"LIKE BEASTS OF THE FIELD": THE POVERTY AND SANITARY CONDITIONS OF THE EAST END'S JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF BRITISH IMPERIAL AND RACIAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The influx of Eastern European Jewry into London stirred controversy within British society and within the Anglo-Jewish community. Newly arrived Jews became part of the debate over the "alien problem," which resulted in the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905. This paper will examine the disputes over the poverty and "dirtiness" of Jewish immigrants in the context of the British imperial and racial discourse. The aim is to show how the controversy over the poverty of immigrants and the sanitary conditions of the Jewish quarter exposed deeper social anxiety over the position of the British Empire. The paper will focus on accusations against Jews from Eastern Europe of impoverishing and polluting the "heart of the Empire," thus contributing to the collapse of the ideals of British progress and superiority.

> *They had been driven from pillar to post all over Europe, and had sought refuge in England.*
> *They must, however, be taught that cleanliness was next to godliness.*
> (*The People* 1894, no. 683)

Introduction

Events taking place in the Russian Empire in the 1880s were a milestone in the history of the Jewish community. The wave of pogroms, anti-Jewish sentiment and political and social repression, along with the difficult economic situation, initiated mass emigration.[1] The eastern European Jewry, tempted by promises of freedom and prosperity, left in

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[1] For more information, see: Dekel-Chen 2010; Klier, Lambroza 1992; Klier 2011; Polonsky 2010, vol. I.

search of shelter in western Europe or beyond the territory of the Old Continent. Among the places where asylum was sought was London, and their new home was to be its eastern district, known as the East End.[2] However, Jewish refugees did not find an entirely friendly environment in the city, and their influx sparked a complex debate over the "alien question."

The exact number of Jews who settled permanently in England during the mass migration from Eastern Europe remains unknown, mostly because of inexact identification of Jews in the available documentation. However, researchers have established that approximately 120,000 to 150,000 Eastern European Jews stayed in Britain between 1881 and 1914.[3] In the last decades of the 19th century the influx of immigrants meant a radical transformation of the Jewish quarter in London's East End. Foreign Jews' understanding of Judaism, as well as their habits, customs, and poverty, significantly altered the character of the Anglo-Jewry. The native post-emancipated community was far wealthier and more acculturated than Jews from Eastern Europe. Cultural, religious, and economic differences between the two communities caused fear among the Anglo-Jewry, anxious about their carefully cultivated image. They perceived the foreignness and poverty of the Eastern European Jewry as impacting the position of Jews within Gentile society.[4] Indeed, the newly arrived Jews became part of controversy over the "alien problem," which resulted in the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905.[5] One aspect of this complex debate concerned the issues of the poverty and alleged dirtiness of Jews from Eastern Europe, which became an argument in favour of introducing anti-immigrant legislation.

Topics surrounding the process of racialisation of Jewish refugees and the connections between the imperial discourse and the anti-Semitic debate in Great Britain have been discussed in various papers.[6] It could be presumed that the image of Jews held among British society has been well-researched, although there has been no comprehensive study on how anti-Jewish stereotypes in London were entangled with imperialism and colonialism. This paper will examine the debate over the poverty and dirtiness of Jewish immigrants in the context of the British imperial and racial discourse. The aim of the presented research is to show how the controversy over the poverty of the immigrants and the sanitary conditions of the Jewish quarter exposed deeper social anxiety over the position of the British Empire. The influx of Jewish immigrants coincided with the collapse of the British economic monopoly and increased competition from other colonial powers.[7] The nation's pride in its imperial might was a crucial element of the British identity. By preaching the idea of white supremacy, progress, and modernity, the British authorities justified the subjugation of peoples who came under direct British hegemony or were under the economic influence of the British Empire. The negative effects of industrialisation in contaminated cities, the poisonous smoke from workshops, and the spread of poverty among the working classes were treated as incongruous with the ideal of imperial progress. Hence, the worsening sanitary conditions in London's

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[2] For the information on history of Jewish immigrants in England, see Gartner 1973.
[3] Endelman 2002: 127–128.
[4] Clark 2009: 224–226.
[5] For more information on the debate over the Aliens Act, see Glover 2012.
[6] See Bar-Yosef, Valman 2009; Cheyette 1993; Ewence 2019; Kushner 2005.
[7] For more information on New Imperialism, see Hobsbawm 1987.

East End were considered a threat to the notion of white supremacy. The paper will focus on accusations levied against Jews from Eastern Europe as supposedly impoverishing and polluting the "heart of the Empire."

"Social Abyss" in the heart of the Empire

Contamination of the urban space along with worsening sanitary conditions in the 18th century resulted in the gradual migration of the city's elites from the eastern district to more prominent parts of London. Previously, as employers and landowners, they had been living in the vicinity of their properties and businesses. However, with the exploitation of the East End they decided to choose other districts not contaminated by industrial activities. The emigration of the bourgeois class contributed to the establishment of a visible geographic and cultural separation of the two parts of the city, which existed in the local imagination as the East End and the West End, along with their specific cultural meanings. The East End appeared as a poor, dirty, and dangerous place, while the West End was treated as a fashionable, elegant, and healthier district.[8] The movement of the richest residents to exclusive neighbourhoods and the cultural division of the city into eastern and western parts exacerbated class antagonisms.[9] From the beginning of the 19th century, the situation of the East End's inhabitants had been deteriorating. Increasing rates of poverty were related to the seasonality of production, transactions exposed to trade cycles, the instability of the consumer market, and competition from provincial and foreign cities.[10] The experience of modernity was associated with urban transformations, and these included widespread social segregation. The migration of the upper classes contributed to the topographic distribution of representatives of socio-economic classes and ethnic groups in particular city districts. Charles Booth's map showing the distribution of poor classes in specific neighbourhoods provides a visual example of class segregation in London, depicting the locations of "poverty districts," almost all of them in the East End.[11] As Richard Dennis points out, "Booth was not just exploring; by classifying and mapping, he was equivalent to a colonial power, with a panoptic vision of city as a whole."[12] Hence, the division of the city into neighbourhoods inhabited by particular social classes and ethnic groups referred to the colonial segregation based on the division between the "modern" and "civilised" world of the upper classes and the "primitive" realm of the lower classes.

According to the Marxist approach, the main function of the spatial structure of a city is to correspond with the challenges posed by capitalism. Industrial cities were thus structured to be able to constantly multiply and accumulate capital, and to consolidate rigid class relations by designating working-class districts and "districts of poverty." The isolation of the poor from the rest of population meant that industrialised cities

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[8] Marriot 2011: 60–63.
[9] Ward 1984: 299.
[10] Marriot 2011: 104.
[11] Dennis 2000: 104–105.
[12] *Ibid.*: 108.

corresponded to the dichotomy of the social and capitalist order, with the poor and the rich occupying appropriate and separated places on the city map.[13]

The topographic distribution of the poor and the rich on the map of London contributed to the isolation of "poverty districts" and to the redefinition of poverty. Social problems were no longer identified with the entire urban society, but with one neighbourhood which became known as a "slum." For Londoners the slums were a "social abyss" – a place isolated from the rest of society from which there were no escape. A series of philanthropic initiatives, reorganisation of charity and attempts to improve housing conditions in the "poverty district" were the public's response to the negative effects of the industrialisation which had significantly transformed the urban landscape.[14] Urban segregation was also a source of social criticism. As the 19th century observer of city life George Sims, noted:

> It is to increased wealth and to increased civilisation that we owe the wide gulf which to-day separates well-to-do citizens from the masses. It is the increased wealth of this mighty city which has driven the poor back inch by inch, until we find them to-day herding together, packed like herrings in a barrel, neglected and despised, and left to endure wrongs and hardships which, if they were related of a far-off savage tribe [...].[15]

The worsening conditions of the East End landscape were widely discussed in the press. Articles were characterised by a dose of compassion mixed with disgust and a series of moralising tirades. Journalists focused intensively on the overcrowding of the district, on its filth, poverty, and demoralisation. Most of the press narratives were created in a very similar way, duplicating structures, repeating catchy phrases, and even using identical titles.[16]

"It might be a corner of some remote Polish city"[17]: The image of the dirtiness and poverty of Eastern European Jewry

Jews from Eastern Europe mostly chose the East End as their new home, becoming part of the district, with its broad cultural connotations. The concentration of Jewish immigrants in the eastern parts of London was the result of various factors. The area's proximity to the port and the possibilities of finding employment in tailors' and shoemakers' workshops attracted newly arrived Jews relatively quickly. Decisions about where to live were also made based on the availability of the most important institutions for maintaining the traditional way of life and of charitable organisations.[18] Indeed, many philanthropic institutions were established in Victorian London to help the neediest members of the Jewish community. Jewish charitable activities reflected

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[13] Pooley 2000: 431–432.
[14] Ward 1984: 300–304.
[15] Sims 1889: 3.
[16] For more information on the image of London's outcasts in the East End, see: Marriot 2011; Newland 2008.
[17] *The Daily Telegraph* 1902, no. 14782.
[18] Lipman 1954: 100.

the benevolent tendencies prevailing in Britain at that time. Philanthropic institutions, in addition to providing real help to Jewish immigrants, were aimed at transmitting Victorian values and transforming the Eastern European Jewry into Londoners. Thus, the most important aspect of their activity was the dissemination of acculturating ideas.[19] The crucial philanthropic institution was the Jewish Board of Guardians, founded in 1859 to deal with multifaceted forms of charity, including support for newly arrived Jewish immigrants.[20] Its philanthropic initiatives were also designed to distract attention away from the poor immigrants, as it was believed that Londoners' image of Jews from Eastern Europe would exacerbate anti-Jewish attitudes and disrupt the social position of the Anglo-Jewry.[21]

In *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Charles Booth proposed a sociological approach to the problem of poverty in the East End by drawing up a classification based on degrees of affluence. Thus he divided the groups, first into the lowest class with occasional work and "semi-criminal" work, a class with casual earnings, described as very poor. Classes dealing with unstable work and low-paid but regular work were designated as poor. The next four classes were those living above the poverty line – the regular and standard wage class, the higher-class labour, the lower middle class, and the upper middle class.[22] According to Booth's research, the first four classes collectively identified as 'poor' accounted for 35% of the total East End population, with the largest percentage abiding in the St. George's area.[23] Thus, the problem of poverty only applied to some parts of the East End. However, to most 19th century observers, the East End was a homogeneous place, so any problem manifesting itself only in some parts was extended to the entire district. Poverty could be understood as a real problem faced by the inhabitants of the East End, but also as a cultural phenomenon with which several images were associated. Paul Newland believes that Booth was aware of the extent to which the East End was a mythologised space. Considering the existing narratives highlighting the poverty of the East End's inhabitants, which arose under the influence of imagination and not actual knowledge, he created a classification based on which he proved that these problems could not be attributed to the entire eastern district. For instance, he considered Whitechapel and Commercial Road to be more affluent. It was true that this area was inhabited by people who could have been classified as poor, but these were isolated cases.[24] According to the map below (Figure 1), Jewish immigrants lived in almost every part of the East End. However, in the areas marked in red they constituted only about 5% of the total Jewish population of this area. Streets with predominantly Jewish inhabitants were marked in blue – mainly Whitechapel and Commercial Road.

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[19]   Tananbaum 2014.
[20]   For more information on the history of the Jewish Board of Guardians, see Lipman 1954.
[21]   Feldman 2011: 5–6.
[22]   Booth 1889: 33.
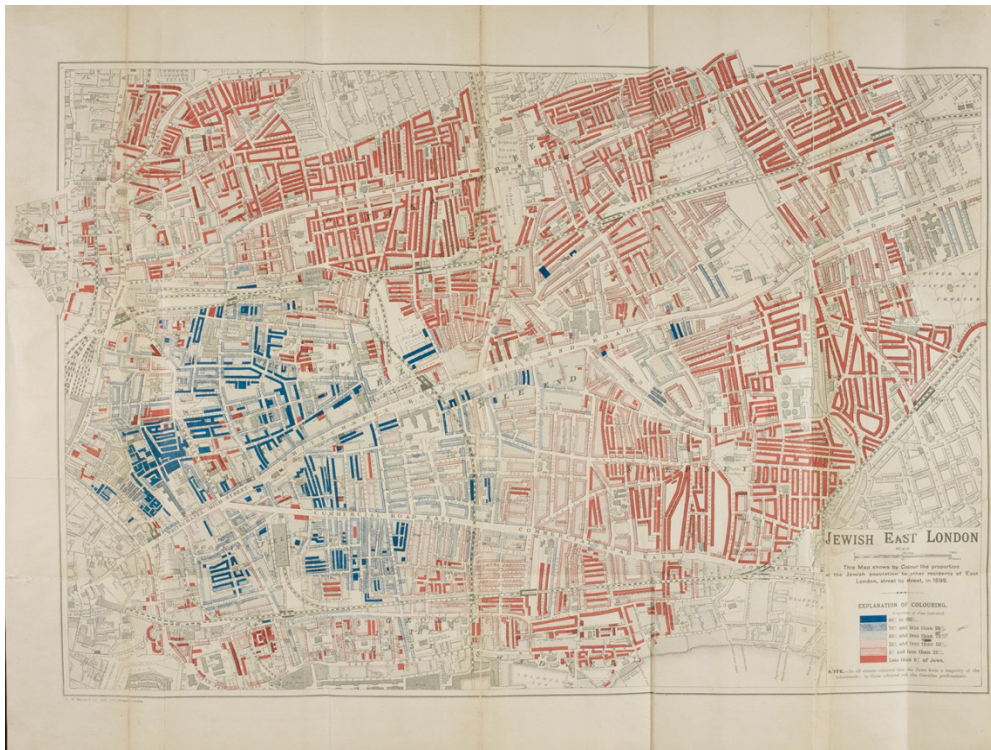[23]   *Ibid.*: 62.
[24]   Newland 2008: 78–79.

Figure 1. Jewish East London

Source: Russel, Lewis 1900.

Booth considered the streets of Whitechapel and Commercial Road, dominated by Jewish immigrants, to be more prosperous than other parts of the East End. Nonetheless, the Jews who settled in these streets were presented as a group living in extreme poverty. The English writer and historian Walter Besant, for example, described newly arrived Jewish immigrants as follows: "Of course, the most important foreign element in East London is that of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. They are the poorest of the very poor; when they come over, they have nothing."[25]

London's intensive industrial development resulted in the emergence of new problems concerning not only sanitary conditions but also social order and cultural identity. Those in the more prominent neighbourhoods were looking at East Enders through the eyes of external observers, extending a helping hand while at the same time emphasising their superiority over the "darker" corners of the city.[26] Dirt, which became part of the modern city landscape, was treated as an abstract concept. Metaphorically speaking, it did not only mean the physical threat of disease, but was also the epitome of social disorder and immorality. The concept of dirt was thus seen as a physical and

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[25]   Besant 1901: 193.
[26]   Allen 2008: 1–2.

social threat to the upper classes.[27] The idea of helping the poor by introducing social reforms crystallised at the beginning of the 19th century, and it had a clear message: those who alleviate human poverty could save the entire society. However, in the 1880s the initial optimism of the social reform movement was on the wane, and the introduced reforms were met with a great deal of criticism. This resulted in redefining the idea of poverty from a phenomenon affecting the individual, and thus susceptible to social reforms, to understanding it as a sociobiological phenomenon, the spread of which was difficult to control.[28]

The eastern district of London was associated with extreme poverty, which contradicted the idea of progress, and with immorality, which contradicted the idea of the civilisational superiority of the British nation. Evangelical organisations thus began intensive missionary activities in the East End in the 1840s. Many of the missionaries saw similarities between their mission in London and those overseas. The Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, upon returning from India in 1866, described the East End as a space parallel to Calcutta, where missionaries were confronted with "true paganism" among the poor.[29] Andrew Mearns' pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* from 1883 is one of the many examples using rhetoric drawing extreme contrasts between the morass of poverty and the world of the "civilised" upper classes. Through biblical references to the flood, Mearns expressed the fears among the middle classes about drawing in the godlessness of the eastern district and support for their Christian mission among the poor. At the same time however, he contributed to maintaining the division between Christian upper-class life and the "primitive" and "unholy" existence of East Enders.[30] Mearns' pamphlet is not just an example of Christianity's understanding of poverty, but is also an illustration of the imperial narrative:

> There is no more hopeful sign in the Christian Church of to-day than the increased attention which is being given by it to the poor and outcast classes of society. [...] All this is good in its way and has done good; but by all only the merest edge of the great dark region of poverty, misery, squalor and immorality has been touched. We are not losing sight of the London City Mission, whose agents are everywhere, and whose noble work our investigation have led us to value more than ever, but after all has been done the churches are making the discovery that seething in the very centre of our great cities, concealed by the thinnest crust of civilization and decency, is a vast mass of moral corruption, of heart-breaking misery and absolute godlessness, [...].[31]

Mearns' pamphlet belies a characteristic attitude towards poverty, associating it with immorality. The evangelical missions were not only activities to improve living conditions but were also treated as a civilisational struggle against the manifestations of immorality. *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* is a demonstration of the distinctive imperial way of understanding the British mission to help people considered to be uncivilised. The British identity, based on the mission of spreading liberal-capitalist values around the world, was thrown into question by conditions in London, the heart of the

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[27] *Ibid.*: 7–9.
[28] *Ibid.*: 115–116.
[29] Marriot 2011: 158–160.
[30] Newland 2008: 62–63.
[31] Mearns 1883: 3–4.

Empire. The problems that the British fought so fiercely were hidden under the guise of civilisation and decency in their own home. The East End with its poverty and immorality was thus treated as an alien land, and not as a part of the powerful Empire. Poverty was a problem of a separate and imaginary urban space in which one can interfere in the same way as in the colonies, all in the name of progress and spreading civilisation. London was also a place where missionary organizations for converting Jews had their headquarters. The most well-known of these was the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, and they shared a similar understanding of the British civilising mission.[32]

The influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe exacerbated British fears about uncontrolled poverty and unsanitary conditions in the heart of the Empire, and therefore about the collapse of progress and ideas of superiority. In various texts from 1880 to 1905, the Jewish parts of the East End were pictured as an alien space which did not fit into the carefully constructed image of the Empire. As S. Gelberg mentioned, "the [Jewish] Ghetto is a fragment of Poland torn off from Central Europe and dropped haphazard into the heart of Britain."[33] The Jewish quarter was then often referred as a "colony" and "Polish" or a "Russian ghetto." Various authors emphasised the Polishness and Russianness of the Jewish space, maintaining the division between the civilised West and the primitive and dirty East. These texts not only emphasised the differences between the "liberal" British Empire and the "despotic" Russian Empire, but also expressed anxiety about "immigration from the less civilized to the more civilized nations."[34] In other words, fears were stoked about mixing of the races and the collapse of the progressive and civilised West by the invasion of the "Eastern race." This anxiety is made plain in a journey of Major William Evans-Gordon, Member of Parliament for Stepney, to countries from which Jews had emigrated, in order to investigate the living conditions of Jews in Eastern Europe. As Hannah Ewence rightly noted:

> Yet although the politician recognised his own capital in the various scenes before him, it was not the triumphant recognition of the cultural imperialist surveying his enlightened colony but rather a nervous apprehension that the colonialist had himself now become the object of colonisation.[35]

Hence, 19th-century observers agreed that the worsening conditions of the East End did not fit into the Western world, so the Eastern European Jewry, "knowing, of course, nothing whatever of the conditions of life in Western Europe,"[36] with their eastern habits and customs, were responsible for the increasing filth and poverty. The influx of Jewish immigrants had sparked a debate over the threat posed to the "indigenous poor" by the "alien race." It was believed that the uncontrolled influx of foreign Jews "may become a source of positive danger and demoralization to a large section of our working population."[37] Hence, the British were torn between the necessity to preserve the

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[32]   For more information on the history of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, see Gidney 1900; Gidney 1908.

[33]   Gelberg 1902: 29.

[34]   *Pall Mall Gazette* 1888, no. 7219.

[35]   Ewence 2019: 64.

[36]   *Morning Post* 1888, no. 36,057.

[37]   *Ibid*.

"tradition of England as the asylum of foreigners," where everyone can derive benefits from the prosperity and freedom of the Western world, and the duty to "save our own people from further wretchedness."[38]

Londoners' narratives about Jewish immigrants revealed a sociobiological understanding of poverty whereby the British "organism" was exposed to the "invasion" of poor Jews exacerbating the unsanitary conditions of the East End. It was believed that the social organism of Great Britain, weakened by the spreading poverty of its native inhabitants, was under attack by a foreign element, one difficult to control, making it all the more dangerous. London's press agitated against the threat posed by Jewish immigrants, portraying them as an impersonal, unform mass flooding the streets of the eastern district. Exaggerated figures Written reports on the arriving Jews where "pauper alien" really spells "Polish Jew" were published in the press.[39]

It was believed that London's poor inhabitants were a separate race whose genetically conditioned instincts actually made them want to live in unsanitary conditions. They were compared to rats, drawn to dark and dirty corners. Theories of social Darwinism advocated the discursive formation of the "London poverty race." This became the explanation for the existence of poor, less-evolved classes that did not fit into the framework of society.[40] There is a clear dichotomy in the issue of the "racialisation" of poverty. The "race of poor Jewish immigrants" was incorporated into the "race of native poor." In the East End, often called the African Jungle, there were clashes between the two groups, which were treated as lower opposition to British society. Hence, there was an expansion of the "species hierarchy" in which the native London poor had occupied a slightly higher position. Jews coming from the distant eastern hinterland were treated as an even more alien race. Most journalists, with no idea where the Jewish immigrants were really coming from, most often invoked the East as more of a metaphorical than an actual existing place. Jewish immigrants were treated as a less-civilised people whose behaviour was comparable to that of wild beasts:

> The great majority of these foreign immigrants are Russian, German, Polish, and Balkan Jews. They usually appear in England in the character of political refugees; and certainly, they seem very delighted to find themselves on free English soil. They have heard that England is a land of freedom, and they have a vague idea that, once there, they will have no further trouble. To do them justice, we must admit that contentment enters their souls at a very early stage of human felicity. They work unheard-of hours for incredibly small pay; they herd together like beasts of the field and breed like them; they satisfy their hunger and thirst with what one can scarcely consider food; and they are capable generally of putting up with a degree of poverty and filth that would kill most Englishmen in a week.[41]

Sabine Schülting notes that the fear of cholera was a typical aspect of the slum narratives. The East End was described as "the pest island" and London itself as "the capital of cholera."[42] This anxiety stemmed from the outbreak of epidemics, first in 1831–1832 and then in 1848–1849, which were a product of industrialisation and urbanisation

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[38] *St. James's Gazette* 1887, no. 2185.
[39] *St. James's Gazette* 1891, no. 3406.
[40] Allen 2008: 124–126.
[41] *St. James's Gazette* 1887, no. 2127.
[42] Schülting 2016: 49.

– processes contributing to the rapid growth of cities with a simultaneous deterioration in their sanitary conditions. Cholera was thus treated metaphorically as a threat to the ideas of progress and civilisation, as it personified the negative effects of these processes. It was referred as the "poor people's disease" under the belief its occurrence was related the working classes failing to comply with the rules of hygiene.[43] The following excerpt from an article illustrates the typical tendency to emphasise the threat of the poor spreading disease:

> It was suggested in 'The Little Chronicle' a few weeks ago that the most likely introduction of cholera into England would be through the migration from Russia territory of poor Jews and others, whose arrival here in squalid swarms has long been a matter of just or unjust complaint. For the most part, as the Local Government Board was then reminded, they come not only in poverty but in dirt; with a sort of baggage in the way of beds, bedding, old clothes &c., than which the most active cholera-germ could ask no snugger harbourage or more prosperous conveyance.[44]

The rapidly spreading cholera epidemic of 1892 placed Jewish immigrants in the spotlight as importing the spectre of the disease with them.[45] Hence, the "invasion of pauper Jews" could be treated as a threat to the ideas of progress and civilisation. It could be concluded that the depiction of Jewish immigrants as carriers of cholera ran parallel to the fear of disturbing the social order supported by the upper classes. It was believed that poor sanitation in the East End, taken as a denial of British power, was deliberately aggravated by Jewish immigrants. Thus, the Jews – the metaphorical spreaders of disease – personified a threat aimed at the heart of British civilisation.

The concept of dirt carried several negative associations. The term was used to condemn something or someone who did not fit within the societal framework of behaviour. The appearance of dirt was a disruption to order, with the risk of contamination of what was considered clean, and it insulted the sense of order of the upper classes, with their ideals based on respect and decency. The idea of cleanliness was part of the identity of the upper classes in their efforts to separate themselves from the "dirty" labourers.[46] The following excerpt from the *Jewish Chronicle* shows the strategy of London Jews to separate themselves from Jewish immigrants for fear of aggravating anti-Semitic sentiment:

> The standard of cleanliness observed by the Russo-Jewish immigrants is considerably below that which English usage and statutory and municipal enactments require to be observed in this country. The result is that the immigrants and their families suffer to a terrible extent from disease and death; that they provoke prejudices in the minds of the English people who offer them an asylum whilst other nations close their doors against them, and that they bring discredit, not only on themselves, but on their English coreligionists also – who have made and are making great sacrifices. To mitigate these evils, it is necessary firstly to get the refugees to understand *what is cleanliness* and *what is uncleanliness*, for these have not the same meaning in *Russia and England*, and secondly, if teaching and admonition fail, to endeavour by a wholesome discipline to enforce our sanitary laws.[47]

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[43] *Ibid.*: 52–53.
[44] *Illustrated London News* 1892, no. 2783.
[45] Ewence 2019: 84.
[46] Schülting 2016: 5–6.
[47] *Jewish Chronicle* 1893, no. 1287.

The London Jewry identified with the British community and duplicated their values. Dirt was considered embarrassing and undesirable. There is a condescending tone to the text quoted above, indicating the obligation to take care of Jewish immigrants and teach them the basic principles of the "civilised world." The eastern European Jewry, personified by dirt, was considered a foreign and undesirable element. Another article from the *Jewish Chronicle* expresses the author's belief that Jewish immigrants should abandon their "dirty habits," as the conditions in which they lived posed a threat to the entire Jewish community. He also emphasised that several remedial actions had to be taken to prove that Jews were good citizens.[48] This article shows the typical need for London Jewry to maintain their social position, while belying their fears of being identified with the Jews from Eastern Europe. Attempts were made to alleviate the anxiety related to the escalation of anti-Jewish sentiment in articles emphasising that the poverty of Jewish immigrants was not a burden for the state, because the Jewish community solved the problem on its own and thanks to habits of hospitality drawn from British culture, they demonstrated that they were worthy Englishmen.[49]

Eastern European Jewry arrived in London hoping to find shelter and a more tolerant environment. Instead, newly arrived Jews became part of a complex debate over the place of "aliens" in British society. The influx of Jewish immigrants was seen as a reason for the overcrowding and deteriorating living conditions in the East End. The contaminated urban landscape of the eastern district did not fit into the carefully constructed image of the Empire. Hence, the narratives about Jewish poverty and dirtiness exposed deeper social anxiety over the collapse of the ideas of British progress and superiority. In the construction of a social hierarchy based on notions of racial superiority, Jews were recognised as "uncivilised savages" who needed to be taught the basic principles of the Western world. The civilizing mission carried out in the British colonies was extended to internal parts of the Empire. The Eastern European Jewry both fascinated with their "exoticism" and triggered contempt as belonging to an "inferior race." Londoners described Jewish immigrants as representatives of a metaphorically understood East, one which stood in absolute opposition to the West. This division contributed to the positioning of Jewish immigrants as representatives of the less civilised East, and thus a group completely foreign to the Western world.

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[48] *Jewish Chronicle* 1889, no. 1065.
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