
London's Jewish Communities and State Education

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ABSTRACT The Inner London education authority was a notable example of a radical and powerful local government body from which the fight for the comprehensive principle in English secondary education emerged. Building on previous work of women's contribution to state education in London, this article focuses on Anglo-Jewish educator activists who helped shape the capital's response to the policy question of how to provide secondary education for all. The author's subjects are Henrietta (Nettie) Adler (1868-1950), siblings Helen Bentwich [née Franklin] (1892-1972) and Hugh Franklin (1889-1962) and Harold Rosen (1919-2008).

The man across the desk looked up and gazed at my mother without saying a word. Teachers do that, I thought. It's how they get on top of you from the word go. My mother wore for the occasion her best black gloves, a newish grey hat and a fox fur. Gloves, hat, fur – she was putting on the style. The man began talking in a cultured voice, affecting infinite patience and civility, cultivated in dealing with the lower orders, especially those from the East End. I heard heavy condescension and controlled insolence. I worried desperately. My scholarship to the grammar school was at stake.
(Harold Rosen, *Troublesome Boy*, 1993, p. 12)

This confrontation with officialdom took place at County Hall, the headquarters of the London County Council (LCC), along the south bank of the river Thames. The child whose scholarship was at stake was Harold Rosen born 1919, in Massachusetts to Anglo-Jewish parents. At the age of two, Harold came to England with his Communist mother, Rosie. Inspired by Harold's memories of growing up in the Jewish community of London's West End, this article will delve into the place of conflicts of race and class in the politics of urban education. To start, we must turn our gaze in the opposite direction, to the Jewish community of the West End of London, engaged in wholesale

commerce and the banking trade. The subject and object of our gaze is the Anglo-Jewish contribution to politics and policy-making on the LCC Education Committee.[1] Group biography is used to examine Anglo-Jewish politics and communal work with a particular focus on the political action of siblings Hugh Franklin (1889-1962) and Helen Bentwich (née Franklin 1892-1972), the fourth and fifth of six children of Arthur Ellis Franklin and his wife, Caroline Jacob. The names and birth order of the remaining Franklin children are Jack (b. 1884), Alice (b. 1885), Cecil (b. 1887) and Ellis (b. 1894).

Growing up in the 1900s, imperial expansion, intensification of class division and class-consciousness, state intervention, the birth of mass education, mass culture and mass leisure, change in the perception of women's roles and male-female relationships were all hallmarks of an Edwardian childhood. For the established Anglo-Jewish community, emancipation was still within living memory due to the fact that the years 1830 to 1871 saw the erasure of legal and political disadvantages on professing Jews in England. Of course, the relation of the Jews to the state was different for men and women. For example, the University of Cambridge admitted women in 1869 and Jews in 1871, but the female students were not considered undergraduates until 1947, nor were they entitled to any degree, rather to 'decrees titular'.

Two Beginnings: class and community

The years 1880 to 1914 saw a significant migration of Jews to Britain, refugees from discrimination and pogroms in Russia, Poland, Galicia and Romania. London was the primary place of settlement and the local Jewish population grew from 20,000 in 1851 (when there were roughly 35,000 Jews in England and Wales) to 135,000 in 1901 (Feldman, 1994, pp. 268-290). Most lived within the two square miles of London's East End, looking for a chance for their children to gain some form of education and an opportunity of securing social and economic improvement for themselves. Different social groups from the Pale of Settlement in Eastern and central Europe embodied quite different cultural strands: the more orthodox, traditional Jews and the secular ones, products of the Jewish Enlightenment. In the 1890s and after, these cultural and political threads (religious orthodoxy, Zionist, socialist and anarchist movements) were woven in to the fabric of a 'shtetl named Whitechapel' as William Fishman (2004, pp. 31-60) put it.[2]

The growing number of Jews funnelled into the East End (Baedeker's 1889 travel guide claimed there were more Jews at the London docks than in Palestine) had to make life for themselves often in conditions of great difficulty (Briggs, 1977, p. 319). Born in 1913, Joe Jacobs was the son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and grew up in the Jewish district of Whitechapel. In his autobiography, *Out of the Ghetto*, Jacobs recalls no more than 10 per cent of the children attending the local state schools were gentiles. In school, English was enforced and assimilation encouraged, although shop signs and posters were in their vernacular, Yiddish, and a range of Yiddish language newspapers

and books were published (Jacobs, 1991, p. 11). Jerry White breathes life into this community in his book, *Rothschild Buildings*, published in 1980. White talked to people who grew up in the Buildings. His narrative includes the testimony of one woman who went to the largely Jewish state-run Commercial Street School in the 1900s. She told White she would never forget one hostile supply teacher, a woman called Miss Jackson who wore a Union Jack apron and actually stood in front of her class and said "Now all you foreigners who come from Russia – you should all go back to your own country!" And a girl sitting at the front – her name was Yetta Solomans – she was so incensed about that ... she took out this inkwell and flung it at her, and she smashed her glasses – she wore thick glasses. And all the ink ran down her' (White, 1980, p. 168).

By 1900, the East End and the lives of its 2 million inhabitants had received considerable attention from writers and journalists. Imperialist propaganda about racial or cultural superiority articulated in a representational taxonomy of 'domestic colonialism', which legitimized the construction of impoverished neighbourhoods as 'dark' and 'hostile' places whose residents were 'primitive tribes', 'savages' or 'races' apart. This 'East End' was a city of 'darkness' that was seen in stark contrast to the city of 'light' and enlightenment that was London's West End. On the one hand, social Darwinism provided a strong referent for those who feared the city as an incubus of public disorder. On the other, new techniques of social investigation fed into the construction of particular out-groups as social 'problems' and the theme of a metropolis at risk became an important part of London's political culture (Feldman & Stedman Jones, 1989). Jews were not the central category in discussions and debates but Jewish issues became interpolated in political argument as one facet of a debate between contending visions of the English nation.

The leaders and spokesmen of emancipated Jewry, many of whom were Sephardim, or Jews of Spanish/Portuguese descent, felt culturally and socially superior to the uneducated and uncivilised 'peasants' arriving from eastern Europe. Therefore, the established Jewish community sought to anglicise, 'raise' and reform the immigrants, influenced by particular anxieties that arose from their position as Jews. Reform efforts included the provision of 'model' housing like the Rothschild Buildings tenement block, whose patrons included Baron Nathan Mayer (Lord) Rothschild the head of the 'Royal Family' of Anglo-Jewry and Lionel Cohen President of the Jewish Board of Guardians.

The impetus for the machinery of communal government was multi-factorial, but an intricate web of relief for, and controls on the newcomers, was intended (and indeed, carefully designed) to shape a community acceptable to the ways of their new home. Rothschild's son captured the attitude underpinning the careful efforts at the opening of a youth club in Whitechapel, in 1905. 'They hoped to catch the youth of the immediate neighbourhood, and to help them to rise in the world, to help them out of the temptation which they found in the streets, the music-halls and the public houses. They wanted to instil into the boys ambition, the pride in being Jews and the pride in being Englishmen' (White, 1980, p. 189). The 'racialisation process' Steve Garner

(2007) sees at work in the period is relevant here. That is, the process of 'Othering' certain characteristics, enabling the English to differentiate themselves from Jews, and the established Anglo-Jewish community to differentiate themselves from the Jewish immigrant in London.

Biographies: the Franklin siblings

Hugh and Helen could trace their English line back to 1763 when one of their ancestors arrived in England as Fraenkel and anglicised the name to Franklin (Maddox, 2003). Their roots were firmly planted within the Jewish moneyed and political elite known as 'the Cousinhood'. Their father was a merchant banker. Their mother, Caroline, attended Bedford College London, one of the new colleges associated with the nineteenth century women's movement. Nonetheless, she married at nineteen, as was customary, and played her part in the machinery of communal government. Their uncle, Herbert Samuel, was the first practicing Jew appointed to the British Cabinet.

Hugh was Clifton College and Cambridge-educated, where he initially read engineering, changing to economics and sociology later. As an undergraduate, Hugh participated in the socialist and women's movements and abandoned Judaism. A founder member of the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement, he missed some of his final examinations due to his involvement in suffrage activity. Arrested in the 'black Friday' suffrage demonstration of 18 November 1910 and released without charge, eight days later he tried to strike Winston Churchill with a dog whip (Hugh said he actually hit him, but Churchill denied it), regarding him, as home secretary, as responsible for police brutality the protestors faced. 'When will cabinet ministers know that their position does not give them the right to insult women?' he asked (Pugh, 2000, p. 258). Altogether, Hugh served three prison sentences and his prison diary records over a hundred attempts at forcible feeding. His final offence was to set fire to an empty railway carriage on a line the family used regularly and he was recognised. Going on hunger strike, he saw himself as a soldier fighting for a cause. Other male suffragists considered him an attention-seeking maverick. His attitudes and behaviour owed something to notions of male chivalry and perhaps also a romantic attachment since his first wife, Elsie Duval, was a suffragette.

Helen was a product of the elite St Paul's School for Girls (opened in 1904) and Bedford College where she studied for a diploma in social work. As a fourteen-year-old schoolchild women's suffrage did not make it into her top ten social reforms, abolition of the Aliens Act and free places at all private schools did (Bentwich, 1973, p. 5). In her late teens she founded the first company of Girl Guides at the aforementioned Commercial Street School. Helen also took adult literacy classes at the West Central Jewish Girls' Club, set up by another member of the Cousinhood, Lily Montagu.

Caroline and Arthur Franklin discussed politics freely but political arguments became more acrimonious as their children grew up. Their mother

was a Liberal Jew, their orthodox father a 'pillar' of the fashionable New West End Synagogue which opened in 1879, serving the Jewish communities of Bayswater, Notting Hill, Kensington, Hammersmith and West London. Many times their father dismissed his children from the table for being 'unduly rude' (Bentwich, 1973, pp. 3-4). Alice Franklin was secretary of a young socialist group that met at the Franklin family home and in her autobiography Helen tells the story of how she 'would creep in at the back unnoticed', when she was meant to be doing her homework. By the age of 14 she had declared herself a socialist too (Bentwich, 1973, p. 3). This nostalgic tale sounds rather neat but her mother's commitment to education had a profound effect on Helen's political journey. As a child, she often accompanied her mother on school visits to the East End where Caroline Franklin held office as a school manager.

The Franklins travelled extensively. During a family tour of the Middle East, Helen rekindled a friendship with Norman Bentwich, a solicitor's son and part of the established Anglo-Jewish community. The couple married in 1915 and settled in Cairo where Norman worked as a law lecturer. However, Helen returned to England when Norman joined the British army in Egypt. Hugh was on the staff of Woolwich Arsenal (disqualified for war service on the grounds of poor eyesight) and helped Helen get a supervisor's post, which she then lost when she tried to unionise the women workers. Hugh was livid. This time Alice Franklin got her younger sister some war work as welfare officer for the Hertfordshire Women's Land Army. Riding a temperamental motorbike all over the place breakdowns and burst tyres became part of the routine, but the practice she acquired in making speeches at recruiting rallies proved useful in her future political career (Glyn, 2000).

In the 1920s, the Bentwichs lived in Palestine due to the fact that Norman was the British-appointed attorney general. Helen was well looked after by servants, which enabled her to combine the political host role with voluntary work including a term as secretary of the feminist-inclined Palestine Council of Jewish Women. Hugh's first wife died during the flu pandemic of 1918-19. His second wife was not a Jew and he was disinherited. Hugh never saw his father again and gave up business for writing in 1931, the year Helen returned to England.

Characteristic of the 1930s when intellectual recruits to the Labour Party commonly received parliamentary nominations, Hugh and Helen twice stood unsuccessfully for Parliament. In 1932, Helen told the electorate of Dulwich, South London, that she was a 'full-blooded Socialist.' 'We heard a great deal about equality of sacrifice' she said (words that remain current in 2012).

What did it mean? It meant a 10% addition to income tax for some people, and a 10% cut in income tax for others... it means mothers and children not having enough to eat ... I stand for the abolition of the Means Test in its present form. It is a piece of legislation which is alien to British tradition, which is being carried out in a most inhuman way. It will be a slur on British history for this period.
(*South London Press*, 3 June 1932)

The Labour Party's capture of the LCC in the spring of 1934 was a turning point for the siblings, who joined the education committee as co-opted members. Hugh became a notable advocate of the common school, within the New Fabian Research Bureau, the Labour Party national executive council and its new education advisory committee (set up in 1938). Helen became vice-chairman of the teaching staff subcommittee, leading the group that interviewed prospective head teachers. She found it very hard work but loved it. Helen stayed in local government until 1965. From 1947 to 1950, she served as chair of the education committee. In April 1956, Hugh and Norman were there to see her inauguration as Chairman of the Council.[3]

Labour Pioneers

As secretary of the London Labour Party (from 1915), Herbert Morrison's goal was to win London for Labour. Throughout the 1920s, Morrison targeted the property-owning, ratepayer vote. This meant putting the case for measured municipal improvement in the face of urban decay, while demonstrating Labour commitment to financial rectitude tempered by social responsibility. Morrison recruited Helen while dancing with her at a Labour party social in the 1930s. As a well-educated, middle class woman with time to devote to civic duties she fitted his profile of a 'good' Labour candidate (Martin, 2008).

In the winter of 1934-5, Hugh chaired a LCC subcommittee set up to consider the problem of London's post-primary education. Between the wars educational politics was seen as an overtly class politics. Secondary schools remained the preserve of the fee-paying middle classes, while many children from working-class homes still had less than ten years' education. Helen deprecated the fact 'that the continuation of education after the age of fourteen depended not upon a child's ability or desire to remain at school, but solely upon money'. She thought 'England would be a happier and a more united country if all children met on equal terms in the classroom and the idea of class education was abolished' (*Wembley News*, 4 September 1934). In 1935, she criticised the education provided 70 per cent of the school population, those whom she described as 'normal', 'ordinary' children (*Harrow Observer*, 23 August 1935). Hugh appointed Helen to the special committee. He also appointed newly elected London councillor Dr Mary O'Brien Harris (c.1866-1938). She spent her working life in the service of the London education authority, becoming a county councillor in 1934 after she retired as head of Clapton Secondary School for Girls in Hackney.

Harris was part of the progressive movement within state education, influenced by the 'New Education' of the 1890s (Harris, 1923). For the period in which she worked as a head teacher (1906-28), she worked hard on various forerunners to what became known as the Howard Plan (built on the site of prison reformer John Howard's birthplace Clapton School was unofficially known as the John Howard School). It is worth quoting at length a piece she wrote for the Clapton school magazine shortly before she retired:

'The School as University' is how I sometimes speak of our organisation. Let a pupil fitted for such training be educated chiefly for Handwork, without debarring him from first rate teaching in language or science, for he may in due course be ready for them. Do not let the academic pupil be cut off from handicrafts; and above all, let him not be encouraged by segregation to think himself superior. Let no one who is to become one of the citizens of tomorrow be prevented by difference of taste or ability from sharing with as many as possible of his fellows the Art and the Music, the Acting and the Games, and the other interests of everyday life which are common to all. We do not want at the age of adolescence separate schools for clerks and for dressmakers, one for future nurses and doctors, and others for housekeepers and shop assistants respectively. A common social life and as much common teaching as possible should be shared by diverse pupils so that all types may mix together as they do in the University, and as they should afterwards mix in the world, all with the common aim of our school motto: 'To do good work whether we live or die'. (*School Magazine*, 1927)

Mary advocated auto-education using the label to mean putting the pupil in charge of his/ her intellectual work. In challenging circumstances she pioneered the ideas that education should encourage self-discovery and self-expression. Learning and teaching was organised on the basis of vertical classification into 'Houses' rather than the horizontal class or form. Clapton girls had individual timetables and spent a good part of the day working independently (following individual learning cards), using the library for reference.

A rare autobiographical account provides an insight into the kind of education Mary exemplified in her practice. She regularly invited groups of her older students to her home for 'Shaw teas' and this particularly stood out in the memories of the Anglo-Jewish mother of the historian Raphael Samuel who went to the predominantly Jewish Clapton School in 1920. So far as Mrs Samuel was concerned Mary Harris was a teacher, visionary, sage, scholar, idealist and philosopher all wrapped into one. Someone who took the democratic imperative of citizenship education seriously: at Clapton the school day began with secular readings, mostly Ruskin and *The Jungle Book* and 'hymns that didn't mention Jesus, so that the Jewish girls could join in' or we were 'told to omit the verses with Jesus's name'. Whereas other schools in the locality had French as their first language, Clapton taught German 'so we shouldn't be enemies of the German people'. Visitors came 'from all over the world... We were like a little university – you could drop subjects to concentrate on those you liked' (Samuel, 2006, pp. 64-65). Harris earned the praise and support of Professor John Adams, first principal of the London Day Training Centre, who considered her a teacher 'of exceptional powers (Harris, 1923, p. xi). Others were less sympathetic. Inspectors said she lacked 'brightness' and a 'sense of humour'. They condemned the Howard Plan as unsuitable for an academic

secondary school and informed the LCC of this while she was outside the room unable to speak in her defence (Kean, 1990, p. 11).

In common with the Franklin siblings, Mary's network thinking bridges Fabian feminism and the European New Education movement. She was a founding member of the National Association of Labour Teachers and it is significant that the committee's final report mirrored the recommendations of a 1930 publication by the Association entitled *Education: a Policy* (1930) which proposed the ending of selection and common schools for all children after age 11. In 1935, Hugh Franklin's subcommittee stated its policy objectives in the following way:

We are of the opinion that more fluidity between all types of post-primary school is desirable, in order to secure that every pupil gets the type of education most suitable to his ability and particular bent. We think that the 'multi-lateral' school might offer a means of achieving this. This new type of post-primary school would cater for all pupils from junior schools from the age of 11 upwards, and entry to the school would be automatic without any special competitive or scholarship examination. Besides overcoming the difficulty of fluidity already referred to, the 'multi-lateral' school would get rid of the disparities which now exist in the cost, equipment and general administration of the various types of post primary schools. It would also help to break down any prejudices which exist regarding the relative merits of one type of post-primary education as compared with another. (Hugh Franklin, 30 May 1935)

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the chief administrative officer within the LCC Education Department blocked the proposals, arguing against the ending of selection and the establishment of the multilateral school. According to Helen, the report was 'put into storage' due to its implications for grammar school teachers who enjoyed preferential salaries, holidays and conditions of service. Nonetheless, the Labour politicians took some action to address distinctions based on class or wealth. The number of scholarships for secondary and university education was increased. State school buildings were improved, extended and rebuilt, as were Council provision of school milk, meals, medical inspection and treatment.

London Labour dusted off Franklin's report following the abolition of secondary school fees under the 1944 Education Act and the ministerial invitation to local authorities to prepare plans for organizing education in their areas. The long-term policy objective was for 67 comprehensive schools intended to remedy the wrongs of working-class schooling. In the short term (1946-50), the LCC established eight experimental comprehensive schools in old school buildings, hamstrung by the loss of school places by bombing and the raising of the school leaving age to 15. In 1947, the Ministry of Education approved the London School Plan, which went back to the blueprint established by Hugh Franklin's committee in the 1930s. Challenging the belief

that there are three types of child, the Council based its programme for London's secondary schools on the comprehensive neighbourhood school that would advance social equality. Two years later, the Labour Education Minister, George Tomlinson, approved a proposal to build the capital's first purpose-built comprehensive secondary. Despite obstruction from a newly elected Conservative government, Kidbrooke School (then a girls' school, now coeducational) opened in July 1955. When Helen became Council leader in 1956, the *Manchester Guardian* (8 February 1956) was disposed to say 'The vigour with which the council has carried out its policy of setting up comprehensive secondary schools in the county since the war owes much to her personal enthusiasm.'

Hugh had been active also, finally winning a seat on Middlesex county council in 1946. Once again, he became embroiled in plans for secondary education provision. This time he envisaged comprehensive schools based on 600-900 places rather than the schools of 1,000 to 2,000 pupils the LCC planned to ensure a viable sixth form. Middlesex education committee accorded a strong priority to 'a comprehensive broadening of existing curricula with, as probably the most obvious desiderata, greater opportunity for academic work for the less academic and greater opportunity for practical work for the more academic' (*Education*, 16 August 1946). The National Association of Labour Teachers lobbied fiercely when Tomlinson rejected the Middlesex scheme, reinforced by local opposition from parents and grammar school teachers. The defeat of the Labour group in the 1949 county council elections saved the grammar school and Middlesex was limited to two, later three experimental comprehensive schools.

Hugh and Helen were clear that comprehensive schools were the best foundation of a democratic society. As an LCC pamphlet, *A Policy for Secondary Education* (quoted in Thompson, 1952, p. 19) put it: 'Education is not a matter only of intellectual achievement. It is a matter of all-round growth and development, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual, and it seems indefensible to categorise schools on the basis of intellect only'.

Education and Cultural Politics

The militant face of the Edwardian suffrage movement provided the subjective experience that shaped Hugh Franklin's activism. Jews were prominent in early twentieth century British feminism but attention to families and siblings shows multiple ties and interests, including diversity of religious practice and political allegiances, quite apart from gendered norms and conventions. Social origin alone did not determine which of these were uppermost. Helen articulates the complexity in her unpublished memoirs. Positioned as a 'nice English girl' when interviewed for a passport to Palestine in 1918, she was 'asked why she wanted to mix with 'people like that old Jew-fellow?' Deploring the comment, she reflects she would have made it, had the official not done so. 'The fact that I resented *him* making it started in me the conflict of the clean-British-officer

versus bearded-foreign-Jew types which pulled me first one way and then another' (unpublished autobiography, Helen Bentwich papers). In the 1920s, she wrote Norman:

To be human and a human is all I want to be. You say we'll try and work out some ideal doctrines for Judaism in Palestine. But my dear, I can never do that. Because my ideals are human, and it's less than nothing to me if people are Jews or Christians or Pagans... I am an assimilationist – I want to assimilate to myself the best of every people and religion ... Let's work out a conduct of life – but with no special Jewish bias.

(H. Bentwich to N. Bentwich 18 September 1923)

Helen's involvement in Zionism was due to the fact of her marriage. Faced with the twin enormities of Fascism and home and Nazism abroad, she stressed the importance of the polling booth in a familiar argument that did not adopt too strident and too salient a profile in terms of her Jewish identity. 'The type of person who becomes a Fascist in this country is an absolute nit-wit' she said, 'a type of perpetual Boy Scout; the adolescent who has never grown up. We in the Labour Movement have got to see how we can best combat all this. There is only one way and that is by strengthening our own movement' (*Harrow Observer*, 10 February 1934).

Geoffrey Alderman's study of London Jewry and London politics shows that the Jewish contingent at County Hall was overwhelmingly Labour in composition after 1934. Looking back, Helen told the official organ of Anglo-Jewry, the *Jewish Chronicle* (9 April 1965) that Jewish members of the LCC never 'allowed their Jewishness to influence their voting on any projects'. Thinking forward from the interaction of party politics and distinctly Jewish values, can we see evidence of attempts by this distinctive minority group to use the LCC education committee to further the educational well-being of London Jewry? In his autobiography, *My 77 Years*, Norman wrote of the 'remarkable part' that Jews played in the LCC, 'no consideration of religion or race affected either the [Jewish] electors or the Councillors' (1962, p. 310). This may have been true of his wife, but there were activist women of a previous generation who sought to exploit the political potential of Jewish membership of the LCC.

Born in 1868, Henrietta (Nettie) Adler was the daughter of the Chief Rabbi. In common with the Franklin siblings, Nettie had a background in social and educational work in the Jewish East End. She joined the LCC education committee as a co-opted member in 1904. Unlike Hugh and Helen, her political affiliation was to the Progressive Party and remained so in the 1920s when other Liberals drifted leftwards. After women regained the right to stand as candidates in 1910, Nettie was elected to the LCC as member for Central Hackney, which was fast becoming an area of Jewish settlement. She made no secret of her Jewish identity, refusing to campaign on the Saturday of the poll, the Jewish Sabbath. Uniquely, in 1913 the *Jewish Chronicle* advised the Jewish electors of Central Hackney to 'do their best to return Miss Adler at the top of

the poll... not merely on account of the honoured name she bears, but because of the admirable work she has done for London in general, and Jews in particular' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 5 March 1913).

Nettie did not disappoint her supporters. She passionately defended the right of children of 'alien enemies', who were not themselves British citizens to have access to the 'central' schools, a selective elementary school to which pupils gained access via an examination. As a group, central schools offered an extended schooling for working-class children whose families could contemplate the costs but would be very unlikely to be able to afford secondary school expenses, and they were particularly strong in London. Anti-Semitism was growing among the Municipal Reform party in power at County Hall. Nettie lost both this and another struggle in 1916-18 when the policy was extended to scholarships for council secondary schools. In future, candidates would have to be British when applying for an award, and to have been born, or have fathers who were born in Briton or the Dominions. Eventually, her deep and publicly expressed anger at the scholarships policy helped facilitate a lifting of the blanket prohibition. On 17 July 1928, the Council adopted a policy whereby the LCC's education officer would deal with each scholarship case on its merits, provided such applicants had made reasonable efforts to secure naturalization (Alderman, 1989, pp. 64-66, 87-88). To return to the epigraph with which we started, eleven-year-old Harold Rosen was an early beneficiary of the change.

Despite commonalities, the Franklin siblings saw themselves as pioneers of a different sort to Nettie Adler. Their significant contribution was to what following Alderman (1989) I will call Jewish Labourism acting in the belief that their success or failure on the LCC would affect the prospects of the Labour Party nationally. Helen and Hugh are key actors in the story of the comprehensive education movement that has been overridden in historical memory. They carried forward a belief in equal educational opportunities to which the past pupils who would otherwise have felt the social effects of segregation still bear witness.

Valerie Avery was born in 1940. Aged fifteen years she wrote a first draft of an autobiography, encouraged by her English teacher, ex-LCC scholarship boy, Harold Rosen.[4] In it, she remembered the months of cramming that preceded her sitting the 11-plus examination, which would determine her educational future and her mother's words on the morning of the test itself.

'Well, Valerie, I just want you to do your best, you can't do more,' said Mum that exam morning. 'But you should pass easily, and won't I be proud then. Wouldn't it be but one in the eye for your cousin Mildred? She only passed because your aunt pays two pounds a week to have her educated at that convent. Your teacher says you stand every chance so long as you're not careless ...'
She kissed my forehead, and her lips were dry. 'Good luck, pet. I'll be thinking of you.'

There was a lump in my throat. 'Please God, let me pass for Mum, please, please God.'

As I dressed, I thought, 'If I do up my buttons then undo them again, I'll pass. I must clean my teeth three times. If I step on a cracked pavement, I'll fail. I must touch the brick wall three times. If I see a flock of birds fly over three times, I'll pass; if I don't, I'll fail. I must go to the lavatory and bounce the ball of the chain seven times.' (Avery, 1969, p.102)

Valerie did not pass. Hers was not among the names the head teacher called out in assembly. She was not among the small group the female head walked toward and said 'Now I would like to congratulate you, my dears. You have all passed the eleven-plus exam and will be going to a grammar school. You have done yourselves proud; you are an honour to the school, your parents.' However, it transpired that Valerie was a 'border-line case' and having missed passing the exam by a few marks, she might yet win a grammar school place by taking another exam. She would have to talk it over with her mother and take a note to school to let the authorities know whether she wanted her to do so, or not. Her mother said 'yes' and Valerie came home with piles of books in the expectation of more revision, no television or going out to play and sleepless nights. In the event, it was her mother who tossed and turned all night, weighing up the pros and cons. 'I tell you' she told Valerie next morning:

... 'I didn't know what to think when I woke up. I had to talk it over with someone, so I had a word with Charlie, the engineer; he's very sensible. I'll have to treat him to a packet of fags, he's been so understanding. He said: "Leave well alone, she's done her best, leave it at that, you can do more damage than good by trying to make things better." Then he told me about the school over the road'. Her eyes lit up. 'You said you liked the uniform they wore?'

'What, the maroon one?'

'That's it. I always thought it was such a rough dump, but Charlie has a friend whose daughter goes there and she's doing very well. I didn't know, but apparently it's what they call a Con-Comprehensive School. I don't really know much about it, but he's going to get some information. He says some of the boys and girls stay on till they're eighteen or more and, what do you think of this, some of them even go to college afterwards to take up teaching, just as they do at Grammar School. He says it's a marvellous place and if you're lucky enough to get there, you couldn't do better.'

(Avery, 1969, p. 109)

The reason for what might seem a rather literary diversion is that the school Valerie attended was Walworth, one of the eight experimental comprehensive schools, established under Helen's leadership of the LCC education committee in the late 1940s. Valerie's autobiography, *London Morning*, was published in

1964. Reprinted twice before being re-issued as a class reader for secondary English in 1969, in the early 1970s it became a set-text for examination purposes.

Making Connections: biography, history and meaning making

The utility of the Franklin siblings as historical subjects is to demonstrate the link between the Anglo-Jewish élite and urban school politics in the twentieth century. The activists in this study are not limited to a single movement. In this respect, it is appropriate to refer, in general terms, to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a radical habitus. Learned more by experience than by teaching, habitus relates to a way of seeing and being within the world but is not restricted to a narrowly political domain but relates to an acquired disposition towards a particular type of practice which is formed through participation in that practice. For Hugh and Helen, the intertwining of social capital and governing values provided an incentive to seize opportunities to shape the character of their culture and society from a position of privilege within the established Anglo-Jewish community. Freed by affluence from having to support themselves economically, the injunction to promote the common good was not just an intellectual matter, but also a moral priority. Inspiration came from a family full of relatives who fought for a variety of causes, generating a radical habitus of protest and critique.

The logo 'LCC' that still adorns school buildings is expressive of an inventive and exciting municipal endeavour, but the scholarship question exposes discriminatory policies at the heart of the Council's education policy in the interwar years. Perhaps this shaped the determined opposition of Hugh and Helen to selective-entry schools. To return to the quote with which we started, Harold Rosen slowly came to realise that he 'had more than one schooling, my elementary school, my grammar school, the university, the Communist Party and ... that vibrant academy, the Jewish East End' (Rosen, 1993, p. 93). There are similarities and differences but in closing the circle we can say these actors – Nettie, Hugh, Helen and Harold – made their mark on English *and* Jewish education history.

Notes

- [1] Education was the largest committee with 38 elected and 12 co-opted members and a dedicated meeting room. It met in public, with printed and published agendas. The LCC's political history falls into three periods. From 1889 to 1907, London Progressives a working alliance of liberals, non-conformists, radicals and Fabian socialists, held control. From 1907 to 1934, the Municipal Reform Party controlled the LCC and from 1934 to 1965, the LCC was Labour. The 1963 London Government Act abolished the LCC and the Greater London Council emerged as the political body of power.

- [2] A shtetl was typically a small town with a large Jewish population in Central and Eastern Europe until the Holocaust. Shtetls were mainly found in the areas which constituted the 19th century Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, Galicia and Romania. The concept of *shtetl* culture is used as a metaphor for the traditional way of life of 19th-century Eastern European Jews. Shtetls are portrayed as pious communities following Orthodox Judaism, socially stable and unchanging despite outside influence or attacks.
- [3] She was the fourth woman and second Jewess to hold the office. Lady Eleanor Nathan was the first Jewess. She held office in 1947-8.
- [4] Briefly, the theory and practice that emerged under Harold Rosen's leadership of the English department, insists that the content of the curriculum that the teacher brings to the class must respect the culture and experience that the learners bring there.

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