

Introduction

LONDON WITHOUT AN ETHNIC LENS



Do you mean to take the oath as a Jew or a Christian?

—I can call myself a Christian, because I am never among the Jews.

What do you call yourself, are you [a] Jew or a Christian?

—I do not know, please your honour; what you please to call me.

I wish you would understand that it is an exceeding indecent thing in you, or any man, to come here to trifle with any religion, in the sort of way that you do?

—I follow more the Christian ways than I do the Jews [*sic*].

Court. You are a good for nothing fellow, I dare say, whatever you are: stand down.

—From the Proceedings of the Old Bailey (1783)¹

‘England! Home of the free, asylum of the brave, refuge of refugees’ – these proud words opened an article in *Blackwood’s Magazine* (1842) titled ‘Foreigners in London’.² Yet the tone is ironic. The author writes indignantly and at length about theatre performances at which the audience sitting in the cheap seats sings in praise of itself and its friendliness towards foreigners:

Something about slaves being free the moment they touch British soil, regenerated, disenthralled by the genius of universal emancipation, or some such stuff ... it takes pit, boxes and gallery by storm, upon all occasions; it is truly delightful to witness the ardour with which a British auditory compliments itself upon its excursive humanity, transmarine benevolence, and free-trade philanthropy!³

Behind these sarcastic remarks lies Tory nationalism: all the foreign ‘adventurers’ to whom London had given asylum and work, it was claimed, had hardly

contributed to the general prosperity. The country's wealth was due much more to its laws and institutions – as well as to a quintessentially English conservative spirit. This national character, it was argued, was what had protected the country from social unrest and revolution, and allowed it to prosper: 'It is to ourselves we owe all that we call our own'.⁴ Quite an audacious claim, given Britain's long imperial history.

Whether London's 'foreigners' were an asset or a liability for the nation – however defined – will not be discussed here. To do otherwise would run the risk of merely reprising the contemporary ethnocentric debate. It is undisputed, however, that in the first half of the nineteenth century, the most diverse migrants could already be encountered on the streets of London. From today's point of view, what is more interesting than the 'contribution' they made to the nation is the question of how they coexisted – whether they got along with each other and, if so, how. This is what the following will investigate.

Many immigrants had settled near the imperial port, in the East End of London, which at this time increasingly fell into disrepute, gradually coming to stand for dirt and vice, criminality and anarchy – and impoverished immigrants.⁵ The area around the actual harbour, for example, housed seamen from India, known as lascars.⁶ Most of them were waiting for a ship to take them back to their country of origin. Some, however, had deserted, or had sustained injuries at sea, were unable to re-enlist, and therefore stayed. The sources report that by 1805 there were already enough lascars living in London to stage a four-day Muslim street festival, complete with sword dancers and crowds of onlookers.⁷

Not far from the port was Spitalfields, an area that was associated with another group of immigrants: the descendants of fugitive Huguenots from France. They earned their living as linen weavers and became steadily poorer.⁸ In neighbouring Whitechapel, on the other hand, there were rows of houses inhabited by craftsmen from Germany, who were particularly valued as confectioners.⁹ And a few streets further west the Jewish quarter began, with its countless second-hand shops and textile workshops.¹⁰

In the eyes of many contemporaries, the streets in which the Jews lived possessed almost fantastical qualities – they were part of the metropolis, yet oddly remote: 'Here we Christians are foreigners, strangers in a strange land', we read in *Blackwood's Magazine*.¹¹ Hebrew characters could be seen on the signs above countless shops, and people with exotic features, thick curls and long beards were everywhere in the streets. They sold watches and clocks, all sorts of everyday items and fried fish, 'a species of dainty in which the Jews alone excel'.¹²

By far the largest group of immigrants in the London metropolitan area, however, came from a place that the English referred to as their sister island: Ireland,¹³ and from the province of Munster in particular.¹⁴ Most of the Irish immigrants were Catholic and had grown up in rural areas. Some spoke only Gaelic when they arrived in England. In London they lived scattered throughout

many, mostly poorer neighbourhoods.¹⁵ The men typically worked as unskilled labourers on building sites or at the port, while their wives and children sold citrus fruit on the streets.¹⁶

The push and pull factors, social networks and media that brought all these different people to London were diverse. It will suffice here to outline them for the groups that will be the focus of this study – that is, those that were identified in the streets as (Ashkenazi) Jews and Irish. In the case of the Irish, it was mostly economic circumstances that prompted them to emigrate.¹⁷ Since potatoes had been cultivated in Ireland from the eighteenth century, the population had grown constantly. In some parts of the country, farms were fragmented as a result of the inheritance laws, while industrially produced consumer goods, including those from England, destroyed Irish domestic production, which was in its infancy.¹⁸ Given this, a culture of migration developed in Ireland. Ballads were sung about a better life abroad; people looked at newspapers and travel guides to find information about opportunities for work and the cost of living outside the country, and read letters from friends and relatives who had already left.¹⁹

In addition to economic factors, it was often political reasons that brought Jewish migrants to London. In Germany, there were many principalities and towns that permitted only a limited number of Jews to settle in their territory. Moreover, they were only allowed to engage in certain trades.²⁰ Nevertheless the Jewish population grew, so that many Jews saw themselves forced to leave their place of birth. They formed groups and roamed the country, becoming known as ‘beggar Jews’ (*Betteljuden*). Some of them eventually went to London, where they did not face any of the legal restrictions that they did in Germany. In the UK they could settle where they liked and practise their religion undisturbed. Being Jewish was a problem mainly for those who aspired to higher education or public office. I will come back to this.²¹

The political conditions for migration to Britain improved steadily during the first decades of the nineteenth century. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, general xenophobia decreased. To be sure, the wartime Aliens Act was still in force, and the Home Office had the power to expel foreigners who were politically suspicious.²² But many contemporaries criticized this as an unwarranted encroachment on English liberties, and as a result, hardly anyone was expelled after the war.²³ In 1826 Parliament formally abolished this law.²⁴ In practice, this meant that from then until the passing of the famous (second) Aliens Act of 1905, the British state no longer deported or expelled any immigrants.²⁵

The nineteenth century in Britain could thus be called a ‘golden age for immigrants’,²⁶ even if the historian David Feldman points to some caveats. Below the level of the state, he argues, there were certainly institutions that returned immigrants to their countries of origin, such as voluntary welfare organizations and local parishes. The latter had been legally empowered since

1819 to expel native Irish if they asked for poor relief.²⁷ In addition, we know of Jewish welfare organizations that on various occasions encouraged poor co-religionists to leave the country and paid for their passage.²⁸ Despite these limitations, it should be noted that immigrants who managed to get by independently of welfare organizations and poor relief were allowed to remain in the country and, after 1836, were no longer even systematically registered.²⁹

London as a ‘Migrant Mosaic’?

Thus in the nineteenth century, the UK developed into a rather immigrant-friendly state, and London offered an enticing variety of employment opportunities. As migrants often settle where they disembark,³⁰ it is not surprising that in London’s East End people of different religions and from various different countries lived in close proximity. How can we imagine their coexistence?

When reading accounts of London’s migration history, one can easily gain the impression that foreigners in the metropolis largely remained among their own kind, forming culturally distinct ethnic diaspora communities that displayed internal solidarity and external exclusivity.³¹ In this context, Ann Kershen uses the metaphor of a mosaic,³² while John Marriott calls the East End an ‘epicentre of diasporic communities’.³³

To be sure, communities of this sort have left numerous traces in the sources. Nonetheless, searching for them in particular is problematic, although it has become a popular research method.³⁴ At least since the 1990s, migration history has witnessed a boom in studies that focus on cultural differences and on diaspora as a way of life.³⁵ In other words, historians are interested in Jews, Irish people and Germans as such – in their characteristic welfare associations, places of worship and culturally distinct ways of eating, dressing and so on.

This focus makes it easy to overlook two things. First, migrants could have social connections beyond their communities and might find themselves in situations in which it was irrelevant whether they identified as Irish, Jewish or German. Second, if this possibility is excluded when designing a study, it becomes difficult to assess what factors determined whether ethnicity was important or not. Anyone who decides from the start to concentrate on one ethnic affiliation runs the risk of overestimating its social significance³⁶ – a kind of bias that is also common in migration research in sociology³⁷ and cultural anthropology,³⁸ where it is dealt with under the term ‘ethnic lens’. The problem is well known; the crucial issue is how to deal with it in terms of methodology.

What is required is a research design that allows us to observe actors who form groups either based on the criteria of an ethnic–religious diaspora, or based on other criteria. To achieve this, one can focus on a locality or an institutional setting where people from different countries come together.³⁹ The crucial

question then becomes: what (ethnic or other) social contexts were relevant for the actors in this environment?

In London's East End during the early Victorian period, one focal point for intercultural contact stands out: the old clothes market, also known by contemporaries as the Rag Fair. Towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it had established itself in Cutler Street,⁴⁰ a poor lane on the eastern boundary of the City of London. The market was thus located in the Jewish district, and the sparse research on the topic often presents it as a genuinely Jewish institution.⁴¹ As an initial approach, this perspective is helpful. Many branches of the used clothing trade were monopolized by Jewish Londoners, for reasons that will become apparent in the following chapters. In addition, however, Jewish and other long-distance traders from Ireland, Continental Europe and ever more distant places appear in the sources – as well as countless shoemakers, tailors and shoppers from other quarters of the city.

In other words, the Rag Fair stood at the intersection of extensive trade routes and migration movements, and formed an interreligious contact zone, as attentive contemporaries noticed.⁴² But what forms of contact actually took place here? Perhaps interreligious exchanges were limited purely to business. Just because people meet in the same place does not necessarily mean that some form of relationship or community will develop between them. But neither, however, can it be ruled out. What social contexts were relevant in this historical place is an empirical question we must ask. By getting to the bottom of it, I want to cast new light on the migration history of London's East End.

On the State of Historiographical Research

Apart from my research question on migration history, a study of the Rag Fair promises interesting insights because not many details are known about it to date. One reason is that many economic historians who work on the Victorian period regard informal street trading as a relic of centuries past.⁴³ There is an influential master narrative which suggests that this form of economic activity was already doomed. According to this narrative, the trend was towards retail trade: arcades and department stores, whose gleaming shop windows are virtually emblematic of urban modernity.⁴⁴ Only recently have historians of London's street markets begun to question this narrative,⁴⁵ and they have not yet dealt with the rag trade.

While looking for studies on the Rag Fair, or at least about the British old clothes trade, I instead came across two other research traditions: the history of textiles and consumption;⁴⁶ and Anglo-Jewish social history.⁴⁷ As far as the ethnic or social affiliations of the old clothes dealers were concerned, the proponents of these two research strands adopt opposing positions. While for

one school these affiliations were hardly relevant,⁴⁸ the other was interested in old clothes traders exclusively as Jews. Both perspectives are at odds with my own approach. Nonetheless, my study has profited from these works. In the following pages, for example, I draw on the research of Beverly Lemire, who has worked out what role the second-hand trade played in the household economy of 'ordinary' people and in the development of British consumer society.⁴⁹ In addition, the reader will frequently come across the name of Todd Endelman, one of the first Anglo-Jewish social historians to consider poor and 'simple' Jews worthy of academic study at all.⁵⁰ He is the author of *The Jews of Georgian London, 1714–1830*, which was published as early as 1979 and deals, among other things, with the living conditions of the Jewish lower classes.⁵¹

Unfortunately, Endelman did not set a precedent with his socio-historical interest in the peddlers, fences and old clothes dealers of Georgian London. Yet the representatives of Anglo-Jewish historiography credit themselves with the fact that in their field, history is often viewed 'from below'.⁵² The 'simple' life and Jewish everyday culture have been popular topics among them since as early as the 1980s. Yet most recent research concentrates on the period from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War.⁵³ It is true that during that time, London experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration from Eastern Europe,⁵⁴ a Jewish trade union movement was making waves in the East End, and Oswald Mosley tried to establish fascism in Britain.⁵⁵ The early Victorian (or Georgian) Rag Fair could not compete with these politically explosive issues.

This may explain why only one historical work has been published so far that deals with the Rag Fair in detail. It is by a South African historian, Adam Mendelsohn, who looks at Judaism in an international comparison, and in its global interconnections. His 2015 book *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* dedicates a whole chapter to the Rag Fair, but concentrates on the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Moreover, the market itself is by no means at the centre of his argument. Rather, Mendelsohn takes a wider view: he is concerned with the (second-hand) clothing trade in the United States, or rather, with the question of why, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Jewish protagonists of the industry were commercially more successful there than almost anywhere else.⁵⁷ Looking for reasons, Mendelsohn uses England as a contrast. He describes the London Rag Fair to show that a thriving niche economy existed there, and argues that around the middle of the century the economic conditions for Jewish used clothes dealers were much more favourable here than in the US.⁵⁸

As a result of this perspective, Mendelsohn's analysis concentrates on Jewish actors and their markets. There is no reason for him to delve too deeply into the details of how people came into contact at the Rag Fair, or exactly how Jewishness and other identities affected their interactions. In the following, by contrast, I will get to the bottom of these questions and, to this end, look at

the Rag Fair from a microhistorical perspective. In fact, the historian has no other choice. Sources about the market are not numerous, so one has to subject them to a precise analysis in order to construct an argument. The method could therefore be described as a theoretically inspired search for ‘clues’, or an analysis of ‘hints’. These terms are derived from Carlo Ginzburg,⁵⁹ who places the working method of a microhistorian in the same tradition as that of a detective, psychoanalyst and neolithic hunter, who at first glance might seem to be quite disparate figures. What they all have in common is that they infer an entity beyond the immediately visible from incidental details and remains. They compare and classify – and before their very eyes those trivialities turn into ‘traces, symptoms, hints’.⁶⁰

Based on a microhistorical analysis of the Rag Fair, it is possible to reconstruct how the historical actors came together to establish different social formations – ones that were relevant to them in this specific environment. In fact, it will become clear that a collection of social mechanisms was at work in and around the Rag Fair, promoting group formation processes based on different categories (such as family, neighbourhood, class, religion and ethnicity). But before I explain these mechanisms in detail, it will be necessary to place the research agenda that I have briefly outlined here onto a theoretical basis, and to situate it within historical migration research – a discussion circle that is as international as it is interdisciplinary.⁶¹ I will also provide an overview of my sources and the structure of my study.

The Foundations of a Constructivist History of Migration

In the humanities and social sciences, it was for a long time common practice to assign people to ethnic groups and nations as a matter of course – as if these were entities that actually existed beyond the names given to them. As in everyday conversation, it was unquestioningly assumed that their members shared certain cultural characteristics, and that they actually saw themselves as members of a collective, showing more solidarity with each other than with ‘others’.⁶² The ethnologist Andreas Wimmer calls this perspective ‘Herderian common sense’, referring to the cultural nationalist philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder.⁶³

Once the world has been divided into ethnonational units, migration becomes a theoretical challenge: what happens if members of culturally closed blocs come into permanent contact? In order to answer this question, migration research until the 1980s was guided by a model from the Chicago school of sociology: the assimilation paradigm.⁶⁴ Many researchers who worked with this paradigm saw assimilation as a process in which migrants shed their unique cultural characteristics over the course of generations, and were absorbed into

a host society that was understood to be static.⁶⁵ In the way the model was originally formulated, however, it could also be understood as referring to the idea of the American ‘melting pot’ in which people of different cultural backgrounds affect *each other*. The author of the assimilation paradigm, Robert Ezra Park, acknowledged that immigrants had at least a certain degree of influence on American culture.⁶⁶ What is crucial here is that both understandings of an assimilation process inevitably led to a homogeneous nation – the United States of America.

Such ethnonational fantasies of wholeness, however, have attracted increasing criticism since the 1960s.⁶⁷ Constructivist perspectives began to replace them in the discourse of the social and cultural sciences. By the early 2000s they were so widespread that Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper complained about a ‘clichéd constructivism’.⁶⁸ In the wake of this development, the concept of identity also experienced a boom. Instead of speaking about nations and ethnicities, scholars now more often referred to national and ethnic ‘identities’.⁶⁹ However, the term has a different meaning from that in the popular, common-sense understanding, as Brubaker und Cooper explain. The fact that ‘identity’ is being used in a constructivist sense is signalled by certain

standard qualifiers indicating that identity is multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, and so on. These qualifiers have become so familiar – indeed obligatory – in recent years, that one reads (and writes) them virtually automatically. They risk becoming mere place-holders, gestures signaling a stance rather than words conveying a meaning.⁷⁰

What was originally meant by these ‘standard qualifiers’? Approaches that are commonly attributed to constructivism go back to an epistemological position that can be found in rudiments as early as in Immanuel Kant’s work.⁷¹ In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant argued that the ‘true essence’ of our surroundings, ‘things-in-themselves’, cannot be known. Instead, we only ever perceive them as far as our senses and our mind allow us to. In this sense, reality is a construction of the human organism.

One line of thought derived from this led to sociological interactionism and, for example, (indirectly) inspired⁷² Berger and Luckmann’s work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) – an influential study that also impacted on historical migration research.⁷³ Unlike Kant, however, the two authors were less concerned with knowledge in the popular sense than with everyday certainties – with the knowledge that we need to be able to act in everyday life. Humans lack instincts – so the argument goes – so they rely on routines instead.⁷⁴ They try out different ways of acting, of interpreting the world and their fellow human beings, and anything that works in everyday life is repeated until it hardens into intuitive certainty.⁷⁵

Crucially, this kind of certainty does not necessarily depend on being factually true.⁷⁶ The primary function of everyday knowledge is to simplify decisions, to relieve the psyche.⁷⁷ So long as it fulfils this function, it remains stable because no doubts arise about it.⁷⁸ There are, of course, situations in which one is forced to externalize one's certainties, to make oneself and others aware of them and to justify them. This, for example, is the case when one explains the world to a child. The socialization of children consists, among other things, in habitualizing this new knowledge until it also becomes self-evident to them. In other words, what we consider to be 'reality' is in fact 'institutionalized' – that is, socially mediated everyday knowledge that has become routine. Berger and Luckmann classified their arguments under the term 'social constructivism'.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, a different, linguistically inspired variety of constructivism gained in importance, which eventually set in motion a linguistic turn in the humanities and social sciences.⁷⁹ This time, the leading thinkers came from France: Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and (the early) Michel Foucault. Their reference point was not so much Kant and the sociology of knowledge as Ferdinand de Saussure, the philosopher of language, and they ultimately advocated a radical reading of Saussurean epistemology.⁸⁰ The starting point for this epistemology was less the inadequacies of the human organism than the inherent logic of human language. In fact, Saussure argued, it is not possible to depict the world as it really is in words because the meaning of a sign or symbol is derived not from what it 'designates', but from other signs and symbols from which it differs: 'synonyms like French *redouter* "dread", *craindre* "fear", *avoir peur* "be afraid" have value only through their opposition. If *redouter* did not exist, all its content would go to its competitors'.⁸¹ From this perspective, language acts as a self-referential system of antagonistic 'signifiers' that generates meaning from within itself.⁸²

Constructivist Perspectives on Ethnicity and Nation

Both of the approaches discussed here have profoundly influenced and changed the way in which social scientists and historians view nations, ethnicities and migrants.⁸³ Thus many historians today describe nations as 'imagined communities',⁸⁴ a term that goes back to Benedict Anderson, one of the co-founders of constructivist research on nationalism. The adherents of this tradition have in common that they do not link the existence of a nation to objective criteria, but to the self-image of its members.⁸⁵ In this view, a national community exists if there are a number of people who are convinced of its existence, who believe that they belong to such a nation, who tell each other national origin myths, gather for rituals, and reassure each other again and

again that their community really exists. Otherwise, it would be forgotten, and disappear.

The concept of ‘imagined communities’ is also important here because migration researchers have applied it to diaspora communities.⁸⁶ And these are highly popular objects of research. The boom began in the 1990s, when more and more scholars began studying ‘transnational’ ways of life,⁸⁷ not least in order to distance themselves energetically from the assimilation paradigm, which at the time was falling into political disrepute.⁸⁸

The term transnationalism points to the fact that immigrants rarely simply migrate from one place to another and cut ties with their country of origin. In fact, they typically stay in contact with it – for example, by letter or telephone, or even by travelling back and forth. In this way, they remain socially integrated in both places, living in transnational spaces, networks and ethnic communities.

In its original formulation, the concept of transnationalism referred to contemporary societies. Some social scientists see ‘transmigrant’ ways of life as evolving out of the dynamics of globalized capitalism.⁸⁹ Indeed, a modern infrastructure with aeroplanes, telephones and the internet is certainly helpful for emigrants who want to keep in touch with their country of origin. Yet there are indications in historical sources that transmigrant ways of life predate these facilities,⁹⁰ as will become clear, for example, in Chapter 2.

When historians draw on the literature on this topic, however, they run into the problem that it largely refers to a world of nation states, and describes how people overcome national borders.⁹¹ These borders are themselves comparatively recent. For this reason, Dirk Hoerder argues that historians should speak more generally of ‘transregionalism’ – an ability to find one’s way in different regional cultures and to mediate between them.⁹²

Regardless of which term is preferred, the view is widespread in migration research that ‘transmigrants’ tend to retain their ethnic identity and do not assimilate.⁹³ This does not necessarily mean, however, that the migration process does not leave a trace. In order to describe the interaction between migrants and their social environment, constructivist-inspired migration research, for example, resorts to ‘hybridity’ – a term with a remarkable history.

The idea that not only biological but also social and cultural phenomena can be described as ‘hybrid’ goes back to postcolonial studies, which, as the name suggests, is a discipline primarily concerned with colonial – that is, a very specific form of – cultural contact. An important concern of many scholars working in this field is not to see the colonized exclusively in the role of victims. Instead, they assume actors who are not entirely powerless, and who consciously engage with the culture of the colonizers, make individual elements of it their own, and invariably ‘indigenize’ it,⁹⁴ changing it in the process. They create cultural ‘hybrids’, as Homi Bhabha calls them.⁹⁵ In his view, they have a subversive

function:⁹⁶ ‘hybridization’ implies not least that the colonial masters lose interpretative sovereignty over the signs and symbols that they created.

Another postcolonial author, Stuart Hall, appropriated the term to help to explain what he means by ‘cultural identity’. The easiest way to illustrate this is to take an example. One of Hall’s central themes relates to the African diaspora in the Caribbean – in particular, the idea that all Caribbean people with African roots share a coherent ‘collective “one true self”’, resulting from a common history of abduction and slavery. According to Hall, this essentialist notion may have been important in postcolonial struggles for emancipation. But to understand the current ‘identity’ of Caribbean people, it is more important to recognize the cultural diversity found on their islands from which hybrid forms are constantly emerging. A typical example of this are creole languages. And if it is true that people design their identities out of antagonistic (linguistic) signs, then they, too, can ‘creolize’, Hall suggests. For historians, this perspective has the advantage of historicizing the notion of ‘cultural identity’.⁹⁷ Those who study hybridity have a story to tell, one of identities that influence and change each other in intercultural contact. In the process, new self-understandings emerge, which Hall calls ‘new ethnicities’⁹⁸ and ‘diaspora identities’⁹⁹ – two terms that have proved to be highly influential.¹⁰⁰

The political point of Bhabha’s concept of hybridity – the idea that the colonized population appropriates hegemonic signs and subverts their authority in the process – has in many places been lost in its reception.¹⁰¹ In the German-language area (but not only there),¹⁰² the term ‘hybridity’ is associated with enthusiastic ideas of creative cultural exchange – something that Hall’s work at least hints at. In this newer sense, the term can easily also be applied to non-colonial forms of cultural contact.

The constructivist theories outlined here have also left obvious traces in British migration history. This becomes clear, for example, when the debates on the Anglo-Irish diaspora in the Victorian century are reviewed¹⁰³ – a field of research that touches directly on my topic here. After all, many Irish migrants earned their living at London’s Rag Fair.

In the 1970s and 1980s, historians still regarded the immigrants from Britain’s ‘sister island’ on the whole as outcasts of Victorian society.¹⁰⁴ This ‘monochrome’ kind of social history, however, is now a thing of the past.¹⁰⁵ Since the 1990s, numerous studies have been published, each dealing with a particular subgroup of Irish migrants (such as harvest workers), or those who lived in a particular city (such as Liverpool)¹⁰⁶ or in a particular part of the countryside.¹⁰⁷ The microscopic perspective allows detailed conclusions to be drawn. The kinds of relationships the actors entered into with each other and with those who were established in the area depended on local factors. Alan O’Day developed his theory of Irish ‘mutative ethnicity’ on the basis of this observation, arguing that it mutated

perhaps most strikingly according to the various political and social benefits which favoured its preservation from one locale to another ... Thus the identity of the Irish in Victorian Britain is, like Irish identity elsewhere, a somewhat complicated and shifting concept, moving and developing in a jostling for cultural, social and political space in which the British and Irish changed one another.¹⁰⁸

It can hardly be said more clearly: the Irish identity is not a stable, fixed point, but a 'matter for negotiation'. In developing his concept of 'mutative ethnicity', O'Day not only drew on Anglo-Irish microhistory, but also referred to the work of a number of theoretical authors, including Anderson and Gellner as representatives of the constructivist nationalism school (see above), as well as Avtar Brah, a pioneer of postcolonial diaspora research.¹⁰⁹ What is unusual, however, is that O'Day explicitly linked this constructivist approach to rational choice theory.

Political Methodological Ethnicism

In historical migration research, the notion has become commonplace that national, ethnic and religious identities cannot simply be presupposed. They exist to the extent that actors confirm or rather recreate them again and again. And they exist only in the specific form that they are given by actors. What exactly it means to be Irish, Jewish or English can therefore differ from place to place, and between social classes.

This 'soft',¹¹⁰ constructivist notion of identity carries a number of risks, which the sociologist Andreas Reckwitz warned about as early as 2001:

In part, post-structuralist and postmodern models of collective and personal identity tend to dramatize the constant dynamism, dissolution, and recombination of patterns of self-understanding (or even normatively to demand them in a manner that comes suspiciously close to the ideal of the high capitalist 'flexible' subject).¹¹¹

Historical community and diaspora research is, of course, a far cry from this sort of dramatized postmodern randomness. The reason is that it describes not only 'creolized' identities, but also the everyday environment out of which they emerge and prove themselves – or fail.¹¹² In this respect the argument is less akin to postmodernism than to classically social constructivist reasoning in the sense formulated by Berger and Luckman, and to which Bettina Severin-Barboutie explicitly refers in this context.¹¹³

It lies in the logic of social constructivist positions that ethnonational identities may prove to be irrelevant in certain social contexts, or might not even occur to the participants. The ethnomethodologist Stefan Hirschauer has emphatically drawn attention to this fact in an essay with the programmatic title 'Un/Doing

Differences'. It should not be assumed, Hirschauer argues, that members of ethnic minorities create ethnicity continuously and in every situation, just as men and women do not always produce masculinity and femininity in everything they do. If it is true that such categories are 'made', actors can instead deliberately try to undermine them ('undoing ethnicity'). Or they can do something completely different, orienting themselves by other categories instead ('not doing ethnicity at all').¹¹⁴ After all, social constructivism leads us to assume that actors confronting their social environment can design a series of different self-understandings, each conceived for specific situations, which can coexist.

Migration history has not adequately taken into account the fact that ethnic identity does not always determine social events everywhere.¹¹⁵ This holds true even for much of the theoretically elaborate constructivist research, as the problem lies less in the theoretical perspective than in the empirical interest of researchers, who continue to concentrate on the (ethnic, religious or national) minority identity of the migrants they study. This identity can be described – in anti-essentialist terms – as 'fluid', or as a 'multiple' phenomenon, or depicted as having become 'creolized' in transnational spaces. Yet either way, the focus remains on ethnic or national identities, and researchers are guided by this interest in their selection of sources.¹¹⁶

This sort of research approach methodologically reproduces ethnic bloc thinking – even though it has been overcome on an ontological level. Community studies run the risk of creating the subject that they research, as historian Michael Esch warns.¹¹⁷ It becomes difficult to judge what role ethnicity actually played in the actors' lives, or to identify the factors that determined whether it became important.¹¹⁸ The bias outlined here is not least politically motivated. Many migration historians see themselves as members or descendants of the community they are researching, and they argue for their minority to be recognized in the public memory.¹¹⁹ To this end, of course, the community must first be profiled as a culturally distinct group. On the whole, Esch claims, migration research is politicized like almost no other field.¹²⁰ People working on this topic often use their research to support political arguments, Esch explains – for example, to prove that immigration is beneficial to the host society, and that peaceful coexistence is possible between migrants and locals.¹²¹ Historians working on migration usually approach cultural diversity with enthusiasm. It therefore stands to reason that they specifically look for traces of diversity, thus running the risk of over-emphasizing it.

Methodology against Common Sense

To be sure, the present study would certainly not have come about without its author's fascination with and predilection for culturally heterogeneous

lifeworlds. The challenge in what follows is to avoid, as far as possible, the ethnic bias often associated with such a fascination. One possibility would be to simply select the migrants one deals with as a researcher on the basis of non-ethnic social categories.¹²² For example, one could look at working-class or aristocratic immigrants, or at Muslims or Pentecostals.¹²³ Or one could focus on actors who fall into a number of social categories at the same time, as an intersectional approach would do.¹²⁴ However, studies of this kind can be accused of merely shifting the problem of the ‘ethnic lens’.¹²⁵ The study design still determines which social identities are the focus, but instead of an ethnic bias, an anti-ethnic one may now be in evidence.

How, then, can we go beyond the ethnic lens without declaring ethnicity irrelevant by the very design of the study? A number of strategies are available here, which the ethnologist Andreas Wimmer discusses in depth.¹²⁶ Some of them are also relevant for historians, and they have significantly shaped my study of the *Rag Fair* – indeed, they form its theoretical underpinning.

According to Wimmer, we could, for example, start by taking the individual as the unit of investigation, as is usual in quantitative sociology (methodological individualism).¹²⁷ Theoretically, this would be a suitable strategy for circumventing the ethnic bias, but in practice, quantitative migration research also tends towards Herderian common sense. To illustrate this, Wimmer looks at ethnic niche economies, among other things, pointing out that when quantitative sociologists establish that a certain origin correlates with a certain occupation, many of them prematurely assume that this correlation is due to ethnic solidarity or discrimination. The first thing to do, however, would be to consider alternative variables, to check

whether an observed situation can be explained in terms of ethnicity, or whether other, lower levels of social organization, such as village communities and families, are in fact responsible for it. Given that most villages are mono-ethnic, the scholarly observer should be wary of attributing ethnic homophily to ethnic solidarity without further clarification ... Turkish migrants do not trust other Turkish migrants with whom they have no family connection any more than they trust German families.¹²⁸

In my study, I will follow Wimmer in repeatedly raising the question of what ‘level of social organization’ actually shapes the actions of the actors – although I will not be able to answer this question with the help of a correlation analysis. Fortunately, there are other ways to escape ethnic bias – for example, by building a study around a particular geographical space.¹²⁹ The classic example of this would be a neighbourhood. A number of studies have found that the main social demarcation lines in many immigrant neighbourhoods run not between ethnicities and nations, but between ‘the established and the outsiders’.¹³⁰ Other promising fields for research in ‘de-ethnicized’ migration studies are ‘institutional

environments', such as schools and workplaces, 'in which non-ethnic (or trans-ethnic) interactions are common. Here we can observe how networks emerge in such fields of interaction, how the actors interpret the environment with recourse to various principles of social classification, and under what conditions the classifications and networks actually align with ethnic lines.'¹³¹

These reflections provide the starting point for this study of the Rag Fair – an institution that brought people of different religions and backgrounds into contact. For my empirical work, this meant that I did not search for sources about Jewish or Irish people, but for documents that addressed, in whatever way, the used clothing market and those who took part in it. On reading them, it quickly became apparent that they described the Rag Fair in terms of two different fields of interaction. Some sources afford us a glimpse of everyday economic life, while others deal with (neighbourhood) conflicts that flared up around the market. For this reason, the study is divided into two main sections, each dealing with one of these fields.

What both types of sources have in common is that they allow us to overcome ethnic bloc thinking. They show how used clothing dealers and local residents formed relationships, developed solidarity or antipathy, and assigned themselves and their interaction partners to social categories. In other words, they describe different – more or less complete – processes of building 'groupness'.¹³² According to Herderian common sense, the actors should always have followed a logic of ethnic blocs. From a 'de-ethnicized', microhistorical perspective, however, it becomes clear that while this was sometimes the case, at other times it was not. Furthermore, the sources allow us to draw conclusions about why the actors organized themselves in the way that they did in each case.

The Sources on the Rag Fair: First Empirical Approaches

In my search for historical documents dealing with the Rag Fair, I came across a collection of different genres that each deal with the market in their own typical way, inevitably providing a distorted view of it. For a first empirical approximation, we can, for example, fall back on social topographic data. In fact, the street market influenced who lived in the surrounding streets, as becomes clear if we look at contemporary census data and tax lists.

In June 1841, the first census to record each resident individually by name, age and occupation was held in the UK.¹³³ The data sheets also contain information on each inhabitant's place of birth. It was noted whether the person in question came from Scotland or Ireland, or – somewhat blurrily – from 'foreign parts'. Thus first generation immigrants identified themselves as such. The social topography of the streets around the Rag Fair comes into sharper focus when the census data is cross-checked with contemporary tax lists. From the end of

the seventeenth century, the state had levied an annual land tax based on the estimated annual rental value of the land.¹³⁴

Numerous lists with such estimates for the London area have survived from the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³⁵ However, caution is required when interpreting these. First, the figures on the tax lists were only up to date in exceptional cases. Assessors deliberately refrained from constantly revaluing properties in order not to penalize landowners who had successfully invested in their property and thus increased its value.¹³⁶ For this reason, land tax in many places continued to be based on estimates that had been made at the end of the seventeenth century.¹³⁷

Second, even when properties (for example, those around the Rag Fair)¹³⁸ were reassessed over time, these reassessments were not necessarily based on real property values. In order to understand this, we must bear in mind that the land tax placed different burdens on different counties. Each of them had to fulfil a quota that had been arbitrarily set 'from above'. The estimated property values depended, among other things, on how much tax had to be raised in total in each case.¹³⁹

Despite these (and other) limitations,¹⁴⁰ the land tax assessments are a valuable source. Historians use them (and other property taxes), for example, as a rough index to compare the relative poverty or wealth of different buildings and streets.¹⁴¹ In order to avoid errors, however, it is advisable to work with figures from the same county,¹⁴² preferably from the same tax survey. Andreas Fahrmeir, for example, draws on rent estimates from 1843 to illustrate the diverse social topography of the City of London.¹⁴³ For example, in the wealthiest City ward, Cornhill, which was (and still is) home to the magnificent Royal Exchange building, estimated annual rents averaged £143, and in the second wealthiest, Bridge Ward, £96.

The Rag Fair, on the other hand, was located in Portsoken, the City's easternmost and poorest ward, where the Square Mile merged into the East End. Here, the estimated annual rental values in 1843 were on average just £27.¹⁴⁴ Even a cursory perusal of the surviving tax lists, however, reveals that many properties were significantly more valuable, and that not all residents of the ward were poor. In Aldgate High Street there were properties that, in a survey of 1829, were assessed at rental values of between £40 and £96.¹⁴⁵ Away from its main arteries, however, Portsoken was riddled with poor alleys and courtyards where property values fell away sharply – for example, in what was known as Fireball Court, to between £4 and £13; and in Great Still Alley¹⁴⁶ to as little as £4 to £6.¹⁴⁷ The social topography that emerges from the tax lists was typical of early modern urban settlements, in that rich and poor lived relatively close together.¹⁴⁸

The census data, in turn, shows that the poorer streets of the ward in particular were home to a large number of migrants.¹⁴⁹ Many local residents had Jewish (or anglicized Jewish) names – Solomon, Abrahams, Simmons, Davis and so

on – and came from ‘foreign parts’. It is no wonder that some contemporaries referred to the area as ‘modern Jerusalem’.¹⁵⁰ Among all these migrants with Jewish names, however, there were also Irish-born residents. On the census date, some alleys were inhabited by them alone.¹⁵¹ It is also noticeable that in the poorer streets, certain occupations were common: above all textile workers, tailors, shoemakers, hatters, furriers and so on, as well as countless people with the vague designation ‘dealer’ or ‘broker’ – all actors who lived from the old clothes market.

Reportage

Census and tax lists, of course, are not the liveliest of genres. One would like to know how contemporary visitors saw the neighbourhood. In fact, from the early 1840s, there were reports on the area, describing how it looked, sounded and smelled.¹⁵² Most of them, of course, were penned by bourgeois journalists and bohemians, whom historian Eileen Yeo accuses of ‘under-disciplined curiosity and overdeveloped theatricality’.¹⁵³ They earned their living in part by roaming the poorer streets in search of places that struck them as curious, exotic or eerie, and which they wrote up for an adventurous audience. The area around the Rag Fair lent itself to this purpose. One writer from the 1860s recalled in retrospect a ‘dense mass of old houses bordering curved, tortuous alleys; lanes thronged with Jewish urchins; stagnant gutters and piles of garbage; wisps of straw, old hats, and lumps of brown paper, alternating with broken glass in the windows’.¹⁵⁴

By the 1840s, many of these authors were using an imperialist rhetoric¹⁵⁵ that defamiliarized and exoticized London city life.¹⁵⁶ Their linguistic style, moreover, tended towards the impressionistic – rich in imagery, associative, and full of idiosyncratic allusions. At times, fantasy took over completely. James Grant, for example, described a conversation between an old hat and a coat who meet each other at the Rag Fair and talk about their former owners.¹⁵⁷

Middle-class bohemians obviously looked at the Rag Fair from ‘above’ and from ‘outside’. We cannot expect too much detailed information about the hustle and bustle of the market and all its group formation processes from writers of this kind – with one exception: Henry Mayhew, who, apart from Charles Dickens, is probably the best-known representative of this genre today.¹⁵⁸ Large sections of his reportage, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1849–1852),¹⁵⁹ are written in a more sober style than the slum reports produced by many of his predecessors and successors, largely because he inscribed himself into a number of other discourses, some of which claimed scientific respectability – such as the statistical studies called Blue Books.¹⁶⁰ This also explains why Mayhew systematically collected empirical data and also

conducted interviews with the poorer inhabitants of the metropolis – unusual for a man from his social class.¹⁶¹

Court Records

Mayhew's reportage is not the only source in which we hear the voices of the traders and visitors to the Rag Fair themselves. In addition, reports of parliamentary enquiries have survived that contain interviews with some market actors. From the early 1830s at the latest, the House of Commons debated whether the poorer inhabitants of the metropolis should be forbidden from holding a market on Sundays.¹⁶² In order to assess the consequences of such a drastic measure, select committees were convened and 'experts' were called in, some of whom knew the Rag Fair well and reported extensively on events at the market.¹⁶³

When reading the committees' reports, it should be borne in mind that the House of Commons had a preference for informants who were as 'respectable' as possible – market hall operators rather than impoverished tailors or rag collectors. Anyone interested in the perspective of the poorer participants in the market can look at another type of source in addition to Mayhew's reportage – namely, court records, a source typically used by the new history from below.¹⁶⁴ Fortunately, a number of court records have survived, for example, from the Old Bailey.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Old Bailey was the central criminal court for the City of London and the adjoining county of Middlesex. Serious crimes were tried here, including cases of theft and receiving stolen goods, which were common in the second-hand clothes trade.¹⁶⁵ As a result, Old Bailey judges saw used clothes dealers of various stripes come and go over the nineteenth century. The City of London had minutes of every session printed, not least to demonstrate the impartiality of its court system.¹⁶⁶ Readers were mainly lawyers and officials of the City Corporation in the nineteenth century, while today historians draw on these sources. Since 2003 they have been available online.¹⁶⁷

The Old Bailey Proceedings are generally considered reliable in that they are regarded as having accurately recorded the sense of the statements in them, or even having reproduced them verbatim. Significant discrepancies would have been noticed as the sittings were held in public.¹⁶⁸ For my research, it is also an advantage that the judges always tried to establish what the social relationship was between a witness and the accused. They were concerned with weighting the evidence they heard. Today, we can use this information to reconstruct the types of relationships that structured the Rag Fair.

The Old Bailey, however, was just one of several courts to which old clothes dealers gave evidence. Minor offences committed at the Rag Fair were mostly

tried in the courts of petty sessions, where a justice of the peace adjudicated without a jury (or referred the case to a higher court).¹⁶⁹ The Rag Fair fell within a judicial district in which the Mayor of the City of London held the office of JP. There are no officially approved minutes of proceedings at this lowest judicial level, but journalists were often present at the hearings.

The court reporters, of course, had their own agenda, and mainly followed cases that they believed were of interest to their readership – perhaps ones that were particularly contentious or controversial, or that touched on topics that were being discussed by the journalistic public at the time.¹⁷⁰ Sometimes it was also simply a matter of entertaining their readers. In the spring of 1829, for example, a Jewish old clothes dealer was on trial for allegedly looking like a monkey and moving and speaking in a bizarre manner – reason enough for a *Morning Chronicle* reporter to cover the case.¹⁷¹ His newspaper report presents the trial as a racist comedy.

Material from Local Political Archives

The court records not only contain valuable information about everyday life at the Rag Fair, but also about local political conflicts that flared up around it from time to time. The more respectable residents of Portsoken felt harassed by the street market and complained to the authorities. In conflicts with the street traders, they benefited from being involved in the political bodies and institutions of the City Corporation.¹⁷² For example, once a year all the taxpayers in the ward assembled in a wardmote and elected an inquest jury,¹⁷³ a regulatory body that complained incessantly about the Rag Fair and petitioned the City's executive council, the Court of Aldermen, about it.¹⁷⁴ Some local residents also served as elected representatives on the City Corporation's legislative committee, the Common Council.¹⁷⁵

All these bodies at times passed resolutions that affected market activities at the Rag Fair. And they produced countless archival records: a hodgepodge of correspondence, petitions and minutes, on which I will draw extensively in the following.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the official minutes of the meetings are not very detailed, noting only the decisions taken without recording the debate. Sometimes, however, the discussion was of public interest, so that the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Times* presented it in greater detail. These newspaper reports are also systematically abridged, albeit according to other criteria: they were intended to highlight the most sensational statements and events.

My corpus of sources thus consists of social reportage and court records, local political archives, tax lists and census data. Although this is not an exhaustive list of empirical material, the remaining sources are comparatively insignificant or only come into play in specific passages, so that it makes more sense to deal with

them in more detail when they arise. The challenge was to arrange the material – using different theoretical approaches – in a way that made group formation processes visible. In the following, I will give a brief overview of exactly which processes these were and how they fit into my chosen systematic structure.

Chapter Review

This book is divided into two parts, each dealing with a different field of interaction around the Rag Fair. Part I concerns everyday market activities, and describes how London's old clothes dealers made their living. For a picture of their everyday life, we must look not only at the Rag Fair itself, but also follow the routes along which the actors brought second-hand clothing to the market and finally shipped it abroad. Special attention is paid to the question of who the old clothes dealers came into contact with at work, what kind of contact this was, and what ethnic, religious or other attributions came into play. In answering these questions, I will, among other things, draw on Clifford Geertz's theory of the bazaar economy,¹⁷⁷ as well as on concepts and arguments from institutional economics that Hartmut Berghoff has applied to the field of history.¹⁷⁸

Part II then deals with the local political arena in the area where the market was located – the City ward called Portsoken. This part is chronological, and starts in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the old clothes traders moved their market to the City of London. The year 1841 marks the end point of my narrative – the time when the Rag Fair ceased to exist purely as a street market and most of the professional traders withdrew to private marketplaces in the vicinity.

During this period, there were repeated conflicts in which the market actors sometimes argued with the established shopkeepers in the ward, and sometimes allied themselves with them. As far as the sources permit, I will look at the social cement that these alliances represented. Were they based on a strategic calculation? Or did other motives play a part – for example, collective outrage, a sense of community and so forth? In addressing such questions, the economic theories used in the first part of the study are of little help. Instead, some of my arguments are based on E.P. Thompson's approach to class formation.¹⁷⁹ In addition, I will draw on the work of two theorists from the field of pragmatist sociology who explain the cohesion of political movements in terms of their emotional momentum: Andreas Pettenkofer and Axel Honneth.¹⁸⁰ I will only mention these theoretical approaches briefly here, and will go into them in greater detail in the chapters as they become important.

*Part I. Day-to-Day Life in an Intercultural Contact Zone:
On Dealing with Uncertainty at the Rag Fair*

In order to present the everyday life of the market in the form of thematic chapters, I have oriented myself by purely economic criteria – a radically ‘de-ethnicized’ way of structuring my research. The first three chapters discuss the most important occupations that could be encountered at the Rag Fair, one after the other. The market itself served as a contact zone where the different migrant and non-migrant used clothing traders met and entered into a specific kind of relationship, as I will elaborate in a subsequent chapter.

Part I opens with a chapter on the so-called clothesmen – that is, rag collectors who went from house to house every day, buying second-hand clothes to resell them later at the Rag Fair for a profit. Most of them came from Jewish families and frequented Jewish coffee-houses, where they came into contact with other old clothes traders. Both types of networks – families and coffee-house cliques – afforded a commercial advantage, as their members shared job-related knowledge and did business together.

Moreover, it is a crucial point for my further argument that the clothesman was firmly anchored in London’s urban folklore. This figure appeared in contemporary music hall songs, children’s books and novels, and all these genres suggested that authentic rag collectors were Jewish. I argue that this, in turn, gave a commercial advantage to those who had the necessary skills to credibly portray this character in everyday professional life. These were mainly people with an East European Jewish migration background. They monopolized the industry until the 1840s – and folklore helped them. In this line of work, we can thus observe an interaction between self-attribution and attribution by others, which ultimately amounted to social closure.

The second chapter turns to the numerous long-distance traders who travelled to the Rag Fair from places such as Ireland, America and the Mediterranean to purchase clothes for the domestic market. Most of them were transmigrants (see above) who were socially integrated both in London and in their country of origin. Long-distance trade was associated with numerous risks and uncertainties, but they used their networks to reduce these.

The third chapter focuses on the countless second-hand shops that lined the streets of the old clothes market and were firmly integrated into the market’s activities. Almost all the shopkeepers listed in the census have Jewish names. They, too, came from families in which the necessary occupational know-how circulated; they, too, were integrated into coffee-house cliques that were relevant to their work. Yet their presence in the ward raises questions. After all, they were in the territory of the City of London, a municipal corporation that reserved its citizenship rights for Christians until 1831. Those who did not possess the freedom of the City were not legally permitted to operate a retail trade on its territory.

By the 1810s and 1820s, the freemen of the City already held different views about whether it was time to admit Jews. A majority held liberal to radical positions and would probably have admitted the Jews if they had not faced a group of influential local conservative politicians. Supporters of the two camps each dominated different political bodies, and kept one another in check for several years. In this situation of conflict, the Jewish identity of the Rag Fair's shopkeepers turned into an advantage: they were not allowed to acquire the freedom of the City, but no one drove them out of their businesses either. For a while, they were spared the expensive fees that Christian retailers had to pay to become freemen.

The substantive high point of Part I is its final chapter on the activities that took place on the streets of the market, where actors from different occupational groups, religions and countries of origin met and entered into business relationships. To illustrate the specific nature of these relationships, I start the chapter by explaining how transactions at the Rag Fair were associated with many risks. The power of the state and municipal institutions that provided security for contracts elsewhere was extremely limited here. Nor were there any standardized prices or quality controls. The value of goods was always subject to haggling, with all participants bringing their knowledge of textiles to bear. In other words, the Rag Fair had features of a bazaar economy, as described by Clifford Geertz.

In order to reduce their business risks, bazaar traders typically make use of a number of strategies that were also employed at the Rag Fair. For example, in such a risky business environment, it is natural to stick to exchange partners known personally, or at least from hearsay. The old clothes dealers formed a group of people known to each other, in which reputation circulated as symbolic capital. It was in the interests of its members not to cheat each other, as a bad reputation was bad for business. Moreover, there was a strong incentive to engage more closely with certain traders and to build up personal client contacts – an institutionalized form of relationship with its own etiquette. Numerous court records show that the old clothes traders ignored ethnic and religious categories in their search for business partners of this kind. Client relationships, in turn, can provide a basis on which other types of attachment may develop – friendships, or even romantic liaisons. In this specific sense, economic insecurity at the Rag Fair encouraged interfaith integration.

Part II: Integration through Conflict

The second part looks at the integrative dynamics of local political conflicts that took place around the Rag Fair. From the moment the old clothes dealers appeared in Portsoken in the early 1780s, there were almost incessant neighbourhood disputes. Chapter 5 focuses on the culture of conflict that developed

as a result. As far as the sources permit, I go into the conflict practices of the parties involved – their petitions, legal arguments and alliances – and explain how a decades-long stalemate could develop in which the market survived despite all the squabbling.

Research on English Jewry sometimes mentions these neighbourhood disagreements in passing. However, these studies suggest that the arguments were mainly between Jews and non-Jews. A close reading of the sources, on the other hand, reveals that the primary lines of conflict were not between ethnic groups or religions, but between different occupational groups, which were also in dispute in many other places in Britain. We are speaking of a class conflict – one that promoted class formation.

The constant local disputes over the second-hand clothes market ended abruptly when a local political scandal occurred in Portsoken in the winter of 1833/34. This is the subject of Chapter 6. The freemen of the ward were at that time fighting for their traditional right to elect their own representative in the Court of Aldermen. The majority had voted for a radical – a master butcher called Michael Scales. But the aldermen refused to accept him, saying that he lacked the necessary dignity for the office. The freemen and residents of the ward saw this as a slight and protested, thereby transforming their feeling of shame into indignation, similar to what Axel Honneth describes in his study *The Struggle for Recognition*.

The protest was joined by large sections of the ward's population – rich and poor, men and women, migrants and long-standing residents. Even declared opponents of Scales were outraged. In the process, those involved went far beyond what would have served their cause. The sources convey the impression of activists who vehemently insulted their opponents and egged each other on. I argue that the protesters were acting under the spell of an emotional state that Durkheimian sociologists call 'collective effervescence'. This refers to a perception of communal strength and elation that arises when people protest in unison, affirming and reinforcing each other's interpretation of the situation. The Scales affair marks a moment when the diverse residents of the neighbourhood developed a strong sense of community and settled their conflicts with each other, at least for a while.

In the course of this development, the political standing of the old clothes dealers in the ward also changed in the longer term. For a while there were no more complaints about them. And when a local dock company began to take political action against the street market in 1837–38, the local authorities and many residents unexpectedly supported the old clothes dealers. The final chapter of Part II, Chapter 7, revolves around this – ultimately unsuccessful – multireligious neighbourhood movement and the motives of its supporters. In some respects, the Rag Fair promoted ethnic closure, tying its participants to their families and religious communities. But at the same time, we can observe

how new, interreligious formations developed within its sphere of influence – networks, political movements and identities. In the Conclusion, I summarize my central arguments and the overall history of the market, and explain why this history is interesting not only for migration historians, but also for those who study legal history, global consumer history and Anglo-Jewish political emancipation.

Notes

1. OBPO, t17831210-75, trial of Hester German, 10 Dec. 1783.
2. *Blackwood's Magazine* 51 (1842), 22–32, at 22. The bookseller William Blackwood founded the magazine named after him in 1817, partly in opposition to the liberal *Edinburgh Review* (Allingham, 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine'). The writers who published in *Blackwood's Magazine* are generally seen as being in the camp of the Ultra-Tories. They defended the established church and the paternalistic ideology of a premodern agrarian society, while railing against free trade and the new Poor Law of 1834 (Poor Law Amendment Act, 4 & 5 Will. IV. c. 76); see Milne, 'Politics'.
3. *Blackwood's Magazine* 51 (1842), 22: 'One shilling and two shilling galleries'.
4. *Ibid.*, 32.
5. Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, 150–63.
6. For a brief overview of the social position of seamen from India and China in London, see White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 148–51; George, *London Life*, 143–45.
7. White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 149.
8. On the migration history of Spitalfields, see Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*. The chapter on Huguenot immigration is on pp. 31–37. In addition, there is a detailed and theoretically sophisticated study of the labour disputes of the linen weavers; see Steinberg, *Fighting Words*. The author used the topic partly to deal with the linguistic turn from a socio-historical perspective in 1999. For a source that gives some of the linen weavers themselves the word, see Mayhew, *Selections*, 123–24.
9. Panayi, 'The Settlement of Germans', 31, 34; White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 140.
10. A lively description of the quarter can be found in Mendelsohn, *Rag Race*, 18–36. For contemporary impressions, see *Blackwood's Magazine* 51 (1842), 27–28; and Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol. 2, 36–39.
11. *Blackwood's Magazine* 51 (1842), 27.
12. *Ibid.*, 28.
13. On the day of the 1841 census, 75,000–80,000 people born in Ireland were living in London and accounted for around 4 per cent of the urban population (Lees, *Exiles*, 46–47; see also the slightly different figures given by White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 131). The number of those who would have described themselves as Irish, however, was significantly higher.
14. Lees, *Exiles*, 51. Since the Act of Union (1801), Ireland had been part of the United Kingdom. From a government perspective, Irish people migrating to London would be classed as internal migrants; see Feldman, 'Golden Age', 169–70.
15. Lees, *Exiles*, 56; see also Chapter 2.

16. Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol. 1, 104. Lynn Lees has investigated in detail the different sectors in which the Irish migrants in London worked; Lees, *Exiles*, 88–122.
17. See the assessments in MacRaild, *Irish Diaspora*, 7.
18. For a detailed discussion of the economic push factors in Ireland, see Lees, *Exiles*, 22–33; and MacRaild, *Irish Diaspora*, 9–22.
19. Lees, *Exiles*, 22, 34–35.
20. Endelman, *Georgian England*, 176.
21. *Ibid.*, 277–78. For a detailed list of all the legal disadvantages that Jews in Britain faced, see Salbstein, *The Emancipation*, 44–53; on the legal status of Jews specifically in the City of London, see Chapter 3.
22. 33 Geo. III. c. 4; moreover, all foreigners were obliged to register at their point of arrival and to inform the Alien Office of any change in their address. And if they wanted to travel in the British Isles, they needed a passport, which a local justice of the peace could issue; Fahrmeir, *Aliens*, 102–3.
23. Between 1815 and 1822 there were only twenty such requests; *ibid.*, 105.
24. For the details see *ibid.*, 104–6.
25. Feldman, ‘Golden Age’, 176.
26. See the title of Feldman’s essay; *ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, 170. It would, of course, be a mistake to see Irish migrants solely as victims of these regulations. Some of them explicitly asked their local parishes to deport them to Ireland (for examples, see LMA, Parishes: St Botolph Aldgate: Journal Kept by the Assistant Overseer of the Poor) as it meant their travel expenses would be reimbursed. In other words, Irish migrants used Pauper Removal Orders as an economic resource.
28. Feldman, ‘Golden Age’, 170–72.
29. Fahrmeir, *Aliens*, 106.
30. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*, 55.
31. See e.g. the relevant chapter in White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 129–59. A bibliography of histories of London’s diaspora communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be found at <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/CommunitiesBibliography.jsp>, last accessed 24 Aug. 2023.
32. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*, 54.
33. Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, 4.
34. See the criticism in Esch, ‘Delegitimationswissenschaft’, 66–67.
35. Bade et al., ‘Die Enzyklopädie’, 23–24; Hoerder, Lucassen and Lucassen, ‘Terminologien’, 46–48; Burrell, *Moving Lives*, 2–3.
36. Esch, ‘Sozialmorphologie’, 93–94.
37. Wimmer, ‘Grenzziehungen’.
38. Glick Schiller, Caglar and Gulbrandsen, ‘Beyond’, 613–15.
39. Wimmer, ‘Grenzziehungen’, 72–75; Fox and Jones, ‘Migration’, 390–91.
40. See *Morning Post*, 17 Dec. 1816. For an overview of the various places where the Rag Fair was held in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see the Conclusion of this book.
41. Wechsler, ‘Garment Trade’, 20–27; Shepherd, ‘Popular Attitudes’, 269–85; Mendelsohn, *Rag Race*, 18–36.
42. On this, see e.g. the evidence given by Mr Gibbs in the court report from *The Times*, 4 May 1802; as well as the speech given by the defence lawyer Mr Wire reported in

- the *Morning Chronicle*, 20 Aug. 1841. A particularly keen observer of the used clothing market, Henry Mayhew noted in the late 1840s that ‘those resorting to the Old Clothes Exchange and its concomitant branches may be but one-fourth Jews, more than half of the remainder being Irish people’; Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol. 2, 39.
43. See the critical discussion of the literature in Jones, ‘Redressing’, 60–61; and Kelley, ‘Streets’, 397–99.
 44. For a prominent example of this sort of argument, see Shaw and Wild, ‘Retail Patterns’.
 45. See e.g. Jones, ‘Redressing’, esp. 61; Kelley, ‘Streets’; Jankiewicz, ‘Dangerous Class’, 400; Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, 144–81.
 46. Ginsburg, ‘Rags’; Lemire, ‘Consumerism’; Lemire, *Business*, 82–109; Lemire, ‘Europe’.
 47. Endelman, *Georgian England*, 181–83; Wechsler, ‘Garment Trade’, esp. 20–27; Shepherd, ‘Popular Attitudes’, 269–85; Naggar, *Jewish Pedlars*; Mendelsohn, *Rag Race*.
 48. An exception is a single chapter by the textile and consumer historian Beverly Lemire, in which she explicitly addressed the question of how Jews contributed to the English old clothes trade (Lemire, *Dress*, 75–94). In order to answer it, Lemire evaluated insurance policies from the last quarter of the eighteenth century (ibid., 81) for information on the ethnicity and socio-economic status of the insured parties, and examined their field of work with the help of social statistics.
 49. Lemire, *Business*, 82–109; Lemire, ‘Consumerism’, esp. 24.
 50. Endelman, *Georgian England*, p. x.
 51. Ibid., chs. 5 and 6, esp. 181–83.
 52. Kushner and Ewence, ‘Whatever’, 25.
 53. Endelman, *Georgian England*, p. xv; see also Kushner and Ewence, ‘Whatever’, 24.
 54. Alderman, *Jewry*, 118; White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 154.
 55. See Endelman, *Georgian England*, p. xv.
 56. Mendelsohn, *Rag Race*, ch. 1.
 57. Ibid., 1–4.
 58. Ibid., 15–16.
 59. Ginzburg, ‘Morelli’.
 60. Ibid., 14.
 61. Bade, ‘Historische Migrationsforschung’, 37–48.
 62. See Wimmer, ‘Grenzziehungen’, 57.
 63. Ibid., 59. In this context, the ethnologist Rogers Brubaker speaks of ‘groupism’ (Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, 7–10).
 64. Hahn, *Historische Migrationsforschung*, 34–35. See also the overview in Bade et al., ‘Die Enzyklopädie’, 23–24. The original formulation of the theory can be found in Park and Burgess, *Introduction*, 734–84.
 65. See the assessment in Bade et al., ‘Die Enzyklopädie’, 23–24; see also the overview of the debate in Morawska, ‘Immigration’, esp. 190.
 66. Park and Burgess, *Introduction*, 735, 767–69; see also the assessment by Schubert in ‘Chicago School’, 136–37; and Lucassen, ‘Gulf’, 9.
 67. At this time, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, for example, were beginning to advocate for a constructivist concept of nation in their first publications; see the overview in Hirschi, *Wettkampf*, 24, n. 2. At about the same time, the ethnologist Fredrik Barth attacked the dominant essentialist ideas of ethnicity; see Barth, ‘Introduction’. For an overview, see Kohl, ‘Ethnizität’, esp. 271–75.
 68. Brubaker and Cooper, ‘Beyond’, 11.

69. *Ibid.*, 2–4. For the reception of the identity debate among historians, see e.g. the reviews by Jensen, ‘Identitäter’; and Pyka, ‘Geschichtswissenschaft’.
70. Brubaker and Cooper, ‘Beyond’, 11.
71. See Hirschi, *Wettkampf*, 45.
72. Berger and Luckmann adopted Kant’s epistemology by referring to Karl Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, which they developed further in an interactionist direction; *ibid.*, 46. Helmuth Plessner wrote a foreword to the German edition of Berger and Luckmann’s study in which he outlined the theoretical traditions out of which their work evolved; Plessner, ‘Vorwort’, p. xii.
73. Severin-Barboutie, ‘Historische Migrationsforschung’, 13.
74. Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 65–70.
75. *Ibid.*, 37, 70–71.
76. *Ibid.*, 34.
77. *Ibid.*, 71.
78. *Ibid.*, 58–59. Behind this idea lies an answer to the Hobbesian question of how social order is possible at all. According to Berger and Luckmann’s approach, people reason and act in socially coordinated ways not because this is rational or morally necessary, but because they lack the know-how even to consider alternatives. See Abels, *Interaktion*, 106.
79. For an overview, see Bachman-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 33–36. For the reception of the linguistic turn among German historians, see Dinges, ‘Kulturgeschichte’; for the Anglo-American debate, see Bonnell and Hunt, ‘Introduction’.
80. Saussure’s language philosophy as it has been handed down is based on lecture notes taken by two of his students; see Saussure, *Course*. For a concise introduction to Saussure’s thinking, see Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 39–60. See also Bachman-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 34–35.
81. Saussure, *Course*, 116.
82. Bachman-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 35.
83. The following passage is based on Hirschi, *Wettkampf*, 24.
84. See *ibid.*, 26–27, n. 11. A definition can be found in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6: ‘I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined’.
85. An overview of constructivist research on nationalism can be found in Hirschi, *Wettkampf*, 24–30, who discusses Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, in addition to Anderson, as pioneers of this school of research. Together, he claims, these authors ‘set off an avalanche of research ... that has grown steadily since then’ (*ibid.*, 24). While Anderson and Gellner avowedly drew inspiration from sociological and linguistic constructivism (*ibid.*, 47), this does not apply to Hobsbawm, who stands in the tradition of Marxist ideological critique, and advocated the idea that there are authentic cultures of memory alongside ‘invented traditions’ (*ibid.*, n. 8).
86. Panayi, *Immigration History*, 139; see also Kershen, ‘The Migrant at Home’, 99; a similar argument had already been put forward by Hall, ‘Cultural Identity’, 232, 237.

87. On this, see Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 'Transmigrant'; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 'Transnationalism'. For an overview, see also Hahn, *Historische Migrationsforschung*, 35–36; Bade, 'Historische Migrationsforschung', 32–34.
88. Bade et al., 'Die Enzyklopädie', 23–24; Hoerder, Lucassen and Lucassen, 'Terminologien', 46–48.
89. Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 'Transmigrant'.
90. The early modern merchant diasporas were also a transnational phenomenon; see Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 'Transnationalism', 225.
91. See the criticism in *ibid.*
92. Harzig and Hoerder, *Migration History*, 84–85.
93. See the criticism in Lucassen, 'Transnationalism', 15.
94. Ha, 'Subversiv', 57.
95. See Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders'; and Bhabha, *Location*, 85–92. My reading of Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' is based on Ha, 'Subversiv'.
96. Ha, 'Subversiv', 56–59.
97. Hall, 'Cultural Identity', 225.
98. Hall, 'New Ethnicities', esp. 447.
99. Hall, 'Cultural Identity', 225.
100. Hoerder, Lucassen and Lucassen, 'Terminologien', 47; see also Banton, 'Teaching', 497–98; Wimmer, 'Grenzziehungen', 62.
101. Ha, 'Subversiv', 59.
102. *Ibid.*, 68.
103. See Panayi, *Immigration History*, 137. This research field is now almost impossible to sum up. Fortunately, Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley have been editing occasional collections of essays since the mid-1980s containing information about the state of research and, in the process, creating a kind of canon; see the Swift and Gilley edited volumes: *Victorian City; 1815–1939; Local Dimension; and Identities*.
104. See the contemporary literature review in Swift, 'Outcast Irish'.
105. The term was coined by Swift, 'Identifying', 134.
106. Belchem, 'Enclave'.
107. See the overview of research in Swift, 'Identifying'.
108. O'Day, 'Conundrum', 319.
109. *Ibid.*, 326–28.
110. Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond', 10–11.
111. Reckwitz, 'Identitätsdiskurs', 34.
112. For Reckwitz, this is the preferred method of avoiding the dangers of postmodernism; *ibid.*, 34–35. In this 2001 argument, the praxeological perspective for which Reckwitz later became known is already apparent; see the much-cited essay by Reckwitz, 'Grundelemente'. For a detailed definition of what is meant by praxeology, see Reichardt, 'Praxeologische Geschichtswissenschaft'.
113. On this see Severin-Barboutie, 'Historische Migrationsforschung', 11.
114. Hirschauer, 'Un/Doing', 82.
115. Esch, 'Sozialmorphologie', 93–94. See also the assessment in Hoerder, Lucassen and Lucassen, 'Terminologien', 47.
116. In this argument I draw on Wimmer, 'Grenzziehungen', 62–63. Kien Nghi Ha also emphasizes that historians frequently combine hybridity with ethnonational bloc thinking (Ha, 'Subversiv', 63–64). They describe 'cultural units' that cross-fertilize each other.

117. Esch, 'Delegitimationswissenschaft', 66–67. In this argument, Esch draws on the work of the Parisian migration historian Nancy Green, *Repenser les migrations*.
118. Esch, 'Sozialmorphologie', 93–94: 'Despite the undisputed social-historical value of many of these studies, they are based on an a priori definition which, given the ethnic ... delimitation of the object of study, means that the relevance of, in particular, the ethnic ascription, or of an ethnic self-image, to the aspects of social behaviour studied can hardly be questioned'.
119. Esch, 'Delegitimationswissenschaft', 66–67; Todd Endelman describes the trend specifically towards research on the Anglo-Jewish diaspora; Endelman, 'Historiography', esp. 32–33.
120. Esch, *Parallele Gesellschaften*, 7–10.
121. London migration historian Anne Kershen gives this impression when she describes, for example, the Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis of Spitalfields as enriching their social environment; see Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*, 229.
122. For a critical view, see Fox and Jones, 'Migration', 388–90.
123. In cultural anthropology, the 'ethnic lens' debate is closely associated with the name of Nina Glick Schiller, who, with two colleagues, wrote a study about Pentecostal communities in Halle (Saale) and Manchester; Glick Schiller, Caglar and Gulbrandsen, 'Beyond'. To the authors' surprise, it turned out that in the communities studied, African migrants and local people practise their faith together.
124. See Anthias, 'Beyond Ethnicity?'; Fox and Jones, 'Migration', 388–89.
125. Fox and Jones, 'Migration', 390.
126. Wimmer, 'Grenzziehungen', 72–75.
127. *Ibid.*, 72–73.
128. *Ibid.*, 73.
129. *Ibid.*, 72.
130. *Ibid.* These two terms go back to a study of the same name by Norbert Elias and John Scotson.
131. Wimmer, 'Grenzziehungen', 74.
132. I take the term 'groupness' from Rogers Brubaker, who defined it as 'the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidarity group'. This term allows us to think of the characteristics or elements that make up 'groups' as properties that occur in varying degrees of intensity. These characteristics are mainly 'connectedness' (relations between group members), 'commonality' (common attributes), and '*Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*' (a feeling of belonging together). These three phenomena may be interlocked and generate 'groupness', but not necessarily. Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond', 19–21.
133. For an overview of the history of the British census, see Brückweh, *Menschen zählen*. For census data from the area in the immediate vicinity of the Rag Fair, see TNA, 1841 UK Census, Population Schedule, Superint. Reg. District: East London, Registrar's District St Botolph, En. District 12–14. At the time of this census, the centre of the old clothes market was in Cutler Street, an alley that is recorded in Enumeration District 13 (pp. 4–5). The original data sheets are kept securely in the National Archives, but can be consulted online on the genealogy website [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk); last accessed 28 Aug. 2023 (subscription required).
134. For an introduction to the history of land tax assessments and their use as historical sources, see London Metropolitan Archives, 'LMA Research Guide 9'; in addition, a

- critical discussion of the tax lists can be found in Hunt, 'Land Tax Assessments'; and Grigg, 'Land Tax', esp. 82–86.
135. They are held by the London Metropolitan Archives (CLC/525/MS11316). It is possible to view them on microfiche, or online. The LMA maintains a partnership with the internet platform ancestry.co.uk, which makes a number of the archive's sources available in digital form.
 136. Grigg, 'Land Tax', 83.
 137. See LMA Research Guide 9: Land Tax Assessments for London and Middlesex, at https://search.lma.gov.uk/rg_pdf_creator/index.php?research_guide=37, last accessed 28 Aug. 2023; and Hunt, 'Land Tax Assessments', 285–86.
 138. The land in Portsoken, the ward in which the Rag Fair was located, was revalued in 1822; see LMA, London Land Tax Assessment: City of London: Portsoken, 1821 and 1822, ancestry.co.uk. Many householders had to pay around twice as much tax as before. Why this was the case is an open research question at this point.
 139. Hunt, 'Land Tax Assessments', 285. This is why the estimated rental values in the land tax records sometimes differed significantly from those collected for the local poor taxes or police taxes at about the same time; see Corfield, Green and Harvey, *Elections*, 169.
 140. There were local influences that are difficult to reconstruct retrospectively – corrupt tax collectors, for example, and local magnates and authority figures who used their influence to sway rent assessments in their favour; Wilson, 'Problem', 426.
 141. See Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 16; Corfield, Green and Harvey, *Elections*, 167; and Turner, 'Anatomy', 102–42.
 142. Hunt, 'Land Tax Assessments', 285.
 143. Fahrmeir, *Ehrbare Spekulanten*, 279, 487.
 144. See *ibid.*, 487.
 145. LMA, London Land Tax Assessments: City of London: Portsoken, 1829, pp. 1–2.
 146. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
 147. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
 148. Hitchcock, Howard and Shoemaker, 'St Botolph Aldgate'.
 149. TNA, 1841 UK Census, Population Schedule, Superint. Reg. District: East London, Registrar's District St Botolph, En. District 13.
 150. Phillips, *Wild Tribes*, 52.
 151. See e.g. Carter Street; TNA, 1841 UK Census, Population Schedule, Superint. Reg. District: East London, Registrar's District St Botolph, En. District 13, pp. 10–11.
 152. Descriptions of the area around the Rag Fair can be found e.g. in Grant, *Lights and Shadows*, vol. 1, 121–55; Ritchie, *Here and There*, 117–23; Phillips, *Wild Tribes*, 52–72. Eileen Yeo looked at reports of this kind in the early 1970s from a socio-historical perspective and declared them to be unsound – that is, of no use for addressing socio-historical questions; Yeo, 'Investigator', 73–76. When Judith Walkowitz reread the same corpus of texts some two decades later, she discussed it more in terms of a literary genre that reveals contemporary anxieties; Walkowitz, *City*, 18–24. When comparing the two approaches, it becomes abundantly clear that the cultural turn had occurred in the meantime. For other examples of the genre, see the bibliographical compilation in Dyos, 'Slums', 13.
 153. Yeo, 'Investigator', 74. Yeo's critical judgement, of course, only makes sense if one is looking for socio-historical facts.
 154. Dodge, 'Rag Fair', 516.
 155. Walkowitz, *City*, 18.

156. A good example can be found in Phillips, *Wild Tribes*, 55: 'A weak-minded man should never attempt the passage of Petticoat-lane excepting under good and sufficient guidance. The dangers of the North-west Passage are but trifles to those which encompass you here'.
157. Grant, *Lights and Shadows*, vol. 1, 131–52.
158. For biographies of Mayhew, see Humpherys, *Travels*; and the more recent Anderson, *London Vagabond*. See also the review article by Roddy, Strange and Taithe, 'Mayhew at 200', which covers Mayhew's impressive oeuvre (including reportage, novels and plays), as well as the impressively wide secondary literature on his works.
159. Mayhew began work on his reportage in October 1849 as a correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle* (see Mayhew, *Selections*), and it was first published in the form of a series of articles. However, he fell out with the newspaper's publisher as early as the autumn of the following year (for the details, see e.g. Thompson, 'Mayhew and the *Morning Chronicle*') and continued his reportage independently from December 1850. From then on, he published his reports in the form of quarto pamphlets that were sold on the streets; Lindner, *Walks*, 52. His new project, called *London Labour and the London Poor*, consisted partly of extended sections from the articles he had already written for the *Morning Chronicle*. These pamphlets were reissued in the form of bound books in 1851–52 and 1861–62.
160. For a discussion of the literary and intellectual influences that gave rise to Mayhew's reportage, see Yeo, 'Investigator'; Lindner, 'Stadtethnograph'; Münch, 'Mayhew', 55–56. On the early Victorian statistical movement, see Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, which is still relevant today.
161. Within the bourgeoisie, the poor at this time were usually considered 'immature ... intellectually incapable of reflecting on their situation, and morally prone to deception'. Lindner, *Walks*, 16. A 'cultural exchange' unfolded between Mayhew and his interviewees, as I have argued elsewhere; Münch, 'Mayhew'.
162. On the historical background, see Keller, *Triumph*, 77–91.
163. See e.g. Parliamentary Papers (PP), *Report from the Select Committee on Sunday Trading* (1847), 62–71, 78–79, 85–90; PP, *Report from the Select Committee on a Bill intituled 'An Act to Prevent Unnecessary Trading on Sunday'* (1850), 24–34, 45–66.
164. On the new history from below, see the spirited polemic by Hitchcock, 'New History'.
165. Emsley, Hitchcock and Shoemaker, 'Crimes'.
166. The Old Bailey Proceedings first emerged in the 1670s as literature to be read as entertainment (for a historical overview, see Emsley, Hitchcock and Shoemaker, 'Publishing History'). At that time, crime genres of various kinds enjoyed great popularity. As early as 1679, however, the minutes had to be approved by the judges of the Old Bailey. In the late eighteenth century, as public interest in lurid crime stories waned, the Proceedings turned into an increasingly respectable-looking and officially subsidized publication of the City of London (see Devereaux, 'The Fall'). They were now no longer about entertainment, but rather about accuracy, and were increasingly aimed at a legal audience, such as the lawyers who appeared in growing numbers at the Old Bailey and drew on the Proceedings for their work. Moreover, they served a political purpose – namely, to demonstrate the fairness of the court.
167. Tim Hitchcock, Robert Shoemaker, Clive Emsley et al., *The Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 1674–1913*, at www.oldbaileyonline.org, Version 8.0, last accessed 28 Aug. 2023.

168. Emsley, Hitchcock and Shoemaker, 'Value'. The many systematic omissions should be noted. It was feared that criminals could learn from the minutes how to successfully defend themselves in court. Therefore, trials that resulted in acquittal were usually recorded in less detail than convictions. Moreover, the testimonies of the defence were shortened and legal arguments were deleted. All these cuts are relevant in this context, as the old clothes dealers who gave evidence at the Old Bailey were typically called to exonerate a colleague accused of theft.
169. Hitchcock, Howard and Shoemaker, 'Justices of the Peace'. In his PhD thesis, Drew Gray deals in detail with the courts of petty sessions in the City of London; Gray, 'Summary Proceedings'; see also Gray, *Crime*. However, his works are limited to the second half of the eighteenth century. For the period that interests us here, there are as yet no systematic studies of the petty sessions; see Gray, 'Justice', 9. In an article on this topic, Jennifer Davis concentrates on the second half of the nineteenth century; Davis, 'Justice'.
170. See Gray, 'Summary Proceedings', 16.
171. *Morning Chronicle*, 23 Apr. 1829.
172. For an overview of the City's political institutions, see Fahrmeir, *Ehrbare Spekulanten*, 35–66; Owen, *Government*, 226–59; Webb and Webb, *The Manor and the Borough*, vol. 2, 569–692.
173. Webb and Webb, *The Manor and the Borough*, vol. 2, 581–82, 594–606.
174. See LMA, Portsoken Ward Presentments. On the Court of Aldermen, see the overview in Webb and Webb, *The Manor and the Borough*, vol. 2, 656–70.
175. *Ibid.*, 626–56.
176. The minutes of the meetings of various City committees are stored in the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). The following archival records are particularly significant in our context: LMA, Common Council: Printed Minutes (call number: COL/CC/04/01); LMA, Common Council: General Purposes Committee: Journals (COL/CC/GPC/01); LMA, Court of Common Council: Papers: Main Series (COL/CC/06/01); LMA, Court of Aldermen: Repertories (COL/CA/01/01); LMA, Court of Aldermen: Police Committee: Minutes (COL/CA/PLA/01/01); LMA, Portsoken Ward Presentments (CLC/W/LA/003/MS02649/002-003); LMA, Portsoken Inquest Minute Book (CLC/W/LA/002/MS02650/001).
177. Geertz, 'The Bazaar Economy'.
178. Berghoff, 'Prometheus'.
179. See the Introduction to Thompson, *Making*.
180. Honneth, *Struggle*; Pettenkofer, 'Die Euphorie des Protests'.