didn't because of my mother.³³

The types of leisure and recreation open to the young took them away from the closed atmosphere of Jewish Glasgow and affected their views and their self-image. The distance created by suburban relocation also heightened estrangement from traditions carried over from Eastern Europe. Often this created a state of divided loyalties for the young. Patterns in gender relations were not static in this process either. Upward mobility interacted with changes in gender roles, and aspects of ethnic identity became vested in differential gendered behaviour. Women like Mrs. Rose felt duty bound to conform to gendered and ethnic expectations of behaviour, more duty bound than men, but greater affluence presented many new opportunities. A good example of this process, and a further way to explore the changed social and cultural horizons of the Jewish community lies with education and how this affected the lives of women, and indeed how women themselves responded to opportunities for learning.

The education of young ladies.

By the interwar years most young Jewish women still did not have the educational opportunities enjoyed by many Jewish boys. Nevertheless they nearly all far exceeded the often-limited education of their mothers. Second and third generation women within the Jewish community in Glasgow were educated until at least fourteen years of age and were thus literate. However, the evidence from oral testimony is highly individual in respect of opportunities available after basic schooling. For example, Mrs Rose despite the reasonable affluence of her parents finished her education at age

³³ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

fourteen, whereas Mrs Simons attended commercial college after leaving school, and became a legal secretary. Yet others, for example Mrs Levy, became graduates. In this case with the encouragement and support of her mother, and in the face of opposition from her father:

He was a highly intelligent man, but he didn't want me to go to university in case I looked down on him.³⁴

As well as personal ambition, the chronology of economic improvement, family size, and the attitudes of immigrant mothers were all influential in determining the fates of young women at this time. For example, Mrs Levy is a second-generation immigrant who attended university, but Mrs Simons was in fact of the third generation and did not benefit from this despite being a woman of intellectual ability. Yet there can be no doubt that the norms of gender relations in suburban life also impinged on the emerging identities of these girls. Suspicion that material advantages and the influence of the non-Jewish world might wreck the future of the next generation of Glasgow Jews had already become palpable in the Gorbals slum, and became even more acute in the suburbs. The prospect of university and the influences that young men might fall prey to during their time as undergraduates was terrifying enough for many Jewish families, yet it did not deter them from encouraging their sons to seek an academic education as a route into the professions. For girls though, any possible advantages in doing so were often outweighed by the anxieties raised when a girl was allowed such freedom. Even within families comfortably settled in the suburbs, the primary ambition of most for their daughters was marriage, motherhood and grandchildren. This was an attitude perfectly in keeping with the overarching suburban view about the

³⁴ SJAC. Transcript of oral history interview with Hannah Levy. Born: 1908. Interviewed by Ben Braber. 13/04/1989.

centrality of family life.³⁵ Moreover, from the late nineteenth century and throughout much of the twentieth, schooling was not meritocratic in terms of gender.³⁶ Both elementary and secondary education was regularly aligned to the perceived domestic future of girls.³⁷ And training for the workplace existed only in so far as to provide girls with the means to earn for a short time before marriage.

Gendered expectations that were imbedded within education, together with the improved fortunes of Jews encouraged many Jewish families to expect their young women to have a good basic education, good enough to keep them out of the workshops and factories. Some new opportunities in work were becoming available to women who came from a good address. For example secretarial, clerical and sales jobs were all considered to have a high status and were expanding for women.³⁸ In Glasgow during the 1930s, such genteel occupations were considered very suitable for suburban girls and did not present impediments to finding a suitable husband within the Jewish community. At the heart of such ambitions was an ideology that remained unshaken about the value of an essentially domestic role for women. Nevertheless, it was recognised that the family businesses that had paid for the purchase of suburban homes often flourished with assistance of female family members. This seems to account for the preponderance of Jewish girls who either went into sales, or if some level of further education could be afforded, undertook commercial training at this time. These skills could always be put to good use in a husband's business, and such activity did not interfere with a suburban woman's respectability as a housewife since

³⁵ Jackson, A. *The Middle Classes 1900-1950* (Nairn, 1991) p. 316.

³⁶ Turnbull, A 'Learning Her Womanly Work: the Elementary School Curriculum' in Hunt, F. (ed.) *Lessons for Life: the Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950* (Oxford, 1987) pp. 83-100.

³⁷ McDermid, J. 'Women and education' in Purvis, J. (ed.) *Women's History: Britain 1859-1945* (London, 1995) pp.107-130.

³⁸ Zmroczek, J. " 'If girls would take more kindly to domestic work': Norwich, 1900-1939," *Women's History Magazine* 44, (June 2003.) pp. 9-19.

it was not categorised as formal employment. Any misgivings that parents might have about the influences awaiting girls in the world of business were usually put aside.

Young women were often proactive in pursuing such careers for themselves in any case. Mrs Simon, who left school at age fourteen trained as a legal secretary. Here she describes the frustrations involved in female ambitions, but also the benefits that were accrued from her training at a commercial school:

I went to Greg's college...the reason I went to Greg's College, I didn't want to leave school... the headmaster got in touch with [my mother] and said that she should let me stay on...but she wouldn't. I hated it I was very, very upset. And then two cousins had gone to Greg's College and got good jobs. So my mother said you'll go to Greg's College. It isn't that we don't want you to be educated but we can't afford to keep you on at school...There was *Gerber's Warehouse* and all the Jewish girls went there and started there. And I remember when I started with *Lindsay Orr* [Firm of Solicitors] I was getting a pound a week and my friends were only getting ten shillings so that was wonderful, but they had all just come out of school and gone straight there. And there was *Goldberg's* which was a big warehouse and a lot of people went there. See a lot of the places you got the Jewish holidays and that was important... Very few girls of my age got an education. None of my friends went to university, I was one of the elite, I went to college.³⁹

The pressures of acculturation and the desire to be modern and sophisticated certainly made many young women look askance at the lives of their mothers. However limited their education, most young women took their cue about the future from the available

³⁹ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914. The *Jewish Echo* contains many examples of commercial colleges advertising training opportunities for both sexes.

role models around them in Scottish society. Shop work was better than the clothing factory, and office work was better still. As can be seen in the above testimony, some mothers did not impede their daughter's progress even when this meant that a girl's working and social life might take place outside of the community; instead they often made compromises. In Mrs Simon's case the family budget was stretched to provide higher education for her brother, while she had to accept the concession of college training in typing, shorthand and bookkeeping. Despite her disappointment at this decision she went ahead and found fulfilling employment outside of the local Jewish employment structure and engaged in a world where many secular influences existed. In this way, Mrs Simons acquired non-Jewish friends. Yet in this testimony, the prevalence of Jewish girls working in sales within Jewish-owned businesses is also attested. During the interwar years the community went so far as to start up an employment bureau for 'boys and girls between the ages of 14-17' that carried vacancies where '*Shabosim*' [sic] and all Jewish holidays were assured.⁴⁰

A fortunate few made it to university and as with their male counterparts, a popular option was to study medicine. The Glasgow Jewish Student's Society was founded in 1911. In that year, its membership of fifteen students was mostly studying medicine.⁴¹ However the first female Jewish graduate in medicine was Dr Sara Jacobs in 1923.⁴² Jacobs was well known in the Gorbals, where she had a medical practice.

Matriculation albums for the year 1920-21 show at least two other Jewish women studying medicine at Glasgow University, and interestingly in this period preceding

⁴⁰ SJAC. Brochure advertising the: 'Glasgow Sabbath Observance Society,' no date but c1930s, Ref: REL GSO 0001.

⁴¹ *Hadardar: Magazine of the Glasgow Jewish Student's Society*, Golden Jubilee Supplement, (December, 1961) p.11.

⁴² GUA. Extract from *Glasgow University Marriage of Female Graduates Register*.

growth of suburban relocation, one of them had a Gorbals address.⁴³ Teaching also began to become popular. Hannah Frank graduated in 1930 and took up teaching in the East End of Glasgow.⁴⁴ Even earlier than this the *Echo* reported on the employment of Miss Dora Stelmach M.A. in Gorbals Public School; this woman was said to be 'well-known locally.'⁴⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s, these women were pioneers however, and the majority of the female population set their sights lower, or were disappointed, until at least the post-war period. The secular influences that lay in wait in higher education did, as Collins has commented, deter parents, and in addition 'There was also the worry that long years spent in studies would make their daughters unmarriageable'. Collins considers that this was a serious concern in a community 'where family life was so pivotal.'⁴⁶

In an effort to counter many of the secular influences incurred when women became better educated, religious education for girls came to be viewed as more desirable than it had in the environment of the Gorbals. An article in the *Echo* in 1932 talked about a 'sad state of affairs' in reference to girls who left school without any religious tuition and instruction 'in those ceremonies dear to the Jewish housewife' was recommended.⁴⁷ Traditions of the home began to be less attractive when there were other more secular and fashionable enticements on offer outside of it. It was recognised that young women were now becoming more questioning of the religious obligations of the home. Mrs Simon explained for example that:

⁴³ GUA. Matriculation Albums for the year 1920-1. Ref: R8/5/H/12. These records do not provide details of religion, however, ethnicity can be extrapolated from details of place of birth and surname – although this is not entirely reliable. For discussion of social class background of women undergraduates see Hamilton, S. 'Interviewing the middle class: women graduates of the Scottish universities c1910-1935,' *Oral History* 10:2 (1982) pp.58-67.

⁴⁴ Ibid. And see also SJAC. Oral history transcripts, which includes that of an interview with Hannah Frank Levy (13/04/1989.)

⁴⁵ *The Jewish Echo* 03/10/1928.

⁴⁶ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, p.175.

⁴⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 11/03/1932.

...when I was at home, before I was married, I never went out on a Thursday night because my mother was baking, she made all her own bread and things like that ...Thursday night she was doing the baking, and I used to prepare all the vegetables and then she would cook...If Sabbath came in early then on a Friday, everything was prepared on Thursday night...But that was the sort of tradition. Thursday night you polished the candlesticks...Most houses did that even if they didn't consider themselves religious – traditional - I had lots of non-Jewish friends, but they would never say 'come out on a Thursday night' because I wouldn't be allowed to come out, I'd to peel the carrots and do stuff like that.⁴⁸

Moreover, many women who were still attracted to their religion began to question their exclusion from the life of the synagogue. This excerpt from a letter to the *Jewish Echo* as early as 1928 is signed 'a disappointed Jewess':

As I grew older...my conviction of this farcical feminine element became more acute...The womenfolk sat aloft in a balcony, separated from their menfolk, and practically out of sight and hearing of the Chazan [Cantor]. In this way the audience of women became bored with the proceedings and indulged in confidential talk among themselves. The tailor, and the baker, the shikshea [sic – non-Jewish woman] and the children, found their place for discussion in the House of Worship...Questions worried me then, which have since answered themselves. Why were women essentially lookers on in the Jewish community? Women who had so much scope for enthusiasm and devotion to a cause, who even had more staying powers than men, were deprived of their

⁴⁸ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914. During the Scottish Winter, Sabbath can begin when dark falls in the late afternoon.

chance and the opportunity of achieving their vocation. So the synagogue has become for women ...the fashion parade, and the debating ground. Cannot something be done?⁴⁹

More religious education for girls was a response to the secular influences upon women, but this was organised around synthesising traditional gendered areas of responsibility and outward conformity with what were seen to be the norms of middle class life in Scotland. This excerpt from personal testimony explains what was on offer:

In addition to the study of the bible, [the girls] learned about the Festivals and the Holy Days, with particular reference as to how these should be observed and celebrated within the home. "A Jewish Way of Life" was one of the many reference books used. The girls were encouraged to do charitable work and to take part in Jewish cultural societies.⁵⁰

Paula Hyman maintains that in Western Europe and America, 'middle class gender norms of behaviour eroded traditional patterns of Jewish practice among men while facilitating a measure of Jewish ritual observance among women.'⁵¹ In Scotland however, neither the Liberal or Reform movements in Judaism (which give more formal status to women in religious life) really challenged traditional Orthodox religion, wherein women were segregated in the synagogue and had no influence on its affairs. Hyman asserts that bourgeois western culture expects women to be more religious than men, and the fact that much of Jewish religious ritual is home centred

⁴⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 13/04/1928 p. 9.

⁵⁰ SJAC. Uncatalogued type-scripted document entitled: *A Different Ceremony*, no date affixed. However, I know the author as an oral history interviewee. In modern Orthodox communities the Jewish girl, at about 12, has a coming of age service, the *Bat Chayil* (meaning daughter of valour). She will be allowed to read in the synagogue but not from the Torah, only from the prophets and the writings.

⁵¹ Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation* p.25.

allowed women to express their greater religious fervour in this way.⁵² The comparative lack of reform in the type of Judaism practised in Glasgow, as compared with other British and American cities meant that women certainly remained very much marginalized in synagogue life, leaving female religiosity within the home as really the only vehicle for giving religious status to Glaswegian Jewish women.

Efforts towards providing religious education for children was usually one of the first measures put into place when numbers of Jews settled within a suburban locality.

Here, indifference to the religious education of girls that had been characteristic in the Gorbals was overtaken by general anxiety about the waning of tradition and the need to refocus efforts in maintaining links with this. Religious apathy was sometimes a consequence of the rigours involved in migration. Within the greater anonymity of the suburbs this lack of interest could soon turn to abandonment of Jewish roots. At a meeting held between the Representative Council and the nascent Giffnock congregation in 1936, a question was asked by several members of the Council in response to a remark made about the 'thirty children' presently receiving Hebrew education in a Giffnock schoolroom rented for the purpose. The gentlemen asked: 'where the rest of the children in Giffnock were being educated as obviously there were more than thirty children among 160-200 families.'⁵³ Smaller families and a greater level of indifference were evidently at play in the mid-1930s. One survey done in 1937 concluded that out of nineteen hundred school age children across the community, only about a thousand were receiving any Jewish education, and this teaching might last for only a couple of years. Thereafter, greater pressure was exerted on parents to be alert to the needs for Jewish education for sons *and* daughters; and of

⁵² Ibid. p.26.

⁵³ SJAC. Minute Book of the *Glasgow Jewish Representative Council*. Minute of meeting held 16/02/1936. Ref: SOC. REP. 0018.

course suburban Jews were more able to bear the expense of educating daughters.

Indeed the formal religious education of girls came to be seen as part and parcel of a more respectable and moral way of life. The resultant measures were designed to maintain loyalties to Judaism and Jewish practices, and prevent assimilation through too much conformity with local norms. The gendered dimensions of this move took account of the changed perspectives of women, but in Glasgow it seems, power and control of religious matters was left in the hands of men.

For older children other means needed to be found to cement their Jewish identity. Here new routes were taken that conformed to the types of organisations run by Christian churches in suburban Glasgow. The youth groups that had previously been instigated by the Garnethill Synagogue, such as the Lads' Brigade, the Girl Guides and the Girls' Club, were of course similar in character to non-Jewish community groups, and provided recreation and education.⁵⁴ These continued to operate in this period, but as part of their agenda had been the assimilation of immigrant youth to the British way of life, they had probably lost much of their appeal among the more sophisticated and acculturated suburban youth. The Girls' Club evidently tried to move with the times and now provided classes in 'shorthand' and 'debating' amongst other options.⁵⁵ Yet there were now growing numbers of young women and men who were more familiar with the South Side suburbs than they were with the Gorbals, and these educated youths were certainly likely to resent the patronage of Garnethill and had their own ideas about how to enjoy life.

⁵⁴ Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.19 & 27; *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook*, 1938-9, pp. 62-3.

⁵⁵ See advertisement for club in *The Jewish Echo* 01/01/1932.

Leisure for young ladies

Leisure is also an area that demonstrates shifting gender, ethnic, and social class identities, although it is rarely viewed as important in examinations of Jewish upward mobility. One of the ironies of Jewish social life in the interwar years is that it was still very much centred on the Gorbals, despite the ongoing migration of Jews from the area. The Jewish Institute in South Portland Street, Gorbals has passed into local legend as the focal point of Jewish society during the 1930s and 1940s. [See Map B.] The Institute in fact grew out of the Jewish Working Men's Club, which was discussed in Chapter 3. It passed through various incarnations and was housed in different sites, all providing social and cultural activities principally for men.⁵⁶ By 1935, a former church in the Gorbals was bought and completely refurbished as a social centre for Glasgow's Jews.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the manner in which leisure had been conceptualised as masculine did not immediately evaporate.

It is a measure of the relative affluence of the community at this time that this project came to fruition, yet there was apparently never any question of placing it in another area. Reliable statistics about the numbers of Jews still living in the Gorbals at this point have not come to light, but it seems likely that although there was still a sizeable population, this was already dwindling rapidly. However, as has been noted in chapter 6, the initial move made by many Jews was to inner-suburbs within two-miles of the Gorbals. This fact may have shored up any objections to keeping this important institution in a slum area, albeit in Laurieston, which was the most upmarket section of the Gorbals. The new Institute was fairly lavish, was licensed to sell alcohol, and

⁵⁶ *The Jewish Echo* 19/09/1930 p.10, article about opening of an extension to the Glasgow Jewish Institute recounts the development of the club. Women were first admitted as auxiliary members in 1913 apparently in an effort to boost funds. However, their activities were restricted and they were not entitled to vote at general meetings.

⁵⁷ The new site for the club was in South Portland Street, which also housed the largest of the Gorbals Synagogues and so created a cluster of Jewish interest.

contained a foyer, lounge area, a ballroom, a billiards room, a library, as well as meeting rooms for chess and bridge clubs. It had members who were part of a 'Literary Section' and in addition there was a 'drama section' – the Jewish Institute Players led by Avrom Greenbaum.⁵⁸ The arrangement of membership into sections reflected an ambition to meet the needs of all Jews in the community, and included such activities as 'physical culture' and a 'choral section'. Above all it was a meeting place. Mrs Rose described it as 'the place where you would go to meet your future husband.'⁵⁹ And indeed this is recalled as its chief function:

Many folk in Glasgow can thank the Institute (or otherwise) for the fact that their romances were sealed there, and mainly in the Isaac Woolfson Ballroom...the Institute was the venue for most of Glasgow's Jewish youth, especially on a Sunday night.⁶⁰

Like most of her generation Mrs Simons went dancing at the Institute; this interviewee had never resided in the Gorbals, but it is a gauge of how much this area still functioned as the heartland of Jewish life that it was deemed acceptable as a place of recreation for suburban Jews. As a young woman, by this time living in the Pollokshields district, Mrs Simons was ferried home in the motorcars of her male friends and escorts, and did in fact meet her husband there.

There can be no doubt that the Institute functioned as a means to keep Jews together and to prevent too much assimilation in the face of recreational opportunities available, especially to the young, in the city and its suburbs. It might be supposed that the communal and youthful nature of the Institute resulted in a new social environment

⁵⁸ SJAC. Articles and ephemera relating to the *Glasgow Jewish Institute*. Ref: CUL. INS.0003.

⁵⁹ Oral testimony of Mrs MR. Born: 1909.

⁶⁰ Morris Slater 'End of an Era' article remembering the Institute upon its closure in 1970. *The Jewish Echo* 30/09/1970.

relatively free of gendered constraints, however this would be to misunderstand how recreation was constructed in line with contemporaneous views about appropriate behaviour for men and women. The aim of being inclusive to Jews with widely different interests really disguised the quite explicitly unequal division of power in gender relations where social activity was concerned. The Institute put out a monthly magazine that had all the hallmarks of its writers' youthful zeal. Assorted pages of this publication were given over to news about the various sections of the membership and included is commentary from the 'ladies' section'. Membership itself continued gender divided; women were not allowed entrance on certain nights, and were reminded of this if they attempted to exert any autonomy in their behaviour, as the following editorial commentary shows:

A problem giving the powers-that-be sleepless nights is that of the overcrowding in the lounge on Sunday evenings. The fault, we are of the opinion, lies with the ladies who take advantage with impunity of the amenities of the Institute, without attending the Sunday dances...Ladies! If you would assist the management in successfully running the Institute, patronise the Sunday evening dances, thereby solving the congestion problem in the lounge. And avoiding the inevitable withdrawal of the privileges you are now enjoying. Everyone must be catered for, and as the Institute is essentially a men's club, the foregoing advice will be appreciated upon fair consideration.⁶¹

The question of how young women viewed such reprimands is interesting. Did they find them tiresome and so challenged them, or were they inured to this kind of discrimination? While life had moved on and the experiences of girls were very

⁶¹ SJAC. *Jewish Institute Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 2 February 1938, pp.1-2, Ref: CUL. INS. 0003. Unfortunately I do not know how long the run of this magazine was. Surviving copies are all pre war.

different from their immigrant mothers and grandmothers, this is a good example of how some aspects of gender relations appeared to be stubbornly the same. However response to these may not have been quite so static. Women, who were not anxious to meet a potential husband on the dance floor and evidently preferred their own company, were put firmly in their place. However, the reply made by 'Miss Grundy', the author of the women's section page in the same issue, is bold:

What's the matter with our Sunday night dancing? Are our programmes too good—the wireless programmes too good—the girls too good—the boys too good—or is the Institute too bad?⁶²

It does seem that by the 1930s young women had begun to question the unwritten rule that men had ownership of public forms of Jewish culture, while Jewish women's culture and society was firmly domestic. These educated young women had ambitions to enjoy themselves in more diverse ways and challenged the status quo of gender relations. The 'women's section' organised their own programme of leisure pursuits on the nights when they had admission. These included parallel activities to those undertaken by men, such as gymnastics and table tennis. However, the male committee ran the large-scale enjoyments such as the Sunday night dances. Miss Grundy's teasing comments are really a criticism, and not all that veiled, about power and control. Young women did try to assert their own culture, one that was more glamorous than the leisure interests assumed to be the lot of the domesticated suburban woman. For instance, when comparing designated social evenings that were segregated for the sexes, known as 'smokers', 'Miss Grundy', also made the following comments:

⁶² Ibid. *Jewish Institute Magazine*, (February 1938) p.18.

It has been said that at the men's "Smoker" risqué tales were told – so risky in fact that none have been repeated; at least I haven't heard any! I presume the jokes told at the Ladies' "Smoker" were about knitting, cooking – and maids. I wonder? ⁶³

Clearly young women felt able to challenge the marginal place assigned them in social life. This is not to say that most did not share the ambitions of the older generation for marriage and motherhood, but other aspects of their lives had changed and this had consequences for gender relations at this time. The apparently petty arguments over women's attendance at Sunday dances perhaps disguised more deep-seated resentments about the rights of these women to exercise their own choices in a previously male domain. Women also took part in activities that challenged consensus over leisure activities assigned as masculine, and were able to be assertive through poking fun at what men supposed were the proper enjoyments of women. Of course the exclusion of women from some forms of male social life has obvious parallels with the exclusion of women from certain types of employment, and from aspects of civic life that were deemed to conflict with domestic responsibilities, or were viewed as beyond feminine intellectual capacity. It might be expected that young women would challenge such views, but older women also sometimes became galvanised by the sexism they met. The most obvious example occurs in the world of politics, which attracted interest from both young and older women.

⁶³ Ibid. p.18.

Political women

Selma Mann was self evidently a politically motivated woman. Born in Latvia in 1893, she seems to have come from a well-off family and is said to have studied at university in Geneva. In 1910 she enrolled at the University of Edinburgh, and thereafter made Scotland her home for several decades, moving to Glasgow after her marriage.⁶⁴ Mann is recalled as a leading light of the first generation of women committed to the Zionist cause in Scotland and there were many like her. Despite her status as a first generation immigrant, Mann was born into the middle classes; she had not made the same class transition that many suburban women had experienced, and her political principles reflected this position. As a doctor's wife it was perfectly acceptable for her to become involved in good works to help the less fortunate, and as Susan Tananbaum argues, this use of supposedly feminine virtues was a means by which middle class Jewish women could assert themselves in communal politics.⁶⁵ However, Mann's interests were wider and she certainly was keen on rousing the energies of more newly middle class women.

The class base of the Glasgow community was still broad at this time and many people not long moved to the suburbs still retained allegiance to socialist politics, which was a legacy of their working class backgrounds. The involvement of Jewish women in Zionist initiatives, in socialism, and sometimes within organisations that combined both of these political stances, has been explored in detail within the context of North America.⁶⁶ However, in Britain, studies of the political framework of Jewish

⁶⁴ *The Jewish Chronicle*, obituary of Selma Mann 24/03/1989 Mann died in London in 1989.

⁶⁵ Tananbaum, S. 'Jewish Feminist Organisations in Britain and Germany at the Turn of the Century' in Brenner, M. *et al.* (eds.) *Two Nations: British and German Jews In Comparative Perspective* (Tubingen, 1999.) pp.371-392.

⁶⁶ See for example, Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, and 'Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Eaton strikes of 1912 and 1934' in Iacovetta, F and Valverde, M. (eds.) *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, (Toronto, 1992) pp. 189-228.

communities have tended to be rather traditional in their approach and have largely excluded gender analysis in favour of a synthesis between class and ethnicity.⁶⁷

In Eastern Europe, socialism had attracted young Jews of both sexes. A Jewish socialist movement started in Russia in the 1880s, but really came to significance in 1897 with the formation of the General Jewish Workers' Union. More usually known as the *Bund*, this organisation became a considerable force for politicising artisans and workers across the Pale of Settlement.⁶⁸ Many first generation migrants had been members of the *Bund* and brought their ideas about social justice with them to countries of settlement. Such ideas included challenging religious authority and traditional gender relations. Susan Glenn has described these Jewish women as 'folk heroines of the younger generation of women' and there is no doubt that the thousands of young women who became involved in the *Bund* in Russia made a significant and active contribution to the socialist movement there.⁶⁹ Far from being dispensers of tea and biscuits, *Bundist* women were involved in 'transporting arms, ammunition and illegal literature, working in underground printing shops...serving as labour organisers and agitators, making speeches and serving on local and central committees...' ⁷⁰ Surely a few must have travelled to Glasgow? It is known for example, that the Communist Party in London had a higher proportion of Jews involved than non-Jews, relative to the overall population of the city during the interwar years. This higher proportion included women as well as men.⁷¹ Yet the involvement of Jewish women in Glaswegian left-wing politics is something of a blank page in history.

⁶⁷ For exploration of this problem see: Marks, 'Carers and Servers of the Jewish Community,' pp.106-123.

⁶⁸ Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, p.35.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.38.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.38.

⁷¹ Srebrnik, H. 'Class, Ethnicity and Gender Intertwined: Jewish women and the East London Rent Strikes, 1935-1940,' *Women's History Review*, 14: 3 (1995) p.285.

The rigours of making a home in a foreign country may of course have left little room for active politics but a very big assumption is needed to assert that no Jewish women did become embroiled. Nevertheless, the scarcity of mention given to women either in surviving documents of Jewish labour groups, or in the existing historiography does seem to suggest that this was the case. The masculine identity of trade unionism in Scotland perhaps accounts in part for this female exclusion.⁷² But in addition, Jewish women experienced exclusion on two levels: on the grounds not only of gender, but also of ethnicity. A specifically Jewish trade unionism did exist in Glasgow, but despite evidence of some militancy, its survival eventually faltered in the face of trade depression during the 1920s.⁷³ Moreover, the nature of female employment in workshops and family businesses more or less ensured that women would find it difficult to become involved in any form of workers' protest movement. However, the ideas garnered in Eastern Europe did find outlets; immigrant Jews did continue to discuss politics at the very least.

Ralph Glasser for example, has written about the influence that socialist politics had on his early life as a Gorbals Jew. Glasser was a frequent visitor to the 'Workers' Circle', a Jewish organisation that operated as a friendly society for a membership committed to socialism.⁷⁴ Indeed, this was really an international movement with similar societies in many countries as well as in the UK.⁷⁵ The Glasgow branch began in 1912 and was part of the UK fraternity whose membership was committed to fighting fascism and anti-Semitism. Within the context of the Gorbals, socialist organisations and meetings for the discussion of left-wing politics amongst Jews would have been entirely in keeping

⁷² McIvor, A. 'Women and Work in twentieth Century Scotland' in Dickson and Treble (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland Vol. 111, 1914-1990* (Edinburgh, 1992) pp.138-173.

⁷³ Maitles, 'Jewish Trade Unionists in Glasgow' pp. 46-69.

⁷⁴ Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*.

⁷⁵ For example, A Worker's Circle also flourished in North America. See Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp.53-54.

with the general political tenor of the Gorbals during the interwar years. Indeed, largely due to the strength of the Catholic Labour vote, constituents of the Gorbals were the first to be represented at a municipal level by a Catholic woman. Alice Cullen became local councillor for the Hutchesontown ward in 1938; and in 1948, Cullen again representing the Gorbals, achieved another record when she became Britain's first Catholic woman MP.⁷⁶ Therefore it can certainly be asserted that socialist politics were part of the lifeblood of the area at this time and some women were actively involved.

In respect of Jewish women's involvement in socialism, it is known that the Glaswegian Workers' Circle included a 'Ladies' Section'.⁷⁷ According to Braber, there were about one hundred women members in Glasgow in 1934.⁷⁸ Within the organisation's premises in Main Street, Gorbals, literature on socialist issues was available and discussion groups took place as part of the cultural commitment that the organisation fostered for working class Jews. In the run up to the Second World War an object of great discussion was events in Spain and the UK membership organised 'relief work' for socialists caught up in this conflict.⁷⁹ Showing comradeship with others was part of the Circle's remit and in return they sometimes received support themselves. For example in 1947, in conjunction with the local Communist Party, they organised public protests about anti-Semitic attacks, which took place across Britain, including in Glasgow, in August of that year.⁸⁰ This protest was said to have had a good response.⁸¹ Yet

⁷⁶ Maver, I. 'Alice Cullen' entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [electronic resource] (Oxford, 2004.)

⁷⁷ SJAC. Copies of Lazar Zaidman's correspondence 1944-196. Ref: POL.WOR.0001. Letter to Zaidman from Mick Goldberg (secretary of Glasgow Division of the worker's Circle) dated 13/01/1950 mentions £50 raised by the Ladies' Section.

⁷⁸ Braber, *Integration of Jewish Immigrants*, p.228.

⁷⁹ *The Jewish Echo* 25/03/1938; *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook 1937-8* (Glasgow, 1938) p.64.

⁸⁰ SJAC. Letter to Zaidman from Mick Goldberg dated 28/09/1947 mentions this activity, which had a positive response. Ref: POL.WOR.0001. The attacks were in response to the murder of two British soldiers in Israel, see Kushner, T. 'Anti-Semitism and austerity: the August 1947 riots in Britain' in Panikos, P. *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, 1996) pp.150-170.

unfortunately very little has come to light about the activities of women members, although interestingly for an organisation committed to political activism it does appear that women's skills were utilised in much the same way as in more mainstream societies; in other words, they were responsible for raising funds for the causes supported by the group. In examining the oral testimony of one female member of the Workers' Circle in Toronto, Ruth Frager has concluded that this organisation encouraged women to be aware of inequalities on the grounds of class and ethnicity, but gave little ground on questions of gender inequalities.⁸² In Glasgow, the women members of the Circle appear to have had quite a lot of difficulty even getting recognised as a bona fide group although they evidently were committed to their work. In 1949, they went so far as to apply for affiliation to the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, membership of which signalled acceptance as a respectable organisation. This was a somewhat eccentric move given the Circle's antagonism towards bourgeois groups, but may have signalled the fact that these women were desperate for acknowledgment and for their views to be more widely aired. Somewhat predictably, the Council demurred over this, and no record exists of whether their application was successful.⁸³

Greater economic stability and removal from the Gorbals did mean that the mainstream organisations within Glasgow Jewry were nervous about groups who they evidently viewed as hotheads. Nevertheless, the left-wing politics of many Gorbals dwellers did not immediately cease on relocation to the suburbs. Individuals did sometimes try to reconcile their allegiances to socialism and social justice with changed personal circumstances. This synthesis of changed horizons with deeply held political

⁸¹ Ibid. Zaidman letter 28/09/1947

⁸² Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp. 167-169.

⁸³ SJAC. *Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of the GJRC.*, 17/11/1949. Ref: SOC. REP. 0018.

convictions about working class life was often retained at the level of the individual because of the relationship that many Jews still had with Gorbals roots. Mrs Rose for example, relocated from the Gorbals during the 1930s but continued to be interested in socialism. 'Yes, we were all socialists I think' were her words. However, it must be acknowledged that the interest individuals like Mrs Rose had with politics was mostly at the level of discussion and generally fired by youthful inquisitiveness. Women like her had seen their families struggle successfully against poverty and settle in middle class areas; this doubtless created personal dilemmas of identification.

The playwright, C. P. Taylor also exemplifies this case. Taylor grew up in a lower middle class district, but was a committed socialist all his life.⁸⁴ His play –*Bread and Butter* – engages with this predicament for some Jews in Glasgow during the 1930s and 1940s.⁸⁵ The dynamic between the central characters of the play hinges on the relationship of social class with local politics. This drama tells the story of a friendship between two married couples. One couple is made up of Morris, the son of a Jewish factory owner, and his rather dull wife Sharon who comes from a respectable and upwardly mobile family. The other couple, Alec and Miriam, are factory workers in the business that their friends will one day inherit. Taylor was evidently alert to the divided loyalties that ensued amongst Jews because of uneven economic betterment. The factory owner's son doggedly holds to his Marxist beliefs despite evidence of his bourgeois circumstances, while his worker friends take a somewhat more measured and cynical approach to the eventual triumph of the proletariat. The message of Taylor's play is surely that Jewish capitalism in Glasgow divided the community and made it

⁸⁴ Freisener, S. 'Travails of a Naked Typist: the Plays of C. P. Taylor,' *New Theatre Quarterly* 9:33 (1993) pp. 44-58.

⁸⁵ See: Taylor, A. 'Breaking free from 'A Scottish Shtetl': The Life, Times and Jewishness of C. P. Taylor,' *Immigrants and Minorities* 21:1/2, (2002) pp.143-183. This play was performed in summer 2003 in the Arches Theatre, Glasgow. Attendance at this excellent performance has greatly enriched my understanding of Taylor's intentions.

weaker, and certainly less able to meet the challenges posed by European Fascism. In Taylor's play the women also seem to take a backseat in the political arguments that are part of the drama, being more concerned with day-to-day life. There is a clear undercurrent in the gender relations evident in this drama, that while men talk politics the women get on with more prosaic matters. Although the audience is given to understand that the women characters are also 'Party' members, female opinion is left unknown. Indeed it is the female character of Miriam who, rather than depending on political salvation, makes a practical arrangement in order to release her and Alec from wage slavery.

So far, the silence of Glaswegian Jewish women in this respect is quite deafening! However, one woman comes to the rescue – her name was Rose Kerrigan (nee Klasko). Born in Dublin in 1903 *Red Rose* as she was popularly known, was the daughter of Eastern European migrants who had met in Glasgow and moved to Ireland for work opportunities. Rose moved back to Glasgow with her family in 1909 and experienced a life of poverty in the working class areas of the city. Kerrigan began life as a socialist agitator early, and took a part in the protest associated with the Glasgow Rent Strike in 1915 when she was only twelve years old. However, it is notable that although she never denied her Jewish heritage and had a religious upbringing, Kerrigan married a non-Jew and committed herself to the cause of international socialism from within the Socialist Labour Party and thereafter the Communist Party.⁸⁶ This path did serve to estrange her from the life of the Glasgow community and she spent most of her adulthood away from the city.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Rose married Peter Kerrigan, a well-known communist political organiser. See McIlroy, J. entry for Peter Kerrigan (1899-1977) in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [electronic resource].

⁸⁷ Jewish Women in London Group. "Rose Kerrigan: 'We Just Wanted to Get Something for the Working Class'" in *Generations of Memories: Voices of Jewish Women* (London, 1989.) pp.48-76; Rafeek, N. 'Rose Kerrigan 1903-1995,' *Scottish Labour History* 31 (1996) pp. 72-84.

Kerrigan is the most widely remembered Jewish woman who was active in socialism, or at least, those outside of the Glasgow Jewish community remember her. From within the Jewish community, Kerrigan's apparently singular route as a political agitator is little celebrated. This situation is something of an enigma and it does seem hardly credible that as a Jewish woman she was entirely alone in her beliefs. However, one of the possible reasons for this mystery is explained by the fact that commitment to socialism amongst Glasgow Jewry began to take a different path by the 1930s, a route that was poles apart from Kerrigan's vision. The *Jewish Echo* campaigned vigorously during this period to alert attention to trends current in Nazi Germany. Examination of this unique record of local media leaves no doubt that news of the disturbing rise of anti-Semitism on the continent was analysed in detail, and publicised to readers. Glasgow's Jews could not have been in the dark about what was going on abroad. Coupled to this was the paper's ongoing commitment to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a campaign that it had followed since it began publishing in 1928. Events in Germany galvanised the *Echo's* devotion to Zionism. Whether this situation reflected local public opinion among Jews, or guided it, is a moot point. But at any rate many Jewish socialists in Glasgow became more focused on founding the principle of social egalitarianism in the Middle East than on tackling this in the context of Scotland. In Glasgow, the cause of socialism either became enjoined to that of Zionism, or was surpassed by it, possibly more than was the case in any other Jewish community in Britain.

The fact of Glasgow Jewry's evident affiliation with political Zionism in the interwar years is notable, and a point also worth mentioning in this respect generally, is the wider context of the reception that this movement received from many Scottish establishments. The Presbyterian churches for example, in the main were in favour of

Jewish nationalism. Much of their enthusiasm was couched in religious sentiment but during the 1930s the increase in anti-Semitism witnessed in Europe almost certainly galvanised views:

...many nominally Christian nations are still guilty of antisemitism, [sic] the outbursts of which so often counteract the message of a purer Christianity. Anti-Jewish prejudice, latent or expressed, in our own land and Church blunts our own testimony, lessens the force of our impact upon Judaism, and aligns us in moral kinship with those who rejoice in deeds of violence against the Jewish people...In not a few countries discrimination against Jews is in vogue; the havens of refuge for the oppressed have also become fewer – America, Canada, Brazil, and South Africa giving less room for Jewish immigrants.⁸⁸

Over this period, the attitude of Protestant Churches in Scotland towards Jews is a complex one, and there is not space to devote to the unravelling of this within this thesis. Whilst vocally condemning anti-Semitism, Scottish Presbyterians were also just as keen to aggressively convert Jews: Scots were enjoined to recall ‘the Rock whence they are hewn and of Him who was not ashamed to call the Jews his brethren.’⁸⁹ Yet in the same breath, Presbyterians also proselytised in ways that were often interpreted by Jews as frankly disrespectful. The fact that the poor, and women and children were particular were targets of missionary zeal, was seen by many Jews of all political colours as especially cynical. On the other hand, the notion of spiritual and cultural connections between Scottish Presbyterians and Jews was put to equally good purpose as the basis of cordial relations between the two. For example, Chaim Bermant who was

⁸⁸ *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1932) p.780.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

evidently much affected by his upbringing in Scotland has attributed the reputedly good inter-ethnic relations enjoyed in Scotland to the fact that Scots, whether religious or not, view the Jew as 'a sort of aboriginal Presbyterian.'⁹⁰ Increased Jewish enthusiasm for political Zionism did find a ready audience amongst many in the Scottish establishment, where the call for a national homeland was listened to sympathetically. Despite many of the inherent contradictions evident in relations between Jews and non-Jews, this wider context of non-Jewish support for Zionism is worth bearing in mind as one element that may have contributed to the success of the movement within the particular context of Scotland.

By the end of the Second World War, the direction taken towards acceptance of Zionism by Glaswegian Jews became even firmer. Over this time it must have become increasingly difficult to express dissent from the Zionist ideal in Glasgow, and due to the government's intransigence over allowing Jewish immigration in Palestine, even socialist-leaning Zionists found their Jewish politics in conflict with party political ones. C. P. Taylor also engaged with this shift in the play *Bread and Butter*. Here the character Morris who has remained a committed Marxist proclaims in a scene that is both comic and tragic, 'We have to turn to Palestine...Palestine is the key to our future role...with clear Marxist outlook, a firm progressive sense of direction...' ⁹¹ This drama reveals much about the complexities of politics and everyday life that Glasgow's Jews had to grapple with. The move to Zionism was certainly a key part of these, and Taylor was intelligently sensitive to this. Morris has to make compromises in his convictions and is portrayed by Taylor as a disappointed man.

⁹⁰ Bermant, C. 'Jews who fled from fear and found a brave new face in Scotland', *Observer Scotland*, 12/02/1989, also quoted in Cosgrove, J. 'Scottish Jewry' in *The Jewish Yearbook* (2000) p.22.

⁹¹ Quoted in Taylor, 'Breaking free from 'A Scottish Shtetl,' p.168.

Taylor left Glasgow, unable to reconcile his own beliefs with the constraints placed on him as a member of the Glasgow Jewish community.⁹² Kerrigan's experience as an émigré from Glasgow is also instructive, and it is evident that Jews who stayed true to the cause of international socialism likely found acceptance in an increasingly upwardly mobile community, difficult.⁹³ For women whose families had made economic progress, the atmosphere of the suburbs also militated against them becoming actively involved in radical politics and their religious education was certainly meant to deter them from just this by fixing the Jewish women's interests to the home. Moreover, the growing passion for Zionism tended to capture the attention of most in the community creating peer pressure. Many Jewish women in Glasgow in fact pre-empted this move towards the politics of Palestine –because they were already steeped in the Zionist cause through membership of suburban WIZO groups. The latter was a movement that allowed women greater independence than might be found in left-wing political parties where, as Rose Kerrigan acknowledged, the leadership was determinedly masculine and women were regularly marginalized.⁹⁴

Zionism and women.

Many of Glasgow's Jews became strong supporters of Zionism from an early date and a Zionist society was formed here in 1891.⁹⁵ A woman's society – the *Bnot Zion* – came into being in 1901.⁹⁶ However this really functioned as a female section of the larger male group and was not autonomous. Having said this, the women's Zionist group was apparently vibrant and held weekly 'Yiddish cultural evenings' as well as forming a

⁹² *Ibid.* pp.143-183.

⁹³ Heppell, J. 'A Rebel not a Rabbi: Jewish Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain,' *20th Century British History* 15:1 (2004) pp.28-50.

⁹⁴ Rafeek, 'Rose Kerrigan 1903' p.80.

⁹⁵ Collins *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, p.19.

⁹⁶ Collins *Second City Jewry*, p. 119.

‘sewing guild’.⁹⁷ Various different Zionist groups existed in Glasgow, during the turbulent formative period of the movement, but by the interwar years, the most prominent was the majority, and centrist, Glasgow Zionist Organisation, which was affiliated to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain. The conundrum of why Zionism captured Glaswegian Jewry so wholeheartedly is again worth expanding on here.

Academic opinion on the subject of Eastern European immigrants in the UK and their involvement with the Zionist cause, agrees that immigrants were at best indifferent to this project, neither hostile nor enthusiastic at least until after the First World War.⁹⁸ Real passion was reserved for left-wing politics, and such beliefs were often hostile to the narrow nationalism inherent in Zionism. However, it is Collins’ view that Gorbals Jewry was always broadly in support of Zionism, making Glasgow rather at odds with other working class Jewish communities in the UK.⁹⁹ This opinion is perhaps contentious, but there may be some truth in it although it is difficult to quantify with any accuracy. At any rate, by the 1930s the character of Glasgow Jewry was beginning to change and whatever latent affiliation had existed between Zionism and working class Jews in Glasgow, certainly began to flourish as many became more comfortably off. According to David Cesarani, ‘Zionism was the vehicle for a middle class Jewish ethnic identity’ amongst the newly economically secure Jews who revolted against old forms of communal power.¹⁰⁰ In making this statement, Cesarani depends too heavily on evidence for London, but his overall argument is broadly correct. Nevertheless, in Glasgow revolt was not so much against the Garnethill elite, as against indifference to Jewishness itself as some sections of the immigrant community became more prosperous. For Jews who had arrived at a point of reasonable affluence and had

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.126.

⁹⁸ Cohen, S. ‘“How shall we sing of Zion in a strange land?”: Eastern European immigrants and the challenge of Zionism in Britain 1897-1918,’ *Jewish Social Studies* 1:2 (1995) pp.101-122.

⁹⁹ Collins, *Second City Jewry*, pp.117-133.

¹⁰⁰ Cesarani, D. ‘The transformation of communal authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940’ in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p.140.

become integrated with suburban life, Zionism presented a polite means of continuing to express Jewish identity, and a reputable medium for being politically involved.

Certainly it was more respectable than left-wing politics; as we have seen, many non-Jewish Scots also viewed it favourably. Jews sometimes did cling to their socialism, but with a good deal less passion than when they were poverty stricken immigrants.

Moreover, Zionism presented a new platform for women who had arrived in the suburbs, and an entrée into a specifically female communal activity that was generally applauded.

It is impossible to do justice in a short section to the complexities of the Zionist movement, which was extremely disputatious over the first few decades of the twentieth century. Factionalism was rife even after the Balfour Declaration in 1917.¹⁰¹ This is reflected in the multiplicity of women's, men's and youth groups that sprang up at both a national and local level. However, a useful way of summarising the complex fortunes of the movement is to say that Zionism in the UK was split along the lines of religion and politics. So-called 'General Zionism' was the majority position and represented by the Zionist Federation and by WIZO. Devoutly orthodox Jews tended to cleave to the *B'nei Mizrachi*, an organisation that reflected the Zionist views of the more religious and conservative, whereas those with socialist leanings were members of the *Poalei Zion* (workers of Zion). The latter two groups had their origins in Eastern Europe and also included women's sections.¹⁰² This tripartite split was mirrored overall in the Zionist politics of the Glasgow community. However, it is certainly acknowledged that by the 1930s, Zionism came to represent the strongest common bond for Jews of all

¹⁰¹ The pronouncement which promised a national homeland for Jews, under certain conditions, made by the British government on 02/11/1917. See Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants*, pp.304-5.

¹⁰² <http://www.mucjs.org/EXHIBITION/9otherformszion.html>

kinds in Glasgow, and often it replaced religion in this respect.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the notion that Zionism itself was really a pseudonym for socialism had been around for a while by the 1930s. Following a visit to Palestine in 1925, the celebrated Rabbi of the Edinburgh congregation, Dr. Salis Daiches, visited Glasgow and gave a public speech on his impressions. The *Glasgow Herald* reported on his comments as follows:

The men who had drained the swamps, built the roads, planted the trees, and erected the houses in the Jewish colonies were men and women of high intellectual attainments, sacrificing their all for the good of the land and relying on the promise of Great Britain that the Jewish national home would be re-established in the country. It was scarcely necessary to point out that the benefits derived from this work of restoring and re-fertilising the land went to all the inhabitants of Palestine, both Jews and Arabs...At the same time he took the opportunity to contradict most emphatically and categorically the rumours which had been spread in this country by ill-informed persons that the men and women who were rebuilding the land of Israel were mere revolutionaries who had discarded religion and were trying to transform Palestine into a sort of Soviet Republic. There was not an atom of truth in that wild assertion.¹⁰⁴

Whether wild assertion or slight exaggeration, there was undoubtedly a commitment to greater social egalitarianism inherent in much Zionist vision between the wars, and a Utopian streak ran through Zionist politics of all colours. This found expression most forcefully within the left-wing *Poalei Zion* movement, which did have some following in Glasgow, and was affiliated with both the Workers' Circle and the Labour Party. Membership of one organisation was often accompanied by membership of one or

¹⁰³ Hutt and Kaplan, *A Scottish Shtetl: Jewish Life in the Gorbals 1880-1974* (Glasgow, 1984.) This pamphlet accompanied an exhibition of Gorbals Jewry.

¹⁰⁴ *The Glasgow Herald* 01/06/1925 "Rebuilding Palestine, Dr. Daiches and Progress of Zionism" p.4.

other; however by this point the *Poalei Zion* were keen to recruit new members, so did underline their independence when it suited them.¹⁰⁵ They also had women adherents, but in Glasgow the *Poalei Zion* was a minority taste as compared with the other Zionist groups, and it must be concluded not the first option of young suburban women. One oral history interviewee, who came from quite a middle class background and has been prominent in Glasgow WIZO, has spoken about some regrets she has in this area. Mrs Shenkin states:

I have always been a political person myself. I went from the young Zionists straight into WIZO...

Nevertheless she also acknowledges that:

...it did not occur to me to extend my Labour feelings about the Spanish government in 1936 to what was going on in Palestine...I was socialist in thinking. It just seemed equitable. [but] It never took me anywhere in Zionist politics. I always worked for Palestine or Israel without referring to the politics of the thing. At my great age now I am a little bit sorry that I did not associate myself more with the *Poalei Zion*. I am not sure that I used my energies to the best account.¹⁰⁶

The dilemma of political convictions as against bourgeois circumstances is seen here. Despite the general consensus over the desirability of a Jewish State, there was a class divide in Zionist politics in Glasgow. Certainly the direction that women's Zionism took mostly depended on the suburban women who formed the membership of WIZO groups, these were without doubt in the middle ground politically. Mrs Shenkin makes clear what were the necessary credentials at this time:

¹⁰⁵ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1938-9 p.37.

¹⁰⁶ SJAC. Transcript of interview with Mrs M. Shenkin. Born: 1917. Interviewed by Ben Braber 1988.

In order to be a Zionist, a general Zionist, you really have to have an income to share with the Zionists, where if you are a member of the *Poalei Zion*, they would accept you without worrying about raising funds.¹⁰⁷

It is from these ranks that Greenbaum derived his 'charitable dame', but this image tells us nothing about what diverse types of women got out of becoming involved with WIZO, or about the contribution they made. Selma Mann was certainly a tireless worker on behalf of the cause; moreover, she encouraged many women to take up work on behalf of Zionism. Following the inauguration of WIZO in Glasgow in 1929, it was reported that one year later 'the income of the organisation had been trebled and the membership doubled.'¹⁰⁸ The enthusiasm of the group was further demonstrated in 1932 when several women from the Glasgow community, including Mrs Mann, made the trip to Palestine to inspect some of the work sponsored by WIZO.¹⁰⁹ This demonstrated a considerable commitment, as the country was far from being a tourist attraction at this time. However, these women had gathered large sums of money in a relatively short time, enough to sponsor health and welfare work of their own choice in Palestine, as well as to make a contribution to the coffers of the Jewish National Fund. In 1938, Glasgow WIZO was described as 'Giving a lead to Zionist societies all over the country...Combining cultural interest with fund raising activity, the Ladies' Organisation has in recent years contributed many thousands of pounds to Zionist funds.'¹¹⁰

The types of fundraising done by Zionist women ranged from low key and fairly informal affairs, in the shape of coffee mornings and card playing afternoons that could

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *The Jewish Echo* 07/05/1930.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 26/02/1932.

¹¹⁰ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1938-9 p.60.

be held in members' homes, to large scale functions such as garden fetes.¹¹¹ A favourite means of organising large occasions that attracted significant sums was to combine a Zionist fundraising appeal with a Jewish religious festival. Grand Balls to celebrate the festival of *Purim* became yearly events that raised considerable sums, but also became high points of the social calendar for Jews who were able to afford these lavish occasions. As a reflection of the suburbanisation that was ensuing at this time, different local sub-groups also came into being. For example, 'A Blue and White Function', the flagship colours that came to be associated with fundraising for Zionism, was held in public halls in the suburb of Clarkston under the auspices of three local WIZO groups.¹¹² This was one of many such occasions championed by suburban WIZO women who added fashion shows and book fairs to the usual bazaars and fetes that were part of their remit.

What then can we understand about the role of women in Zionist politics in Glasgow? WIZO was begun in London in 1918 and was the original idea of Rebecca Sieff.¹¹³ It is known that her politics were in favour of greater autonomy for women. She supported the suffrage movement and waged a war on the authority of men within Zionism.¹¹⁴ Indeed, it was the failure to secure voting rights and the marginalization of women within the Zionist Federation that led to her setting up a separate women's society. Sieff was tireless in promoting the expansion of women's Zionism and she undoubtedly influenced Mrs Mann in this respect.¹¹⁵ There can be no doubt that this expression of

¹¹¹ *The Jewish Echo* 20/06/1930

¹¹² SJAC Ref: CUL AGP 0002 programme for a 'Blue and White Function' no date but circa late 1930s or early 1940s.

¹¹³ Gassman-Sher, R. *The Story of the Federation of Women Zionists of Great Britain and Ireland 1918-1968*, (London, 1968) pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.8.

¹¹⁵ Sieff made a number of visits to Glasgow. SJAC. See *Minute Book of Glasgow Ladies' Zionist Organisation 1928*, Minutes of a Special Committee Meeting 09/10/1928 which records her first visit. Ref: POL WIZ 0002.

Jewish political commitment was also embroiled with wider feminist issues when women became involved. However, at a more prosaic and local level WIZO groups were a unifying factor for suburban Jewish women in Glasgow who were trying to find their feet as middle class suburbanites. They provided a social forum that engaged women in recreational pursuits, and diverted them from domestic concerns. By taking initiative within a WIZO group women were encouraged to exercise many of the skills that were supposed to be the lot of suburban women, such as being an effective hostess and social organiser. Women could be resourceful, efficient and imaginative outside of the domestic arena *and* make a contribution to the wider concerns of the community. That they have been denigrated for these aims is unwarranted.

Women were to a large extent responsible for much of the energy and success that went into this movement at a local level. It is also important to recognise that if Zionism did indeed become the vehicle for expressing a new, middle class and more secular Jewish identity, then this had implications for gender relations. Women achieved greater autonomy within WIZO than they did on the ladies' committees of male-led organisations. Within women's groups they made their own decisions without having to defer to men. Most importantly, the foremost mission of WIZO was to assist women and children in Palestine, so this communal effort was very much a feminine one. This was a great attraction and brought many dynamic women into the organisation. Female ingenuity both increased the effectiveness of women only initiatives and boosted the coffers of Zionist funds. Further programmes that sprang up in order to make WIZO more inclusive were the *Ziona* groups that catered specifically for younger women. By 1939 there were two of these in Glasgow, one for women on the South Side of the city and the other based at Garnethill. The social and recreational aspects of these groups are again clearly reflected in this division. Young women undertook fundraising work and

entered into educational programmes by joining WIZO groups, but they also did so in the expectation that they would be able to socialise with their peers. *Ziona* groups were another manifestation of an overarching mission to keep Jews together, and in this example a means of keeping young Jewish women within the fold. That the Zionist project became a gendered one is undeniable, but women heeded the call and in Glasgow a great measure of the movement's overall success was down to women. In fact this situation was even acknowledged at the time. In 1938, the *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* stated that of the twelve Zionist groups in Glasgow the strongest was the women's organisation headed by Mrs Mann.¹¹⁶

Inculcation of the Zionist ideal was begun ever earlier and in Glasgow many youth groups followed quickly on the heels of women's groups. Indeed another of Mrs Mann's favoured campaign stances was to encourage the young to become involved with the cause. An early initiative, made only one month after their formation as a group, was a film show organised by the Zionist Ladies. The film displayed life in Palestine, and the children were treated to 'Passover sweets and singing of "Hava Nagrila." [Sic]' ¹¹⁷ The *Echo* described the event as a 'Propagation of the national ideal.' ¹¹⁸ The purpose of such initiatives was of course two-fold in that it both cemented commitment to Zionism itself, but it also clearly promulgated local networks of loyalty that were under stress through greater acculturation. This idea of planting Jewish nationalism firmly in the land of Palestine was being taken up across Jewish communities in Britain, most fervently by an organisation known as *HaBonim* (The Builders), which was begun in 1929 and which only one year later established a base in

¹¹⁶ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1937-8 p.38.

¹¹⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 23/03/1928.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Glasgow.¹¹⁹ This group further competed for the socialist loyalties of the young and acted as both an alternative form of radical politics and a substitute for the old-fashioned patriotism fostered by more traditional youth groups like the Girl Guides and the Lads' Brigade. *HaBonim* preached a form of Zionism that encouraged the young to train for eventual settlement in *Eretz Yisrael* by undergoing agricultural education and by learning Hebrew. Within this organisation, ideological debate and political activism was fostered, and the young were inspired with a vision of social egalitarianism available within the Kibbutz system.¹²⁰ *HaBonim* became very active in Glasgow and had a central base in Langside.¹²¹ Overall though, the Zionist project did a more effective job of keeping Jews interested in communal politics during the 1930s, than it did of selling *Aliyah* (emigration to Israel).

Here again gender differences infiltrated the cause. The new Jewish homeland needed young women as well as men, but in Glasgow Jewish suburban parents did not especially look favourably upon becoming a pioneer despite their enthusiasm for Israel. For boys it was a less attractive parental prospect than study, or joining the family business, and for girls it was simply unthinkable that daughters would travel to such a faraway and inhospitable place. However, the advent of the war was set to change the local horizons of many of the young, including young women. War work became a necessary alternative to joining WIZO amongst young women, and an addition to the civic work of older women.

¹¹⁹ SJAC. *Glasgow Habonim Silver Jubilee Brochure* 1929-1954, no page numbers. Ref: POL.HAB.0003.

¹²⁰ Kadish, S. " 'A Good Jew or a Good Englishman?': The Jewish Lads' Brigade and Anglo Jewish Identity" in Kershen, A. (ed.) *A Question of Identity* (Ashgate, 1998) pp.77-93.

¹²¹ See Appendix 3, p. 407, *Habonim in Glasgow*.

Women, war work and the gender implications.

Despite the fact that the timeframe of this study takes in the course of two world wars, there has been little analysis included about the social impact of these upon Glasgow's Jews. The reasons for this omission are explained in Chapter 1, but it would be invidious to avoid the subject altogether as some aspects of life during World War Two certainly made a great impact on many young women's personal experience. Even before the outbreak of war, the ranks of young women in the Glasgow Jewish community were enlarged by the arrival of German Jews. This is an aspect of the crisis of the 1930s and 1940s that also cannot be overlooked, both because of its magnitude and because of the involvement of a great many Jewish women in Glasgow with this.

As noted in chapter 1, the arrival of German Jewish refugees in the UK and the course of this matter have been examined in many works. Proportionately few refugees came north to Scotland, and unfortunately the numbers of German Jewish refugees who were settled here has never been calculated with any reliable accuracy. Much of the refugee population was mobile, and after the war, many of those who had spent some years in Glasgow moved on to other countries. In addition, these refugees also included numbers of unaccompanied children, some of whom became completely assimilated and relinquished their Jewish identity.¹²² However, Kolmel claims that the numbers who spent some time here were in the thousands overall.¹²³ Amongst these, some younger women grew into adulthood during the war, stayed on, and married within the local community.

¹²² SJAC. Transcript of interview with Moray Glasser. Born: 1898. Interviewed by Dr. Ben Braber July 1988.

¹²³ Kolmel, R. 'German-Jewish refugees in Scotland' in Collins, *Aspects of Scottish Jewry* p.57.

The following advertisement appealing for help, made its way into the *Jewish Echo* in April 1939:

Please help my daughter, 12 years of age; well brought up:
father 10 months in concentration camp; have pity.¹²⁴

By 1939 of course, it was almost too late to respond to such appeals. But in the years preceding this some Jews had found a home in Scotland. Among these were women and teenage girls who were allowed entry to the UK on condition that they undertook work as domestic servants. This service was available in both Jewish and non-Jewish homes. The domestic service opportunity was popular and it has been estimated that between 1933 and 1948, 'over one third of all Jewish refugees in Britain came through the domestic service option.'¹²⁵ Females made up the majority of this group and this dispensation meant that 20, 000 Jewish women and girls were able to escape and settle in Britain.¹²⁶ This following advertisement also appeared in the *Echo*, 'Viennese woman graduate, in Glasgow, domesticated, with permit, desires post to assist in household: fluent English and French.'¹²⁷ Since employment in domestic service had become increasingly unpopular amongst women in Scotland, many refugee women were exploited within this system. It may seem churlish to complain about the employment of educated women in menial work, since in the last resort this did save the lives of many. Nevertheless, this course of action did sour the experience of Scotland for some, and this was not their only difficulty.

¹²⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 21/04/1939 miscellaneous column.

¹²⁵ Kushner, T. 'Jewish Refugees and Domestic Service in Britain 1933-1948' in Mosse, W. et. Al. (eds.) *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (London, 1991) p.554.

¹²⁶ Kushner, T. 'Politics and Race, Gender and Class: Refugees, Fascists and Domestic Service in Britain, 1933-1940,' *Immigrants and Minorities* 8:1 (1989) p.49.

¹²⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 21/04/1939.

Refugees from central Europe did not have a particularly easy admittance to Jewish society in Glasgow. In 1937 a leader article in the *Jewish Echo* accused them of being 'assimilationist' and of harbouring attitudes towards Eastern European Jews: 'not unlike the attitude of the average German towards the Juden [sic] generally.'¹²⁸ This was strong criticism and calculated to make the new visitors think long and hard about their loyalties. Even once war had begun the *Echo* did not let refugees off the hook, it complained that, 'large numbers of German and Austrian Jewish refugees in this city keep themselves aloof from the Jewish community.'¹²⁹ There was clear mutual antagonism between the newcomers and at least part of the community. The question of the role of gender in this antipathy is hard to answer, but it had some part to play. Many German Jews took up domestic posts in non-Jewish households, but once the war began they often found themselves out of work. Some families became sensitive about the idea of employing a German, regardless of her Jewish ethnicity. But for affluent Jewish suburban women there was obvious mileage in the employment of refugee domestic help at a time when domestic employees were scarce. Advertisements appeared in the *Echo* seeking posts in Jewish homes, for example, 'Refined capable girl, aged 20 (Refugee), desires domestic post with children; references.'¹³⁰ However, given the existing antagonism, employment in a Jewish household was no guarantee of a happier encounter with Scottish life. Although experiences were variable, there can be no doubt that many refugee women were used as cheap labour and so did remain on the fringes of Jewish society.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ibid. 18/06/1937.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 01/04/1940.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 12/01/1940.

¹³¹ Kolmel, 'German-Jewish refugees,' pp. 64-69.

Notwithstanding this unhappy situation, many Glasgow women did admirable work to secure asylum for refugees, particularly in the case of children. Disparate groups, which met as sub-committees of Zionist and other charitable organisations did *ad hoc* relief work from 1933 onwards, but these eventually came together in Glasgow as the German Jewish Aid Committee.¹³² WIZO women took a prominent role in the latter. The 1937 *Yearbook* states that 'In addition to their regular work, the women find time to assist special causes such as the appeal for German-Jewish women and children.'¹³³ By the start of 1939 Selma Mann had charge of a sub-committee that set up a place of refuge for yet more children for whom foster homes could not be found.¹³⁴ However, the WIZO women's renowned talent for raising money began to impact on other areas needing community support. The *Echo* pointed out that the publicity given to this cause was having an effect on local charities, and charity collections made at community meetings and celebrations were disproportionately going to the child refugees.¹³⁵

Around this time the demands being made on women to do voluntary work increased. The atmosphere created by the coming conflict, as well as the knowledge of the havoc being caused by rampant anti-Semitism in Germany also influenced Jewish women to look outside of the community's own concerns. The *Echo* published a letter in 1939 setting out the case for women's involvement in shoring up the patriotism of Jews generally:

¹³²Ibid. p 61. Kolmel acknowledges that the exact date of this committee's formation is impossible to place.

¹³³ *Glasgow Jewish Yearbook* 1937-8, p. 60.

¹³⁴ *The Jewish Echo* 06/01/1939; SJAC. *Garnethill Hebrew Congregation 90th Anniversary Commemorative Brochure* p 8. The refugee hostels were in Garnethill and in use until 1945.

¹³⁵ *The Jewish Echo* 13/01/1939. .

Sir — an opportunity is being given us to show in a small measure an appreciation of the hospitality and privileges we so happily enjoy in this free country... We will shortly be called upon to volunteer for service in whatsoever capacity we feel best fitted...the various types of assistance are going to be explained by Miss Marsh and Miss Innes, organisers of the Women's Voluntary Services for Air Raid Precautions at a meeting on Wednesday 18th...The organisers of this meeting (The Glasgow Women's Lodge of the B'nei Brith) hope that the Jewish women of Glasgow will attend in large numbers and thus assure the Women's Voluntary Service of the patriotism and enthusiastic co-operation of the Jewish community as a whole.¹³⁶

The Women's Voluntary Service enlisted many Jewish housewives in the full range of their activities. Henceforth throughout the course of the war, Jewish women were encouraged to be seen as interested and committed to war work in addition to their usual charitable endeavours. A Jewish Women's Red Cross Committee was quickly set up, mirroring the work of many Christian women's church based groups. Jewish women knitted garments and raised money by holding afternoon teas in their own homes.¹³⁷ It should be remembered that many suburban women were still involved in commerce; they were shop workers and landladies and not all could be described as simply 'housewives'. The conditions of war in fact increased the demands on women within small businesses as men went off to war or became involved in protecting the home front. Nevertheless, the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism made Jews more than usually sensitive to accusations of shirking their responsibilities as British citizens. Accusations of Jewish black-marketeering were not uncommon during the war and

¹³⁶ *The Jewish Echo* 13/01/1939. Note also, the *B'nei Brith*, which was a friendly society that also provided cultural activities, had its own women's 'Lodge'.

¹³⁷ *The Jewish Echo* 01/03/1940.

also surfaced in Glasgow, a situation that was exploited by the *Scottish Protestant League* in pamphlets of the time.¹³⁸ Oral testimony uncovers that women were sensitive to the rise in casual anti-Semitic attacks in Glasgow. For example Mrs Simons recalls being taken to task for supposed Jewish queue jumping in a local cinema, a situation made all the more galling by the fact that several members of her family were then serving in the armed forces.¹³⁹ On the home front in Glasgow, Jewish women became an integral part of a defensive propaganda campaign to protect the community as a whole. However the positive side of this may have been that it brought women into wider concerns outside of the community; the negative aspect was that it also exposed them even more to wartime anti-Semitism.

Discrimination also crept into official war work amongst young women who volunteered for the services, or were conscripted. For example, second-generation women found it difficult to join the more elite services. The following testimony is from a collection of wartime reminiscences collected by the SJAC:

I volunteered to join the Wrens, but was turned down as my father was not a British subject when I was born...I eventually agreed to join the ATS...My uniform was like something that had been left over from the First World War... My mother opened the door to this vision and burst out crying with a torrent of Yiddish – “to take a girl and make such a mess of her!” Fortunately my mother was a tailoress, and she sat up all night remaking my uniform, much to the envy of the other girls.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ See Protestant League Truth Series No 4, Ratcliffe, A. *The Truth About the Jews!* (1943.)

¹³⁹ Oral testimony of Mrs HS. Born: 1914.

¹⁴⁰ SJAC. *Serving Their Country: Wartime Memories of Scottish Jews* (Glasgow, 2001). Contribution by Ruby Diamond p.24.

This contributor did experience some compensation for her Jewish heritage then! And of course she was not alone. Jewish parents were not keen for their daughters to move away from home, and in wartime even less so. This was understandable, but young women often responded with frustration to such curtailments on their freedom. The war opened up new vistas away from the confines of Glasgow Jewish society. Many young women were ably equipped by their commercial and business training to take up the jobs that were on offer to female recruits. As the following source demonstrates, young women had the opportunity to live away from home and responded to many of their experiences positively:

The year was 1942 and I had at last overcome my parents' reluctance to allow me to volunteer for active service. So in March of that year I joined the WAAF engaged on clerical duties, and after twenty weeks at Blackpool and a further seven weeks at Compton Bassett, I became a wireless operator...[By] mid 1944 and I was now stationed near East Dereham in Norfolk...there were many American Bomber stations and it was from there that the huge B29 planes went out in strength bombing the major German cities...My friends and I had become friendly with some of the boys from these camps attending their dances...And we regularly went out on dates with many of the boys...¹⁴¹

The effects of wartime opened the way for some women to travel away from home, and also to receive approval for work that might previously have been disapproved of within the confines of Glasgow. In 1940 for example, the Girls' Club had a visit from a former member and the *Echo* saw fit to report this:

¹⁴¹ *Serving Their Country*, contribution by Trudy Digby p. 25.

A very warm welcome was extended to Miss Becky Berkovitch...[who] is now living in London where she is doing some splendid work on behalf of refugees. ...Having completed her nursing training she is now entering Highbury Jewish Training College as a staff nurse.¹⁴²

Many young women returned from the war having learned new skills and with positive memories of the experience. Yet wartime was a time when many of the anxieties felt about the proper place of women in the community were heightened. It is impossible to quantify, but there is a perception that marriage out of the community increased during wartime and after it.¹⁴³ Marriage to non-Jews had been increasing as the community became more affluent. However it was more usual for Jewish men to marry out than women. The effects of the war created more worries that were particularly focused on the new freedoms available to young women. After the war such anxieties did not entirely disappear and together with the onward exodus from the Gorbals, circumstances conspired to heap more pressure on women to conform to gendered, ethnic and social class expectations.

The company of one's own kind.

During the 1930s roughly half of Glasgow's Jews still lived in the Gorbals. However the direction that the community was taking was quite clear even then. The most affluent had moved in the first two decades of the century, but increasing numbers did likewise in the following decades. By 1950, Jews remaining in the Gorbals were a small minority. This residential shift also changed the balance of Jewish social life. Aside from the frivolities of the Institute, and the weightier concerns of politics, Jewish youth also had a number of other outlets for meeting one another. Where youth is concerned

¹⁴² *The Jewish Echo* 09/02/1940.

¹⁴³ SJAC. Transcript of interview with Moray Glasser. Born: 1898. Interviewed by Ben Braber July 1998.

it is evident that greater affluence also created changes in gender relations; this is often reflected in the different educational and cultural horizons of young women from the Gorbals as compared with suburban Jews. Nonetheless ethnic allegiances papered over the cracks until perhaps the outbreak of war. That a great deal of the social life enjoyed by young Jewish women took place in the company of their own community in the Gorbals has been demonstrated, the Jewish Institute was a physical expression of this. The attractions of the cinema and the dancehalls that were open to general population in interwar Glasgow did engage Jewish youth, but did not divorce them from their own community entirely. However, the dancehalls of Glasgow were a more predominately working class form of entertainment. The prospect that some youngsters would be led astray by these, and meet a non-Jewish partner, or indeed, someone from an unsuitable social class background also eventually underpinned efforts to provide specifically suburban recreation, particularly in the formative period of adolescence. The onward exodus of Jews from the Gorbals did eventually lessen the attractions of the Jewish Institute and of other Gorbals-based societies such as the Worker's Circle. Gendered expectations for suburban girls made the society of the Gorbals less acceptable. Moreover, it is clear from newspaper advertisements of the time that Jewish clubs and societies had also become used to hiring suburban facilities for special events and social occasions. After World War Two the Institute became more the preserve of the older generation, those people who still felt comfortable with the Gorbals environment. Combined with the disruption of the war, this opened up the cracks that had been covered over; greater fragmentation of the Jewish group was henceforth more evident.

The older generation certainly did attend social occasions that helped to raise funds for good causes, but a great deal of their entertainment still took place around family occasions. More structured recreation was to be found at many of the suburban literary

societies and bridge clubs. Both the Queen's Park area and Pollokshields had thriving literary groups, which seem to have provided a forum for lively debates. However, although women certainly took part in these activities, they remained very male dominated.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, strictly suburban forms of recreation such as golf and tennis clubs tended to attract men within the older cohort of Jewish suburbanites. Where these activities are concerned, being Jewish did present obstacles. Many clubs refused membership to Jews. During the period that Jews were moving in numbers from the Gorbals, this had evidently begun to irk some of them, one letter writer to the *Jewish Echo* stated:

The difference between anti-Semitism in an intolerant country and anti-Semitism in Britain is that one spills blood and the other spills dignity.¹⁴⁵

The Glasgow Jewish Representative Council tended to ignore discrimination of this sort and preferred to treat it as trivial rather than draw attention by confronting such problems. Even after the war Jewish authorities rarely tackled this type of anti-Semitism, and the response of suburban Jews was simply to provide their own facilities. To this end, Jews in the South Side suburbs went so far as to build their own golf course in the post-war years.¹⁴⁶ This tendency served to keep Jewish social life fairly exclusive, and from the perspective of the outsider, perhaps a little claustrophobic. It might be imagined that this situation would inevitably change for the younger people of the second and third generations, but this was not entirely the case.

¹⁴⁴ *The Jewish Echo* often reported on these activities and men's names appear predominately in articles.

¹⁴⁵ *The Jewish Echo* 07/11/1930 letter entitled: 'Discrimination Against Jews' this provoked lengthy correspondence in succeeding issues.

¹⁴⁶ Hight, J. 'Social Relations' in Cunnison, J. and Gilfillan, J. B. S. *Third Statistical Account*, p.753.

A move to provide useful recreation for youth was part of a wider movement in British society that began to recognise the need for informal culture that could successfully compete with the cinema, cafes and the dance hall.¹⁴⁷ The provision of facilities for youth that were not sex segregated was of course a reflection of post-war freedoms; but this did not necessarily reflect an agenda of gender equality. Indeed, the supervision of adolescent girls' sexual conduct was a strong impetus for local youth clubs. Dance halls and ice-cream parlours had long been thought of as places of sexual licence, and particularly as places where young women might be led astray. Many youth clubs were set up by churches or by organisations that had a specifically Christian ethos. This fact obviously excluded Jewish youth.

Consequently, a Jewish youth club called the '7.30 Club' was set up in Giffnock in 1945. Its female instigator has described the reasoning behind this move:

It was [to] keep the Jewish boys and girls together so that they would know each other...They met there and eventually married...They couldn't have gone to the Jewish Institute. First of all it was in the Gorbals...It was a Gorbals institution. And although our boys came from all over and our girls, in fact some of the fathers brought the girls and called for them, they didn't all come from Giffnock although we were centred in Giffnock. A few boys came from the Gorbals to us but to expect... our girls wouldn't have gone down to the Gorbals I don't think, and the boys wouldn't have been allowed to because of all the gambling and things that went on at the Institute. It wasn't the place for them, it wasn't for the youth, no.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ See for example, Jephcott, P. *Girls Growing Up* (London, 1942.)

¹⁴⁸ SJAC. Transcript of interview with Mrs Lillian Levi. Interviewed by Ben Braber 01/06/1989.

'Gambling' in the form of card playing undoubtedly did go on at the Institute, but this activity was often invoked by the suburban classes as shorthand for behaviour associated with masculine, working class and generally vulgar interests. This youth club initiative clearly reveals some of the limitations of assimilation in this period. These particularly impacted on girls whose lives were still subject to greater supervision. Teenage boys did have various secular interests that could engage them, football is one popular example, and despite the sectarianism at large in this area of Glaswegian culture, Jews did support local teams, attend matches and play football as amateurs. The venue for the 7.30 Club was synagogue property usually used for Hebrew classes. However despite primitive surroundings the club managed to provide wholesome activities such as table tennis, cycle runs and picnics for Jewish youth. More regular activities were dance classes and bridge sessions. And the young enjoyed regular 'novelty dance nights'.¹⁴⁹ During its heyday the agenda of the Club was perfectly transparent, and this was to prevent youth, and almost certainly girls in particular, from straying off the straight and narrow. The founder of the youth club has described the pressure she was put under:

The Synagogue Committee wanted me, for instance, to say that anyone who hadn't both parents Jewish wasn't to be a member of the club. I said, look I am not the Gestapo... We had a real battle over that... I just refused on that. They wanted me to make certain things, if their mother wasn't Jewish I wasn't to take them in you see... There probably were cases of children whose mothers weren't Jewish, but I shut a blind eye to that, that wasn't my business, if they were brought up Jewish.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Audio tape of interview with Mrs Lillian Levi (01/06/1989)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Transcript of interview with Mrs Lillian Levi.

Clearly mixed marriages had not been so uncommon and attitudes towards social mixing between Jewish and non-Jewish youth were generally fraught with anxiety for parents. It was recognised that men were more likely to take up with non-Jewish women; nevertheless the temptations were open to Jewish girls also. On dance nights at the youth club this could prove problematic:

The only responsibility that I felt, and I did feel it; I had to watch for it, was that the girls used to disappear with the boys from the band behind the hut in the interval. Of course the boys in the band weren't Jewish and the girls were.¹⁵¹

The involvement of the synagogue, which provided facilities for socialising, was of course little different from the role played by Christian churches in British suburban life. Nevertheless the meddling of the synagogue that was evidently aimed at stemming the tide of intermarriage was something of a Jewish affair. The overall approach of youth initiatives in this period took account of the greater affluence, sophistication, and level of education among the young. These groups aimed to cement Jewish loyalties without alienating young people by preaching the attitudes of the immigrant settlement. However the gender agenda that ran through these was less forward thinking. Preventing out-marriage, especially for girls, and encouraging loyalty to traditional gender roles seemed to underpin a lot of what was on offer. The anxieties of parents could be assuaged and assimilation could be warded off by these means. Moreover, knowledge about events in Europe had caused Scottish Jews to reflect more on the cost of greater assimilation. Keeping the community together became a passionate project.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

It is hard to know how attractive suburban youth found the 7.30 club. Having started with a membership of over a hundred, this had dwindled to, 'about 60' one year later.¹⁵² Nevertheless, the club survived with a smaller but enthusiastic membership during the 1950s, until its decline when another era of youth culture took off in the 1960s.

However, it is clear that a more firmly middle class identification acted as a control factor on the social activities of young Jewish women. The working class dance halls were no longer suitable but neither too was the diminishing social life of the Jewish Gorbals. Regardless of the enthusiasm or lack of it experienced by the young, the older women of the community certainly saw such initiatives as necessary because it was they who bore the brunt of the disgrace when a son, or worse a daughter, married out. Help from any quarter to avoid this was welcome.

Married women's culture.

In the post-war period The 7.30 Club's agenda of keeping suburban youth in contact with one another did mean marriages eventually took place, helpful for a community where there were few further incomers, a declining birth rate, and further geographical fragmentation was ongoing. The first Jewish suburban congregations were generally set in areas within a short distance of the Gorbals. But as we have seen, even in the late 1920s Jews were beginning to move further afield. The new estates were largely made up of housing designated for families, thus they attracted couples with children in the main. The need for these families to have local Jewish resources was more acute because of their distance from the Gorbals. Although this was the era of the family motorcar, it is unlikely that most married women had access to one, even if they were

¹⁵² SJAC. *Giffnock and District Jewish Youth Club Magazine* (January 1946.) Ref: REL. GIF.0002. This magazine cost 3d to members and is the only surviving issue in the SJAC. It was possibly a short-lived experiment.

able to drive.¹⁵³ However, the new suburbs attracted sufficient numbers of families to make it possible for women to recreate much of the social life that had previously existed in the Gorbals and in inner-suburbs. In addition the plethora of local women's groups that had grown up around Jewish concerns became a way for new suburban dwellers to adjust. Relocation into smaller suburban communities also served to make some female skills more in demand.

In 1935 the growing Giffnock and Newlands congregation decided to build a synagogue. In keeping with the general exclusion of women from formal religion, the synagogue committee was made up of men. However, money was needed for this plan and the talents of women were thus called upon. Accordingly a 'Ladies' Auxiliary' came into being and at a meeting called to discuss this matter 'a hearty welcome' was extended to the Ladies!¹⁵⁴ Yet despite the fact that these women were obviously needed by religious authority, their influence was minimal within Orthodox synagogue life. Fortright women like Mrs Levi might stand up to the Synagogue Committee, but this was a brave move.

Women's Synagogue Guilds did exist as parallel organisations to the type common in suburban Christian churches. However surviving records from these groups reveal the obvious frustration of many women with the intransigence of male authority in the synagogue, where there was an apparent expectation that Guild women were at the beck and call of men. Records show the huge amount of work undertaken by Guild members in order to raise money and cater for Synagogue functions, but highhanded men on the committee largely disregarded much of this effort. For example, the Garnethill Ladies'

¹⁵³ Oliver *et al.* *Dunroamin* p.129.

¹⁵⁴ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Giffnock and Newlands Congregation*. Minute of meeting 23/10/1935. Ref: REL.GIF. 0001.

Guild went so far as to consider disbanding in 1948 because of this treatment. At what appears to have been quite a stormy Annual General Meeting of the group, their Chairwoman 'very ably enlightened' the delegates from the Synagogue Council of how disgruntled they had become.¹⁵⁵ In this same year, the Guild raised £603 for the Synagogue, a not inconsiderable sum, so it is little wonder that the women were exasperated.

The apparent lack of feminist consciousness amongst middle class suburban women in the post-war years is a conundrum of twentieth century feminist history. Indeed a view exists that the late 1940s and 1950s were years where a rigid form of gender relations became entrenched until the revolution of second wave feminism upset this state of affairs.¹⁵⁶ The way that suburban women viewed their own status in this world of family and local community is so rarely considered, that it is easy to see how this impression might arise. Instead suburban women are usually viewed from the outside, and often their lives are found wanting. They are seen as servicing the needs of their families with little reward forthcoming for this. In the case of Jewish suburban women in Glasgow there is ample evidence that they did not view themselves as lacking in status, and many of their endeavours outside of the home show a will to do practical work that made use of their abilities. Skills derived from domestic experience, but also from business practice, and from what women had learned about the needs of their own community did confer status. Moreover, when men frustrated female efforts, women were not always quiescent and stood up to the traditional male authority of synagogues and committees. In 1949 the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council accepted into its

¹⁵⁵ SJAC. *Minutes of the Garnethill Synagogue Women's Guild 1948-51*, entry for 21/06/1948. Ref: REL GAR 003.

¹⁵⁶ For examination of this view see Pugh, M. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 2nd Edition* (London, 2000) pp. 209-263.

membership a 'Housewives' Association'.¹⁵⁷ Women had always had a less powerful place in Jewish society, but the women who grew up in Glasgow's suburbs were a new hybrid. To a large extent they had embraced the assimilated domestic role of the middle class Scottish woman, but in addition they had inherited powerful role models in the form of assertive mothers and grandmothers. Added to this, they also had the support of likeminded women within their own community. This situation provided security, sometimes autonomy, and a sense of worth for a lot of capable women. In turn Jewish organisations were dependant on women's fundraising skills to keep afloat.

Zionist groups and a plethora of other charities were also open to women. The social gap that had widened in the post-war years between suburban Jews and those left in the Gorbals meant that the Board of Guardians still felt women had a vital role to play. The Ladies' Committee of the Board was involved with this. Women were often responsible for visiting families in distress as well as the sick and elderly. It was out of such amateur social work that later professionalised services grew.¹⁵⁸

The fundraising activities of all of these organisations also maintained a vibrant social life. Chaim Bermant has commented that in the daily social round, the comfortably off woman could:

...have morning coffee for one charity, attend a luncheon in aid of another, drink tea to promote a third, play bingo on behalf of a fourth, and, if she has the stamina and the money, dance the night away on behalf of a fifth.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ SJAC. *Minute Book of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council*, entry for 07/03/1949.

¹⁵⁸ SJAC. See material relating to social services. The Jewish community in Glasgow now have a wide range of professional housing and welfare services largely financed by local authorities.

¹⁵⁹ Bermant, 'Anatomy of Glasgow' p.104.

This humorous overstatement is vaguely reminiscent of Greenbaum's charitable dame, and as usual no account is taken of the women's roles in organising such events or the expertise needed to make them successful. As a result, isolation was not the common experience of such women however difficult their domestic lives were. In the post-war years, most Jewish women in the Glasgow suburbs would not have considered themselves as feminists but on the other hand they might well have claimed to be emancipated. Part of the immigrant success story had been bound up with women's escape from the drudgery of the workshop. In addition, second and third generation women benefited from education, even perhaps higher education for a fortunate few. The successful flight from poverty meant that there were many better-informed women whose talents were put to good use. The involvement of women in charity work, whether local, or geared towards Israel, did provide a communal role as well as a social platform for married women. Certainly marriage and the centrality of a domestic role remained key ambitions, but these did not prevent married women from having interests beyond these. Middle class women in the post-war years are generally presented as having few choices in their lives, marriage and motherhood being a single-track option. However, in the case of women from immigrant families the ambition of becoming a suburban wife often represented enviable progress and was desirable because of this.

In the decade after the war suburban sprawl continued apace and new estates grew up with even more spacious and luxurious housing on offer. Many Jews were now sufficiently well off to take advantage of these. The suburb of Newton Mearns, which was examined by Benski in the early 1970s, is the prime example of an area of detached homes that was very attractive to Jews. However, the families who moved here, from the 1930s but mostly in the post-war period, were generally practised suburbanites and

as Benski has shown, women in these families were not necessarily archetypal suburban 'housewife' types or likely to be predisposed to suburban sadness.

Benski claims that in her cohort of Jews resident in Newton Mearns during the early 1970s, the pattern of residential mobility meant that a network of social relations was well-established, because most residents had lived in the same areas previously. While non-Jews tended to be from upwardly mobile middle classes who had moved to Newton Mearns because of occupational commitments from a wide variety of locations. She states that in this locality it is the Jews who are the locals, whereas non-Jews are 'the immigrants with all the concomitant attitudes of such a position.'¹⁶⁰ The close involvement that many women had with Jewish organisations, coupled with the fact that they often retained business interests ensured a fairly secure and inclusive life for young women who married and stayed in their community. However this rather rosy picture had its definite drawbacks as well. Those women who did find the life of the suburbs not to their taste, or whose personal politics were at variance from the majority, did indeed find this life claustrophobic. Onward migration from Scotland claimed women as well as men. Suburban relocation after the war coincided with a fall in the overall population of Glasgow Jewry, which by 1961 stood officially at 13,400 persons.¹⁶¹ The continuing trend towards smaller families accounts for much of this decline, but so too does increasing levels of education. Post-war reforms in education, which did open the door to university and the professions for some women, also left its mark. By the 1950s, the by now settled middle class Jews of Glasgow included more women educated for the professions. They did not always remain in Glasgow; marriage to a fellow professional, or their own career ambitions frequently encouraged further relocation.

¹⁶⁰ Benski, *Interethnic Relations*, p.33.

¹⁶¹ *The Jewish Yearbook* (London, 1961.)

Before leaving on their trip to Palestine in 1932, the ladies of Glasgow WIZO gave a farewell party for Mrs Mann and her travelling companions. At this occasion Selma Mann gave a speech, which expressed her devotion to Zionism and mentioned the response of Glasgow women to this:

Our society has achieved something great. We have developed a deep friendship among the ladies of Glasgow and for years we have worked together. I may say that I have spent the happiest four years of my life amongst you.¹⁶²

The lives of middle class women in twentieth century suburbia are rarely viewed as productive and happy and indeed, have often been despised in popular literature. Academic treatment has also been far from kind to them. Sociological treatments of suburban Jewry for example, have tended to either ignore gender issues, or have used gender as a variable in quantitative measurements of community and ethnicity. This type of analysis gives little or no attention to the different ways that men and women experienced their ethnic identity and upward social mobility. Moreover, the case of women from an immigrant background provides a useful paradigm of Scottish suburban life generally – a subject, which on the whole, awaits historical curiosity. The image of gilded suburban ghettos denies the agency of those who welcomed the opportunity to build communities away from the problems of the city, and embraced suburbia as life enhancing. The experiences of Jewish women who made the journey from the Gorbals to 1930s suburbia provide evidence of such agency.

¹⁶² Reported in *The Jewish Echo* 26/02/1932 p.4.

Conclusion.

*Auld Scotia's Yidden, there's nae doot,
Maintain some orra social laws.
The Chanukah candles scarce burnt oot,
We turn tae welcome Santa Claus.*

Avrom Greenbaum.¹

The journey made by Jews from Eastern Europe to Scotland was multi-faceted in its transformative nature. Certainly it was a longer and more complicated journey than *that made by simply crossing the Baltic*, and it was a passage full of ambiguities, as Greenbaum alludes to in his verse above. This thesis has discussed the various ways that shifting social relations between immigrant women and men operated and has argued that these helped shape changes in the ethnic identity of the Jewish community in Glasgow. Alterations in gendered roles interacted with ethnic traditions in a dynamic process to influence the apparently competing aims of maintaining Jewish continuity, and a desire for increased acculturation to local lifestyles. Generally speaking, a set of compromises was made, which varied in their impact at the level of individual experience. What has certainly been shown is that immigrant women and men experienced settlement in Glasgow differently. Examination of this aspect of the migration journey has allowed us to reappraise this whole event from a gendered historical perspective and provided a more inclusive and more nuanced picture of the material changes experienced by immigrants in Glasgow, and the social and cultural transformations involved in this continuing journey between 1880 and 1950.

The first aim of this thesis was to place women at the centre of the narrative and analyse the experiences of immigrants in a way that accepts gender as integral to the

¹ Excerpt from 'Shir Ha Ne'erday' by Avrom Greenbaum in *The Jewish Echo* 12/01/1962. p.7.

process of migration and settlement. This was a central objective because Jewish settlement in Glasgow has previously been recalled within a gender hierarchy that privileges male experience over female. Chapters 2 through to 7 have therefore recovered the experiences of women and redressed the low visibility that they have had in many different types of narrative, including, as was demonstrated in chapter 1, historical discourse. This approach has shown that women were in fact highly visible, both during the initial migrant journey and thereafter as settlers who became an integral part of Glasgow society. Beginning with the migratory passage itself, chapter 2 aimed to recover what little is known about the ambitions of Jewish women, using material that goes beyond statistical analysis and evidence contained in official documentation, these forming *the usual* parameters of this type of examination. Storytelling is by no means an unusual response to migration, yet this oral tradition has tended to remain of interest more to anthropologists than historians. In the case of immigrant Jews who came to Glasgow, the story involved has had an important part to play in our understanding of how this journey began with fundamental ambiguity and ambivalence, and these characteristics have later been adapted to consolidate Jewish needs for acceptance and tolerance. Moreover, migration stories such as this expose the ways completely different versions of the past - from the official contained in published histories to the popular contained in an oral tradition - are nevertheless similarly gendered in a way that favours male experience over female. The exploration in chapter 2 demonstrates that women did arrive in numbers and were fully involved in the decision to settle in Glasgow. From the start of our timeframe, the presence of women was in fact, just as notable alongside that of men.

Overall, analysis in this thesis has sought to counter the apparent low visibility of women and show them in the multiplicity of roles that they undertook: as workers, mothers and active agents within communal structures. Indeed, a major concern of this exploration has been to focus on the agency of Jewish women within Glasgow. To this end, the second aim of the thesis was to examine material life for poor Jews in the Gorbals and the responses of women to this. Given that the Gorbals Jewish settlement has become an important site of memory as well as an actual physical space, it was found that the notion of women's low visibility has been artificially constructed within many narratives of life in the Gorbals. The Gorbals *shtetl* has been created with hindsight in a way that accepts a fixed view of women as confined within the private sphere. The limitations of the private/public dichotomy are now widely accepted within scholarship, but there is still a need, particularly within Scotland, to show these limitations and demonstrate the ways that gendered discourses actually obscure our view of female agency; and certain apparent continuities in female experience disguise the way that material changes wrought by immigration to Scotland affected women as well as men. Chapter 3 engaged with the second aim of the thesis by elaborating on how poverty impacted on Jewish women and how they negotiated survival. This exploration found that individuals experienced ongoing change in an uneven way and produced evidence about the influence of gendered concerns upon this process of integration, particularly in respect of the philanthropic remedies directed at immigrant families. It was found that integration to a Scottish way of life placed different expectations on women and men. For women, this process involved continuity of their domestic role and they experienced pressure from within and without the Jewish community to be as inconspicuous as possible, except as exemplary housewives despite slum conditions.

Philanthropists took for granted the centrality of women's relationship with the home, and indeed this focus was *the most prominent ostensible* continuity in immigrant women's lives. Consequently, chapter 4 entered the material environment of what has been conceived of as a very private sphere – the Jewish home. In doing so it was demonstrated that women were actively involved with the public project of immigrant integration through their roles in the domestic sphere. This chapter opened the door on a world that has been hidden, indeed made private, because it is associated with women and discourses of the private sphere. Yet it is clear that immigrant women were conspicuous in the Gorbals and not confined to the home, they have been merely reconstructed as such by a communal history that tends not to intrude on perceived private areas. The fact that this history is then usually based upon male interests follows seamlessly from this, and needs to be challenged if we are to move beyond such partial analysis. One such challenge that was met in chapter 4 was to examine the role played by women as domestic managers. It was found that this female responsibility not only had an important part to play in securing economic security for families; it also carried immense cultural weight.

Yet the confines of the home as they affected gender roles were only one aspect of female experience; evidence in chapter 4 shows how these supposed restrictions of domestic duties and motherhood were more fluid than has hitherto been accounted for. The work performed by women within the home took up a lot of time and did shape a woman's future life in Glasgow, but immigrant women understood 'multi-tasking' long before this became a mantra of the late twentieth century, liberated woman. Many popular understandings of Jewish women and stereotypes in particular of Jewish mothers, create images of women who were oppressed by overwork. This

thesis has shown that these images do not take account of the ways that women worked for a purpose that began when they opted to become migrants. Their work – both inside and outside the home – was the means of escape from poverty and the means by which families achieved social and economic upward mobility. Women in immigrant families were often seeking forms of liberation from poverty, arranged marriage and a future that would be different from that experienced by their forebears.

Chapter 5 looked at an area of Jewish women's experience that would undoubtedly benefit from more attention than was possible in this thesis. The role of women within the local Jewish economy had, it is argued, an integral part to play in the economic improvements experienced by this group as a whole. However, it is acknowledged that more evidence is needed in this area. Still, chapter 5 clearly shows that many women were prepared for hard work and used ingenuity to exploit the opportunities available to them in Glasgow. Findings included in this chapter about the economic roles of married women in particular, refute the image often generated in British Jewish history of immigrant women as housewives who were necessarily dependant on a male breadwinner. On the whole, evidence contained in chapters 3 to 5 has addressed the first two aims of the thesis; and has shown how women became *acclimatised to the materiality of Glasgow* and how they pursued active roles within the local economy and society that made them highly visible.

The third aim of the thesis was to analyse the interface between Jewish experiences of upward economic and social mobility, and relocation to Glasgow's middle class suburbs. It has been argued that although, generally speaking, suburban studies have been the province of sociology rather than history, a historical perspective is now

needed in respect of this economic and social transformation, which in Glasgow is now almost a century old. The social improvements experienced by many Jews expose the ways that women were actively involved in what has almost universally been seen as a 'success story'. It is conceded that this thesis does not really depart from a narrative of economic and social transformation, although many caveats are included that show how this part of the migrant journey was not an even process, and indeed was not quite universal. For example, in post-war Glasgow the era of the Gorbals slum was supposed to come to an end. By this point only a small minority of Jews resided in the area and there were few Jewish businesses still flourishing there. The proposed demolition of slum housing and the relocation of these tenants exposed the few members of the Jewish community who were too old, too poor or too fixed in their ways to have moved out. The response of Glasgow Jewry to this revealed the ways in which the identity of the community had almost been completely transformed. Already dwindling in numbers, an appeal was made in the late 1960s to maintain the integrity of the Jewish community by assisting Gorbals tenants to move into more expensive, but more suburban areas of Jewish settlement.² Thus attempts to prove the persistence of a Jewish proletariat in Glasgow have usually foundered in the face of such evidence to the contrary. By the end of our period in 1950, Glasgow Jewry was a community of small businesses and an emergent professional class in the main, with many women still active in commercial pursuits, and a small but increasing number entering the professions.

The purpose behind chapter 6 was to show the changing role of women in this process of upward mobility. Examination of the Jewish suburban experience through the

² SJAC. *The Glasgow Jewish Board of Guardians, Centennial Commemorative Brochure* (1967.) Ref: SOC REP 0018; Also, *The Jewish Echo* 10/03/1967.

prism of gender as well as ethnicity and class enlarges the whole project of Jewish upward social mobility. The latter has previously been inadequately explained at the level of everyday life. An opportunity emerged in this study to not only investigate an under researched area of enquiry, but also to do this using a gender perspective. This involved demonstrating the ways that Jewish women's image evolved into that of a suburban consumer— a housewife in other words – but specifically within the context of the cultural values at large in interwar Glasgow. Analysis about diverse areas of everyday experience in interwar Glasgow, such as leisure and household consumption, as well as more usual aspects of analysis in Jewish history such as discrimination and interethnic relations in the process of integration was presented. This chapter also revealed the ways in which it necessary to reappraise the housewifely role. The findings presented in chapter 6 about the continuing economic role of women and their pivotal place in the formation of Jewish ethnic identity in Glasgow's suburbs is so far unique in the unfolding history of this city's Jewish community. Moreover, chapter 6 provides a more sympathetic view of suburban Jewish women than is usually found in either popular literature or sociological explorations.

The ways that women interacted with their Jewishness and with local social and cultural mores was further developed in chapter 7. Examination of political and cultural organisations is a well-worn path in Jewish histories, but the experiences of women who were a part of these are usually marginalized. This is also an area that needs to be further addressed in Scottish history. Chapter 7 was concerned with the experiences of women within a minority ethnic group in the suburbs, but in fact very little is known about women in this stratum of twentieth century Scottish life

generally. This chapter demonstrates the way that gender analysis changes conceptions of not just the domestic world, but also the arenas of politics and culture. For example, evidence included about women's involvement in Zionism reveals much about the evolution of this highly charged political area at its grassroots. Within the argument of chapter 7, the Zionist project in Glasgow cannot be understood historically without acknowledgment of the role undertaken by women who concurrently were striving to carve out a new social space for themselves.

The findings of chapters 6 and 7 can be summarised thus. Women's circumstances were not subject to an overnight transformation; instead there was a gradual transition that involved alterations to acceptable behaviour. These chapters also showed how integration to middle class values and the maintenance of ethnic identity once this community had left the Gorbals behind, was a gendered programme. Lastly, the case of suburban women shows how a new sense of class and ethnic identity emerged for these immigrant families that was very much shaped by gendered concerns. We have seen how Jewish women themselves met the challenges of further integration and adjusted to changes in lifestyles that came alongside a move to the suburbs. At the same time the specific character of Glasgow has been drawn upon to show how the dual ethnic identity that was formed in the Gorbals was then subject to a more intense pressure in the suburbs. This project concerned the maintenance of traditions alongside integration with middle class Scottish norms. It also involved outward compliance with the image of a suburban housewife, but not always absolute conformity where this restricted longer cultural traditions in domestic and working life. And although it was found that women were regularly called upon to be responsible for this project of reconciling competing ideals, they also often *took*

charge of it and were not passive ciphers whose principal function was to stave off assimilation.

This study of immigrant women within a city not normally treated as a major place of Jewish settlement has addressed gaps in existing knowledge in three main areas. It has made a general contribution to women's and gender history in Scotland by engaging with social diversity. In Scotland there is still a need for more empirical work on the lives of the working classes that is not approached in a gender-neutral way, or in a way that avoids discussion of ethnic diversity. Therefore, the thesis has looked at the lives of Jewish women as lived alongside Jewish men and at relations between Jews and the wider community of Glaswegians. It has been pointed out, that immigrant women would have found much that was recognisable in the lives of working class Scottish women. This familiarity had a role to play in assisting settlement that is often overlooked, and gender issues were certainly prominent in social relations between Scots and immigrant Jews. Further to this, the case study of Jewish women has made inroads into an area of Scottish experience that is still inadequately explained in historical terms, that is, upward mobility. The material aspects of life that changed because of better housing, increased consumerism and improved access to education still merit further exploration, particularly in respect of how all of these influences affected the lives of women *and* men, and relations between the sexes. Moreover, evidence in chapter 6 about the new areas of Jewish communal resettlement shows that the Glasgow suburbs were not physically or culturally homogenous and this is an area that also merits further research

Secondly, although within the context of the UK Jewish history is productive, *it is still* often constructed within a gender-neutral framework. Unfortunately, attempts to place women within British Jewish history have regularly stalled and such work has not made significant changes to a traditional historical agenda that is still largely conducted without recourse to the voices of women in the past. For this situation to change, the hitherto margins of British Jewish history must be incorporated. This *thesis has attempted the latter* by analysing the experiences of women who have been subsumed in the overall UK narrative from a *geographical standpoint and a gender perspective*.

Thirdly and lastly, the thesis clearly makes an addition to the particularity of Scottish Jewish history and its place in the migration history of this distinct country. Although many similarities exist across the UK, the community of Jews in Glasgow was not identical to the analogous cases of Jewish settlement in English cities. Analysis has been concerned with those who opted to maintain a Jewish identity while acquiring a Scottish identity and demonstrates the critical part played by gender relations within this transition. Here, women made decisions and choices as well as men that would affect the viability of their ethnic identity. Of course for some Jews who arrived in Glasgow, choices were made that resulted in the abandonment of Jewish roots. It is undeniably the case that women experienced pressures to maintain Jewish ethnic identity in different and, arguably more acute ways than men, but they were not passive in this process.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the Glasgow Jewish community is very much smaller in numbers than it was for most of the period under discussion. The current

Jewish population in Glasgow is set at 6,700 persons.³ Throughout the post-war period many factors produced this shrinkage including total assimilation, usually through exogamy; further onward emigration, either overseas or to other UK towns and cities; and the establishment of a pattern of smaller family size. However, this apparent crisis of Jewish continuity should not be confused with absolute decline; Jews in Glasgow have maintained communal integrity through a social and cultural infrastructure that remains vibrant. As we have noted, part of this energy has been directed at recovery of the history of Glasgow's Jews. However until now, this history has been cast in the mould of much traditional *Anglo-Jewish* history, a project that has steadfastly eschewed *theoretical considerations of ethnicity and gender, and has little* acknowledged the place of women within the history of Jewish settlement in the city. Much that is conventional in Scottish history, where gender is still only occasionally incorporated into the dominant narrative, has also affected it. As this thesis has demonstrated, Jewish women in Glasgow were not just active participants in the migration and adaptation process, their paid and unpaid work and their communal engagement shaped their own identities and the identity of the Glasgow Jewish community. Thus the transformative journey from Eastern Europe to poverty in the Gorbals, onwards from there to the Glasgow suburbs, and from the identity of foreign immigrants to integrated community, is usually recorded a way that renders it gender neutral. As we have seen this is not only misleading it tells only half of the story.

³ *The Jewish Yearbook* 2003. p.199.

Appendix 1: methodology of the oral histories.

Two sets of oral evidence were used in this study: material commissioned and housed within the SJAC, and these tapes and transcripts are available for consultation there; the second, and most extensively used set were those *collected by myself*. I interviewed ten people, and many of these sessions involved several visits and more than one interview. Overall, the interviews were structured around a life course format. Interviewees were asked to talk about their memories of parents and also about their childhood and early life up until the immediate post-war period. However in order to avoid overly directing the scope of the enquiry, conversation on tape that strays beyond this is evident. Interviews generally began with brief biographical details for example, name, date of birth, place of birth and parental places of birth. The interviewees were then asked to talk about growing up and usually chose to provide information about their families, home life and experience of education, before moving on to discuss employment, marriage and sometimes parenthood. A preset questionnaire was not used; instead a more informal and conversational approach was employed.

Oral history interviews are formed by a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, between the present concerns of the researcher and the anxiety of the person being interviewed to fulfil the requirements of this search for explanations, they are a mechanism by which the expectations of the questioner are either confirmed or sometimes confounded. The role of the interviewer in this process is thus pivotal for shaping the kind of narrative that emerges. Naturally no one would wish to manipulate an interview or deliberately ask leading questions, but it is fatuous to deny that the preoccupations of the researcher do not have a significant part to play

in what emerges. Examining the transcripts of an interview conducted by someone other than myself was a very different experience from listening to tapes where my own voice played a part. Sometimes interviewees did not provide answers at all to my inquiries; they simply did not share my concerns. Some interviewees required very little prompting or supplementary questions and settled quickly into providing long monologues about their life experiences; others did not have this facility and looked to me for directions in the form of comments or further questions about the information they were providing. Naturally, the questions asked were then informed both by the content of this person's narrative, together with my own concerns to find out more about certain aspects of experience. A minority of interviewees showed an innate awareness of chronology and by and large *spoke about their lives* from birth to adulthood in that order, albeit with a little prompting from myself; but more often, the narrative included asides to the present and regularly moved in and out of chronological format. So, although an overall pattern did emerge in terms of how these interviews progressed, notwithstanding, they are all different. A flexible approach was therefore essential towards each individual's style of narration.

In addition, a flexible approach was also required in respect of the scale of the project, which was initially planned to include a larger number of interviews. Some explanation of this change of heart is appropriate in order to champion the utility and validity of the relatively small-scale sample used. Here, it is pertinent to note that sudden death and illness unfortunately intervened for a few potential interviewees who agreed to take part in this study after an initial visit. Similarly, since the time of interview, a couple of the interviewees have died. Sadly this is a reminder, if one were needed, that some urgency is involved in exploiting the resource of personal

testimony amongst second-generation immigrants who are an increasingly aging and diminishing section of the population. With this inevitable fact in mind, a larger-scale oral history study would of course be have been of immense benefit to future exploration of the history of Glasgow Jewry but, it must be stressed, would not necessarily have improved this particular study. Nor would it have provided evidence that was somehow more representative. Large oral history projects are not a task than can easily be undertaken by a lone researcher; moreover, the relative small scale of this project proved to be of definite benefit within the remit of this thesis in terms of manageability and efficacy.

For this study, undertaking more interviews proved impractical in terms of resources of time; it also soon became clear that it would be impossible to do justice to a larger amount of interview material within the remit of the thesis. Although the collection of oral testimony is important for preserving an inevitably dwindling resource, weight of interviews should not be confused with weight of evidence. It was noted in chapter 1 that it would perhaps have been possible to study the case of Jewish women in Glasgow without recourse to oral evidence. In the course of research many different types of sources emerged that revealed aspects of women's lives, and it was indeed tempting to rely more and more on this documentary record. The collection and utilisation of oral testimony is, without doubt, time consuming and occasionally frustrating, however it does provide rewards unique to this source. The fact that the scale of this exercise had to be made smaller proved serendipitous. In this way, the interview material used became integral to analysis alongside other types of personal testimony and documentary sources. This approach provided material that added a more inclusive and multi-dimensional picture of everyday life in Glasgow for

immigrant families. There can be no doubt that oral testimony collected provided admittance to the interiority of immigrant life that would have been very difficult to access via documentary sources alone. This method was undertaken with awareness that such use of oral testimony has been criticised as merely providing 'colour' to more traditional, and for some, more weighty evidence contained in printed sources. This opinion is absolutely refuted within this thesis, wherein the use of oral testimony certainly did more than simply augment other kinds of evidence. Instead the reverse was regularly true.

In fact, oral testimony was often the starting point that *led the way* towards other sources. For example, it was Mrs Rose's casual mention of the Jewish Girls' Club, and her clear impression that the ladies of Garnethill had a mission to educate girls in the Gorbals, which set me seeking out documentary evidence of this establishment. As is often the case, the records of this women's organisation turned out not to have been preserved. However, subsequent closer examination of other sources, such as newspapers, then revealed snippets of information often imbedded in lists of up and coming communal events. This interviewee's recall of an organisation that has all but been forgotten, and could all too easily be overlooked, was therefore the catalyst for another line of research and presents an opportunity that would certainly merit further attention than was possible within this study. Clearly, Mrs Rose's memories of the club were important in terms of her own experience of young adulthood; but at a wider level they reveal a set of gendered activities thought suitable for the adaptation of immigrant girls to Scottish society. In this example, the documentary record certainly reveals the strategy of the Garnethill authority, but it does not show how young women members received this attention, or how it was viewed by the likes of

Jewish mothers. Oral sources are notably more effective in such areas, and can, as was the case here, make the agenda of historical treatment more 'democratic'.¹ In this way, oral evidence could be integrated with documentary material to create a much fuller and more reliable picture of aspects of Jewish women's lives in Glasgow that until now had escaped the scrutiny of historians.

As was pointed out in chapter 1, memories of the migrant experience are *all too easily* lost; the collection of oral testimony does go a long way towards redressing this problem. However, another issue that has been highlighted is that community histories can tend to create a veneer of homogeneity; and examples of inter-communal dissension in the past are therefore dealt with as problematic areas that needed to be sorted out in order for the community to survive. In this analytical approach, the heterogeneity of experiences within immigrant groups is not celebrated. Conversely, within this thesis, the different ways that immigrants settled and the importance of individual experiences are observed; these multiple standpoints are then set alongside what appear to be aspects of life that became most common and seem to have been representative of many families and individuals. However, no attempt has been made in this work to suggest that the experiences of oral history interviewees were always representative of the whole, and I would strongly argue that regardless of the size of the study this could never have been the case. Moreover, in the course of listening and re-listening to the tapes of interviews, a closer relationship with testimony was formed than would have been possible with a larger amount of material.

¹ See Thompson, P. 'The voice of the past' in Perks, R & Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader* pp. 21-28.

The individuals concerned were approached to take part in this exercise because of their status as second and occasionally third-generation immigrants who still, at a great age, retained remarkable facilities for remembering their past and articulating this fluently. Several of these interviewees were residents of a care home managed on behalf of the Jewish community in Scotland. In this instance, the manager and senior members of staff were involved in selecting persons it was appropriate for me to approach in regard to their mental health, with the exception of one resident (Mr Taylor) who actually approached me and volunteered his services. A few other interviewees not resident in elderly care were contacted with a request to take part in this project via recommendations obtained through my links with the SJAC and the Jewish community in Glasgow. The taped interviews that took place within the residential home, which is large and busy, were subject to some background noise, which was inevitable, but this has impacted negatively on only one of the recordings. Residential care generally involves conformity to routines that cannot be disturbed, even for the recording of history. I had to make concessions for this. Likewise, I had to accommodate the fact that such elderly people were likely to tire easily and this was the reason for some interviews taking place over more than one session.

Recordings range in length between 80 and 200 minutes (approx). At preliminary visits, I spent time with all of the interviewees and explained what this research was concerned with, and what it would be used for. All interviewees were offered a copy of their tapes and/or transcripts of these. In addition, anonymity was offered, although only one interviewee requested this. Signed copyright permission was obtained for all of the material used in the thesis. After careful ethical consideration however, I have used pseudonyms for most, although not all, of these individuals. It should also be

acknowledged that not all of the interview material was used, in one case this was because I later had personal misgivings, rightly or wrongly, about the ethics of using this elderly person's memories. But for the most part, material that has been excluded on this occasion was simply the result of pressures on space. In time, it is planned that the majority of the interviews will be fully transcribed and added to the collection already cared for by the SJAC and therefore, will be of further use to other research projects whether undertaken by myself or other interested parties.

Although the persons interviewed by me were certainly willing participants, I have observed standard ethical guidelines in respect of treating the evidence provided with respect. For me this has meant going some way towards protecting the privacy of interviewees who did provide intimate details of their lives. This scruple is my own however, and not influenced by the interviewees. However, some brief biographical details are included in the following section alongside the dates of interviews.

Details of interviews:

Mr MB (Mr Balkin).
Born in Glasgow: 26th August 1913.
Interviewed: 26th June 2000 & 3rd July 2000.

Mrs RB (Mrs Miller).
Born in Glasgow: 16th September 1920.
Interviewed: 14th April 2003.

Mrs AG (Mrs Green).
Born in Glasgow: 11th March 1905.
Interviewed: 9th June 2000.

Mrs MR (Mrs Rose).
 Born in Falkirk 11th August 1909.
 Interviewed: 13th June 2000.

Mrs HS (Mrs Simon).
 Born in Glasgow: 22nd December 1914.
 Interviewed: 14th August 2002 & 8th October 2002.

Mr JT (Mr Taylor).
 Born in Glasgow: 28th April 1904.
 Interviewed: 10th & 12th July 2000.

Mrs MT (no pseudonym applied).
 Born in Glasgow: 15th October 1933.
 Interviewed: 26th November 2002.

Also interviewed but testimony not used in final version of thesis:

Mr HC.
 Born in Edinburgh: 9th November 1907.
 Interviewed: 2nd July 2002.

Mrs DL.
 Place of birth unclear. Born: 19th October 1906.
 Interviewed: 19th July 2000.

Mrs HF
 Born in Glasgow: 20th May 1908.
 Interviewed: 4th July 2002.

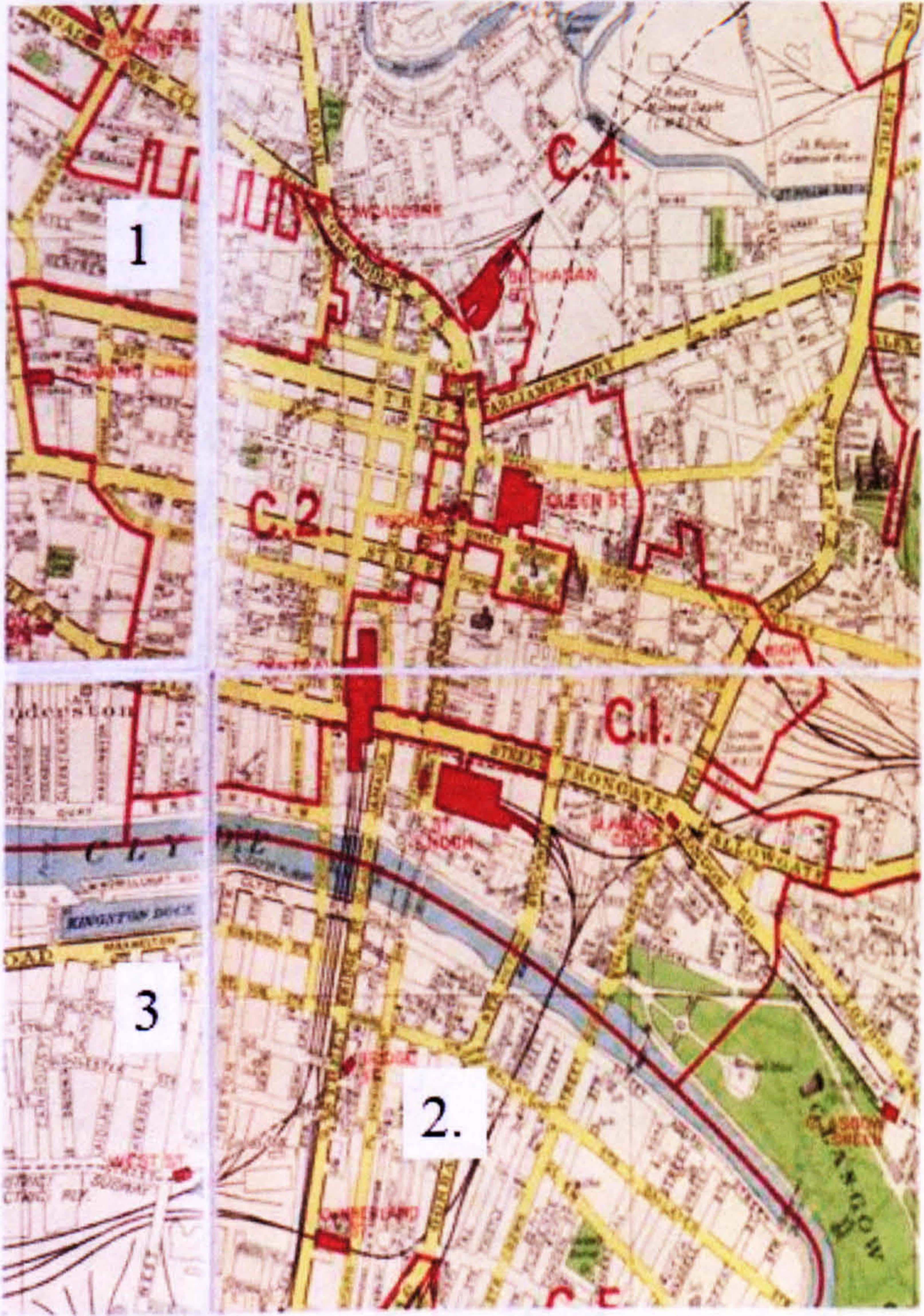
With two exceptions (Mrs Simon and Mrs MT, both third-generation) the interviewees were second-generation immigrants. Interviewees' parents and grandparents came to Scotland from a variety of towns and cities then part of the Russian Empire and in at least four instances, Glasgow was a place of secondary migration; all were urban dwellers before leaving Russia. All of the second-generation interviewees reported their fathers as having skilled trades, although not all of them were able to engage in these and entered into other forms of making a living in

Glasgow. For mothers, there was less good information about the issue of skilled employment before migration. Several interviewees recalled their mothers' expertise in sewing and it might be inferred from this that they had at some point made a living in this way. Otherwise, evidence was provided of some interviewees' mothers providing board and lodging in Glasgow and as we have seen, Mrs Green's mother sewed quilts at home which were for sale. Those immigrant mothers who are reported as having an occupation outside of the home were all engaged in peddling or retail. The majority of interviewees were born and raised in the Gorbals district with the exception of: Mrs Green, Mrs Simon and Mr HC. Interestingly, despite evidence of large families amongst immigrant Jews, for example as seen on Census returns, only half of the interviewees were members of families of five or more siblings (Mr Balkin, Mrs Green, Mrs Miller, Mrs Rose and Mrs DL) and in line with the general demographic trend, none of the interviewees themselves became parents of large families of five or more children. All of the interviewees relocated from working class areas either as children or young adults, with two exceptions: Mrs Green did not relocate and Mr Taylor left the Gorbals when he married, by which time he was in his thirties. The overwhelming majority of these relocations were to districts in the South Side of Glasgow. In terms of career, some interviewees tried their hands at a variety of jobs and amongst the women paid employment was sometimes interrupted, or discontinued, upon marriage. But in general terms, the main forms of employment among the ten were: two entered professions (Mr HC and Mrs HF); two became secretaries/administrators (Mrs Miller and Mrs MT); three engaged in sales work (Mrs Rose, Mr Taylor and Mrs DL); one was a market trader (Mrs Green) and one owned a retail outlet (Mr Balkin).

Appendix 2: Maps.

Map A.

Map A: Glasgow City (c1930) showing Garnethill and Gorbals.



KEY:

1. Garnethill. 2. Gorbals. 3. Tradeston.

Map B.

Map B: The Gorbals (c1930.)



Key:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Abbotsford Place. | 2. South Portland Street. |
| 3. Thistle Street. | 4. Hospital Street. |
| 5. Gorbals Cross. | |

Map C: Glasgow City (c1930) showing Gorbals and adjacent districts.



KEY:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1. | Gorbals District. | 4. | The Broomielaw |
| 2. | Laurieston Area. | 5. | Govanhill District |
| 3. | Calton District | 6. | Crosshill District |

Map D.

Photographs and illustrations courtesy of
Archives Centre

Map D: Glasgow South (c1950) dates indicate boundary changes as city expanded. Main areas of Jewish relocation indicated by colour key.



Colour Key:

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------------|---|----------------|---|
| Gorbals | | Govanhill | | Pollockshields | |
| Queen's Park | | Langside/Battlefield | | Shawlands | |
| Newlands | | Netherlee | | Giffnock | |
| Clarkston | | Newton Mearns | | | |

Appendix 3.

Photographs and illustrations courtesy of The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre.



A Glasgow Jewish clothing workshop in the early twentieth century, the exact provenance of this image is unknown. However, the ratio of female to male workers is clear. Conditions here seem fairly good as compared with many of the domestic workshops around in the same period.



Staff standing outside Bernstein and Simon's drapery store in Saltmarket c1914, with more at the first floor windows, the usage of which can only be speculated, but it is possible that some sewing went on here. Bernstein and Simon proclaimed themselves the 'Bargain Kings' and had a chain of stores across Glasgow.



Mr and Mrs Linderman ran a bakery in the Gorbals. The couple married in 1891 and immigrated to London. They arrived in Glasgow around 1910. This photo was *probably taken in the* Gorbals sometime after the First World War.



This image is of four female employees of a Jewish warehouse in the Gorbals. It was taken outside of their place of employment in the late 1930s.



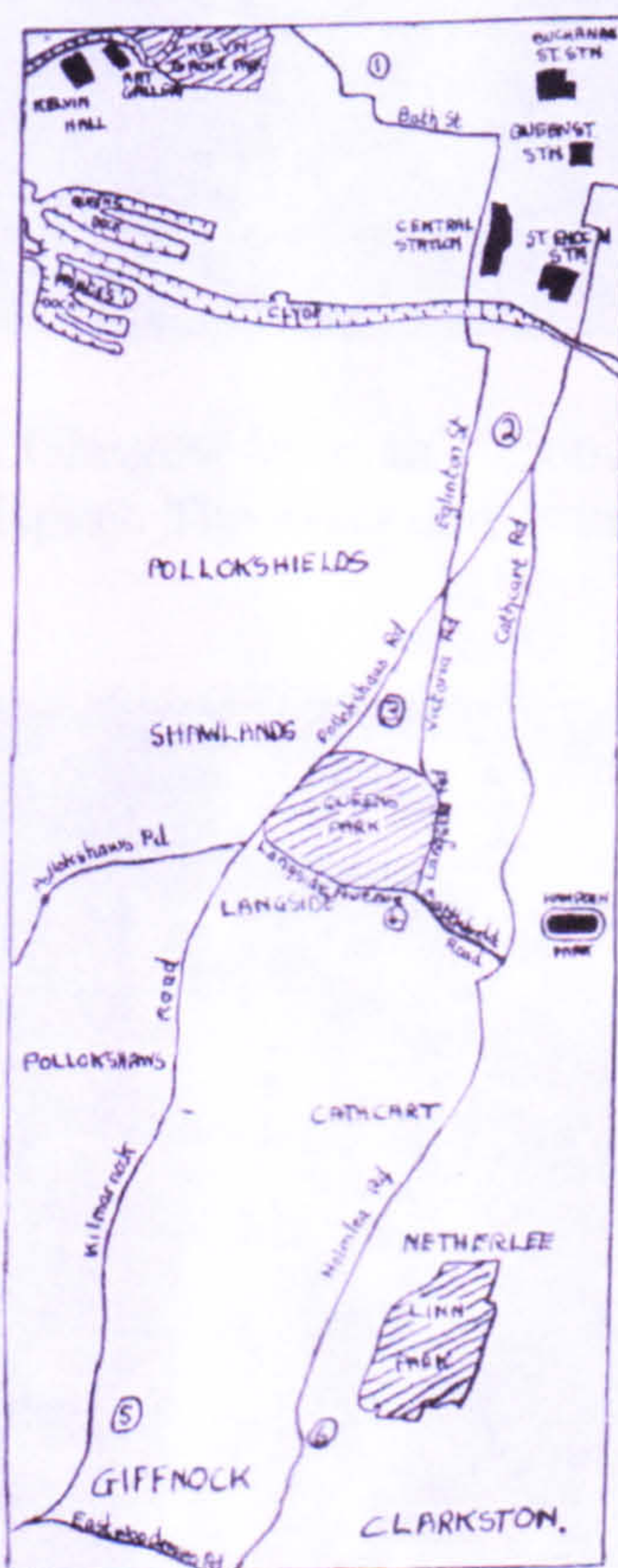
These are the girls of the *Bar Kochba* Jewish gymnastic club performing daring acrobatics in a somewhat seedy looking back court in the Gorbals during the 1930s.



Members of Glasgow *HaBonim* in the early 1950s

HABONIM IN GLASGOW

An attempt has been made in the planning of junior groups to disperse them so that no part of the Jewish community is without a local group. This policy has been, on the whole, successful with the youngest age group, and when more youth leaders become available we hope to increase the number, so that the distance a young child has to travel is reduced even further.



Meeting places and the age level meeting at them are as follows:—

1. Gedud Hanegev (10-13 years) meets at 3 p.m. most Sundays at the Garnethill Shul.
2. Gedud Hapoel (10-13 years) meets at 3 p.m. most Sundays at South Portland Street Shul.
3. Gedud Chanita (10-13 years) meets at 3 p.m. most Sundays at Niddrie Road Shul.
4. HABONIM BAYIT, 6 SINCLAIR DR., GLASGOW, S.2. TEL. LANGSIDE 3891.

Groups meet at the Bayit as follows:—

Gedud Balfouria (10-13 years) meets most Sundays at 3 p.m.

Plugot Maayan Zvi Wednesdays 7.30 p.m.

Plugot Tsora (13-16 years) meet and

Plugot Hagarin Sundays 7.30 p.m.

Plugot Herzl meets Sunday at 5.30 p.m.

Chavurot Avoda meets 6.15 p.m. Saturday nights.

Senior Vatikim meets at the Bayit at varying times.

5. Gedud Hagalil (10-13 years) meets at 5 p.m. most Sundays at the Giffnock Communal Hall.
6. Gedud Tel Chai (10-13 years) meets at 3 p.m. most Sundays at Clarkston Shul.

NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

This image is extracted from Glasgow *HaBonim*'s Silver Jubilee brochure (1954). This organisation made an effort to base itself in all areas of Jewish settlement where youngsters could be found in numbers. The map illustrates the localities where this was the case in the post-war period.



A Glasgow Women's Zionist Organisation meeting. Note the fur coats on display. The exact date is unknown, but probably around the late 1930s.



A social function organised by Glasgow women Zionists in rather opulent surroundings (1938). These events raised large sums of money for various Zionist causes and in the 1930s much needed funds that assisted German, Jewish refugees.

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Transcripts and Audio Tapes of Oral Histories held in SJAC.

Interviewed by Ben Braber:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Anne Berman & Philip Berman. | Born: 23/07/1908. Born: 21/01/1914. | . Interviewed 19 th January 1989 |
| Alec Frutin. | Born: 1903. | Interviewed 17 th March 1989. |
| Ray Greenbaum & Ida Schuster. | Born: ? Born: ? | Interviewed 5 th November 1987. |
| Moray Glasser. | Born: 1898. | Interviewed July 1988. |
| Hannah Levi. | Born: 1908 | Interviewed 13 th April 1989 |
| Lillian Levi. | Born: 1908. | Interviewed 1 st June 1989. |

Interviewed by Harvey Kaplan:

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Fanny Rosenthal | Born: 1910. | Interviewed 25 th January 2004. |
|-----------------|-------------|--|

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