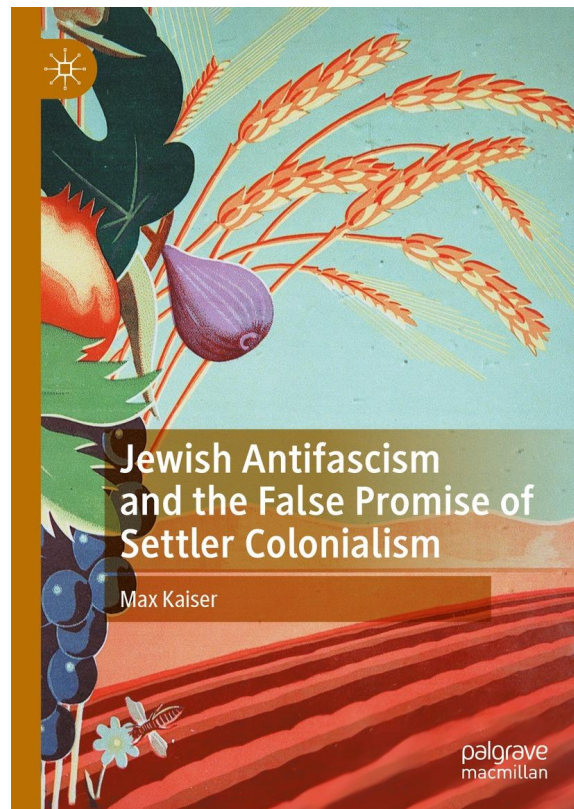


Jewish Antifascism and the False Promise of Settler Colonialism

Max Kaiser



2022

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This book was written on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. Their sovereignty has never been ceded.

1. Introduction

Max Kaiser⁽¹⁾

With whom does historicism actually sympathise? The answer is inevitable:
with the victor.

Walter Benjamin¹

For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in
any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.

Walter Benjamin²

I do not pretend that mine is a detached history. This volume is a partisan history. I agree with Saul Friedländer that ‘a kind of purely scientific distancing from the past, that is, a passage from the realm of knowledge strongly influenced by personal memory to that of some kind of “detached” history [is] a psychological and epistemological illusion’.³ My sympathies are with the Australian Jewish antifascist left and against their opponents, their politics reflecting in many ways my own.

The main organisation of the Jewish antifascist left in Australia was the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (hereafter the Jewish Council). A like-minded group of Central European refugees, men from established Eastern European families, and Anglo-Australian Jews founded the Jewish Council in Melbourne in May 1942.⁴ The Jewish Council ‘represented in institutional form the broad-based antifascist leftism enjoying considerable vogue both within the Jewish community and in society at large’.⁵ It combined the practical activity of monitoring and responding to specific incidences of antisemitism with a larger propaganda effort that consistently linked the

¹ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1955; reprint, 1973), 248.

² *Ibid.*, 247.

³ Saul Friedländer and Martin Broszat, “A Controversy About the Historicization of National Socialism,” *New German Critique*, no. 44 (1988): 120–121.

⁴ David Rechter, “Beyond the Pale: Jewish Communism in Melbourne” (University of Melbourne, 1986), 81–82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

(1) University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser
Email: kaiserm@unimelb.edu.au

threats of antisemitism and fascism.⁶ The Jewish Council's central strategy was to ally the Jewish community with progressive political forces in order to fight these threats.

By 1943, the Jewish Council was popular enough for the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board to vote to give it 'full moral and financial support' and responsibility for all public relations activities going forward. This meant that the Jewish Council served as the official political interface between the Jewish community and the general public. From its founding and throughout the 1940s the Jewish Council had widespread support.⁷ It was constituted by hundreds of members and numerous committees, including special committees of doctors and lawyers and later on a very active and successful ladies auxiliary committee and youth section.⁸ Australian Jewish antifascism was thus a major political and cultural force in Australian Jewish communities in the 1940s and early 1950s, but this history of Jewish antifascism has been obscured and distorted. In today's Jewish communities, dominated by Zionism, Jewish antifascism has variously been forgotten or told as a tale of political folly, or worse, Communist infiltration. This cultural and intellectual history of Jewish antifascism in Australia utilises a transnational lens to provide an exploration of Jewish antifascist ideology. It argues that Jewish antifascism offered an alternate path for Jewish politics, between nationalism and assimilation, that was foreclosed by mutually reinforcing settler colonial ideologies from both Palestine and Australia.

One of the central figures in the Jewish Council was my grandfather, Walter Lippmann. One somewhat unexpected product of my research was learning the extent of his involvement. Discovering an article he had written about the Australian Jewish anti-German migration campaign of the early 1950s and struggling to understand the politics behind it was the initial impetus towards this research endeavour. Conditioned by Australia's current racist migration politics, my immediate reaction to this campaign was to dismiss it as misplaced and xenophobic. But my grandfather was a committed anti-racist and multicultural activist. My attempt at a transhistorical political understanding of this seeming contradiction necessitated an approach that took seriously the political commitment and sophistication of the Australian Jewish antifascist left, but also that located their political values in a continued thread with my own.

This partisanship informs my historical method as a process of excavation and recovery of fragments of an 'oppressed past'.⁹ I seek to resist the conservative triumphalist historicisation of the Jewish left. Their ideas deserve neither to be aestheticized, anomalised, nor relegated to the status of a 'lost treasure entrusted to antiquarian

⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁷ P. Y. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of An Australian Jewish Community (Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney: F.W. Cheshire, 1968)*, 63.

⁸ David Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 84; "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Annual Report 1952-1953" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁹ Benjamin, "Theses," 254.

remembrance’.¹⁰ This work aims to bring together, albeit indirectly, the thought of the Australian Jewish antifascist left of the 1940s and 1950s and of ours today. As I write this the far right is on the rise, antisemitism is resurgent, people around the world are revolting against the Israeli occupation, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are winning large numbers of non-Indigenous Australians to their cause. Australian Jewish antifascists confronted all of these questions in a previous era.

I examine Jewish newspaper articles, magazines, propaganda pamphlets, novels, short story collections, annual reports, and organisational minutes to construct a complex history of Australian Jewish antifascism in the post-war period. Scholarly historical studies utilising the ethnic press in Australia are few and far between. As late as 2009, James Jupp stated, in a foreword to a collection about the Italian Australian newspaper *Il Globo*, that ‘hardly anyone has looked at the non-English press in the past or at the ways in which Australian political alignments arise in immigrant situations’.¹¹ However, a small amount of historical literature has emerged in the past decade or so that makes use of ethnic press sources, applying critical frameworks from transnational cultural studies, critical race studies, and gender studies.¹² In a similar vein, I apply critical frameworks from memory studies and settler colonial studies to these marginalised sources to write a new type of ethnic or migrant history, one that questions and re-writes aspects of Australian history.

This book represents an alternative archive, a collection of lost texts: unperformed plays, out of print novels, ephemeral political pamphlets, forgotten magazines, and so on.¹³ My conceptualisation of this project as a partisan history aimed at a fundamental re-assessment of Australian Jewish antifascism has led me on a journey through previously dispersed texts and archives to identify sustained patterns of analysis and

¹⁰ Alain Brossat and Sylvie Klingberg, *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso Books, 2016), ix.

¹¹ James Jupp, “Foreword,” in *Il Globo: Fifty Years of an Italian Newspaper in Australia*, ed. Bruno Mascitelli and Simone Battiston (Ballan, VIC: Connor Court Publishing, 2009), 10.

¹² See the recent collections, Catherine Dewhurst and Richard Scully, eds. *The Transnational Voices of Australia’s Migrant and Minority Press* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Catherine Dewhurst and Richard Scully, eds. *Voices of Challenge in Australia’s Migrant and Minority Press* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). See also Mei-fen Kuo, *Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892–1912* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013); Francesco Ricatti, “‘Was I Cursed?’ ‘Was I Hypnotized?’ Ethnic Moralism, Sexual Dilemmas and Spectral Fantasies of Italians in Australia (1956–1964),” *Women’s History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012): 753–771; Catherine Dewhurst, “Collaborating on Whiteness: Representing Italians in Early White Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2008): 33–49; Simone Battiston, “How the Italian-Australian Left and Its Press Viewed *Il Globo*,” in *Il Globo: Fifty Years of an Italian Newspaper in Australia*, eds. Bruno Mascitelli and Simone Battiston (Ballan, VIC: Connor Court Publishing, 2009).

¹³ I follow here Michael Rothberg and Benjamin Balthaser. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 18. Benjamin Balthaser, *Anti-Imperialist Modernism: Race and Transnational Radical Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 30.

definable intellectual tendencies. I do not read this constructed archive as representative of a completely coherent, static, or final discourse. These texts were generated through dynamic political and cultural struggle, reflecting (though not fully determined by) the contradictions, potentialities, strategic considerations, and circumscriptions of their conditions of production.¹⁴ This archive demonstrates both the contingency of its local formation and the transnational genesis of Australian Jewish antifascism.

Jewish Communism or Jewish Antifascism?

Jewish antifascism was born from the international Popular Front against fascism in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Popular Front was generated through the international Communist movement's strategy of working within broad cross-class and cross-political tendency coalitions to defeat the international threat of fascism.¹⁵ This new orientation on the global left had a significant effect on Jewish left politics internationally.¹⁶ Both the Jewish and non-Jewish left's emphasis on fighting fascism, during this period, meant a change in Jewish left politics to reflect the understanding that fascism attacked Jews *as* Jews. This understanding had as its concomitant the new importance of a specifically Jewish politics that *fought* fascism as Jews. A Jewish political subjectivity was needed to effectively counter fascist antisemitism. In a break with prior left doctrine that emphasised the need for assimilation as the path to equality, this new subjectivity required a proud and distinctive Jewish culture and consciousness.

This politics came to international prominence with the entry of the Soviet Union into World War Two and the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish people worldwide. In the Soviet Union the driving force of this re-assessment of Jewishness within communist politics was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC). The Committee was set up by Joseph Stalin in 1942 along with other anti-fascist committees meant to rouse their respective constituencies to support the war effort. The JAFC featured many prominent Yiddish poets, writers, and cultural figures and was headed by the famous actor and director of the Moscow State Theatre, Solomon Mikhoels.¹⁷ The JAFC, somewhat exceeding its brief, inspired a widespread politics of Jewish solidarity and identification (occasioned as well by the Holocaust) that was named as 'nationalist'

¹⁴ Balthaser, *Anti-Imperialist Modernism*, 17–18.

¹⁵ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917–1991*, translated by Allan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75–143; Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 244–328.

¹⁶ Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik, "Introduction," in *A Vanished Ideology*, eds. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 10–11.

¹⁷ Shimon Redlich, "The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the Soviet Union," *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 1 (1969). See also Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

by Stalin's regime.¹⁸ Coupled with the rise of Zionism in the Soviet Union, and the paranoia of the regime, the JAFK's popularity led to its eventual liquidation and the murder of its central figures.¹⁹

The JAFK had been successful in inspiring Jewish solidarity against Nazism and for the Red Army worldwide, the high point being a visit of Mikhoels and Itzik Feffer to the United States in 1943 where they addressed crowds of tens of thousands.²⁰ Misreading the political climate, the JAFK unsuccessfully pressed the Soviet authorities in 1947 and in early 1948 to allow the convening of an international Jewish antifascist pro-Soviet conference that would consolidate an international movement.²¹ While the staging of an international Jewish conference was quashed by the Soviet Union's Central Committee Secretariat, the ideas of an international progressive antifascist Jewish movement were already spreading around the world.²²

The international popularity of these politics was represented well in June 1948, when the representatives of Jewish communities from over sixty countries met for the Second Assembly of the World Jewish Congress in Montreux, Switzerland. This Assembly was the first possible since the Congress's inaugural session in 1936. Setting the scene for the discussion at the conference, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the World Jewish Congress, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, pronounced that since the First Assembly the Jewish people 'have witnessed the greatest tragedy in Jewish history—the annihilation of more than one third of our people by the Nazi barbarians and their allies'.²³ Referring to the collective Jewish failures to save more lives from what is now commonly known as the Holocaust, Goldmann continued:

it was the tragic short-sightedness of a people which had got used to its abnormal situation, and which, confronted with a danger of unprecedented character and dimensions, could react only by the usual routine methods. More important than any admission of our past failures, is to apply to our future the tremendous results of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history.

¹⁸ This was in some respects an echo of earlier conflicts between the Bund and the Bolsheviks over the supposed 'nationalism' of limited claims for Jewish autonomy, see Roni Gechtman, "A 'Museum of Bad Taste'? The Jewish Labour Bund and the Bolshevik Position Regarding the National Question, 1903–1914," *Canadian Journal of History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 31–67.

¹⁹ Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Volume 3, 1914 to 2008* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2012), 570–581, 613–624. See also Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

²⁰ Polonsky, *The Jews*, 572. Shimon Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism: A Documented Study of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 74–75. They also visited Mexico, Canada, and the UK. *Ibid.*, 76. For an evocative account of the New York and Canada visit, see Ester Reiter, *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 86–89.

²¹ Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism*, 86–88.

²² Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism*, 86–87.

²³ Dr. Nahum Goldmann, "Opening Address," in *Papers from the World Jewish Congress*

Goldmann went on to suggest that the world was facing great upheavals, revolutions, and social, cultural, and economic change. He asked, ‘in the fight against new ideas, reactionaries—defenders of the past—must always seek a scapegoat—and who more likely than the Jewish people, the classic scapegoat and object of attack from time immemorial for every reactionary movement in the world?’ Goldmann then outlined the dangers of a growing antisemitism in Great Britain, the United States, Latin American countries, and especially in Germany and Austria. Goldmann emphasised that antisemitism was a ‘general political phenomenon’ that was a ‘popular disguise of reactionaries, Nazis and fascists everywhere’ and that it was

only with the help of all democratic, liberal and progressive forces in the world that there is any chance of striking at it effectively, and preventing in the future catastrophes such as the one through which we have passed in the last decade or so.²⁴

Goldmann here outlined the main themes and analysis of a widespread international Jewish antifascist interpretation of the Holocaust and its consequences. While there was an obvious progressive bent to these ideas, it was much more original and capacious than a restatement of Communist dogma. It was this interpretation that was taken up by the Jewish Council in Australia. Although there were Jewish communists involved in the organisation from the beginning, ‘organisational links with the party were limited, and the relationship between the Party and the organised Jewish communists was ill-defined’.²⁵ This meant that although Jewish members of the Communist Party of Australia did operate at times as an organised and binding ‘fraction’ or caucus, claims by conservative Jewish leaders and historians about communist fronts, puppet organisations, or infiltration are ill-conceived.²⁶

Second Plenary Assembly (Montreux, Switzerland: World Jewish Congress (WJC). Available at <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=22287>, 1948). Goldmann would go on to serve as WJC president from 1948 until 1977. On the shifting politics of the WJC in this era, see Nathan A. Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights After the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 24–26.

²⁴ Goldmann, “Opening Address.”

²⁵ Rechter, “Beyond the Pale,” 99. I assess Australian Jewish Popular Front politics along similar lines to Michael Denning’s assessment of the US Popular Front as a ‘historical bloc’ of social movements, where the ‘fellow travellers’ were the core of these movements, rather than being centrally directed by Communist Party members. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), 5–6. For discussion along these lines in the Australian (particularly Melbourne) case, see Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920–1955* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), 198.

²⁶ Rechter, “Beyond the Pale,” 100. ‘Fraction’ was a Communist Party of Australia organisational term denoting an organised communist grouping within a larger non-communist organisation, workplace, or community. For example, see Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960” (Victoria University, 2011), 26, 50; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 116.

Historians such as Philip Mendes have suggested that Jewish leftists can be neatly divided into those who were ‘communist universalists’ and used their Jewishness cynically, and those who prioritised their Jewishness but had a mistaken strategy in aligning themselves with the left.²⁷ This depiction misrepresents the manner in which a distinct Jewish antifascist politics fitted into the broader Jewish and non-Jewish ideological landscape of the period. Australian Jewish antifascism was not just a matter of strategic calculations or ultimate allegiances; it involved a larger worldview, a reconceptualisation of Jewishness, and an ambitious cultural project. The idea that Jewish antifascism was sophisticated, bold, and popular sits at odds with the established narrative of an essential Australian Jewish conservatism.

Challenging the Australian Jewish Story

Australian Jewish historiography depicts a Jewish community that is ‘non-universalistic’, ‘inward-looking’, and ‘concerned almost solely with its own future’.²⁸ Historian, W.D. Rubinstein correlates this with Jewish ‘economic, professional, and cultural success in the wider Australian community’ and contrasts it with the US Jewish community’s long tradition of socialism, liberalism, and ‘universality’.²⁹ According to Rubinstein,

Post-war Australian Jewry arguably never had ... any vision which is not, essentially wholly Jewish, and either aimed at rebuilding the shattered remnants of European Jewry here, or at furthering Israel and Zionism, or a vision expressed in purely religious terms. Post-war Australian Jewry has never sought to change Australian society for the better through radical nostrums.³⁰

Rubinstein attributes this to the Holocaust and to Israel: ‘Jewish survival became, and remains, the central concern of a tiny community composed very disproportionately of Holocaust survivors; Israel’s *raison d’être* is Australian Jewry’s writ large. In such an environment, Jewish universalism is a luxury which cannot be afforded, and which, regularly, represents an impediment to Jewish aspirations.’³¹ That the memory of the Holocaust is an inevitable cause of conservatism and Zionism has become part of a ‘common sense’ idea of, and about, Australian Jews. A central focus of this work

²⁷ Mendes, “Jewish Communism in Australia,” 208.

²⁸ William D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History: Volume 2, 1945 to the Present* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991), 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–7. For a history of the ongoing contested nature of this liberalism since World War Two, see Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (Columbia University Press, 2002).

³⁰ Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

is an examination of Holocaust memory as a key part of the Jewish antifascist left's influential left wing, non-nationalist, universalistic discourse.

Until the late 2000s it was a commonplace understanding in popular memory, and in studies of Holocaust memory internationally, that in the first decades following World War Two, memories of the Holocaust were widely suppressed and silenced.³² Over 17,000 Holocaust survivors migrated to Australia in the post-war period, around 60 percent going to Melbourne and 40 percent to Sydney.³³ Despite this, little has been written on the history of Holocaust memory in Australia.³⁴ The accounts that do exist concur with the conventional analysis. Judith Berman, who has written the only book-length general study, for instance, states that it was not until the late 1970s that the Holocaust moved from the 'periphery of Australian Jewish public consciousness'.³⁵ However, in recent years the 'silence model' or the 'myth of silence' has been brought into serious question.³⁶ There is a growing body of international research that seeks to challenge the previous consensus around a post-war silence.³⁷ Following in the footsteps of scholars such as Hasia Diner, who has overturned the established history of Holocaust memory in the United States, this book debunks the 'myth of silence' in an Australian context.³⁸

I employ Michael Rothberg's concept of 'multidirectional memory' and build on his historical linkage of the emergence of early Holocaust memory with global decolonisation struggles.³⁹ As defined by Rothberg, multidirectional memory is a concept for thinking collective memory against the framework of 'competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources'.⁴⁰ Multidirectional memory is therefore 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; [it is] productive and not

³² See, for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Beth Cohen, "The Myth of Silence: Survivors Tell a Different Story," in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, eds. David Cesarani and Eric J Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

³³ Judith E. Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945–2000* (Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), 5; Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Sydney, NSW: Collins Australia, 1988), 254.

³⁴ See Tom Lawson and James Jordan, "Introduction," in *The Memory of the Holocaust in Australia*, eds. Tom Lawson and James Jordan (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008); Steven Cooke and Donna-Lee Frieze, *The Interior of Our Memories: A History of Melbourne's Jewish Holocaust Centre* (Melbourne, Victoria: Hybrid Publishers, 2015).

³⁵ Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance*, 9.

³⁶ Lawson and Jordan, "Introduction"; Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009).

³⁷ David Cesarani, "Introduction," in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

³⁸ Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*.

³⁹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

⁴⁰ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

privative'.⁴¹ This book explores how the Australian Jewish antifascist left's particular understanding of the Holocaust allowed lines of political solidarity and multidirectional comparison to be opened to decolonisation struggles internationally, as well as in Australia. The interpretation of the Holocaust within an antifascist framework meant that the memory of the Holocaust, rather than being understood exclusively as a Jewish story of past suffering, had wider political implications for Jews and non-Jews. The 'myth of silence' concerning Holocaust memory in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s reflects a general historiographical neglect of migrant memory and agency in this period.

Multiculturalism from the Bottom-Up

The history of Australian multiculturalism is often told as beginning with the 1970s replacement of assimilationist policy with a new set of policies that valued and enabled migrants diverse cultural identities. Australian Jewish history has been folded into this narrative, which gives primacy to the actions of an enlightened government. For political scientist, Geoffrey Braham Levey, for instance, the advent of official multicultural policy in Australia, produced a significant change in Australian Jewish self-perception allowing Australian Jews to express an ethnic identity publicly.⁴² In Levey's account, before these policies Jews publicly downplayed their difference, seeing themselves as 'Australians who happened to be of the Mosaic faith'.⁴³

By contrast, I look at Australian Jewish history from the bottom-up. Australia's celebrated multiculturalism is not a product of top-down government policy. Instead, the refiguring of power relations between Anglo Australians and non-Anglo migrants, and the construction of ethnic and multicultural institutions, resulted from a complex dialectic of ethnic self-organisation, class politics, and government responses.⁴⁴ Debates about Jewish identity, difference, and assimilation were occurring long before the Gough Whitlam Government's official implementation of multiculturalism in the 1970s. Previous histories have downplayed migrant political agency in the 1950s and 1960s, seeing migrants as completely alienated from existing Australian political par-

⁴¹ Ibid., 3.

⁴² Geoffrey Braham Levey, "Jews and Australian Multiculturalism," in *Jews and Australian Politics*, eds. Geoffrey Braham Levey and Phillip Mendes (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2004).

⁴³ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁴ George Zangalis, *Migrant Workers & Ethnic Communities: Their Struggle for Social Justice & Cultural Rights: The Role of Greek-Australians* (Common Ground, 2008), 321–327, passim; Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945–1975* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 131–155; Andrew Jakubowicz, Michael Morrissey, and Joanne Palser, *Ethnicity, Class and Social Policy in Australia* (Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales Kensington, 1984); Michael Kakakios and John van der Velden, "Migrant Communities and Class Politics: The Greek Communities in Australia," in *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia*, eds. Gill Bottomley and Marie De Lepervanche (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984); Simone Battiston, *Immigrants Turned Activists: Italians in 1970s Melbourne* (Kibworth Beauchamp, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2012).

ties, trade unions, and political institutions.⁴⁵ I build on recent studies to question the extent to which assimilationism was an all-pervasive social ideology and policy framework.⁴⁶

In my account Jewish people deploy notions of race, religion, and ethnicity in order to (partially) shape their own positioning within Jewish and non-Jewish discourse. They are not passive objects defined solely through a changing governmental racial discourse. The transformation of certain groups into ‘ethnicities’ within a multicultural society is thus neither a top-down nor natural process, but one shaped by multiple, contesting ideas and practices.⁴⁷ The formation of ‘ethnic identities’ in this context is just as much shaped through ‘intraethnic’ political conflict as through ‘interethnic conflict’.⁴⁸ My analysis of newsletters, propaganda, magazines, and the Jewish press reveals the conflicts and contradictions of Jewish efforts of self-definition.

This question of Jewish self-definition and collective identity brings us to another central concept of this study: ‘assimilation’. The conditions for Jewish acculturation and entrance into non-Jewish society in Europe only became possible through Jewish emancipation in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Whereas previously Jews belonged to separate collective legal and political entities, Jewish modernity meant the ‘shift of political agency to the individual Jew who became a citizen of the modern nation-state’.⁵⁰ This led to the hegemonic idea that ‘Jewishness’ was an ongoing attribute of an individual.⁵¹ In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western and Central Europe, Jewish people aiming to become accepted into wider non-Jewish society were marked and continually judged.⁵² Thus, individual personal conduct (whom one would marry, what

⁴⁵ See James Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1966); Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 1988).

⁴⁶ Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (North Freemantle: Freemantle Press, 2008); Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft, “Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation,” *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015): 234–251.

⁴⁷ Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 204–208.

⁴⁸ Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 18.

⁴⁹ This process proceeded unevenly and as suggested by David Sorkin, ‘interminably’. David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019). See also Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, eds. *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁵⁰ Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 4. For an overview of the diversity of Jewish political history, see David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

⁵¹ Julie E. Cooper, “A Diasporic Critique of Diasporism: The Question of Jewish Political Agency,” *Political Theory* 43, no. 1 (2015): 87.

⁵² This was particularly so in Germany which became the paradigmatic case. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, USA: Polity Press, 1991), 112–113. Hannah Arendt famously outlined that in this situation Jews could only choose between being a parvenu and a pariah. Hannah Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

one would eat, etc.) became *the* ideological terrain for anxieties over Jewish identity and futurity.⁵³

It is from this context that prior Australian Jewish histories have inherited their definition of assimilation as involving the taking on of non-Jewish modes of ‘dress, language and behaviour’ and intermarriage.⁵⁴ I break with this definition. Jewish assimilation is not a marker of becoming less Jewish, as if there were one ‘authentic’ mode of Jewish identification untouched by outside forces.⁵⁵ In my rendering, Jewish assimilation is not understood as the consequence of an agglomeration of individual Jewish behaviours. Assimilation is not a matter of individual choice or moral failing. It is not defined by declining adherence to a set of unchanging cultural or religious norms. Instead, I analyse assimilation as a political phenomenon. Jewish assimilation is an issue of *collective* political and cultural positioning. In this study it is an issue of collective political and cultural positioning in a context of structural colonialism and racism.

Jews, Race, and Settler Colonialism

Applying a critical framework to twentieth-century Jewish cultural and political history in Australia requires an understanding of the formation of Australian society through an ongoing process of colonisation and the entanglement of Australian Jews with a certain ongoing colonisation project in the Middle East.⁵⁶ This book frames Jewish antifascism in relationship with settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine and in Australia. Patrick Wolfe, one of the key figures in the field of settler colonial studies, has a materialist, structuralist analysis of race that has been a key influence in my work.⁵⁷ Wolfe suggests that racial divisions have their genesis as ideological tools used

⁵³ Cooper, “A Diasporic Critique,” 88; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1951; repr., 1976), 84.

⁵⁴ See Medding, *Assimilation to Group Survival*, 5–6; Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 141. For a critical analysis of post-Holocaust Australian Jewish discourse around intermarriage, ‘sexual insularity’, and heteronormativity, see Jordana Silverstein, “‘If Our Grandchildren Are Jewish’: Heteronormativity, Holocaust Postmemory and the Reproduction of Melbourne Jewish Families,” *History Australia* 10, no. 1 (2013): 167–186.

⁵⁵ See Amos Funkenstein, “The Dialectics of Assimilation,” *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (1995): 1–14.

⁵⁶ An example of the utilisation of a settler colonial framework for a study of Australian Jewish history and memory is Jordana Silverstein, *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 142–177.

⁵⁷ For an overview of the multiple genealogies of settler colonial studies, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “False dilemmas and settler colonial studies: response to Lorenzo Veracini: ‘Is Settler Colonial Studies Even Useful?’,” *Postcolonial Studies* (2020): 2–3; Jane Carey and Ben Silverstein, “Thinking with and beyond settler colonial studies: new histories after the postcolonial,” *Postcolonial Studies*, 23, no. 1 (2020): 7–8.

to create and maintain social divisions. In both Australia and Israel/Palestine, settler colonialism determines the operation of race. For Wolfe, settler colonialism requires replacing Indigenous people on their land with settlers; this leads to a fundamental ‘logic of elimination’ that has determined and continues to determine the relationship between non-Indigenous settlers and Indigenous peoples.⁵⁸ In Wolfe’s formulation, ‘invasion is a structure, not an event’.⁵⁹ There have been different objections to this analysis as it has been applied to Palestine/Israel and to Australia, respectively.

As Yoav Peled has outlined, the analysis of Zionism as a settler colonial movement and Israel as a settler colonial state often faces objections along two main lines. The first objection is that Zionist intentions were not straightforwardly colonial.⁶⁰ Without rehearsing the voluminous empirical evidence that significant Zionist intellectuals and institutions consciously positioned their movement as colonial, I would echo here Wolfe’s critique of Derek Penslar’s argument from intentions.⁶¹ That is, that no matter their supposed anticolonial, benevolent, nationalist, or other ideas, it amounts to a kind of historical solipsism to assess a process of dispossession and violence from the standpoint only of the intentions of the dispossessors.⁶² The primary case for an assessment of Zionism in Palestine as settler colonialism is that it has systematically replaced Palestinians on their land with Jewish settlers. While I expand upon this analysis in Chap. 4, for now we can note that this occurred through a program of land purchase exclusively for Jews and the establishment of a separatist economy, culminating in 1947–1948 through a violent mass expulsion of Palestinians in the *nakba*, and continuing through to today.⁶³

⁵⁸ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409; Patrick Wolfe, “Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race,” *American Historical Review* (2001): 866–905.

⁵⁹ Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 33.

⁶⁰ Yoav Peled, “Delegitimation of Israel or Social-Historical Analysis? The Debate over Zionism as a Colonial Settler Movement,” in *Jews and Leftists Politics: Judaism, Israel, Antisemitism, and Gender*, ed. Jack Jacobs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 107–109.

⁶¹ Peled covers some of this evidence. Ibid. See Derek Penslar, “Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?,” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, eds. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 275–300.

⁶² Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 205 fn. 6. The argument from intentions is also critiqued by Peled, Joshua Cole, and Elizabeth Thompson. See Peled, “Delegitimation of Israel,” 106–109; Joshua Cole, “Derek Penslar’s “Algebra of Modernity”: How Should We Understand the Relation between Zionism and Colonialism?” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, eds. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 301–316; Elizabeth F. Thompson, “Moving Zionism to Asia: Texts and Tactics of Colonial Settlement, 1917–1921” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, eds. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 317–326.

⁶³ Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 223–235; Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2012). As Shira Robinson notes ‘across the ideological spectrum, few historians’ dispute the similarities between Zionist settler colonialism and other settler colonialisms. Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the*

The second common objection, outlined by Peled, to this analysis is that Zionism did not have an imperialist mother country, so it cannot be assessed in a similar manner to other projects of settler colonialism.⁶⁴ Firstly, whether or not there is a mother country does not determine if the situation is a settler colonial one or not, the definition rests on the actions of the settlers, not where they come from. Secondly, as scholars such as Peled, Elizabeth F. Thompson, and Rashid Khalidi have suggested, this argument too falls flat when considering the role of the British Empire in sponsoring Jewish settlement in Palestine.⁶⁵ While neither the vast majority of the settlers nor the capital for this venture originated in Britain, the major legal, political, and economic settings which allowed the expansion of Jewish settlement and colonisation at the expense of the native Palestinians were all determined by British rule under the mandate system.

The objections to settler colonial analysis in the Australian case rest on two central claims: firstly, that such an analysis is fatalistic and dismissive of Indigenous agency. This objection rests on a misreading of Wolfe's analysis as suggesting that Indigenous resistance is always already doomed or at best inconsequential as the settler colonial state proceeds on a path of elimination that is never challenged.⁶⁶ This misinterprets the very nature of settler colonialism as depicted by Wolfe. For a settler colonial society to remain settler colonial, the logic of elimination remains *a logic* rather than being fulfilled, as 'the logic of elimination marks a return whereby the Native repressed continues to structure settler-colonial society'.⁶⁷ The constitutive sticking point is the persistence of Indigenous sovereignty. The colonisation of Australia and replacement of Indigenous people on their land by settlers is dependent not on the simple transfer of ownership from Indigenous to non-Indigenous people but on a continued effort to replace and deny a 'system of ownership', that is, a regime of Indigenous sovereignty.⁶⁸ For Wolfe, 'Native sovereignty does not end with conquest any more than Native ownership ends with dispossession'.⁶⁹ This is a point that has been made by Indigenous people in Australia for the last two centuries and is reflected by scholars such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson who writes that 'our ontological relationship to land, the ways that country is constitutive of us, and therefore the inalienable nature of our relation to land, marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-

Birth of Israel's Settler State (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 4. Israel remains a settler state. See Ibid.

⁶⁴ See Penslar, "Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?," 279.

⁶⁵ Peled, "Delegitimation of Israel," 113–118; Thompson, "Moving Zionism to Asia," 318–321; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 31–64.

⁶⁶ For a representative example, see Tim Rowse, "Indigenous Heterogeneity," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014): 297–310. For a critical overview of this critique, see Jane Carey, "On hope and resignation: conflicting visions of settler colonial studies and its future as a field," *Postcolonial Studies* 23, no. 1 (2020): 23–27.

⁶⁷ Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 36.

Indigenous’.⁷⁰ This subject position with its ‘inalienable relation to land ... cannot be erased by colonizing processes’.⁷¹

While this is a history of settler rather than Indigenous cultures and politics, it analyses any Jewish solidarity, or lack thereof, with Aboriginal people, as formed in relationship with Aboriginal political action. Here I follow Crystal McKinnon’s argument that Indigenous resistance to colonialism is better ‘appreciated as a continuous but dynamic expression of sovereignty that has never been ceded or diminished’.⁷² Jewish antifascism as it played out in Australia navigated settler colonial political formations that resembled not a ‘single-minded practice of elimination’, but ‘a “cacophony” of contradictions and competitions’ formed as iterative responses to the ongoing practice of Indigenous sovereignty.⁷³

Such an analysis also answers the second common objection to a settler colonial analysis of Australia, that is, that this analysis presumes an insular and exclusive category of pure eliminationist colonialism. Following Ben Silverstein, I consider settler colonialism not as antithetical to, but as a type of, colonialism ‘entwined in an imperial and imperialist world’.⁷⁴ This book is not a comparative history of settler colonialisms; it makes connections between settler colonialism in Australia and Palestine/Israel through considering their essential constitutive relationships with the British empire and the role played by both countries in a post-war re-configured imperialism led by the United States. The settler colonial character of the two colonies does not and did not guarantee any sort of automatic settler solidarity, any discursive affinities had to first pass through geo-political structures.

The other connection I draw is through an analysis of the pseudo-egalitarian tropes of settler ideology generated in both contexts. Australia and Palestine both developed triangular political structures—the metropolitan authority of the British empire, the settlers, and the Indigenous people. As Lorenzo Veracini highlights, in such situations there is a double imperative for settler egalitarianism, an egalitarian collectivity is formed to struggle for autonomy against the metropole on one hand and Indigenous

⁷⁰ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 11.

⁷¹ Ibid. See also Irene Watson, “Sovereign Spaces, Caring for Country, and the Homeless Position of Aboriginal Peoples,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 1 (2009): 36.

⁷² Crystal McKinnon, “Expressing Indigenous Sovereignty: The Production of Embodied Texts in Social Protest and the Arts” (PhD thesis, La Trobe University 2018), 10, cited in Ben Silverstein, “Reading sovereignties in the shadow of settler colonialism: Chinese employment of Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory of Australia,” *Postcolonial Studies* 23, no. 1 (2020): 45.

⁷³ Silverstein, “Reading sovereignties,” 53. Silverstein here cites Jodi Byrd’s notion of ‘cacophony’. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii.

⁷⁴ Ben Silverstein, *Governing Natives: Indirect Rule and Settler Colonialism in Australia’s North* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 7. Whereas Lorenzo Veracini argues that ‘settler colonialism is not colonialism.’ Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 13–31, cited in Silverstein, *Governing Natives*, 6.

people on the other.⁷⁵ I highlight and interrogate the supposedly emancipatory, egalitarian, and indeed anti-imperial aspects of settler colonial ideology as an aspect of the material processes of settler colonisation.

The logic of Indigenous elimination is the primary determinant of Australia's racial order. Probing the relationships between migration, racialisation, and settler colonialism, I figure Australian white supremacy as the product of a set of distinct yet interrelated processes. As Moreton-Robinson puts it, 'Indigenous people's circumstances are tied to non-Indigenous migration, and our dislocation is the result of our land being acquired for the new immigrants ... all migrants share the benefits of our dispossession.'⁷⁶ While Indigenous people and Jews have both been racialised, their racialisation is not the same, arising from different histories and logics.⁷⁷ This book explores how these differing racialisations played out and were understood by Australian Jewish antifascists.

Jewish people sit within Australia's racial order as settlers that are 'not quite white' or 'marginal whites'.⁷⁸ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews occupied an ambivalent position in relation to the 'White Australia' policy and Australia's changing racial hierarchy.⁷⁹ Before World War Two, whiteness in Australia was assessed in a racially determinist way, with reference to a particular white phenotype. As a result of the post-war mass migration programme, the category of whiteness was broadened and an importance was placed on race as a signifier of culture.⁸⁰ This emphasis on a common morality and values as a key element of whiteness runs through Australia's history of racial exclusion and white supremacy. This history is tied to larger issues of geopolitics and Western imperialism: from competition with China to the War on Terror; from the early exclusion of Chinese people through to more contemporary panics around asylum seekers, Muslim migrants, and Chinese influence.⁸¹

Jon Stratton notes that a growth in Australian nationalism, in the lead up to Federation and the establishment of the White Australia policy, was coupled with a rise of

⁷⁵ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 61, cited in Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 32.

⁷⁶ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 17.

⁷⁷ This book joins a recent historiography forming at the intersections of migration studies, Indigenous studies, and settler colonial studies. See Silverstein, "Reading sovereignties"; Samia Khatun, *Australianama* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2019); Maria Elena Indelicato, "Beyond whiteness: violence and belonging in the borderlands of North Queensland," *Postcolonial Studies* 23, no. 1 (2020): 99–115; Andonis Piperoglou, "Migrant-cum-Settler: Greek Settler Colonialism in Australia," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 38, no. 2 (2020): 447–471; Jimmy H. Yan, "'Ourselves Alone'? Encounters Between the Irish Literary Revival and Australian Settler-Modernisms, ca. 1913–1919," *Australian Literary Studies*, 36, no. 2 (2021).

⁷⁸ Jon Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish* (London: Routledge, 2000), 61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 193–250.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁸¹ Fethi Mansouri, "Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Australia," in *Islam and the West: Reflections from Australia*, eds. S. Akbarzadeh and S. Yasmeen (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the*

antisemitism in the 1890s.⁸² The White Australia policy, which would continue until the 1970s, was principally aimed at excluding Asian people and forming a ‘cornerstone of the construction of a homogeneous white Australian nation’; a nation simultaneously imagined as an outpost of the British empire and a ‘self-governing’ ‘white man’s country’.⁸³ In the 1890s Jews were attacked by elements of the press as part of an ‘aggressive nationalism’ that figured Jews as playing a nefarious role in ‘international finance and usury’.⁸⁴ The antipathy towards Jewish migration was particularly directed towards Russian Jews, who, unlike Anglo-Jews, were racialised as ‘Asiatic’.⁸⁵ Despite this, Jews in Australia were for the most part considered white until the 1930s when in governmental discourse potential Jewish migrants were racialised and considered unassimilable.⁸⁶

This book covers a period when Australian antisemitism was at its height, around the mid- to late 1940s, when anti-Jewish refugee sentiment combined with the adverse public reaction to Jewish terrorism in Palestine.⁸⁷ Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, Jews were discriminated against in Australia’s immigration policies.⁸⁸ This discrimination also extended into society more broadly at least until the mid-1960s.⁸⁹ An antisemitism informed by racial and religious discourse meant that ‘there was always the possibility that Jews in Australia would be racialised as “Asiatics” and excluded

International Challenge of Racial Equality (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).

⁸² Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, 204–206. This mirrored developments in Europe where as Patrick Wolfe puts it ‘the racialised Jew’ as a ‘displaced colonial surrogate within ... took on the xenophobic intensity of nationalism’s outward thrust’. Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 102; Shmuel Almog, *Nationalism & Antisemitism in Modern Europe, 1815–1945* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1990).

⁸³ Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, 214–215. As suggested above, this was coupled with a project of Indigenous dispossession and elimination which was justified on racial grounds. For a discussion of the relationship between Asian exclusion and Indigenous elimination and dispossession at the time of Federation, see Fred Cahir and Dan Tout, “‘All That Appears Possible Now Is to Mitigate as Much as Possible the Trials of Their Closing Years’: Alfred Deakin’s Attitudes to Aboriginal Affairs,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 64, no. 2 (2018): 177–193. On the White Australia policy and white men’s countries, see Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 137–165.

⁸⁴ Rutland also quotes *The Bulletin* calling Jews ‘the one with the Talmud’, suggesting that the racialisation of Jews in Australia was partly based on their perceived allegiance to alternate system of law and values. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 95.

⁸⁵ Jon Stratton, “The Colour of Jews: Jews, Race and the White Australia Policy,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 20, no. 50–51 (1996): 55.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 58; Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 144.

⁸⁷ Suzanne Rutland, “Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria: A Case of Racial or Religious Bigotry?,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003): 69–79.

⁸⁸ Suzanne Rutland, “Subtle Exclusions: Postwar Jewish Emigration to Australia and the Impact of the IRO Scheme,” *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 10, no. 1 (2001): 50–66; Andrew Markus, “Jewish Migration to Australia 1938–49,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 7, no. 13 (1983): 18–31.

⁸⁹ For example, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne Frank Woods noted in 1965 that ‘[a]nti-Semitism is fairly general in Melbourne in business and academic circles and in some schools, and certain clubs and organisations in Melbourne are barring Jews from membership’. Quoted in J.M. Machover, “Towards Rescue,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 7, pt.1 (1971): 10. The story for Sephardic Jews, migrating from India and the Middle East to Australia, was different from that of European Jews.

from the nation-state'.⁹⁰ Australian Jews struggled in a contested and contradictory manner to collectively define themselves in relationship to both antisemitism and settler colonialism.⁹¹ The racialisation of Australian Jews is intertwined with the history of settler colonialism in both Australia and Israel/Palestine. This book explores how intra-Jewish conflicts over Jewish racial and political positioning in Australia were heavily influenced by the changing place of Zionism and Israel within Western imperial designs.⁹²

The first four chapters explore the ideas and history of transnational Jewish antifascism, focusing on the rise and fall of the Australian Jewish antifascist political movement and its interrelationship with post-war decolonisation and Zionism. Chapter 2 examines the Holocaust as the central defining event of Jewish antifascism worldwide and looks specifically at how the Holocaust was memorialised in Jewish antifascist ideology in Australia in the 1940s and early 1950s. Chapter 3 builds on this discussion of Holocaust memorialisation to address the Jewish antifascist left's particular theorisation of fascism and antisemitism and the construction of a Jewish antifascist political subjectivity. In Chap. 4 I discuss how Jewish antifascists clashed with other Jewish political movements and orientations in Australia. I focus on the very particular approach of Jewish communists and antifascists to Israel and Zionism in the late 1940s. Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of the political fault lines of Australian Jewish politics in Chap. 4 exploring how a Jewish antifascist consensus was destroyed very quickly by the increasing alignment of international Jewish institutions with anti-communism and Western Cold War policy imperatives.

Chapter 6 switches gears to examine Jewish antifascism through its cultural history and focuses directly on the place of Jewish migrants within Australian settler colonialism. Chapter 7 explores the development of a Jewish antifascist 'minor culture' in Australia. I look at how the magazine *Jewish Youth*; the writings of Judah Waten; and the paintings of Yosl Bergner exceed a Jewish or an Australian national framing.

In this history there are two false promises of settler colonialism: that an exclusivist nation-state premised on Palestinian dispossession was the answer to antisemitism and, in the Australian case, that egalitarian and multi-ethnic national belonging was

Although restrictions were eventually lifted in the mid-1960s, they faced a greater degree of governmental racialisation and discrimination than that faced by European Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants as well as racial prejudice from Jewish community institutions, see Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 242–243; Naomi Gale, "A Case of Double Rejection: The Immigration of Sephardim to Australia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 20, no. 2 (1994): 269–286.

⁹⁰ Stratton, "The Colour of Jews: Jews, Race and the White Australia Policy," 63.

⁹¹ Here I build on and question aspects of Colin Tatz's mostly negative assessment of the historical relationship between Australian Jews and Indigenous people. Colin Tatz, "An Essay in Disappointment: The Aboriginal-Jewish Relationship," *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004): 100–121.

⁹² Abigail B. Bakan, "Race, Class, and Colonialism: Reconsidering the 'Jewish Question'," in *Theorizing Anti-Racism: Linkages in Marxism and Critical Race Theories*, eds. Abigail B. Bakan and Enakshi Dua (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). See also Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

possible without addressing the attempted suppression of Indigenous sovereignty. I bring critiques of these two promises together to discuss how Zionism and settler colonialism in Australia generated mutually reinforcing ideologies that foreclosed the development of more radical paths for Jewish politics.

Through an in-depth assessment of the political and cultural thought of the Australian Jewish antifascist left in this period, I aim to establish new conceptual and historical bases for the re-writing of Australian Jewish history in a manner that expresses the contemporary relevance of Jewish antifascist politics. This is a politics that presents a challenge to global capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy. As suggested in the epigraphs that frame this introduction, it is a history of an oppressed past, previously obscured by a narrow historicism congruent with the hegemonic conservative Zionist politics of Australia's Jewish communities. Writing this history as a recovery of this past has only been possible because of present-day challenges to this conservatism. In this sense, it is a symptom of a present that could begin to recognise itself as 'intended' in 'the image of the past' I offer here.

2. Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Fascism

Max Kaiser⁽²⁾

The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.

Theodor Adorno¹

On 3 March 1950, a letter appeared in the Yiddish edition of the *Sydney Jewish News* from Chaim Chalef.² In this letter Chalef gave an eloquent account of the history of the Bialystok Ghetto.³ He detailed the betrayal of the underground resistance, of which he was a part, by the Bialystok *Judenrat*, and he called for *Kapos* (concentration camp prisoners assigned supervisory or administrative functions by the Nazis) and people who had been part of *Judenraete* (Jewish leadership organisations in the Ghettos) who had been traitorous, to be excluded from Australian Jewish communities where there was ‘adequate proof’.⁴ According to Chalef these people

should be judged without any sentimental regards! To purify our ranks, so that Jews should know there is no scum! There must be a reckoning for everything! We must be certain that our ranks are closed and united.

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 1951; repr., 2005), 247.

² For further biographical details of Chaim Chalef, see “Chalef Chaim,” Virtual Shtetl, Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN, <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/biographies/4315-chalef-chaim>; Rafael Rajzner and Henry R. Lew, *The Stories Our Parents Found Too Painful to Tell* (Melbourne: AMCL Publications, 2008), 155.

³ It was later republished as Ch. Chalef, “The Judenrat and the Kapos,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

⁴ Chalef mentioned that unlike in Bialystok, in other ghettos such as in Warsaw and Kovno there were ‘heroic and sincere Juden-rat leaders’. Ibid. The thousands of Jewish administrative organisations set up by the Nazis had very mixed records, see Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972); Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81–86.

⁽²⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser

Chalef noted that ‘judgement is not so much important for us, but for the historian, for if, God forbid, such a tragedy should repeat itself, Jews should have learnt a lesson’.⁵ Chalef’s letter was a particularly powerful contribution to a passionate debate, then playing out in the *Sydney Jewish News*, regarding how Australian Jewish communities should treat Jewish refugees who had been accused of collaborating with the Nazis. The debate was prompted by the presence of *Kapos* in Australia.⁶

Chalef’s letter was the only sample of this debate to be translated and republished by the Jewish antifascist left-wing magazine, *Unity*.⁷ His stark and uncompromising appraisal of the history of the Holocaust meant, for him, that a complete re-assessment of Jewish communal politics in Australia was needed. Jews needed to build communal infrastructure and a political orientation that excluded those who would side against their own people. The memorialisation of the Holocaust was important, above all, to draw out its ongoing political and social consequences.

This interpretation was exemplified well in Australia, by *Unity*. *Unity* was published in Sydney between 1948 and 1951. It was a mature and sophisticated forum for debate, opinion, and analysis, representing a high point of Jewish antifascist and left thought. The Unity association was founded in 1945, inspired by the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (Jewish Council). Most people involved in the Unity association were active in the socialist Zionist movement, had some association with the Communist Party, or had communist sympathies.⁸ The Unity association began publishing the magazine in March 1948 before members of the association formed the Sydney Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism later that year.⁹ The magazine differed from other Jewish publications; it was not a newspaper, nor was it affiliated with a synagogue or a stream of Jewish religion.¹⁰ It was an independent magazine, governed by its own editorial committee, rather than being the organ of a political organisation or youth movement, though it had close ties and affinities with both the Melbourne-based Jewish Council and its Sydney equivalent. Notably, the magazine was published in Sydney rather than in Melbourne where the

⁵ Chalef, “The Judenrat and the Kapos.”

⁶ Ibid. In response to this discussion in the Yiddish press the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies instituted a commission of inquiry. Rutland has a brief discussion of this issue, see Suzanne Rutland, “The History of Australian Jewry, 1945–1960” (University of Sydney, 1990), 165.

⁷ Chalef, “The Judenrat and the Kapos.”

⁸ NAA: A6122, 155 REFERENCE COPY, “Jewish Unity Association” (1941–1949).

⁹ After the formation of the Sydney Council, the magazine continued to be published by the Unity association. All other political work was undertaken by the Sydney Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism. Nate Zusman, “‘Unity’ a Magazine of Jewish Affairs,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 9, pt. 5 (1983).

¹⁰ There were two major Jewish weekly newspapers in Melbourne at the time, both of which had substantial Yiddish supplements, the *Australian Jewish News* and the *Australian Jewish Herald*. In Sydney there was *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* and the *Sydney Jewish News*.

Jewish Council was much stronger and had more influence and followers.¹¹ This allowed the magazine to be somewhat independent from the Jewish Council's everyday campaigns and concerns and thus able to attract a broader range of readers and writers. It also allowed *Unity* to posit itself as a national Jewish magazine, appealing to and rhetorically addressing all Jews in Australia.¹² This meant that although parochial issues were occasionally covered by the magazine, in the most part it wrestled with larger, national and indeed international issues on a political and philosophical level.

The first issue of *Unity* in March 1948 opened with an editorial calling for a national Jewish conference to combat antisemitism.¹³ This editorial established a number of themes that would animate *Unity's* articles for the next four years. First, it established that *Unity* was actively engaged in political organisation and activism. Second, the editorial analysed antisemitism in order to better fight against it. Third, it highlighted the need for immediate action, noting that '[t]his is an urgent need of the moment. We dare not leave ourselves open to the rebuke of doing too little too late.'¹⁴

Memorialising the Holocaust

Unity first appeared in March 1948, not quite three years after the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. The Nazis had attempted to eliminate the Jews of Europe, murdering approximately six million Jewish people. As Jordana Silverstein suggests, a popular historiography and pedagogy has emerged in Jewish communities in Australia and the United States that imposes a chronological narrative structure on our understanding of the Holocaust. In these tellings there is a need for narrative closure 'to ensure that the Holocaust is finished, and the Jewish people reborn'.¹⁵ Silverstein demonstrates that this narrative closure takes the form of a reinstitution of the law and the creation of the state of Israel, both of which can be seen as forms of mimicry that seek Jewish safety and belonging in an embrace of particular facets of modernity.¹⁶ This has come to be the hegemonic narrative of the Holocaust within most Western Jewish communities. In the years immediately following World War Two, as images of

¹¹ This was not a decision made by the Melbourne Jewish Council. The two Jewish Councils were not, at this stage, in close co-operation. The driving force behind the establishment of the magazine was its editor Hyam Brezniak who lived in Sydney; see Suzanne Rutland, "Creating Intellectual and Cultural Challenges: The Bridge," in *Feast and Fasts: Festschrift in Honour of Alan David Crown*, ed. Marianne Dacy, Jennifer Dowling, and Suzanne Faigan (Sydney: Mandelbaum, 2005); Hyam Brezniak, interview by Hazel de Berg, 29 April 1975, National Library of Australia, Hazel de Berg collection.

¹² A part of Jewish left politics in this era was an ambition of unifying and thus leading the entire Jewish community.

¹³ "Editorial – Unity Says: A National Conference Needed," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jordana Silverstein, *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 87.

¹⁶ Ibid., 110–111.

the Western concentration camps were released (Dachau, Belsen, etc.), the dominant narrative of these camps was of general Nazi atrocities, framed within a nationalist narrative justifying World War Two or a liberal narrative that refused to understand the genocide of the Jews as the result of a distinct programme of racial extermination. The particular narrative of the Jews as victims of Nazi genocide was consistently played down by Western governments.¹⁷

Australian Jewish communities are the product of the Holocaust in a way that is not true for other Western Jewish communities, such as those in the United Kingdom and the United States. The combined effect of the migration of pre-war Central European refugees, as well as the post-war Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe, was to more than double the Australian Jewish population. The newcomers profoundly changed the structure, culture, and politics of the Jewish community.¹⁸ Tackling this situation, Judith Berman has suggested that the memorialisation of the Holocaust in the Jewish community in the first three decades following World War Two was somewhat inconsistent. In her account, the major institutionalisation of Holocaust memorialisation was an annual day of remembrance that was first held to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, then moved to *Yom Hashoah*;¹⁹ no Holocaust museum or other formal modes of Holocaust pedagogy were developed until the mid-1970s, when Berman suggests that the Holocaust moved from the ‘periphery of Australian Jewish public consciousness’ to its centre.²⁰

Berman’s analysis, however, neglects a close study of Jewish publications in the decade following World War Two, a neglect that conforms with a once-dominant histo-

¹⁷ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 205–269; Nathan A. Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights After the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 50–51. Daniella Doron provides a compelling account of the post-war struggle of French Jews to voice a specifically Jewish narrative of suffering during the War, against a mainstream narrative of universalisation and ‘[t]he fierce resistance of French state and society to alternative memories of the war’. Daniella Doron, *Jewish Youth and Identity in Postwar France: Rebuilding Family and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 32, 31–73. For a nuancing of Kushner’s assessment, particularly around a knowledge of the Holocaust in Britain in the immediate post-war period, see David Cesarani, “How Post-War Britain Reflected on the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of Europe’s Jews: A Reassessment of Early Responses,” *Jewish Culture and History* 12, no. 1–2 (2010): 95–130.

¹⁸ Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Rose Bay: Brandl & Schlesinger 1997), 256.

¹⁹ Judith E. Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945–2000* (Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), 15–20. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was commemorated on April 19. Memorial events were held in both Melbourne and Sydney from 1944 onwards. By decree of the Israeli government in 1953, Yom Hashoah is held on the 27th of Nisan on the Jewish calendar. There were significant Holocaust memorial events held by the Jewish Labor Bund, the *landsmanschaftn*, and the Katzetler Farband before the 1970s. This is mentioned only fleetingly by Berman. *Ibid.*, 8–9. There is a brief discussion of early Holocaust memorialisation in Margaret Taft and Andrew Markus, *A Second Chance: The Making of Yiddish Melbourne* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2018), 172–198.

²⁰ Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance*, 9.

riographical model of a post-war silence about the Holocaust in Jewish communities.²¹ While I will leave aside the question of the development of Holocaust memory in non-Jewish communities, I suggest that even a cursory glance through Australian Jewish newspapers of the late 1940s and early 1950s demonstrates that there was an overwhelming concern with the Holocaust and Nazism. However, this concern was effected in a register very different from the one that recognises and narrativises the Holocaust in the twenty-first century.

‘Six million of the “big noses” died in concentration camps’: Internalised Antisemitism, the Warsaw Ghetto, and a Political Ethic of Memory

In articles written shortly before his death and published in 1947 in the Melbourne Yiddish journal *Ojfbay*, the acclaimed Yiddish writer Pinchas Goldhar interrogated the effects of antisemitism.²² A few of his eloquent articles were translated and published for the first time in English in the early issues of *Unity*. For Goldhar, the effects of the Holocaust continued: ‘[t]he Nazis not only enslaved and slaughtered us, but also stigmatised us in such a way, and so discriminated between us and all other peoples and races, that our human values have decreased in the eyes of the world’.²³ The Nazis’ dehumanisation of Jewish people was a continuing source of external antisemitism, but also an internalised antisemitism.²⁴ The Holocaust was not simply a past event on another continent, it had a profound effect on a transnational Jewish imagination, provoking what Goldhar suggested was an ‘acute spiritual crisis associated with the great physical tragedy shared by all of us’.²⁵

²¹ See David Cesarani, “Introduction,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–4.

²² Goldhar had come to Melbourne from Lodz, Poland, in 1926, see Judah Waten, “Goldhar, Pinchas (1901–1947),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goldhar-pinchas-6415/text10969>, published first in hardcopy 1983, accessed online 30 March 2016.

²³ Pinchas Goldhar, “Does Anti-Semitism Affect Us Only Physically?,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

²⁴ ‘Internalised antisemitism’ is my, borrowed, terminology rather than Goldhar’s. The concept of ‘internalized anti-Semitism’ has been important for the US Jewish left since the early 1990s and has returned to prominence in the past decade. Past and present-day Jewish anti-racist activists have also criticised aspects of the concept’s deployment, see Jenney Milner and Donna Spiegelman, “Carrying It On: A Report from the New Jewish Agenda Conference on Organizing against Racism and Anti-Semitism,” *Bridges* 3, no. 1 (1992/5752): 138–147; Tallie Ben Daniel, “Antisemitism, Palestine, and the Mizrahi Question,” in *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice for Peace (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017).

²⁵ Pinchas Goldhar, “Jewish Antisemitism,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948).

In Goldhar's opinion this prompted a complete re-assessment of antisemitism and minority Jewish communities' political relations with the dominant non-Jewish societies. He stated: 'The fire of Hitlerian extermination-antisemitism has not been extinguished under the ruins of the Third Reich. It continues to smoulder everywhere, all over the world, and will flare up at the smallest opportunity. We must be alive to this danger and prepare all forces at our command to fight it.'²⁶ It was precisely this analysis that underlay the importance of memorialising the Holocaust in the pages of *Unity*. The Holocaust was not over. There was no outpouring of sympathy for Jewish people, or tempering of antisemitic attitudes, in the years immediately following the Holocaust. If anything, there was a hardening of opinion against Jews. In Britain, as a partial result of violence in Palestine, antisemitic riots broke out in 1947.²⁷ In Australia, there was an antisemitic campaign in the popular press against Jewish migration.²⁸ Politically conscious Jews in Australia saw a strong need to intervene against antisemitism in the public discourse of Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Part of this involved a memorialisation of the Holocaust that gave justice to a Jewish narrative and sought to create a greater transnational Jewish consciousness through the remembrance of the Jewish victims of Nazism.

In the April 1950 issue of *Unity*, Ernest Platz, a prominent member of the Jewish Council and a regular *Unity* contributor, wrote a letter to the editor, prompted by an article in the previous issue, decrying the dangers of antisemitic humour.²⁹ Platz aimed his letter's opprobrium at a prominent contemporary Australian Jewish comedian, Roy Rene, who played a character called Mo. A prominent part of Mo's humour was his self-deprecating antisemitism, including references to 'big noses'. This was unacceptable to Platz who said 'I was in a concentration camp. There the Storm-Troopers used to call us "the Jewish mob" and point to our "big noses" ... He [Mo] may be appalled to learn it, but experience proves that his kind of humour is as effective as it is brutal... six million of "the big noses" died in concentration camps or were consumed in the gas ovens. My father and 21 of my relatives were among them.'³⁰ Platz moved on to tell the story of Max Ehrlich, a famous comedian, who was with him in Buchenwald. According to Platz, Ehrlich was forced by the concentration camp guards to sing a song; "I am a Jew and you can see that by my big nose". Then, Platz continued, '[o]ne night in 1939 the Storm-Troopers clubbed Max Ehrlich to death. Before he died, he

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, 223.

²⁸ Suzanne Rutland, "Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria: A Case of Racial or Religious Bigotry?," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003): 69–79; Klaus Neumann, *Across the Seas: Australia's Response to Refugees: A History* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2015), 86–96. Walter Lippmann writing in the *Sydney Jewish News* suggested that Calwell's 1947 cessation of the family reunion scheme (which had been bringing Jewish refugees to Australia) demonstrated 'the extent to which racial and religious prejudices have survived the military defeat of fascism'. Cited in Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 236.

²⁹ Julian Rose, "Time to Call the Joke Off," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949).

³⁰ Ernest Platz, "Letters to the Editor – 'Time to Call the Joke Off'," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1950).

could be heard whimpering the slanderous song, “I am a Jew with a big nose”.’ Platz ended with a plea that Mr. Rene ‘this great Australian comedian’ would never end up in the same situation, ‘I would never again like to hear the echo of a dying voice whimpering, “I am a Jew with a big nose”.’³¹ An eyewitness account of a concentration camp murder here formed a direct warning against internalised antisemitism and its potentially devastating consequences.

Platz’s story worked as a powerful parable. However, Max Ehrlich was never in Buchenwald with Platz. Ehrlich left Germany for the Netherlands in 1939. In 1943 he was sent to the Westerbork concentration camp. Ehrlich was put on the last transport to leave Westerbork for Auschwitz in September 1944. He was murdered in the gas chambers less than a month later.³² We can speculate that Platz was informed of a version of this story through word of mouth, through stories shared amongst Holocaust survivors. A cynical reading of Platz’s account would hold that he was exploiting the memory of Ehrlich’s life and death to make his own political point. Though there may be an element of truth in that reading, we gain a better account if we consider Platz’s story as a form of what Marianne Hirsch terms ‘affiliative memory’. Hirsch defines ‘affiliative memory’ as a type of ‘postmemory’, which, as she puts it,

describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.³³

Hirsch uses the term ‘affiliative memory’ to describe how as a result of ‘loosened familial’ structures after the Holocaust, even those who were not actually descendants of Holocaust survivors gained a certain type of postmemory as ‘the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation, combined with a set of structures of mediation that would be broadly available, appropriable, and, indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective.’³⁴ Crucially, Hirsch suggests that postmemory does not take the form of an absolute identification with the memory

³¹ Platz, “Letters to the Editor – ‘Time to Call the Joke Off’.”

³² Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb, eds., *Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 54–57. Ehrlich was the director of the Camp Westerbork theatre group, a cabaret troupe that during its eighteen-month existence staged six major theatre productions. According to one account he was ordered to tell jokes by the SS officers in Auschwitz. “Max Ehrlich,” Music and the Holocaust website, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/camps/western-europe/westerbork/max-ehrich/>.

³³ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

of survivors; there is a necessary distancing which recognises the ultimate inability of non-survivors to comprehend survivor's experiences or inhabit an approximate subject position.³⁵

We can also apply this analysis to an understanding of the complex forms that memory and testimony took for the first generation of Holocaust survivors (and their generational contemporaries) for whom familial structures were to an even greater extent destroyed.³⁶ Although there are obvious variables that apply to intergenerational processes of postmemory creation that do not apply in the more immediate aftermath, there was still—as evidenced in publications such as *Unity*—a delay, still a mediated aspect of 'imaginative investment, projection and creation' in how this memory was transmitted, received, and felt, which was not a matter of recall. The traumatic memory of survivors was transmitted to others, who in turn did their own memory work of creation and transmission, creating universes of meaning for the legibility of the original experiences in a manner that is 'distinguished ... from history by deep personal connection'.³⁷

Dori Laub, a psychoanalyst, suggests that survivor testimony does not necessarily function to give an 'accurate' account of events, but this does not mean that their testimony cannot reveal a different form of historical truth, an added dimension of meaning and signification.³⁸ Platz's story should be seen as part of this memory work. It played a part in inventing a universe of meaning, an exchange of a particular type of knowledge across a transnational network of survivors, that extended through forums such as *Unity* to the wider Jewish community creating a new post-Holocaust Jewish public informed by selected truths garnered from the Holocaust experiences of survivors and those that left records of their experiences. At the same time, we should also recognise Platz as a talented writer and a passionate political operative. His story, his affiliative memory of Ehrlich's death, cannot be separated from his antifascist and anti-racist political commitments, which included combating internalised antisemitism.

Platz's 'eyewitness' account was part of post-Holocaust antifascist efforts at historical and political world-making that took place partially through a project of publicising, reviewing, and translating Holocaust literature. Although Platz's account is theorisable as a form of first-generation affiliative memory, it should also be thought of as participating in what I deem a Jewish antifascist political ethic of Holocaust memorialisation. This ethic was central to *Unity*'s approach to the Holocaust.

The emergence of this ethic can be traced in articles in *Unity* treating the commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In the years immediately following World

³⁵ Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 35.

³⁶ Marianne Hirsch, "Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory," *Discourse* 15, no. 2 (1992): 8–9.

³⁷ Hirsch, "Family Pictures," 8.

³⁸ *Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History (New York: Routledge, 1992), 59–62.*

War Two, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (aka the Warsaw Ghetto revolt) was the main emphasis of Holocaust commemoration.³⁹ *Unity* ran a special issue every year, to coincide with the Uprising's anniversary. For *Unity*'s second issue, Joachim Schneeweiss translated from Yiddish a long article titled 'The Fundamental Idea of the Revolt' by Tovyah Bashikowsky, one of the few surviving Warsaw Ghetto resistance members. For Bashikowsky the revolt was 'the most heroic demonstration of the will to live differently and the striving to become different'.⁴⁰ The revolt was ultimately important not because there was any prospect of winning, but rather because

[t]he idea of the Jewish revolt to be fought in defence of the honour of a people, became the greatest incentive for the minds of the masses and created greater strength than any previous revolt or uprising...Had we ended these bitter years only with Jewish destruction and not with Jewish strength, we would, in addition to broken hearts, have carried a burden of shame for ourselves and for the whole world. The heroic fight in the Ghetto saved the few survivors spiritually, giving them the strength to continue working and fighting, without regard to their incurable wounds.⁴¹

This passage gives us a crucial insight into how the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising became the pre-eminent aspect of the Holocaust memorialised by Jews in the post-war period.⁴² The story of the Holocaust as the widespread and indiscriminate slaughter of helpless victims was not only reductive, but also not a useful story for the type of Jewish consciousness that was being developed in post-war communities such as Australia. The story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising provided a productive metonym for the Holocaust as a whole because it represented a truly heroic struggle: it represented not only the horrors of the Holocaust, but also a forceful, proud, and militant Jewish resistance. Rather than occluding a broader knowledge and memorialisation of the Holocaust, the elevation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was a correlative for the expression of traumatic memory and the formation of a political ethic of Holocaust memorialisation.⁴³ Holocaust survivors, and indeed their generational contemporaries,

³⁹ Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance*, 15–20.

⁴⁰ Tovyah Bashikowsky, "The Fundamental Idea of the Revolt," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 125–133; Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 43–61. For a discussion of the political valences of the memorialisation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Israel, see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 434–439.

⁴³ Diner notes how in the US context Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial events became the vehicle for a much wider expression of Holocaust memory which encompassed all the Jewish victims of Nazism. In contrast with the Australian situation, she suggests that prominent non-Jews, 'particularly elected officials', were often invited to participate in these commemorations. Diner, *We Remember*, 65–79. David

could tie their ‘broken hearts’ to memories of the revolt as a vehicle that provided a means of interpreting and deepening the meaning of their struggles. The cover of the 1949 commemorative issue illustrates the affiliative nature of the memory produced by *Unity*. Adjacent to an image of the ‘Monument to the Ghetto Heroes’ are the lyrics translated from the Yiddish ‘partisan song’ composed in the Vilna Ghetto in 1943 by 21-year-old poet Hirsh Glick, who was inspired by hearing news of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.⁴⁴ The song spread throughout the ghettos and camps of Eastern Europe, subsequently becoming a mainstay of Holocaust memorial events throughout the Jewish world.⁴⁵ The lyrics themselves display a remarkable transhistorical spur to a greater Jewish consciousness:

And the morning sun will vanish all our woe/ All our yesterdays will vanish
with the foe/ And if the sun does not appear to bring us light/Then this
song will be our beacon in the night.../ That’s why they’ll never make us
say this is the end/ For we know somewhere, some day, we’ll find a friend/
And the day that we all dreamed of will be near/ When we’ll shout to all
the world/ “We Still Are Here.”⁴⁶

The lyrics “We Still Are Here”, featured on the front page of *Unity*, represented an identification with the partisans and victims of the Holocaust who may have sung this song. The ‘we’ represents a continuity formative of a post-Holocaust transnational Jewish consciousness and indeed an ‘imaginative investment’ creating a form of affiliative memory of the Holocaust.⁴⁷ This transtemporal memorialisation resembled homologous forms of remembrance in Jewish religious tradition which often involve an identification with past Jewish victims of oppression and suffering. As Hirsch notes, the most obvious example of this is during the Passover Seder when Jews are enjoined to identify themselves as, and thus remember, having been personally saved from slavery in Egypt.⁴⁸

The writers of *Unity* and the Jewish antifascist left more generally were attempting to understand the Uprising as a true rupture and discontinuity that produced a

Slucki notes the Polish hegemony that emerged in Holocaust memorialisation in the United States, which I would suggest was very similar in Melbourne. David Slucki, “A Community of Suffering: Jewish Holocaust Survivor Networks in Postwar America,” *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 119.

⁴⁴ Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 70–73.

⁴⁵ For an account of its first ever performance in Melbourne in March 1947, see Arnold Zable, *Wanderers and Dreamers: Tales of the David Herman Theatre* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1998), 28.

⁴⁶ “Cover,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949). In another version/translation of this song the same stanza reads: ‘The morning sun will tinge our today with gold/ And yesterday will vanish with the enemy/ But if the sun and the dawn are delayed/Like a watchword this song will go from generation to generation.’ Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust*, 71.

⁴⁷ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

⁴⁸ Hirsch, “Surviving Images,” 35. I will discuss the influence of specifically Jewish forms of remembrance further below.

radically new situation.⁴⁹ This is even more so the case as the revolt was brutally crushed, and almost all of the participants murdered. The temptation here then would be to historicise away the event's significance: everyone died, the Holocaust occurred, nothing was altered. The memorialisation of the revolt takes the form of maintaining a fidelity to the event as something truly significant in the face of seeming oblivion. In the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Jews moved from complete segregation and near death to a miraculous revolt that managed to fend off the Nazis for a month.⁵⁰ As Bashikowsky suggests, it is the strength of the revolt itself which allows the voiding of meaning, the murder and dehumanisation of the Nazis to be resisted. It is the centring of the revolt that allowed for the development of a particular consciousness and political ethic of memorialisation of the Holocaust. The emphasis on the militant and dignified image of resistance was of huge import to a Jewish antifascist movement that wanted to develop a proud Jewish self-consciousness. It enabled a transcendence and refutation of the image of the Jew as a dehumanised object of pity, as outlined by Goldhar. The focus on the Uprising shaped a certain political ethic of memory which transcended a merely historical appreciation of what had transpired.

In the hegemonic historiography and popular understanding, as discussed above, the mass murder of European Jewry was subsumed within a broader account of the clashing state regimes of World War Two. The ethic of Holocaust memory rendered by *Unity* as an account of individual lives, collective Jewish life, and Jewish resistance reflected a broader transnational Jewish memorial project to construct what we could deem a counter-imperial social history of Jewish life during the Nazi regime. This project represented both a challenge to a dominant historicisation and also a form of knowledge that exceeded history as such. As in the case of Platz, for the writers of *Unity* this ethic of memory was inseparable from a broader political commitment. This ethic represented an impetus to the creation of political and cultural forms of remembrance which produced a deep affective engagement with the Holocaust.

Reviewing, Translating, and Publishing Holocaust Literature

Unity had a strong commitment to translating, publicising, and reviewing eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust, particularly accounts of the Polish ghettos. In 1948, Hyam Brezniak, the editor of *Unity*, reviewed *No Traveller Returns*, a collection of

⁴⁹ In Badiou's terms the political subject is incorporated into the truth procedure that the event opens the possibility of. The subject thus becomes a militant of that truth. For Badiou the truth is the subject's fidelity to the event, defined as 'that which this fidelity produces in the situation'. A thinking of the situation according to the event embodies this fidelity, see Alain Badiou, *Ethics* (London and New York: Verso, 2001), 42; Alain Badiou, "The Idea of Communism," in *The Idea of Communism*, eds. Slavoj Žižek and Costas Douzinas (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 3.

⁵⁰ Marek Edelman, *The Ghetto Fights* (London: Bookmarks, 1946; repr., 2013).

stories from the Warsaw Ghetto, by Henry Shoskes, edited by Carl Reiss, published in 1945 in New York. The review begins with a startling quotation:

If we do not forget. If we keep their memory, and the memory of their deeds alive for generations to come, we will one day be recompensed for suffering with those who have suffered in the ghetto of Warsaw. We will take courage from their fight. We will know that a world in which there were such men and women cannot be without hope. We will understand that the Jews in the ghetto of Warsaw, too, were crucified for us, for all of us.⁵¹

This passage is an illustration of the ‘spiritual crisis’ referred to by Goldhar. Such was the unimaginable suffering of the Holocaust, that it provoked here an explicitly messianic schema of interpretation. For *Unity*, the meaning of the Holocaust was far from set; it needed an ongoing process of memorialisation, publicisation, and interpretation. Above all it needed to be understood as having had enormous ongoing consequences for international Jewish culture and politics. In an article republished in *Unity*, Professor Hyman Levy, a Jewish intellectual in the Communist Party of Great Britain, wrote of the importance of documenting this history. According to Levy, fidelity to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising meant not just memorialising the fighters:

when we speak of the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto, of the last 60,000 who fell on their oppressors with little more than their bare hands, and fought to the last before they perished in the flames, let us also remember those who in the midst of this inferno steadily secured that this unprecedented episode shall not go unrecorded in all its details, and that whatever else shall perish, the story of the Warsaw Ghetto shall live in the history of Jewry.⁵²

Jews were collecting and documenting their experiences of Nazi oppression and murder during World War Two and the Holocaust. In July 1944, Lublin in Poland was liberated by the Red Army. In August 1944 a major Jewish historical commission was set up in Lublin, which at its height expanded to 25 branches and 100 staff and conducted over 5000 interviews.⁵³ Jewish survivors in the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany also set up historical commissions and published journals which collected

⁵¹ Hyam Brezniak, “No Traveller Returns – Review,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948).

⁵² Hyman Levy, “Crucifixion of Jewry,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949). Note here the messianic title of the article. For an account of the historians of the Warsaw Ghetto, see Samuel D Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Indiana University Press, 2007).

⁵³ Cesarani, “Challenging the ‘Myth of Silence’: Postwar Responses to the Destruction of European Jewry,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, eds. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 16.

and published accounts of the Holocaust. These journals and other publications circulated throughout Yiddish-speaking communities worldwide.⁵⁴ As David Cesarani puts it,

[d]espite the disruptions of communications and disputed borders, authors, witnesses as well as manuscripts criss-crossed war shattered Europe. With extraordinary speed, accounts by survivors from one country appeared in another, frequently translated into a third language.⁵⁵

In an essay published in 1950, Phillip Friedman, a leading Yiddish historian, reported that there were over 10,000 books and articles published on ‘our recent catastrophe’, written by people ‘who never in their lives dreamed of becoming writers’.⁵⁶ In the same year A. Sonnenberg was writing in *Unity* of the creation of ‘a new literature ... the like of which the world has never seen before’; a literature which ‘in its naked revelation should shame mankind ... The Jewish literature which has survived deserves to be translated into every language so that all who can, may read and those who cannot, may listen.’⁵⁷ For Sonnenberg, the task of translating, publicising, and reading this literature meant a sacred, specifically Jewish form of remembrance conjoined with a secular universal political purpose: ‘[t]his literature is the Kaddish to our dead. Through their writing the dead must live. Through that writing their heroism must become known and strength renewed to banish fascism from the face of the earth.’⁵⁸ *Unity*’s ethic of memory meant a commitment to reading, reviewing, distributing, and publicising Holocaust literature, directly contributing to producing a specifically Jewish political consciousness. As I have suggested, this represented more than a fostering of historical consciousness. Sonnenberg’s injunction that ‘the dead must live’ is here both a product of and a spur to an affiliative memory of the Holocaust, a deeply personal connection and identification with the Jewish victims, formed through an ongoing ethic of memory.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18–19.

⁵⁶ Phillip Friedman, “Unzer Khurbn-Literatur,” *Yidisher Kemfer*, 31 March 1950 in Mark L. Smith, “No Silence in Yiddish: Popular and Scholarly Writing About the Holocaust in the Early Postwar Years,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 56.

⁵⁷ A. Sonnenberg, “War without Gold Braid,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

⁵⁸ Ibid. These sentiments were echoed in a review of *Bleter Fun Pain Un Umkum* (Document on the History of Jewish Extermination) published by the YIVO Committee, Melbourne, 1949. The volume was a compilation of accounts from seven survivors and was, as the review put it, ‘the first attempt in this country [Australia] to record for posterity data on the greatest Jewish tragedies, and provides not only material for the historians and writers of the future, but portrays for the reader to-day the real extent and nature of the tragedy’. Nate Zusman, the reviewer, wrote that ‘this book should be read and re-read, particularly by those fortunate enough to be in Australia during the war. It will bring home more forcibly than any other writing can, the nature of Fascism and the need for constant vigilance against a resurgence of this evil.’ Nate Zusman, “‘Bleter Fun Pain Un Umkum’ – Review,” *Unity: A*

It is important to note that although this consciousness was certainly deeper and more sophisticated than then dominant non-Jewish understandings, it was tied to images of the Holocaust that were necessarily limited by the available sources, which were principally the remaining survivors.⁵⁹ This circumscribed the ‘imaginative investment, projection, and creation’ which formed the immediate post-war memorialisation of the Holocaust.⁶⁰ As Sonnenberg noted, the literature produced by survivors could be grouped into three categories: descriptions of the Nazi concentration camps, accounts of the Jewish ghettos, and ‘the diaries of those Jews who managed to “live” on the Aryan side’, by either hiding or passing as non-Jews.⁶¹ In this respect, many aspects of the Holocaust were neither understood nor represented within the memorial narratives of post-war Jewish communities.⁶²

As translated, and publicised through the pages of *Unity*, we should acknowledge a further bias of presentation of this Holocaust literature, particularly in its major focus on resistance in the ghettos. As discussed above this militant Jewish figure was important to the re-imagining of Jewish identity. Notably in other imaginings of this figure, it was directly tied to a masculinised, Zionist ‘New Hebrew’ Jewish subjectivity, a break with the feminised image of the passive diaspora Jew.⁶³ *Unity* had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Zionism (as I explore in Chap. 4), and its images of Jewish resistance were more often geared towards a general antifascist and anti-assimilationist consciousness.⁶⁴

Although the image of the militant figure of ghetto resistance certainly predominated, *Unity* offered other approaches to Holocaust memory which held this heroic image of resistance in tension with more negative representations. In 1943, Itzhack Katzenelson, a participant in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, was deported to a concentration camp in Southern France. Before being sent to his death at Auschwitz,

Magazine of Jewish Affairs 2, no. 2 (1949).

⁵⁹ Cesarani, “Challenging the ‘Myth of Silence’,” 22.

⁶⁰ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

⁶¹ Sonnenberg, “War without Gold Braid.”

⁶² One of many instances of this misunderstanding was Platz’s claim that ‘six million [Jews] died in concentration camps’. Ernest Platz, “Letters to the Editor – ‘Time to Call the Joke Off’,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1.

⁶³ This was particularly the case in the cultural production of the DP camps, see Margarete Myers Feinstein, “Re-Imagining the Unimaginable: Theater, Memory, and Rehabilitation in the Displaced Persons Camps,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Though as noted by Yosef Grodzinsky, sixty percent of Jewish DPs chose not to go to Palestine, despite it being the easiest place to travel to. Yosef Grodzinsky, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Struggle between Jews and Zionists in the Aftermath of World War II* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 2004), 225–226.

⁶⁴ Cesarani notes that many of the Holocaust memoirs and testimonials that emerged in Europe in the immediate post-war years were written within a narrative of hegemonic post-war official national antifascist ideology which effaced the narrative of ‘racial persecution and the specifics of Jewish suffering’. Cesarani, “Challenging the ‘Myth of Silence’,” 22. *Unity* did not efface this narrative, they made it inextricable from their antifascist ideology.

Katzenelson told his friends where he had placed a long poem, ‘Song of the Slaughtered Jewish People’, ‘hidden in three hermetically sealed bottles and buried under the twisted and gnarled roots of an old tree’.⁶⁵ As part of their 1950 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial issue *Unity* printed a translated extract from this poem which ends ‘[o]h Heaven, desolate and waste! Oh vistas of wide and endless nothingness/ I have lost my God amidst your emptiness.’⁶⁶ In introducing this extract, the editors of *Unity* concluded that ‘[t]his volume of verse contains perhaps the most poignant, the most stark, record of the Third Destruction’.⁶⁷ By foregrounding the importance of a work like this, which represented the essential negativity and difficulty of assigning meaning to the Jewish catastrophe, *Unity* was attempting to hold open a gap in interpretation, an opening rather than a closure of narrative. The extract published here produces, in Hirsch’s terms, ‘the disruptive emotion that prevents too easy a resolution of the work of mourning’.⁶⁸

In a similar vein, Martin Jay suggests that Walter Benjamin was attracted to *trauerspiel*, a genre of German tragic drama, because of its ‘endless, repetitive “play” of mourning, as opposed to ... the allegedly healthy “working through” of grief’.⁶⁹ Jay cites Gillian Rose as suggesting that Benjamin’s ‘defence of repetitive, never worked through remembrance’ was grounded in the Jewish notion of *zakhor*, the ‘commandment that is at the heart of Judaism’, the ‘commandment to remember, which Benjamin would enlist for the method and outcome of revolution’.⁷⁰ According to Jay, ‘Benjamin defended

⁶⁵ Itzchok Katzenelson, “Song of the Slaughtered Jewish People (an Extract),” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* ‘The third destruction’ or ‘*der dritter khurban*’ was a common way to describe the Holocaust in Yiddish-speaking communities. The first two destructions being of the temples in Jerusalem. David G. Roskies notes that Katzenelson’s poem was published and promoted in Yiddish and Hebrew by the Kibbutz movement in Israel because of his links with the socialist Zionist Dror movement and that ‘Katzenelson’s long day’s journey into the ghetto night made maximal demands of the reader and would never have appeared were it not for its institutional sponsor’. David G. Roskies, “Dividing the Ruins: Communal Memory in Yiddish and Hebrew,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 90.

⁶⁸ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 172. Herz Bergner’s novel *Between Sky and Sea*, with its tragic, non-redemptive ending, works very much in this same vein. Herz Bergner, *Between Sky and Sea*, trans. Judah Waten (Melbourne, Australia: Text Publishing, 1946; repr., 2010).

⁶⁹ Martin Jay, *Refractions of Violence* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 15. *Trauerspiel* was the subject of Benjamin’s *habilitationsschrift*. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1928; repr., 1998).

⁷⁰ Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, 21; Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1993), 206. This concept is famously explored by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi who suggested that the invocation to remember, for rabbinic Judaism, displaced historical consciousness which was seen as unnecessary while ‘[t]he biblical past was known, the messianic future assured; the in-between-time was obscure’. Rose suggests this led to an ethic of ‘eschatological repetition’ at the expense of ‘political judgement’. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982), 24; Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, 207.

allegorical melancholy to keep the wound open in the hope of some later utopian redemption, understanding ritual or redemption as a placeholder for future happiness.⁷¹ We can see the writers of *Unity* participating in a similar ethic; their memorialisation was not aimed at curing the ‘incurable wounds’ of the survivors, their fidelity to the event of the Uprising served as placeholder for a future redemption as yet unknown in form—in Benjamin’s terms a ‘utopian apokatastasis’, a messianic vision of universal justice.⁷² As suggested above, this form of repetitive, ritualised memory practice has held a central place in Jewish religion and culture, often coupled with an injunction to a transtemporal and transhistorical identification. In what follows I argue that *Unity* did not embrace a Zionist narrative of transcending the Holocaust in order to make a clean break with an obsolete form of Jewishness. Instead it allowed its readers to dwell with the memory of the Holocaust, figured as an incurable wound, to continue to draw out its complex and non-teleological consequences.

‘Commemorating the Jewish “Anzac Day”’: The Warsaw Ghetto and Multidirectional Memory

Part of this struggle to understand the Holocaust was evidenced in *Unity*’s fascination with the ‘Monument to the Ghetto Heroes’ in Warsaw. Images of the ‘Monument to the Ghetto Heroes’, erected by the Polish government in April 1948 and designed by Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport, were featured in at least four issues of *Unity*, including the cover of the 1949 commemorative issue.⁷³ In Michael Rothberg’s analysis, the monument embodies a ‘double consciousness’: a specific experience of oppression and estrangement that opens up a more universal insight. Rothberg’s ‘double consciousness’ here gestures explicitly to W.E.B. Du Bois’ 1903 conception of ‘double consciousness’ which referred to ‘the fact that minorities are both “gifted with second-sight” by virtue of their inside/outside position vis-à-vis dominant culture and are plagued with a lack of “true self-consciousness” because they are “always looking at [their selves] through the eyes of others”.’⁷⁴ The monument is two sided, with bronze statues representing

⁷¹ Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, 22.

⁷² Jay defines ‘apokatastasis’ here as ‘the redemption of all the fragments of fallen reality, the admission of all souls into heaven’. Ibid., 20. See also Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin’s ‘On the Concept of History’*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 34–36.

⁷³ On the 1949 cover it was paired with the popular Yiddish ‘Partisan song’. “Cover,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949). Images of the monument were also prominent in contemporary US Jewish media, see Diner, *We Remember*, 29. For an account of the changing uses, reception, and interpretations of the monument, see James E. Young, “The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport’s Warsaw Ghetto Monument,” *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 69–106.

⁷⁴ According to Rothberg, ‘[t]he simultaneity of estrangement and insight that Du Bois locates in the black experience of modernity certainly finds its analogue in twentieth-century Jewish history and its articulation in Rapoport’s monument’. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 129–

the heroes of the ghetto as typically heroic ‘mytho-proletarian’ figures on one side.⁷⁵ On the other side of the monument there is a stone bas-relief depicting a ‘train of huddled [Jewish] figures herded towards their death’, a particularly Jewish narrative of suffering.⁷⁶

For Rothberg, rather than assimilating a specifically Jewish story into a flattening Stalinist and universalising aesthetic as some have alleged, the monument successfully holds both narratives together in tension.⁷⁷ The tension of this ‘double consciousness’, for Rothberg, is a precondition for making memory ‘multidirectional’.⁷⁸ Multidirectionality is a concept for thinking collective memory against the framework of ‘competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources’. Multidirectional memory is therefore ‘subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; [it is] productive and not privative’.⁷⁹ The monument’s simultaneous specificity and universality provides a discursive space for memory to travel in multiple directions.

The articulation of a specifically Jewish narrative of the Holocaust was in stark contrast to concurrent hegemonic interpretations, which denied the racial nature of the Nazi regime and considered the Nazi’s victims through liberal universalism in the West and as undifferentiated Soviet Citizens in the USSR.⁸⁰ David Ritter has suggested that this was very much the case in the non-Jewish Australian context, where the Holocaust only started to be widely known as a distinct phenomenon as a result of publicity from the Eichmann Trial in 1961.⁸¹ Even then, Ritter suggests that the interpretation of the trial was ‘heavily conditioned by the crucial context of the chilling and polarising rigidity of the Cold War’, occluding an understanding of the specificity of the racial nature of the Nazi regime and its genocide of European Jewry.⁸²

130. For the original quote, see W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: W.W. Norton, [1903] repr. 1999), 5–10.

⁷⁵ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 155, quoted in Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 128.

⁷⁶ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 128.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 128–131.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁰ See Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*; Zvi Gitelman, “History, Memory and Politics: The Holocaust in the Soviet Union,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5, no. 1 (1990): 23–37; Dov-Ber Kerler, “The Soviet Yiddish Press: Eynikayt During the War, 1942–1945,” in *Why Didn’t the Press Shout? American and International Journalism During the Holocaust*, ed. Robert M. Shapiro (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva University Press in association with KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 226. For an account of Auschwitz as de-Judaised memorial site in a ‘Cold War theater’ in the late 1940s and early 1950s, see Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003), 79–107.

⁸¹ See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

⁸² David Ritter, “Distant Reverberations: Australian Responses to the Trial of Adolf Eichmann,” *Holocaust Studies* 13, no. 2–3 (2007): 78. Paul Bartrop notes that there was sporadic reporting of the oppression and murder of Europe’s Jews in the Australian press throughout the War, but that general coverage of Nazi atrocities was very patchy until the exposure of the western camps in April and May of 1945. Journalists visited the camps personally, taking photographs and reporting on what the

In contradistinction, Michael Rothberg suggests that ‘communism provided one of the discursive spheres, both in the US and elsewhere, in which the articulation of genocide and colonialism could first be attempted’.⁸³ Peter Novick points to the high frequency with which Jewish communists, communist sympathisers and Communist Party members more generally, referred to the Holocaust in the United States. Their anti-Cold War and anti-McCarthyist rhetoric was particularly informed by Holocaust references.⁸⁴ Rothberg discusses how in the communist discursive sphere there uniquely emerged an idea of ‘the specificity of the Nazi genocide’ through its articulation in a ‘comparative framework’. This framed the Holocaust in comparison with other instances of racism and colonialism, most particularly with the civil rights struggles of African Americans.⁸⁵ In the post-war era American Jewish agencies focused huge amounts of energy on civil rights struggles. Jewish and co-sponsored events and campaigns on civil rights issues constantly evoked the memory of the Holocaust.⁸⁶ Although there was no such sustained movement amongst Australian Jews to campaign alongside Indigenous people in Australia, the interpretation of the Holocaust within an antifascist framework meant that the memory of the Holocaust, rather than being understood solely as a Jewish story of past suffering, had wider political implications for Jews and non-Jews.⁸⁷

In 1950 a controversy erupted highlighting the ideological disjuncture between a still somewhat assimilationist Jewish leadership in Sydney and a new antifascist, anti-assimilationist consciousness associated with the Jewish Council and *Unity*. Following a poor turnout for the previous year’s event, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies declined to organise a Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemoration in 1950. Brezniak, in his *Unity* column, was outraged: ‘[t]o Jews all over the world the day of the Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration is a day of remembrance for the fallen Jews in the greatest cataclysm in Jewish history. This is the day when the message of Jewish resistance and of Jewish survival is echoed once more. The leading body of NSW Jewry has no message.’⁸⁸ Brezniak continued, invoking a particularly Australian analogy: ‘[h]ave the few years which separate us from those never to be forgotten

Sydney Morning Herald called the ‘German Camp Horror which has Shocked the World’. Although the facts were readily available, these revelations were not identical to an understanding of what we would now deem the ‘Holocaust’, nor was it widely understood that the Nazis had a specific policy and programme of extermination of European Jewry. Paul Robert Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1933–45* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), 212.

⁸³ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 118.

⁸⁴ Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*, 93–94.

⁸⁵ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 118–119.

⁸⁶ Diner, *We Remember*, 294–296. See also Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 19–44.

⁸⁷ I explore the Australian Jewish relationship with Indigenous people in Australia and Australian settler colonialism in Chaps. 6 and 7.

⁸⁸ Hyam Brezniak, “Spotlight on Events,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

days when a symbolic revolt took place been sufficient to make us insensitive to the importance of commemorating the Jewish “Anzac Day”?’⁸⁹

This rhetorical flourish is a prime example of *Unity*’s deployment of multidirectional memory practices. Rather than substituting or hierarchising the two commemorations, Brezniak highlighted the importance of the Warsaw Ghetto commemoration by comparing it to the widely acknowledged importance of ANZAC Day in Australian society, connecting the suffering and sacrifice of Australian soldiers with the heroism and suffering of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters.⁹⁰ Brezniak both maintained the distinctiveness of the Jewish narrative, whilst opening up the collective memorialisation of the Holocaust to analogy and comparison in a specifically Australian context. This idea was echoed in *Unity*’s 1949 commemorative issue which featured a page titled ‘Lest We Forget’ including Holocaust photographs with descriptive captions. The introductory text read: ‘A reminder to those who need it! With horror we witness the revival of the Nazi movement in Germany, and many of those responsible for crimes against humanity, being placed in important posts.’⁹¹ This page at once connected the memory of the Holocaust and the importance of memorialisation with the traditional refrain of ANZAC Day commemorations, as well as pointing to the ongoing threat of fascism in West Germany. The collective memory of the Holocaust here was projected not just horizontally, across and through Australian ANZAC memory, but also forward, as an explicit warning for the future, manifested through an antifascist politics.

The memory of the Holocaust in general, and the Warsaw Ghetto in particular, took on an international significance for the writers and editors of *Unity* who placed themselves firmly within the worldwide peace campaign of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which sought to head off a seemingly immanent third world war.⁹² In the words of Hyman Levy, in an article he wrote after visiting Warsaw, ‘[m]ay the graveyard that is the Warsaw Ghetto be sanctified by becoming the graveyard of war itself. If this is to become a reality it will not come by mere words of dedication, but by the conscious and deliberate actions of all those who understand.’⁹³ Here an appreciation

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ The meaning and memory of ANZAC Day was far from uncontested in Australian society. See Nick Dyrenfurth, “Labor and the Anzac Legend, 1915–45,” *Labour History*, no. 106 (2014): 186; Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10–20. For an overview of the historiography on ANZAC day, see Bruce Scates et al., “Anzac Day at Home and Abroad: Towards a History of Australia’s National Day,” *History Compass* 10, no. 7 (2012): 523–536.

⁹¹ “Lest We Forget,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949). The line ‘Lest We Forget’, taken from Rudyard Kipling’s poem, ‘Recessional’, has been incorporated into the ‘Ode of Remembrance’ which is regularly recited at ANZAC day memorial events.

⁹² Although the worldwide peace campaign of these years was a key aspect of Soviet Union foreign policy, the peace movement in Australia certainly predated and exceeded its determination by the Soviet Union and the CPA, see Kim Thoday, “‘A Harder Thing Than Dying’: Peace Activism and the Protestant Left in Australia During the Early Cold War,” in *Fighting against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber (Melbourne: Leftbank Press, 2015).

⁹³ Hyman Levy, “Crucifixion of Jewry,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949).

and understanding of the history of war and fascism that led to the Warsaw Ghetto was tied to a political consciousness that could combat war in toto. We move here from the specifics of Jewish oppression and the Jewish Uprising to a universal political goal, embodying Rothberg's 'double consciousness'. We can also note this passage's Benjaminian resonances as discussed above: the memorialisation of the Warsaw Ghetto served as a placeholder for a more universal redemption.

‘[R]espectful, uniformed guests [who] were regaled with motion pictures of Warsaw in flames’: Genocide, the Holocaust and Decolonisation

In 1949, *Unity* ran an article covering the use of the term ‘genocide’ as part of the indictment of Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. As noted by the article’s author, Simon Wolf, the term had only been recently coined by the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin.⁹⁴ Wolf noted that the term ‘will, in due course, be included in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, but it first should penetrate into the minds of all civilised peoples as a term for the most horrible of deeds and, more important still, as a warning for the future.’⁹⁵ The article continued by detailing the arguments of Lemkin’s book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), which was notable not just for its strong legal arguments and documentation, but for being a pioneering work of genocide studies that framed the Holocaust in a comparative perspective:⁹⁶

Genocide itself was not invented by the Nazis: the blood-stained history of our planet contains dreadful chapters on the mass extermination of human beings. Genghis-Khan and Attila, described in history books as great warriors and conquerors, were in reality genocidal maniacs: the destruction of Carthage and Jerusalem: the massacres of the Albigenses and the Waldenses and, more recently, of the Armenians, were classic acts of genocide.⁹⁷

Describing the Nazi genocide, Wolf continued to detail Lemkin’s analysis: ‘[t]his all-out attack on the very existence of some races was made by the Germans against Jews,

⁹⁴ Simon Wolf, “Genocide: The Crime That Is No Longer Nameless,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949); John Q Barrett, “Raphael Lemkin and ‘Genocide’ at Nuremberg, 1945–1946,” in *The Genocide Convention Sixty Years after Its Adoption*, ed. C. Safferling and E. Conze (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2010), 46–47.

⁹⁵ Wolf, “Genocide.”

⁹⁶ A. Dirk Moses, “Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook on Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–41. See also James Loeffler, “Becoming Cleopatra: The Forgotten Zionism of Raphael Lemkin,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 19, no. 3 (2017): 340–360.

⁹⁷ Wolf, “Genocide.”

Gypsies [sic], Poles, Russians and other Slavs'. Enshrining the concept of 'genocide' as a crime in international law, he argued, would act as an important deterrent against 'any criminal attack on a civilian population by a conqueror in any future war, or by a ruthless oppressor of a racial, national or any other minority in time of peace.'⁹⁸ For Wolf, Lemkin's proposals and achievements meant both a specific conceptualisation of the Nazi's crimes and the beginnings of a new international political order which would prevent future genocides from occurring to any people.

In a 1951 issue *Unity* published a condensed version of an article titled 'Hitler and the Gypsies [sic]' by Dora E. Yates, then the world's foremost Romani scholar.⁹⁹ It was introduced by the editors, who noted: '[o]ne of the oldest Aryan groups in Europe was destroyed because it did not suit with Hitler's Fascist expansion. Let this account be an additional warning to the free people of the world of the danger of the revival of Nazism in Germany.' Yates then gave a brief account of Gypsy [Romani] history, beginning with an analogy: the 'Gypsies [sic], like the Jews, stand alone in the history of the world as an isolated race; both are, seemingly, miraculous survivals'. Yates continued:

Hitler and his gangsters then chose to classify the whole race as "asocial"—i.e., a nomadic people who did not fit into his New Order and a proper object for genocide ... [h]e decreed the wholesale massacre of Gypsies [sic] in Central Eastern and Southern Europe, for the sole reason that they were Gypsies [sic], a race of free men and women.¹⁰⁰

Unity's analysis of Hitler's regime as a racial, genocidal regime that targeted many groups including Jewish people evinced a sophisticated understanding of the Holocaust as well as opening up a wider field of analysis of racism and fascism, enabling the creation of multidirectional forms of memory and new lines of political solidarity.

An example of this is an article by John Hatch, a lecturer in International Relations at Glasgow University, in the February 1950 edition of the Jewish Council newsletter. Hatch wrote of 'the transformation of South Africa into a great concentration camp for all peoples with coloured skins' and made explicit comparisons with Nazism, suggesting that the Nationalist policy was 'galloping to the same end as was found in Dachau, Buchenwald, Belsen, Maidenek [sic] and a score of other camps'.¹⁰¹ An editorial from the short-lived Jewish Council affiliated magazine *The Clarion* (1952–1952) went further, criticising Australia's key allies, by suggesting that:

the Master Race theory of Nazism has reached a new peak in the war circles of America and Britain: for what is the difference between exterminating

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Dora E. Yates, "Hitler and the Gypsies (the Fate of Europe's Oldest Aryans)," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ John Hatch, "South Africa: Malan Brings Back Slave Labour," Newsletter of the Melbourne and

“Gooks” in Korea and “Yids” in Europe? Both are fruits from the same tree of evil.¹⁰²

The Jewish Council consistently connected the commemoration of the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with broader political issues. Whilst Berman notes that for the most part the speeches given at the annual commemorations were particularistic and insularly focused, the Jewish Council pushed to have non-Jewish speakers included.¹⁰³ Berman notes that Norman Rothfield, a key Jewish Council activist, stands out for his 1949 speech at the commemoration which made a universalistic point: ‘Jews did not die that we should weep and mourn, but so that we might live to carry on the fight for a better world secure from the fascism and war that destroyed them ... We must learn from the past and wake up to the danger of fascist tendencies and aggression everywhere today.’¹⁰⁴ According to Berman, Rothfield cited events in Indonesia and elsewhere as dangers to freedom.¹⁰⁵ We can note again here a Benjaminian suspended structure of mourning and its association with multidirectional Holocaust memory.¹⁰⁶ The references to South Africa, Korea, and Indonesia suggest not just that the memory of the Holocaust became a venue for new lines of political solidarity, but that anti-colonial and decolonial struggles provided a discursive space for the articulation of Holocaust memory.¹⁰⁷

In early 1949, *Unity* published a report on the World Congress of Intellectuals at Wroclaw (August 1948) from Ber Mark, a representative of Polish Jewry at the Congress and the editor of *Dos Naye Lebn*, the Yiddish organ of the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Warsaw.¹⁰⁸ The Soviet-sponsored Congress aimed to unite communist

Sydney Jewish Councils to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, *February* (1950).

¹⁰² “Editorial: The Clarion Fights for Peace,” *The Clarion: A Progressive Jewish Monthly*, no. 1 (1952).

¹⁰³ Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance*, 64–68.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68; “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 3rd April 1951” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

¹⁰⁵ Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance*, 68. The context of Rothfield’s remarks on Indonesia would have been the long-running struggle for Indonesian independence against the Dutch. Australian trade unions had played an active part in this struggle, principally through a ban on Dutch shipping, see Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960” (Victoria University, 2011), 33–38.

¹⁰⁶ Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, 209.

¹⁰⁷ Rothberg discusses this multidirectional movement in relation to the emergence of the idea of Holocaust survivor testimony in France against the background of the Algerian War, see Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 192–198.

¹⁰⁸ Ber Mark was a famous Polish Jewish communist historian. Interestingly Moshe Shklar notes that *Dos Naye Lebn* was a newspaper ‘without an official Party line’; that Mark was less dogmatic than the paper’s previous editor, Michal Mirski, who we encountered above at the World Jewish Congress, and that the paper ‘concentrated on mirroring a rebirth of economic and cultural life of Jewish society in Poland. Simultaneously it referred to the struggle of Palestinian Jews in the creation of the Jewish state.’ Moshe Shklar, “The Newspaper Folks-Shtime (People’s Voice), 1948–1968: A Personal Account,” in *Under the Red Banner: Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Postwar Era*, ed. Elvira

aligned and non-communist intellectuals against US imperialism.¹⁰⁹ The main focus of the article was the speeches given by ‘a series of representatives of the colonial and oppressed peoples’:

Each speaker in turn hurled a stirring J'accuse against imperialism ... They came to demand the fulfilment of the urge for freedom of millions of enslaved colored peoples, to cry out against oppression by imperialism, colonialism and racism. They came to unite with the ever-growing movement for freedom that is gathering power in Europe and rousing America from sleep.¹¹⁰

After detailing a number of the speeches and giving portraits of the colonial intellectuals, Mark continued: ‘[a] deep impression was made by the speeches of ... the French North African writer, Aimé Césaire ... [who] explained in broad, powerful terms the basic issues of colonialism ... Césaire ended his speech with the moving words, “[e]very time a Negro is beaten, a Chinese is oppressed or a Jew attacked, civilisation is desecrated.”’¹¹¹

Mark noted that a specifically Jewish perspective ‘did not come out as clearly and as strongly as it should at an anti-war Congress’. But he also noted that ‘in many speeches by both Jews and non-Jews mention was made of the Jewish tragedy, of present-day Jewish struggle and of the attitude of the Jewish people towards war and peace’. Mark wrote of his own unfulfilled impulse, to call out a German delegate for his statement that the German people had committed great crimes against the Polish people, “and also against other peoples”, rather than mentioning specifically the ‘barbaric murder of six million innocent Jews’.¹¹² Mark quoted Albert E. Kahn, the American delegate to the conference, who after outlining the growing problems in the United States, described his visit to the ruins of Warsaw: ‘I speak not only as an anti-Fascist and as an American. I speak also as a Jew. Six million Jews were annihilated in the last war. I have three children and I do not want them to suffer the tortures of the Jewish children in occupied Europe.’ Mark commented:

These words evoked a tremendous response. The audience hung on his words. They wanted to hear from the lips of a Jew, from a proud Jew, the J'accuse of the Jewish people. When the entire audience rose to its feet and gave the speaker a tremendous ovation, it was primarily applause for

Grözingen and Magdalena Ruta (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2008), 137.

¹⁰⁹ Robbie Lieberman, “‘Does That Make Peace a Bad Word?’: American Responses to the Communist Peace Offensive, 1949–1950,” *Peace & Change* 17, no. 2 (1992): 199–200. This congress formed part of the Soviet Union’s ‘peace offensive’. For further discussion see Chaps. 3 and 5 of this book.

¹¹⁰ Ber Mark, “Voice of the Oppressed: World Congress of Intellectuals in Wroclaw, Poland, August, 1948,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 6 (1949).

¹¹¹ See Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 66–107.

¹¹² Mark, “Voice of the Oppressed.”

the Jewish people, it was a tribute to the indescribable martyrdom of the Jew.¹¹³

The effect of this passage is to give the reader a sense of the power of Kahn's speech to the Congress audience. But the article was written for a Jewish readership; thus the reader is positioned simultaneously as both the international non-Jewish audience and in a similar position to the Jewish Kahn. The audience is portrayed as having a deep psychic need to hear a specifically Jewish account of oppression stemming from the 'indescribable martyrdom of the Jew'. Kahn fulfils the desire of the audience, while the 'tremendous ovation' also functions to validate the Jewish speaking position of Kahn, as well as represent a somewhat triumphant overcoming of Mark's initial hesitance to interrupt the German delegate. Mark's article is an emotionally resonant description of the discursive space opened at the World Congress in Wroclaw for an association of Holocaust memory and anti-colonial movements. We should also understand Mark's position as a global Jewish intellectual, representing not just Polish Jewry but a transnational antifascist Jewish consciousness. The printing of Mark's report in *Unity* speaks to the complex movement of thought and memory between a specifically Jewish memorialisation of the Holocaust, world communism and its associated cultural initiatives and international events, a post-war worldwide anti-colonial or decolonial moment, and finally the antifascist Jewish cultures created locally in Poland and in Australia.¹¹⁴

The salience of global decolonisation for Jewish antifascist thinking in this period is also apparent in an extraordinary article written pseudonymously for *Unity* in 1951. The author 'Maccabeus' decried the present state of world affairs:¹¹⁵

Cultured announcers purr into our homes the news that American Generals, the morganatic descendants of the victors of Bull Run and Gettysburg, are devising for the Chinese and the Koreans brilliant new ways of death which cause them to asphyxiate in airless vacuums caused by exploding petrol jellies that absorb the oxygen in the air. One thinks of those film shows, organised by German embassies in still uninvaded countries, in which respectful, uniformed guests were regaled with motion pictures of Warsaw in flames. Grain for starving India is held back to blackmail her government into the export of death-dealing materials, in the same way as the Nazis bartered the life of the Jews for lorries and drugs.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ For a much more unsympathetic account of the congress, see A.J.P. Taylor, "Intellectuals Betrayed Liberty at Wroclaw," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 September 1948.

¹¹⁵ 'Maccabeus' is a reference to Judas Maccabeus, or Judah Maccabee, the leader of the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire, a figure of Jewish anti-colonial resistance par excellence.

¹¹⁶ The article was clearly written from an Australian perspective, the decline of civilisation was partially indicated by 'Queenslanders thrill[ing] to the twang of Texan Guitars [and] housewives of

After outlining the mass movements against colonialism that erupted following World War Two, and associating these movements with a progressive movement of history, Maccabeus continued:

The deliberate resuscitation of Nazism in Germany which threatens the Jewish people is insolubly linked with the mad and impossible adventure of bringing the lords of rubber, tin and oil back to assume the white man's burden. Equally it is a childish illusion to believe that we can oppose one form of this catastrophic "policy" without opposing the other—an American High Commissioner in Germany who makes a mockery of de-nazification and conspires to return Krupp to the Ruhr is only trying to keep in step in his own sector with the work of a MacArthur, a Malcolm MacDonald or a De Lattre de Tassigny.¹¹⁷

Thus, 'Maccabeus' made clear that there was a strong link and continuity between fascism, American imperialism, and colonialism. In the paragraph quoted immediately above, it was the contemporary struggles against a resurgence of Nazism and rearmament of West Germany that were joined with an anti-colonial critique. In the first paragraph, it was the memory of the Holocaust that was associated with (then) present-day colonial violence. There was a mixing of temporalities here which both eschewed a unidirectional causal connection between phenomena and avoided flattening them as essentially interchangeable atrocities within a liberal universalistic schema. Paradoxically, the capacious nature of the progressivist historical schema employed here created a space for a non-hierarchised, non-deterministic, transnational and transtemporal comparison, co-implication, and multidirectionality. The rhetorical strategies employed by 'Maccabeus' here take us not just from the memory of the Holocaust through to a critique of contemporary American policy in West Germany, and a leap again to an account of colonialism in Korea, India, Malaya and Indochina, but also in the other direction. The anti-colonial movements battling colonialism and imperialism in these countries provided an occasion to articulate Holocaust memory within a broader field of political meaning.

'Learn[ing] what it cost German Jewry so dearly to teach': Lessons for Australia

Unity provides us with evidence that the experiences of the Jews of Germany during the rise of Nazism held particularly important lessons for the Australian Jewish antifascist left. The failures of assimilated German Jews became a key reference point for

the Murray country do[ing] their ironing, soothed by an American singer singing a Californian song'. "Maccabeus", "Despair and Hope," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951).

¹¹⁷ "Maccabeus", "Despair and Hope."

the writers and activists associated with *Unity* in combatting antisemitism, discrediting assimilationism, and creating an antifascist consciousness. As has commonly been pointed out, Germany's Jews held themselves to be 'more German than the Germans'. An embrace of German culture had as its concomitant a certain chauvinistic attitude towards *Ostjuden*, un-assimilated Yiddish-speaking and traditionally religious Eastern European Jewry, who migrated in increasing numbers to Germany in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁸ In an article translated for *Unity*, Pinchas Goldhar questioned this chauvinism:

Thanks to the integrity of their souls and their proud Jewish self-consciousness, our Eastern Jewry created a certain respect for themselves on the part of the non-Jewish surroundings. They were hated, but while hating them, they knew that the Jew was prepared to suffer for his beliefs, that he would die defending his Jewish faith or his revolutionary ideals. This bridled the hatred of anti-Semitism which became humanised and elevated to the state of a conflict, the state of a struggle between equals. The Jewish communities in Western Europe, as well as those in the countries across the sea, whose Jewish self-consciousness has become atrophied, are harbouring an unworthy fear of the surrounding world. Their souls are seared by an inferiority complex which is gnawing at them not only in a national sense, but is also degrading their human honour and dignity, and therefore, the hate towards them is as heartless and cold as if they were creations of a lower order.¹¹⁹

Leaving aside Goldhar's doubtful claims as to the superior antisemitism suffered by 'Eastern Jewry', this passage is indicative of a fundamental post-Holocaust re-assessment of Jewish culture, politics, and history. It is representative of a new widespread consensus on the ultimate failure of Jewish attempts to assimilate as an answer to antisemitism and thus a re-assessment of the content and worth of non-assimilatory Jewishness. Here it is crucial to note the way the case of German Jewry was understood and how it came to inform the political consciousness of those associated with *Unity*. The failure of German-Jewish assimilation became, through political parable and its ties with other forms of Holocaust memory, a foundational aspect of Jewish antifascist consciousness.

¹¹⁸ Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Enzo Traverso, *The Jews and Germany: From the 'Judeo-German Symbiosis' to the Memory of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Weissbort (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 7–22. Marion Kaplan suggests that Traverso's thesis of a false or unidirectional cultural symbiosis is somewhat overstated, that there were some examples of a genuine symbiosis and that Traverso's gender bias leads him to a 'marginalization of women [that] badly skews German-Jewish history, for it was in the home and family where Jews retained far more Jewishness than has previously been acknowledged'. Marion A. Kaplan, "The 'German-Jewish Symbiosis' Revisited," *New German Critique*, no. 70, Special Issue on Germans and Jews (1997): 185.

¹¹⁹ Goldhar, "Jewish Antisemitism."

In *Unity's* first issue, Judah Waten referred to the historical precedent of the chauvinism of German Jewry to warn against anti-Jewish refugee sentiment: '[r]efugee-baiting is, in the present circumstances, a form of Jew-baiting that must not be ignored—and is reminiscent of Hitler's attacks on the "eastern Jew" which lulled even some sections of German Jewry into a false sense of security.'¹²⁰ Hyman Levy, in an article on assimilation, took a similar line of argument:

[f]irst it was only the Jews from Eastern Europe to whom they [the Nazis] objected, not the more "cultured" German type, whose grandfathers only were of Hebrew extraction. This move played on a class distinction, for the Jews of Poland were perhaps the most poverty-stricken in Europe. And the middle-class German Jew—and the middle-class German—fell for it. "Hitler hasn't bad ideas, you know, if only he stops just there."¹²¹

It is notable that this argument was mounted not just against assimilation but also against intra-Jewish class divisions and racism. A further example of the significance of a particular narrative of German-Jewish history to Jewish antifascists in Australia was an article titled 'Heads You Win, Tails I Lose' by Walter Lippmann in *Unity*. Lippmann was a refugee from Nazi Germany, a leading activist in the Jewish Council and the Melbourne editor of *Unity*.¹²² Warning of the intensifying Cold War and the challenge to civil liberties represented by Prime Minister Robert Menzies' attempts to ban the Communist Party, Lippmann wrote: '[a]s Jews ... [w]e cannot run away from it, nor can we hide our heads in the sand and say, "this does not concern us." It concerns us vitally. And we must learn from the experience of Jewish communities elsewhere rather than repeat the lessons, only to learn them later, the hard way, by our own experience.'¹²³ Referring to the demonisation of Judah Waten by Jewish establishment figures, Lippmann continued:

[t]o exclude a man for no other reason than that he holds, or is alleged to hold, unpopular political views, is but a first step to the admission that Hitler was perfectly within his rights, when he arbitrarily excluded Jews from German citizenship or dissolved opposition parties ... Surely Australian Jewry will be on its guard and not allow itself to be divested from its tight and democratic course either by the fear of its weak-kneed

¹²⁰ Judah L. Waten, "Anti-Semitism in Australia," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

¹²¹ Hyman Levy, "Assimilation," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 5 (1948).

¹²² For a brief biography and a collection of Lippmann's letters, writings, and speeches, see Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft, eds., *Walter Lippmann, Ethnic Communities Leader: 'Creative Thinker, Dogged Worker, the Kindest of Men'* (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2016).

¹²³ Walter Lippmann, "Heads You Win, Tails I Lose," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949).

members or by the urgings of the local counterparts of that small group of super-Teutonic German Jewish intellectuals who, as the society of National German Jews, embraced even the ideas of Hitler. According to the story, they opened their meetings with a cry, “Down with ourselves!” ... There were Jewish firms which subsidised Hitler’s National-Socialism. They regarded themselves as far-seeing Jews, who thought their judicious investment might repay itself in immunity. We still have time to profit by their terrible experiences and to refuse to be drawn into the atmosphere of undemocratic intolerance ... We must learn what it cost German Jewry so dearly to teach. During periods of stress and straightened economy, no minority can hope, in the long run, to be freer than any other minorities, whether these be racial, religious or economic. Jewish liberties are bound up with general liberties. The only effective fight for Jewish rights, to win them or to keep them, is the fight for democratic rights and freedom of every group or class. It certainly is not to ally ourselves with undemocratic witch-hunts and to apply to ourselves and our allies the evaluation of our enemies.¹²⁴

The ‘National German Jews’ and the ‘Jewish firms which subsidised Hitler’s National-Socialism’ served a metonymic function here as representatives of a failure of German Jewry as a whole. There was a rhetorical slippage and association from firstly the ‘weak-kneed’ Jewish community members, then to the openly self-hating National German Jews, then to the ‘far-seeing’ Jewish firms, then to ‘German Jewry’ as a whole. Lippmann’s analysis and the arc of his rhetorical associations were reflective of his understanding of the vicissitudes of German-Jewish history. Historian Sidney M. Bolkosky has demonstrated how even after Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, representative Jewish organisations clung to an attachment to an idealised Germany, characterised principally by Enlightenment values. This attachment blinded large sections of German Jewry to the character and prevalence of a German racial nationalism and antisemitism.¹²⁵ Lippmann’s account here was rhetorical, rather than strictly historical. Like Platz’s account, it was based on his personal experience of Nazi Germany, but its truth was not necessarily to be found in its accurate depiction of events. For Lippmann, as for other German refugees to Australia, mostly middle class and assimilated, the lesson from Germany was to warn against the false security of assimilation and that as a minority Jews had an inherent political stake in ‘democratic rights and freedom’. They could not afford to be politically neutral. The

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Sidney M. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image: German Jewish Perceptions of Germans and Germany, 1918–1935* (New York, Oxford, Amsterdam: Elsevier 1975), 170–171; Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 230; Jürgen Matthäus and Mark Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution, Volume 1: 1933–1938* (Maryland and Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2010), xxxii–xxxvi, 1–2.

parable of the ‘National German Jews’ represents here the most extreme example of a supposed tendency in German-Jewish culture to self-effacement, prejudice, and absolute identification with Germany.¹²⁶

In an article for *Unity* that argued that fascism was inherently antisemitic, Waten referred to a well-known book, *The Jews of Germany* (1939) by ‘Marvin Lowenthal, a Zionist historian of the German Jews’ who wrote of the ‘disastrous theory amongst the Jewish people’ that fascism was not necessarily antisemitic ‘with the result that there was little resistance offered to fascism’.¹²⁷ I consider Waten and *Unity*’s particular theorisation of antisemitism and fascism in the following chapter, but for our purposes here it is instructive to note Waten’s source. Lowenthal’s history, largely written in 1935, with an updated epilogue in 1939, still stands as a well-written and sophisticated historical analysis. It combined a historical materialist examination of the class basis for Nazism with a complex account of the origins and development of German antisemitism. His analysis of Nazism as a sort of social faith or political religion based on racism, and antisemitism as a widely held delusion about excessive Jewish power, accords with the twenty-first-century historiography on Nazism.¹²⁸

Lippmann too had obviously read Lowenthal’s volume, using the same phrasing to describe the group of ‘super-Teutonic Jews’ as well as learning what it cost German Jews ‘so dearly to teach’. Lowenthal made explicit the political and ideological situation of the 1930s, which also seemed to hold true for the post-Holocaust, Cold War world of diasporic Jewish communities.¹²⁹ The old forms of a free and flourishing capitalism were dead, taking with it political liberalism and its promise of emancipation through assimilation. It was replaced with a crisis-prone monopoly capitalism and a concomitant authoritarian or fascist politics. Jewish communities needed to realise new ideas to respond to these radically altered economic and political conditions.¹³⁰

Zygmunt Bauman suggests that Germany’s Jews were put in an impossibly ambivalent position by the modernity he identifies with the German nation-state. In order to assimilate they needed to divest themselves of their particularity, but as Bauman puts

¹²⁶ Though this was certainly a prevalent tendency, historical scholarship over the past few decades has emphasised the complex nature of the development of German-Jewish culture. John M. Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 20, *passim*.

¹²⁷ Judah L. Waten, ‘Fascism Is Anti-Semitic,’ *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1950); Marvin Lowenthal, *The Jews of Germany: A History of Sixteen Centuries* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1939).

¹²⁸ Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust*, 192–202. While Lowenthal’s Zionism is not hidden, it is not overly pronounced or seen as the only obvious answer to the woes of Germany’s Jews.

¹²⁹ Or at least seemed to hold true from the vantage point of the early 1950s.

¹³⁰ Lowenthal, *Jews of Germany*, 414–417. This diagnosis is partially echoed by Eric Hobsbawm, himself a Jewish émigré from Berlin, who offers a less economically determinist account of the decline of political liberalism and the rise of fascism in Europe. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short 20th Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus 1994), 124–140. Christopher Vials discusses the ubiquity of class analysis-based accounts of fascism, in this period, in the US context. Christopher Vials, *Haunted by Hitler: Liberals, the Left and the Fight against Fascism in the United States* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 74.

it, their *Entjudung* (De-Jewification, or De-Judaisation) was cast as a *Verjudung* (Judaisation), an infiltration of German cultural and social life.¹³¹ Jews aiming to assimilate were put on a permanent trial period, where the grounds of the trial were constantly shifting, and one's success could paradoxically indicate one's cunning and artificiality, and thus one's essentially Jewish nature.¹³² As Goldhar put it, '[t]he less conspicuous we attempt to be, the more we are observed, and the more we are observed, the more we create a state of disorder and fear, with the result that we begin to look at ourselves with exaggerated attention and from the same angle as our enemies'. For Goldhar, this had the effect of 'crippl[ing] our Jewish self-consciousness by the sickly complexes of inferiority and persecution', creating an internalised antisemitism as described above.¹³³ Lippmann pointed towards the answer to this internalised antisemitism. In refusing 'to apply to ourselves and our allies the evaluation of our enemies' a space was created for a new consciousness and conception of pluralism and solidarity: '[t]he only effective fight for Jewish rights, to win them or to keep them, is the fight for democratic rights and freedom of every group or class'.

In this chapter I have outlined the major themes and modes of Holocaust memorialisation practiced by the Australian Jewish antifascist left in the immediate post-war period, as exemplified by *Unity* magazine and the Jewish Council. Their modes of memorialisation conformed neither to the dominant contemporary liberal framing nor to the narrative closure common to modes of Holocaust memorialisation in Jewish communities today. The Holocaust in this account was not finally over; the dangers of antisemitism and fascism were still prevalent. There was no silence in Australian Jewish communities in this period; while the Holocaust was not thought of in the same mode as it is today, it certainly was a key part of Jewish community consciousness.

I have tracked here the tension between images of militant and dignified figures of resistance and a foregrounding of negativity that could not be easily resolved into state-centred or nationalist narratives of closure or redemption. This can be further understood as reflecting a Benjaminian type of aberrated mourning. There could be no cure, or proper working through as a response to the Holocaust, only an ongoing memorialisation which would draw from it political and historical significances. In this sense, it was not as if a political layer of meaning was layered on top of raw experience or accounts of that raw experience. The political ethic of memory was the vehicle, the mediating factor, that made Holocaust memory in this mode expressible and intelligible.

In the Jewish left account, the Holocaust was not abstracted from history or politics or understood as belonging to a uniquely Jewish account of suffering. Instead it was seen in a multidirectional mode, leading to a political consciousness with a much wider critical framework opposing war, racism, and colonial oppression. *Unity* understood

¹³¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, USA: Polity Press, 1991), 119–120.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 112–113.

¹³³ Goldhar, "Does Anti-Semitism Affect Us Only Physically?"

the Holocaust as a racist genocide. This allowed lines of political solidarity and multidirectional comparison to be opened to global decolonisation struggles. In rejecting attempts to assimilate, or to practice respectability politics within an established oppressive political order, the stage was set for the development of a Jewish antifascist political subjectivity. This construction was to take place through a historically specific Jewish antifascist understanding of antisemitism. I turn to this topic in the following chapter.

3. Jewish Antifascism, Communism, and Antisemitism

Max Kaiser⁽³⁾

If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever.

Hannah Arendt¹

In August 1946, the acting chairman of Melbourne's Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Aaron Mushin, replied to a letter from a Mr. A.G. Silk who had written to the Jewish Council objecting to the inclusion of the word 'fascism' in the Jewish Council's name.² This was a common objection to the Jewish Council from those conservative members of the Jewish community who saw the need to actively combat antisemitism but thought that opposing 'fascism' made such a body overly political. Mushin replied that '[t]he Council was given its present title right at its inception, and after tremendous consideration'. A special meeting of the executive had been held that week to reconsider the council's name and had decided:

after a lengthy and exhaustive discussion ... that it cannot recommend an alteration to the name of the organisation. The history of the past decade abounds in examples which link anti-Semitism and Fascism. It was true not only in Germany but in democratic countries where such men as Mosley and Captain Ramsay proved the close tie-up which exists between anti-Semitism and Fascism.³

¹ Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': An Interview with Gunter Gaus," in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 12.

² "Letter to A.G. Silk from Aaron Mushin, 20th August 1946" (Papers of Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, State Library of Victoria, MS 14257).

³ See Barbara Winter, *The Australia-First Movement and the Publicist, 1936–1942* (Brisbane: Glass House Books, 2005).

(3) University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser
Email: kaiserm@unimelb.edu.au

This analysis was closely tied to the idea that the Holocaust and Nazism were not fully over and safely consigned to the past. As Mushin wrote:

There is, of course, a change in the world situation since the war has ended. But too often we have found, and considered it necessary to publicize, that while Hitler is dead his devilish work lives on in those quarters where the refugee, the newcomer, the foreigner, the alien, or the Jew are regarded as something inferior, something to be isolated, something to be blamed for economic conditions or post-war handicaps, something to be used as a scapegoat.

Mushin closed his letter with a suggestion that Silk host a drawing-room meeting with his friends, at which a member of the Jewish Council executive could

explain in detail the work of the Council and incidentally expound more fully the thesis that it is impossible to effectively combat anti-Semitism without understanding its close link with Fascism and without organizing activity in general against both equally dangerous anti-democratic manifestations.⁴

Mushin's letter outlined some major themes of the Australian Jewish left's antifascist politics during this period. The Jewish antifascist left saw the fight against transnational fascism and antisemitism as inextricable. This chapter examines the Jewish antifascist left's analysis of antisemitism as a socially and historically contingent phenomenon. This analysis was tied to a critique of assimilation and the articulation of the necessity of an independent Jewish political subjectivity. Popular Front ideology conceptualised countries like Australia and the United States as enlightened democracies fighting fascism. In the early years of the Cold War, pro-Soviet leftists became more critical of these democracies as both imperialist and racist. This chapter discusses how this Cold War anti-imperialism was connected to a more critical Jewish antifascist account of the genesis of antisemitism in Western democracies.

The 'spectre of Goebbels' and the Necessity of Antifascism

Mushin's reference to Captain Ramsay and Oswald Mosley in the passage cited above was not incidental. References to the prominent British fascist Mosley in *Unity* (Australian Jewish antifascist magazine discussed in Chap. 2) and in the Australian Jewish press more generally were frequent. This indicated a general Australian fixation on British politics and society but also an understanding that if fascism were to emerge

⁴ "Letter to A.G. Silk from Aaron Mushin, 20th August 1946."

in Australia it would take a similar form to Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF).⁵ Mosley had aimed to organise an international fascist movement, prompting a 1948 article in *Unity* by Len Fox asking 'Is Mosley a Danger to Australia?'⁶ Discussions around Jewish efforts to combat fascism were paralleled and influenced by those in the UK in the 1930s. In this period the established Jewish representative bodies received criticism from working-class and left-wing Jewish organisations for refusing to oppose fascism outright.⁷ As Daniel Tilles notes, this situation was resolved in the late 1930s by a 'communal convergence', with the Board of Deputies of British Jews eventually resolving to oppose fascism and the BUF fully rather than restricting its opposition to the BUF's antisemitism.⁸

In Australia during and following World War Two such a perspective was widely accepted in the Jewish community. As outlined earlier, in 1943 the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board (the precursor to the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies) voted to give the Jewish Council 'full moral and financial support'. It effectively took over all public relations activities from this point onwards.⁹ As noted by Phillip Mendes, this meant that the Jewish Council also operated as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's (the national representative body) public relations wing when the organisation

⁵ For example, "Mosley's Meetings in London," *Australian Jewish News*, 16 June 1950. The major political force on the Australian far right during the middle decades of the twentieth century, although their influence ebbed and flowed, was the Australian League of Rights, see Andrew A. Campbell, *The Australian League of Rights: A Study in Political Extremism and Subversion* (Melbourne: Outback Press, 1978). For an analysis of the BUF's 'imperial fascism', see Evan Smith, "The Pivot of Empire: Australia and the Imperial Fascism of the British Union of Fascists," *History Australia* 14, no. 3 (2017): 378–394. Mosley had created the BUF in the 1930s, was interned during World War Two, and after the War sought to revive a fascist movement. See *ibid.*

⁶ Fox described Mosley's efforts to 'organise a world Fascist International' and stated that his 'main successes appear to have been in South Africa, Germany and Scandinavia' and that 'already his filth-sheets, faithfully copied from the outpourings of Goebbels and Streicher, are being posted to key points in Sydney and Melbourne'. Fox concluded that 'the real danger of fascism to-day comes from men who don't look like fascists' and that 'Mosley is important, not in himself so much, but as an indication of how respectable Tories and Labour Party Right-wingers are prepared to tolerate and secretly encourage the most violent forms of fascism'. Len Fox, "Is Mosley a Danger to Australia?," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 5 (1948). Fox was a Jewish communist author and journalist, see Vera Deacon, "Farewell to Leonard Phillips Fox," *The Hummer* 4, no. 1 (2003/2004). Fox wrote a pamphlet outlining Jews' role in Australian society and denouncing antisemitism in 1939, which was republished in abridged form by the Jewish Council at the end of the war, see Len Fox, *Australia and the Jews* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1945).

⁷ Daniel Tilles, *British Fascist Antisemitism and Jewish Responses, 1932–40* (London: Bloomsbury 2015), 123–156.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 157–186. Although when Mosley re-surfaced after the war, conflicts within the Jewish community again arose over how best to approach Fascism. Dave Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 87–97.

⁹ P. Y. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community* (Melbourne Canberra Sydney: F. W. Cheshire, 1968), 63.

was based in Melbourne.¹⁰ Sender Burstin, a critic of the Jewish Council, outlined this situation in rather caustic terms:

It should be noted that the function of “Public Relations,” i.e. the point of contact between the Jewish community and the general public, was in the hands of the Council. Every decision in these matters at 325 Collins Street, second floor (the office of the Board), had to pass the censorship of 325 Collins Street, third floor (the office of the Council). In effect, the Council was representing the Jewish community to the Australian public and government bodies.¹¹

As discussed in the Introduction, during the 1940s, the Jewish Council had widespread support throughout the community.¹² The Council was constituted by hundreds of members and numerous committees, including special committees of doctors and lawyers and, later on, a very active and successful ladies auxiliary committee and youth section.¹³ That the Jewish Council’s activities were also frequently endorsed in the *Australian Jewish News* (*AJN*) serves to indicate that its antifascism was to a large extent hegemonic.¹⁴ This was reflective of a wider antifascist consensus in Jewish communities worldwide.

An editorial in *Unity* in April 1950 spelled out the continued importance of an antifascist politics in Australia after World War Two and demonstrates how *Unity*’s discourse was generated through political struggle. The editorial begins: ‘Goebbels’ spectre is still alive. Hitler’s lies and exploded theories are being refurbished.’¹⁵ The specific evidence referred to here was the widespread distribution of propaganda in Melbourne from the ‘All Aryan World Movement’, a white supremacist organisation which advocated ‘an alliance with Aryan Germany in a holy war against American Jewry and “their agents the Soviet Communists.”’ The editorial continued:

Shall we ignore such ridiculous and poisonous material? Some people in the community because of their sheltered lives in Australia have never really

¹⁰ It rotated between being based in Sydney and Melbourne. Phillip Mendes, “Jewish Communism in Australia,” in *A Vanished Ideology*, eds. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 207.

¹¹ Sender Burstin, “The Board, the Council and German Immigration (First Published in *Undzer Gedank* 1952),” in *Sender Burstin: Yiddish Melbourne Observed*, eds. Ben Burstin and David Burstin (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2013).

¹² *Medding*, *Assimilation to Group Survival*, 63.

¹³ David Rechter, “Beyond the Pale: Jewish Communism in Melbourne” (University of Melbourne, 1986), 84; “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Annual Report 1952–1953” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

¹⁴ For example, “Editorial – a New Age,” *Australian Jewish News*, 13 January 1950; Robert Kahn, “Here and There,” *Australian Jewish News*, 14 July 1950; William D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History: Volume 2, 1945 to the Present* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991), 404. See also Chap. 5 of this book.

¹⁵ “Editorial – Unity Says,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1950).

felt or understood the impact of Nazism on the Jewish people. They are advocates of silence. Their counterparts in Hitler's Germany only learned the folly of their inactivity on the threshold of the gas chamber. To-day, we dare not wait to see if these incipient cancerous growths take roots. Prompt action is demanded. The spreading of fascist and anti-Semitic doctrines threatens us not only as Jews but strikes at the very foundations of our democracy ... There is only one way to face up to this danger and it is certainly not to imitate the ostrich. The experience of those engaged in Public Relations activities, especially in the Melbourne and Sydney Councils, have proved time and again that vigilance and activity bring results. Only the stupid or the criminally negligent may believe that "It can't happen here" or that fighting anti-Semitism creates anti-Semitism—or that only support for Israel is necessary and the solution. Now is the time for those who do not shut their eyes to reality to join and strengthen the bodies actively concerned in fighting fascism and anti-Semitism. Awareness, vigilance and thorough understanding of the implications of such dangerous propaganda and hitting back in time—these are the only effective means of combating the horrible spectre of Goebbels.¹⁶

This editorial summarises aspects of the basic approach of a distinct Jewish antifascist politics. The 'spectre of Goebbels' was here a metonym for the Nazi regime and the Holocaust more generally. A central lesson of this period was taken to be that 'monstrous absurdities' cannot be dismissed because of their irrationality and previous marginality; people were susceptible to hateful propaganda given the right circumstances. The example of German Jewish inaction and assimilation was cited as a political parable, an argument against those Australian-born Jews who naively 'imitate the ostrich' in their approach to fascism. Fascism was analogised as a 'cancerous growth' that must be cut off before it can take root. It was figured here as inherently dangerous, something that could not be reasoned with or made somehow more moderate. Even in a nascent form, there could be no compromise in confronting it. 'Fascism' and 'anti-Semitism' were drawn together as being both dangerous for Jews and to the 'foundations of our democracy', a greater political threat to rights and freedoms. The Jewish Council and its Sydney equivalent were pointed to as the vital institutions to support and join by those 'who do not shut their eyes'. The implicit target of this editorial was not just the remnants of the previous assimilationist Anglo Jewish establishment, but a Zionist movement that had gained enormous momentum (and was soon to become hegemonic) with the establishment of the state of Israel, hence the derisive reference to those who hold that 'only support for Israel is necessary and the solution'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Jewish antifascist left's approach to Israel and Zionism will be explored in the next chapter.

As the Jewish left antifascist hegemony was contested in the Jewish community by the increasing primacy of Zionism and Cold War politics—a process that is covered in detail in Chap. 5—the Jewish Council and its associated milieu were increasingly called upon to justify their linkage of fascism and antisemitism. In 1950, Dr Aaron Patkin, the prominent anti-communist, Zionist intellectual, and editor of the Melbourne monthly *The Zionist* (1943–1952), wrote an article for his magazine strongly criticising the Jewish Council for its focus on fascism.¹⁸ In response Judah Waten set out a comprehensive view of the inextricability of fascism and antisemitism in an article for *Unity* titled ‘Fascism is anti-Semitic’.¹⁹ Patkin had claimed that the example of Mussolini’s fascist movement in Italy proved that fascism was not necessarily antisemitic. Waten responded with a history of the integral role of antisemitism in the Italian fascist party and went on to claim that:

It is true, of course, that fascism grows up as a movement without an ideology in the sense of a distinctive and systematic doctrine and world outlook. There is only a practise, and to cover this practise, a medley of borrowed slogans from any and every theory, principle, or institution which may serve the purpose of the movement. In other words, fascism grows up as a negative movement, in opposition to the Working-class and democratic movement and is mainly distinguished by the use of violent and extra-legal methods against the democratic movement ... at all times fascist movements, wherever they may be, employ chauvinist, racist, and anti-Semitic slogans.²⁰

¹⁸ Before emigrating to Germany in 1920, Patkin had been a secretary for Maxim Litvinov in the Bolshevik government. J.S. Levi, “Patkin, Aaron (1883–1950)” (Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/patkin-aaron-15092>, published first in hardcopy 2012, Accessed 8 November 2016). Patkin turned from a previous ally to an enemy of the Jewish Council in 1950. For another biographical sketch of Patkin, see Vivien Altman, “‘The Spark in the Ash,’” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 23, pt. 1 (2016): 79–92.

¹⁹ Judah L. Waten, “Fascism Is Anti-Semitic,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1950). In the next issue *Unity* published a response to this piece, which, while broadly in agreement with Waten, suggested a more nuanced analysis of Fascism, extending the analysis of fascism as a transnational phenomenon to suggest that even in a situation where there are no Jews, fascism always needs an outsider or a scapegoat with which to instil fear. Dr J. Gentili, “Where Do Anti-Semites Breed?,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950). It is notable here that Waten’s claim about the inextricability of antisemitism and fascism served also as an implicit riposte to the increasingly dominant Soviet ideology of downplaying the antisemitic nature of Nazi genocide in World War Two, see Zvi Gitelman, “History, Memory and Politics: The Holocaust in the Soviet Union,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5, no. 1 (1990): 23–37.

²⁰ Despite it being an entrenched view (particularly of Italian historians) in the historiography on Italian fascism, that antisemitism did not form a major feature of Italian fascism until pressure was received from the Nazi regime, the most recent historiography vindicates Waten’s position. Daniel Tilles and Salvatore Garau, “Introduction,” in *Fascism and the Jews: Italy and Britain*, eds. Daniel Tilles and Salvatore Garau (London, Portland: Valentine Mitchell, 2011), 6–13; Patrick Bernhard, “Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany,” *Fascism:*

What is key to grasp in Waten's theorisation here is both the persistence of the fascist threat and the transnational nature of the question of fascism and antisemitism, necessitating an international Jewish political response:

There is today a world-wide tendency among some Jewish leaders to try to ignore the development of fascist trends in countries like U.S.A., Great Britain and Australia. They chant that fascism is not necessarily anti-Semitic because they believe that fascism, if it would only play down its anti-Semitic aspects, would be preferable to a whole-hearted struggle against fascism which would imply the alliance of the Jewish people with the progressive democratic forces of the world.

Fascism was theorised here not as the result of a unique path of national development or as a cultural or civilisational deficiency, but as a transnational political movement.²¹ The section below outlines the political and ideological origins of Waten's answer to this movement—'the alliance of the Jewish people with the progressive democratic forces of the world'.

'I am a Jew': Jewish Antifascism and the Popular Front

While there is a significant historical literature on 'Jewish communism',²² the lens of 'Jewish antifascism' is a more helpful frame for an analysis of the Australian Jewish left during the 1940s and early 1950s. The popular incarnation of the Jewish antifascist left in Australia during this period broadly reflected a particular type of pro-Soviet, progressive, and Jewish internationalist Popular Front politics and worldview.

As Enzo Traverso has outlined, the origins of Popular Front antifascism lie with antifascist resistance in Italy. After the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933, these an-

Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies 6, no. 2 (2017): 127–162. As discussed by Ángel Alcalde, 'after the transnational turn, historians ... see fascism as a single transnational and global phenomenon that violently expanded throughout Europe and beyond by processes of transfer, mutual inspiration, hybridisation, interaction, entanglement and cross-border exchange.' Ángel Alcalde, "The Transnational Consensus: Fascism and Nazism in Current Research," *Contemporary European History* 29, no. 2 (2020): 243. For an analysis of fascism not as a coherent set of ideas but as a movement or set of behaviours, see Dave Renton, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

²¹ For an overview and discussion of the 'sonderweg' debate in German historiography, see Helmut Walser Smith, "When the Sonderweg Debate Left Us," *German Studies Review* 31, no. 2 (2008): 225–240. For a discussion of liberal antifascism as relying on a crude culturalisation of fascism, see Christopher Vials, *Haunted by Hitler: Liberals, the Left and the Fight against Fascism in the United States* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 60–61.

²² See Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik, eds. *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

tifascist politics expanded throughout Western Europe.²³ In Italy the major antifascist political grouping in exile was the ‘Concentrazione Antifascista Italiana’ formed by the ‘majority of democratic parties outlawed by Mussolini, from socialists to republicans’ in 1927.²⁴ In France, left-wing intellectuals and artists such as André Breton called for united action against fascism and established antifascist groups in 1934.²⁵ In the 1930s antifascism was expressed in a constellation of magazines published by European antifascist intellectuals and activists in exile around the world.²⁶ The Comintern’s policy shift during the mid-1930s was an adaption to the popularity and salience of this antifascism.²⁷ The Soviet Union and communist parties worldwide turned from their previous ‘third period’ political analysis, which had emphasised the need for a strict adherence to class politics and saw all reformist or social democratic political parties as enemies of the working class.²⁸ The rise of fascism across the continent, and particularly in Germany, saw a drastic recasting of this policy. Under a politics of the Popular Front, national patriotism and cross-class solidarity with liberals and social democrats (and indeed imperialist powers) and against fascism were emphasised.²⁹ Traverso suggests that elements of the politics and values of the Popular Front represented a sidelining of class analysis in favour of a defence of Enlightenment values of

²³ Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 261–264.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 261. For a history of antifascist resistance in Italy in the 1920s, see Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and the Resistance in Italy: 1919 to the Present* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

²⁵ Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 261–262. See also Anson Rabinbach, “Paris, Capital of Anti-Fascism,” in *The Modernist Imagination: Intellectual History and Critical Theory Essays in Honor of Martin Jay*, ed. Warren Breckman, et al. (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

²⁶ Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 262–263.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 261–262. For an analysis of early international antifascist organising, see Kasper Braskén, “Making Anti-Fascism Transnational: The Origins of Communist and Socialist Articulations of Resistance in Europe, 1923–1924,” *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (2016): 573–596. Joseph Fronczak makes the case that 1935’s global ‘Hands off Ethiopia’ campaign ‘midwifed the global Popular Front that followed’, see Joseph Fronczak, “Local People’s Global Politics: A Transnational History of the Hands Off Ethiopia Movement of 1935,” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 2 (2015): 250. For German political dynamics before 1933, see Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?: The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For antifascist organising in Britain preceding the inception of the Popular Front, see Tilles, *British Fascist Antisemitism*, 101–122; Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000), 5–41. For a history of the US Popular Front and its transcendence of Communist or Stalinist politics, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997).

²⁸ Matthew Worley, ed. *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004). For the Australian implementation of this policy, see Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 183–202.

²⁹ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917–1991*, translated by Allan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75–143; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 244–328. For a critical assessment of antifascism’s tension with anti-imperialist politics, see Tom Buchanan, “‘The Dark Millions in the Colonies Are Unavenged’: Anti-Fascism and Anti-Imperialism in the 1930s,” *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (2016): 645–665.

rationality, democracy, and progress. These values were posited as countering the perceived anti-modern, anti-rational, politics of fascism as well as other reactionary forces seeking to preserve traditional social hierarchies against progressive movements.³⁰

Recent work by Benjamin Balthaser has highlighted the plurality of Popular Front politics and culture in the US context, suggesting that as well as a Popular Front stress on a nationalistic celebration of American democracy, there were strong anti-imperialist and anti-colonial threads in the movement. Such threads intersected with African American and Native American modes of Popular Front politics and culture.³¹ There was also an international Jewish Popular Front politics.³² Both the Jewish and non-Jewish left's emphasis on fighting fascism meant a change in Jewish politics to reflect the understanding that Jews were especially targeted by fascism as Jews. As per the comments from Hannah Arendt that serve as this chapter's epigraph, this understanding had as its concomitant a new validity for a Jewish politics that fought fascism as Jews. This politics came to international fruition and prominence after the entry of the Soviet Union into World War Two.³³

³⁰ Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 263–264, 273–276. Walter Benjamin's theses on the concept of history contain a famous critique of this left-wing understanding of fascism, see Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1955; reprint, 1973), 245–255. For an extended discussion of conservative thought and politics as a reactionary response to movements which seek to challenge social hierarchies, see Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³¹ Benjamin Balthaser, *Anti-Imperialist Modernism: Race and Transnational Radical Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016). See also John Munro's discussion of an 'anticolonial front' in the post-war period. John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonisation, 1945–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

³² Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik, "Introduction," in *A Vanished Ideology*, eds. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 10–11.

³³ For an overview of the geopolitical positioning of the Soviet Union and its effect on the international left during this period, see Silvio Pons, "The Soviet Union and the International Left," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, eds. Richard Bosworth and Joseph Maiolo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Jewish communism was, to an extent, always a transnational phenomenon, and there are clear continuities here with the Jewish Popular Front politics of the late 1930s, a politics encouraged by the Comintern after 1937, see Nick Underwood, "Exposing Yiddish Paris: The Modern Jewish Culture Pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46, no. 2 (2016): 160–175; Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 34–36, 61–105. However, in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States, both a wider enthusiasm for a Popular Front politics in Jewish communities and a transcendence of Yiddishism on the antifascist (non-Zionist) left were post-1942 phenomena. In this sense, a Jewish Popular Front politics is part of a longer historical cycle of left politics that stretched until the late 1940s. Michael Denning uses this periodisation in his assessment of the Popular Front in the United States. Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xx. As suggested by Christopher Vials, antifascism, in the US context, remained as a vital 'political grammar and cultural force', through the late 1940s and beyond. Christopher Vials, "Antifascism as a Political Grammar and Cultural Force," in *American Literature in Transition, 1940–1950*, ed. Christopher Vials (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

While others have drawn attention to the impact of Popular Front politics on Yiddish communism,³⁴ I suggest there was a parallel move towards an English-language Jewish leftism internationally.³⁵ To understand this move, we first need to address the place of Jewishness within communist ideology and policy in the Soviet Union. In the first two decades of the Soviet Union, a Yiddish-language socialist culture was justified through the slogan ‘national in form, socialist in content’.³⁶ The creation of Yiddish cultural institutions and media through the 1920s and 1930s was envisioned by the majority in the Soviet Union’s leadership as a transitional means to assimilate Yiddish-speaking Jews into a broader Soviet, communist culture.³⁷ Soviet Jewish institutions were prohibited from publishing Jewish content or holding activities in ‘non-Jewish’ languages.³⁸ Content produced in Yiddish became the only officially allowable expression of Jewishness, imagined as a purely linguistically determined national minority grouping. Matthew Hoffman has demonstrated that although this was the same ideological justification for Yiddish-language communist media and activities in the United States, a distinctly *Jewish* communist culture was developed in the United States in the

³⁴ Matthew B. Hoffman, “‘At What Cost Comrades?’: Exploring the Jewishness of Yiddish-Speaking Communists in the United States,” in *A Vanished Ideology*, eds. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016); Ester Reiter, “The Canadian Jewish Left: Culture, Community, and the Soviet Union,” in *A Vanished Ideology*, ed. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

³⁵ There was likely a corresponding movement in non-English-speaking countries with substantial Jewish populations, but this is unfortunately beyond the scope of this book. For an examination of political conflicts between Zionists and progressives in the Jewish community in Argentina during the immediate post-war period, see Lawrence D. Bell, “Bitter Conquest: Zionists against Progressive Jews and the Making of Post-War Jewish Politics in Argentina,” *Jewish History*, no. 17 (2003): 285–308.

³⁶ Hoffman, “‘At What Cost Comrades?’,” 20–21. This too was a position taken by the ‘internationalists’ in the Bund around the turn of the century, see Roni Gechtman, “National-Cultural Autonomy and ‘Neutrality’: Vladimir Medem’s Marxist Analysis of the National Question, 1903–1920,” *Socialist Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007): 75–77.

³⁷ Though this assimilationist view was not pervasive or monolithic, see Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52. In actuality this project was more complex, creative, and contradictory, see Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006); David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet-Jewish Culture: 1918–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For an account of Bundist scepticism of the Bolshevik’s nationality policy, see Gertrud Pickhan, “Yiddishkayt and Class Consciousness: The Bund and Its Minority Concept,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2009): 256. See also Roni Gechtman, “A ‘Museum of Bad Taste’? The Jewish Labour Bund and the Bolshevik Position Regarding the National Question, 1903–1914,” *Canadian Journal of History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 31–67. As Brossat and Klingberg suggest, the Bolshevik’s Jewish policy was characterised by ‘zigzags and incoherence’. Alain Brossat and Sylvie Klingberg, *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso Books, 2016), 196. For a compelling sketch of Jewish history and lives in the USSR, see *ibid.*, 177–239.

³⁸ Gennady Estraiikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War* (London: Legenda, 2008), 3; Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 147.

decade before the inception of the Popular Front.³⁹ Nonetheless, the early 1940s turn towards a specifically Jewish progressive politics and culture in ‘non-Jewish national’ languages represented a significant international shift.

As discussed in the Introduction, in the Soviet Union the driving force of this re-assessment of Jewishness within communist politics was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFK). The Committee was set up by Stalin in 1942 along with other anti-fascist committees meant to rouse their respective constituents to support the war effort. The JAFK featured many prominent Yiddish poets, writers, and cultural figures and was headed by the famous actor and director of the Moscow State Theatre, Solomon Mikhoels.⁴⁰ As suggested by Antony Polonsky, the JAFK somewhat exceeded its brief, leading to a widespread politics of Jewish solidarity and identification (occasioned as well by the Holocaust), that was named as nationalist by Stalin’s regime.⁴¹ Coupled with the rise of Zionism in the Soviet Union, and the paranoia of the regime, the JAFK’s popularity and power led to its eventual liquidation and the murder of its central figures.⁴²

The JAFK published a regular Yiddish newspaper titled *Einikayt* [Unity], which was widely distributed in allied countries during the War.⁴³ Polonsky highlights a poem by Itsik Feffer, ‘I am a Jew’, published in *Einikayt* in December 1942 as a typical cultural production of the JAFK. Feffer emphasised a transnational and transhistorical continuity and solidarity among Jews, listing persecutions and successes of Jews throughout history and ending with the projected victory of the Red Army over Hitler and Feffer dancing on Hitler’s grave proclaiming ‘I am a Jew.’⁴⁴ The JAFK was successful in inspiring Jewish solidarity against Nazism and for the Red Army worldwide,

³⁹ Hoffman suggests that after the Popular Front period began, ‘the communists’ form of Jewishness becomes much less distinctive and more similar to other forms of left-wing Jewish identity and culture’. Hoffman, “‘At What Cost Comrades?’,” 21. See also Bat-Ami Zucker, “Jewish Communists and Jewish Culture in the 1930s,” *Modern Judaism* 14, no. 2 (1994): 175–185.

⁴⁰ Shimon Redlich, “The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the Soviet Union,” *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 1 (1969). See also Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

⁴¹ This was in some respects an echo of earlier conflicts between the Bund and the Bolsheviks over the supposed ‘nationalism’ of limited claims for Jewish autonomy, see Gechtman, “A ‘Museum of Bad Taste’.”

⁴² Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Volume 3, 1914 to 2008* (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2012), 570–581, 613–624. See also Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005). For a description of the workings of Stalin’s regime during this period, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 200–218.

⁴³ Polonsky, *The Jews*, 571.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 578–579. While the listing of historical persecutions and their overcoming by Jews was a typical Jewish nationalist trope, the crucial difference in Feffer’s poem was the tying of Jewish fortunes to those of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, see Gennady Estraiikh, “Itsik Fefer: A Yiddish Wunderkind of the Bolshevik Revolution,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2002): 14–31.

the high point being a visit of Mikhoels and Feffer to the United States in 1943 where they addressed crowds of tens of thousands.⁴⁵ Misreading the political climate, the JAFCC unsuccessfully pressed the Soviet authorities in 1947 and in early 1948 to allow the convening of an international Jewish antifascist pro-Soviet conference that would consolidate an international movement and provide an alternative to the World Jewish Congress.⁴⁶

This international Jewish antifascism exceeded the doctrine of ‘national in form, socialist in content’. The content itself was a politics of transnational Jewish identification and solidarity, though inextricably allied with an international socialist movement.⁴⁷ The form was no longer sutured to Yiddish. As we will see below, the internationalist, and non-nationalist, nature of this Jewish antifascism meant an explicit validation of the dynamic futurity of diasporic Jewish communities worldwide in whichever language or means of expression was available to them. I deploy the idea of Jewish dynamic futurity here to suggest a necessarily changing and changeable Jewish ‘ongoingness’ internationally that was staked against Jewish elimination, assimilation, or concentration in one place.⁴⁸ While the staging of an international Jewish conference was quashed by the Central Committee Secretariat, the ideas of an international progressive antifascist Jewish movement were already spreading around the world.⁴⁹

An Internationalist Progressive Antifascist Jewish Politics

The most important magazine reflecting this perspective was the US-produced *Jewish Life*. It was the most prominent Jewish left English-language magazine of this period, reflecting the size and particular history of US Jewry. It was well resourced,

⁴⁵ Polonsky, *The Jews*, 572. Shimon Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism: A Documented Study of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995)*, 74–75.

⁴⁶ Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism*, 86–88.

⁴⁷ Yehoshua A. Gilboa, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry, 1939–1953*, trans. Yosef Shachter and Dov Ben-Abba (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 42–86.

⁴⁸ While I am inspired here by José Esteban Muñoz’s conceptualisation of ‘queer futurity’, the concept of ‘dynamic futurity’ is my own formulation. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009). Both ‘futures’ are necessarily critical of and ‘profoundly resistant’ to the status quo of existing society, figured as inimical to their respective projected futures. However, Muñoz’s utopian futurity is explicitly positioned as a Kantian regulative ideal, to be strived for continually but never actually achieved, as forever anticipatory. In this reading, futurity is a potentiality within the quotidian. *Ibid.*, 1–22. An antifascist Jewish dynamic futurity, on the other hand, was both an explicit, though at times contradictory, political, and cultural programme and an actually existing political, cultural, and geographic praxis, encompassing both a rejection of assimilationism and a rejection of an ideal of Jewish exodus from Europe or elsewhere and concentration in Palestine.

⁴⁹ Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism*, 86–87.

well edited, and substantial, covering national and international issues and including reprinted and translated articles from international Jewish communist and left groups. *Jewish Life* was founded in 1946 as an English-language monthly offshoot of the *Morgen Freiheit*, the premier communist Yiddish daily from New York.⁵⁰ In August 1948, *Jewish Life* reprinted a keynote speech given by editor Morris Schappes at the American Jewish Cultural Conference in English, which summarised the magazine's perspective as reflecting neither Jewish nationalism nor Jewish assimilationism.⁵¹ Schappes dated the creation of 'English-speaking American Jewish' progressive culture to the inception of the Popular Front.⁵² He suggested that:

The assimilationist escaped not only from the ghetto, but from his people and, often, from himself, leaving a hollow thing. The bourgeois nationalist sought to build his own ghetto walls, not of medieval stone but of modern stream-lined glass brick. We progressive Jews are opposed to ghettos no matter how fancy, and we refuse to separate ourselves from our people.

For Schappes, this was not simply a question of developing an autonomous Jewish culture. To propose that the chief problem of assimilationism was the imitation of 'gentile ways' suggested a Jewish nationalist separatism or chauvinism. For Schappes bourgeois assimilation was not an issue of Jewish culture or ways of life being eroded by gentile or non-Jewish culture. Instead the problems of bourgeois assimilation were identified as the imitation of 'reactionary ways', a broader alignment with the forces of conservatism, imperialism, and the American establishment.⁵³ Jewish culture in this rendering was not something desirable in and of itself. What was desirable was a *progressive* Jewish culture, a culture framed within a broader anti-nationalist, internationalist vision. This vision was firmly pitched against the domination and exploitation of the ruling class and their efforts to build American empire. Progressive Jewish culture was to be built up to 'take its rightful place in the complex culture of many hues and varied sources ... in defiance of the reactionary Anglo-Saxon domination ... of American culture'.⁵⁴ This battle was intimately tied to the 'inescapable duty of bringing to book that last great citadel of imperialism'.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *Estraikh*, Yiddish in the Cold War, 27.

⁵¹ For a biographical sketch of Schappes, see Alan M. Wald, *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 174–180.

⁵² Morris U. Schappes, "Answer to a People Calling, Excerpts from Main Address to American Cultural Conference – June 18–19," *Jewish Life* 2, no. 10 (1948). Though here we should note that it was not only international influence from the JAFC at play in this new politics. Unlike the Australian and UK Communist parties, the CPUSA was 40 percent Jewish (at least in 1939), while anti-racism was at the forefront of communist politics there given the strength and salience of African American struggles, see Vials, *Haunted by Hitler*, 81–82; Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 29–44.

⁵³ Schappes, "Answer to a People."

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

In the United Kingdom, although Jews formed a substantial portion of the membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), it was not until 1943 that a National Jewish Committee was established in the Party. As Tony Kushner suggests, the analysis developed by the National Jewish Committee initiated a fundamental change in the CPGB's approach to Jewish issues.⁵⁶ Jason Heppell has outlined the pivotal role of the JAFC, and the visit of Mikhoels and Feffer to the United Kingdom, in initiating this new orientation.⁵⁷ Antisemitism had previously been understood as an epiphenomenal by-product of ruling class domination, meaning it could be addressed by a general emphasis on class struggle with no special tasks for Jewish communists.⁵⁸ This economistic analysis of antisemitism was replaced with a strategy that saw a progressive Jewish struggle as necessary to defeat antisemitic ideology. Jewish communists were tasked with 'mobilis[ing] all Jews and Jewish organisations' in support of winning the war, fostering solidarity with the Soviet Union and Soviet Jewry, and 'mak[ing] of the Jewish people an active element in the democratic life of the country'. This meant that Jewish communists were obliged to participate in Jewish organisations and actively campaign for Jewish rights, the plight of Jews in Europe and against antisemitism at home.⁵⁹ As noted by Kushner and Henry Srebrnik, this new approach was part and parcel of a 'pro-Soviet euphoria' that had developed amongst British Jews by the end of the War.⁶⁰

Emerging from this context was *New Life* (1947–1948), a short-lived progressive Jewish pro-Soviet monthly magazine. Unlike *Jewish Life*, it was an independent non-party publication.⁶¹ J.B. Jackson, responding to an article by Leo Koenig that 'challeng[ed] the very aims which *New Life* set itself' by questioning the worth and future prospects of a Jewish culture expressed in non-Jewish languages, laid out the analysis

⁵⁶ Tony Kushner, "Jewish Communists in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Zaidman Collection," *Labour History Review* 55, no. 2 (1990): 67.

⁵⁷ Jason Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics'? The Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1936–1945," in *Jews, Labour and the Left, 1918–1945*, ed. Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 101–112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 108–112.

⁵⁹ Kushner, "Jewish Communists," 69–70; Henry F. Srebrnik, "The British Communist Party's National Jewish Committee and the Fight against Anti-Semitism During the Second World War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 8, no. 1–2 (1989): 82–96. Although the Communist Party and its Jewish membership were much smaller in Australia, there was a parallel movement and shifting of analysis and priorities in the Jewish section of the Communist Party around 1943–1944. See NAA: A6122, 444, "The Tasks of Jewish Communists in the Struggle against Anti-Semitism and for the Rights of the Jewish People." This included the publication of a new magazine *Jewish Review*, of which unfortunately no copies are extant. A pamphlet issued at the time by the Jewish committee of the Party said, 'We have the right to ask every Jewish party member what he has done in the struggle for the rights of his people. Jewish comrades must, as Communists, be able to answer this question also. And they cannot be good Bolsheviks if they evade the issue.' *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Henry F. Srebrnik, "Communism and Pro-Soviet Feeling among the Jews of East London, 1933–45," *Immigrants & Minorities* 5 (1986): 298 cited in Kushner, "Jewish Communists," 70.

⁶¹ "Talking to Our Readers," *New Life* 2, no. 5 (1948).

and philosophy informing *New Life's* project. The 'collective experience of persecution and extermination' he argued had occasioned a new 'Jewish consciousness':

To this should be added a certain awakening to the fact that the question of existence and survival, even as individuals, can no longer be 'solved' by a policy of 'wait and see' but by a joint effort and by joining the forces of progress against those of reaction... It is not a 'Jewish question' but it is one affecting Jews more than any other section of the population. These then, are the realities of life, of Jewish life not less than of the life of the nations of the world. To reduce them, when speaking about Jews, to a question of language, Yiddish or Hebrew, is reverting to a narrow nationalism, making language the sole criterion of cultural values. From here there is only a little distance to mysticism of all sorts, to literary escapism and to bare formalism, completely disregarding contents and context. *New Life* it seems to us is attempting to reach out to as wide as possible a Jewish public, deeply affected by the problems of today. In giving expression to its needs and anxieties, encouraging hope and creative effort and enriching Jewish cultural experience with what is valuable of the Jewish past and of Jewish culture, which is being created in Yiddish, Hebrew or, for that matter, in any other language and in any land where Jews live and work, it can say that it is 'strengthening and spreading Jewish culture'.⁶²

Jackson's article is striking because of its refusal to hierarchise differing forms of Jewish culture. The Jewish cultural politics he outlined necessarily exceeded nationalistic formulations. Jewish culture was valid, possible, dynamic, and important in any country where Jews lived and in any language, including English. This linguistic and cultural pluralism was associated with combating antisemitism through a Jewish progressive internationalism. Reflecting the politics of the JAFC, this internationalism was a conscious politics of Jewish political and cultural struggle that sought liberation through solidarities formed across national boundaries, without seeking to dissolve Jewish difference through linguistic or territorial centralisation.

In Australia, this politics was expressed through the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism founded in Melbourne in 1942, a month after the formation of the JAFC.⁶³ As David Rechter has argued, it 'represented in institutional form the broad-based antifascist leftism [then] enjoying considerable vogue both within the Jew-

⁶² J.B. Jackson, "A Matter of Importance: A Reply to Mr Koenig," *New Life* 1, no. 6 (1947).

⁶³ While from around 1950 the Jewish Council was increasingly directed by a Jewish fraction of the Communist Party and its allies, in its first decade it was largely an independent body. However, Jewish communists were involved in the Jewish Council from its inception and there were certainly large overlaps in ideology. This is further explored in Chap. 5, see "The Tasks of Jewish Communists"; Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 81, 101. A 1944 Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) document reveals that at least one of the founders of the Jewish Council, Sam Brilliant, had a subscription to *Einikayt*. A further

ish community and in society at large'.⁶⁴ It combined practical activity in monitoring and responding to specific incidences of antisemitism as well as a larger propaganda effort that consistently tied together the threats of antisemitism and fascism.⁶⁵ The founding statement of the Jewish Council connected this analysis to a Jewish Popular Front politics: 'In its lust for power, Fascism has used hatred and persecution of the Jews as the first steps in its path for the Destruction of peoples and Communities and the subjugation of all Democratic Institutions and all forms of liberalism.'⁶⁶

Sydney's *Unity* magazine (closely associated with the Jewish Council) aligned itself with the international progressive antifascist Jewish movement. Its editor, Hyam Breznia, suggested that fighting antisemitism was impossible 'without seeking the social, political and economic roots of the disease', necessitating an alignment with progressive political forces.⁶⁷ This was coupled with an acknowledgement that the strengthening of Jewish culture in a majority non-Jewish country was a necessary cultural-political project.⁶⁸ In line with a Jewish Popular Front politics, *Unity* sought to be the leading light in furthering an antifascist Jewish solidarity between all sections of the community rather than acting as a dogmatic left-wing mouthpiece.⁶⁹ *Unity's* first issue saw a feature obituary article for Solomon Mikhoels, praising his immense cultural impact and his work as part of the JAFC. Accompanying this was the text of an 'exchange of cables' between the Unity association and the JAFC, (respectively) expressing and accepting Unity's condolences on the passing of Mikhoels.⁷⁰

Unity frequently republished articles from *New Life*, the British periodical, and obviously saw it as a chief source of inspiration and analysis.⁷¹ *New Life* was freely available in Australia and subscriptions were advertised in *Unity* and distributed through W.S.

report from the CIS indicates the circulation of 'Russian newspapers' through 'little cliques of Jewish people' associated with the Jewish Council. See NAA: A6122, 444, "Communist Party of Australia – Interest and Activities in Jewish Community" (1943–1954).

⁶⁴ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 82.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁶ "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Founding Statement" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁶⁷ H. Breznia, "A Matter of Opinion: We Must Look beneath the Surface," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Julian Rose, "Take Off the Blinkers," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948). For a similar change in Jewish left politics in Canada, see Reiter, *A Future without Hate or Need*, 40–41.

⁷⁰ "Exchange of Cables," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948). The article also featured a famous image of Mikhoels as King Lear, likely taken from the cover of issue four of *New Life*. In September 1943, Maurice Allen, a future member of the editorial board of *Unity*, in his capacity as the chairman of the Jewish Section of the Russian Medical Aid and Comforts Committee, cabled the JAFC to invite Mikhoels and Feffer to Australia. See NAA: A6122, 444, "Soviet Jewish Delegates." Mikhoels was murdered on Stalin's orders and his murder was made to look like an accident. Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism*, 129–134.

⁷¹ See Ernest Platz, "A Review of Jewish Overseas Publications," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1948). The similarities in design between *Unity* and *New Life* are also striking.

Matsdorf's bookshop on George Street in Sydney.⁷² *Jewish Life* and other communist material was not as freely available. The Jewish Council had a subscription to *Jewish Life*, but the magazine did not have an Australian distributor and direct subscriptions were monitored by the intelligence services.⁷³ A direct relationship with *Jewish Life* and an arrangement to republish articles was established in the early period of *Unity*'s existence.⁷⁴

The Australian Jewish antifascist left in this period did not express a Jewish-inflected but essentially regurgitated communism; it represented a distinctive type of progressive internationalist Jewish antifascist politics, one which explicitly and implicitly validated the cultures and futurity of diasporic Jewish communities. This was a transnational politics in which the Australian Jewish left was firmly enmeshed. Arrangements to republish articles from *New Life* and *Jewish Life* meant *Unity*'s ideas were developed in dialogue with the international Jewish left. As such *Unity* did not have a straightforward relationship with the Communist Party of Australia, the Soviet Union, or communism more generally.⁷⁵

‘The tall Russian ... brought their ghosts into the hall’: The Meaning of Communism for *Unity*

Hyam Brezniak was the main driver of *Unity* magazine and the magazine's editor. Brezniak had come to Australia from Poland in 1939, where he had been very active in left-wing politics. He was a member of the Communist Party at the time of *Unity*'s publication but became an inactive member after the ‘Doctors Plot’ in 1953 (Stalin's antisemitic campaign based around the accusation of a conspiracy of Jewish doctors to assassinate Soviet leaders).⁷⁶ Dr George Berger, a progressive non-communist Australian Labor Party member, and one of the founders of the Unity association, resigned in September 1949, complaining of the growing influence of a pro-communist perspective.⁷⁷ In contrast to Berger, Joachim Schneeweiss, a frequent

⁷² “‘New Life’ Advertisement,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

⁷³ “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 4th July 1950” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1); “Communist Party of Australia – Interest and Activities in Jewish Community.”

⁷⁴ Nate Zusman, “Letter to the Editor,” *Jewish Life* 2, no. 12 (1948).

⁷⁵ I will assess the relationship between the Melbourne-based Jewish Council and communist politics further in Chap. 5.

⁷⁶ Bernard Taft, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 30 August 1998, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/97. On the Doctor's Plot, see Polonsky, *The Jews*, 621–622. For further details on Brezniak's life, see Hyam Brezniak, interview by Hazel de Berg, 29 April 1975, National Library of Australia, Hazel de Berg collection. Brezniak discussed his dedication to Yiddish literature and poetry from a young age as well as his friendships with Judah Waten, Herz Bergner, Pinchas Goldhar, Clem Christesen, Brian Fitzpatrick, and Vance and Nettie Palmer.

⁷⁷ “Dr. Berger Leaves ‘Unity’,” *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 15 September 1949. Berger

contributor and translator for *Unity* and member of the Sydney Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (who would go on to be a fairly mainstream Zionist Jewish communal leader), interviewed many years later, perceived there to be very little influence from the Communist Party in either *Unity* or the Sydney Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism.⁷⁸

The available evidence suggests that although there was a small Communist Party Jewish Committee, there was no significant organised Jewish communist fraction in Sydney, unlike in Melbourne.⁷⁹ Letters between Communist Party branches in Melbourne and Sydney reveal that Brezniak had told others in the Communist Party that he had received no content from the Jewish communists in Melbourne, ‘hence the need to accept material from the Wattens [sic] and others’.⁸⁰ While Waten was a lifelong supporter of the Soviet Union, he had a fractious relationship with the Communist Party and at this time was not a member.⁸¹ The apparently less than preferable acceptance of material from the ‘Wattens’—which presumably included others associated with the Jewish Council—indicates a distance between officially sanctioned Communist Party viewpoints and those published in *Unity*.

There was little coverage of Jewish life in the Soviet Union in *Unity*, beyond reference to the equality enjoyed by Jews there, and the outlawing of antisemitism.⁸² Neither was there a focus on Jewish life in the Eastern European ‘people’s democracies’. This was in contrast to the focus on both in *New Life* and *Jewish Life*.⁸³ This lack of coverage was noted in a letter to the editor by Saul Factor, a prominent Melbourne Jewish communist, who asked:

was an art critic who fled from Vienna in 1939 and published many articles on art in *Unity* before his resignation. Interestingly Berger had previously resigned from the *Australian Jewish Forum* because of its emphasis on anti-communism. As will be elaborated in Chap. 5 there were many people associated with the Jewish left who found anti-communism abhorrent but were increasingly put off by the poor strategy and controlling influence of Jewish communists.

⁷⁸ See Dr. Joachim Schneeweiss, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 19 April & 22 June 1987, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/168–169. Schneeweiss was a refugee from Germany who came to Australia in 1939.

⁷⁹ NAA: A6122, 155 REFERENCE COPY, “Jewish Unity Association” (1941–1949).

⁸⁰ Ibid. At this stage Brezniak was also after international material such as the *Morgen Freiheit* (the Yiddish communist daily from New York of which *Jewish Life* was an English language offshoot), to be forwarded on from Melbourne. Ibid.

⁸¹ Waten was expelled in 1935 and 1942, paradoxically re-joining in 1957 at a time of mass exodus from the party following Khrushchev’s secret speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, see David Carter, “Waten, Judah Leon (1911–1985)” (Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/waten-judah-leon-14884/text26074>, published first in hardcopy 2012, Accessed 8 November 2016).

⁸² This was a common notion across the Jewish world until the late 1940s, see, for instance, Hannah Arendt, “Antisemitism,” in *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York, Schocken Books, 2007), 51. There were in fact official Soviet campaigns against antisemitism through the 1920s and early 1930s, see Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 158–170.

⁸³ For example, see J. Katsenelson, “With Reb Simche at Home: Letter from Moscow,” *New Life* 1, no. 5 (1947); Hershl Hartman, “The New Youth in Poland,” *Jewish Life* 4, no. 2 (1949).

Why has the Soviet Union failed to receive adequate mention in your magazine?... [T]he position of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union, with their magnificent culture and achievements might have received a little attention. It would appear, therefore, that in some respects, your magazine is lagging behind enlightened Jewish opinion in Australia, and is, therefore, not truly representative of the heightened Jewish conscience that exists in this country today.⁸⁴

It is also striking that there was only passing mention of Birobidjan in *Unity*. Birobidjan was the supposed autonomous Jewish province in the Soviet Union and an international cause célèbre for Jewish communists.⁸⁵ In May 1949, for instance, *Jewish Life*'s editorial was a dual anniversary celebration of both Israel and Birobidjan. Birobidjan was celebrated as a place where a 'socialist Jewish life is developing' as part of the Soviet Union's 'solution of the national question'.⁸⁶

Although there were likely a number of reasons behind the lack of coverage in *Unity*, including a lack of access to material, there were two principal reasons for this dearth. Firstly, from 1949 onwards there was a growing repression of Zionist political activism across both the Soviet Union and the 'people's democracies', which became a major issue for Jewish communities internationally.⁸⁷ *Unity*, like the Jewish Council, took a lowest common denominator approach, reserving its anti-imperialist opprobrium for the United States and its allies rather than featuring celebrations of (or indeed questioning) internal Soviet policy.⁸⁸ Openly approving of this repression would have lost them support in the Jewish community, and no doubt amongst the editorial committee and contributors to *Unity*.⁸⁹ Secondly, the Jewish antifascist left in Australia was

⁸⁴ S. Factor, "Letter to the Editor – 'Unity Criticised'," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1948).

⁸⁵ For an account of the Gezerd in Melbourne and its support for Birobidjan, see Rechter, "Beyond the Pale." For a history of the province, see Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland. An Illustrated History, 1928–1996* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For its support from American Jewish communists, see Henry F. Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924–1951* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010).

⁸⁶ "Anniversary Greetings," *Jewish Life* 3, no. 7 (1949).

⁸⁷ This was coupled with restrictions on migration to Israel. For the reactions of the Jewish press internationally, see David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 205; Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 68; "Editorial: The Mixed Blessings of Equality," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 8 September 1949.

⁸⁸ For the lowest common denominator approach of the Jewish Council, see Walter Lippmann, "Letter to the President & Executive of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism, 30 May 1953" (Lippmann collection, 1953).

⁸⁹ This reflected a much more pro-Israel and Zionist mainstream Jewish community in Australia than in Britain or in the established non-Zionist communist constituency in the United States, see Paul Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism: History of a Divorce* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), 44–68; Hoffman, "'At What Cost Comrades?'," 34. An exception to this was a

committed to an analysis of antisemitism that expressly refuted the notion that antisemitism was somehow caused by Jewish behaviour or identity. This served as a rebuff both to Zionist ideas of Jewish ‘normalisation’ or a restored Jewish dignity through the establishment of Israel, but also to communist ideas of Jewish economic integration, ‘normalisation’ and ‘productivisation’.⁹⁰ In the aforementioned editorial in *Jewish Life*, this was phrased as ‘the productivization of the Jew’. This style of rhetoric and social policy was common across Jewish and non-Jewish discourse in the post-war ‘people’s democracies’.⁹¹ This rhetoric was diametrically opposed to the analysis of antisemitism developed by the Australian Jewish left, as I explore below, making a forthright or in-depth focus on Soviet and Eastern European Jewish life a fraught prospect for *Unity*.

Nonetheless, *Unity* was stridently pro-Soviet in orientation. It is evident, however, that this orientation was tied inextricably to an antifascist worldview. In March 1949, *Unity* translated and published a striking article by B. Feder from the Paris communist Yiddish daily *Naye Presse*.⁹² Titled ‘In the country of the United Nations’, it illustrates well the international Jewish left’s imagination of the Soviet Union during this period. Feder reported on a UN meeting at the Palais de Chailot in Paris where he observed a session that was debating the text of the Genocide Convention. He described the Soviet representative amending the wording to express a definition of genocide as intimately associated with:

Fascism, Nazism, and other similar racial theories which carry on propaganda for race-hatred and national antagonism ... As he continued speaking, referring to pages, paragraphs, lines etc., there hovered before my eyes, the

reprint of an editorial from *Naye Presse*, a contemporary communist Yiddish daily from Paris, which stridently defended Rumanian and Hungarian policy, see G. Koenig, “The World Jewish Press: ‘He Who Sows the Wind Shall Reap the Whirlwind’,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949). For accounts of the situation in Romania and Hungary during these years, see Alexandru Florian, “Romanian Jewry: The First Decade after the Holocaust,” in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, City University of New York, 1994); Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 604–637.

⁹⁰ These policies dated back to the 1920s in the Soviet Union. As Gennady Estraiikh notes, these were not imposed solely from above but were adopted from the ideas of liberal and social democratic Jews. Gennady Estraiikh, “The Stalinist ‘Great Break’ in Yiddishland,” in *1929: Mapping the Jewish World*, ed. Hasia R. Diner and Gennady Estraiikh (New York: NYU Press, 1929). The trope of economic normalisation as a prelude to socialism was common across communist and Left Zionist ideology. Pickhan, “Yiddishkayt and Class Consciousness,” 255; Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock’s Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁹¹ “Anniversary Greetings.” For example, S. Inslicht, “Yugoslavia: An Interview with David A. Alkalay, President of the Belgrade Kehille,” *New Life* 1, no. 2 (1947). Which is not to say that this was coerced or even undesirable from a Jewish point of view, see Polonsky, *The Jews*, 625–626.

⁹² In September 1949 *Unity* published another article by Feder with a short biography reading ‘B. Feder was until recently, editor of a Paris Yiddish daily. He has now taken up residence in Israel where he will act as correspondent for “Unity”.’ B. Feder, “‘The Twenty-Four’: Fallen Jewish Resistance Heroes Honored in Paris,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949). There were no further articles

six million of our murdered brothers and sisters. The project against Genocide [the Genocide convention] wished to forget them, but the tall Russian, standing there in the hall below me, turning over page after page, brought their ghosts into the hall, and pleaded their cause.⁹³

In a similar vein, in a feature article for *Unity* in early 1950, Janka Pearl, a Melbourne Jewish immigrant who left Poland in the mid-1930s, recounted her recent return to Warsaw. She made clear the connection between a specifically Jewish antifascism and political memorialisation of the Holocaust, with support for the Soviet Union and the post-war people's democracies:

I came to see a ruined devastated city given over to despair and resignation. Instead, I found the swift tempo of rebuilding and a kindled hope. There was the noise of utter enthusiasm. Nobody talked about the past or the war, although the memory of the death chambers, the concentration camps and the rest of the horrors of Nazi domination still remain ... Polish playwrights are concerned with the problems of building a new, socialist society. This is a subject which engrosses all ... One Polish film *Ulica Graniczna—Frontier Street* is regarded as a great classic. The story of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, it stresses the inhumanity of anti-Semitism and glorifies the friendship which arose between Jew and Pole in those dark days. The Poles go to see this film as a kind of penance. It is grim and uncompromising as it unveils an awful situation. I have seen men and women weep unrestrainedly during the show. They were not Jewish and I have heard some of them admit their shame. I believe they were really contrite.⁹⁴

published by Feder, so this appears not to have eventuated. On *Naye Presse*, see Nick Underwood, "Exposing Yiddish Paris: The Modern Jewish Culture Pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46, no. 2 (2016): 160–175.

⁹³ For a discussion of the Soviet approach to the genocide convention, see Anton Weiss-Wendt, "The Soviet Perspective on the Drafting of the UN Genocide Convention," in *The Genocide Convention: The Legacy of 60 Years*, ed. H.G. van der Wilt, et al. (Boston: Brill Nijhoff, 2012). See also Chap. 2 of this book for a discussion of Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention.

⁹⁴ Janka Pearl, "I Came Back to Warsaw," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no.1 (1950). Pearl's account, based on her late 1949 visit, of the blossoming of Jewish life and the 'relentless' campaign against 'race-hatred' and antisemitism (although it took place against a background of persistent antisemitism and mass Jewish emigration) is borne out by the historiography. Antony Polonsky notes that in 1946 two-thirds of Jewish children were in Jewish schools, and overseas visitors were frequently impressed with the political and cultural diversity and achievements of post-war Polish Jewry. However, from around 1949 onwards, in line with increasing communist control over all aspects of Polish society, all Jewish organisations, including schools and publications, were taken over by communists or 'subjected to communist ideological control'. Although there was political repression, especially restrictions on Zionist activity, this did not resemble the contemporaneous overtly antisemitic purges and widespread repression of Jews in the Soviet Union. Ethnic Jews continued to make up a disproportionate number of government officials until 1956, see Polonsky, *The Jews*, 624–653. Although Pearl's account is decidedly rosy, she does not gloss over the persistence of Polish antisemitism nor the Polish government's restrictions on

This article was a striking expression of confidence in the possibilities for building a type of socialist society directly tied to an ethic of memorialisation of the Holocaust.⁹⁵ There was an express relationship posited here between a Polish attitude of penance and memorialisation and the achievements of a new socialist society, a society premised on the outlawing of antisemitism and other forms of discrimination.⁹⁶ Communism and the Soviet Union in the Jewish left imagination represented the liberation of Jews through a general politics of emancipation. In this rendering, however mistaken, the principles and politics of international communism meant an end to racial discrimination, a final defeat of fascism and a proper memorialisation of its victims.

As the Cold War heated up, *Unity's* editorial line increasingly reflected the two camps thesis proffered by the Soviet Union. This thesis—that the world was split into one camp of pro-imperialist, anti-democratic warmongers and another camp of anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, pro-peace forces—was adopted by Communist parties internationally.⁹⁷ Brezniak interpreted this thesis in a specifically Jewish manner related to *Unity's* ongoing project of Holocaust memorialisation. The politics of the Soviet Union's 'peace offensive' were incorporated into a Jewish Popular Front politics and a transnational analysis of the continuation of fascism. In a feature article for *Unity*, Brezniak suggested that from the recent Wroclaw Congress of Intellectuals an analysis had emerged that held that:

There were two camps, but not East and West, rather, two camps of war and peace, progress and destruction, culture and slavery. Those two divided camps exist in America as in France; in Britain as in Italy. Those who released Ilsa Koch, who had lamp shades made of human skin; those who have reinstated former Nazis to high governing positions in Germany; those who talk of Franco Spain as an ally—those who will if they can, wipe out the principles for which the Second World War was fought, and bring about a new one.⁹⁸

Jewish emigration. Interestingly even the conservative *AJO* recognised the achievements of the new Polish government in the late 1940s, see "News Front: Poland," *Australian Jewish Outlook* 2, no. 4 (1948).

⁹⁵ Echoing again Benjamin's repetitive, aberrated mourning, suspended until the moment of redemption.

⁹⁶ This dynamic was embodied in the film *Ulica Graniczna* or *Border Street* (1949). The Jewish Council screened *Border Street* along with *The Last Stage*, to Jewish audiences and non-Jewish high schools, adult education, and church groups. "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Annual Report 1952–1953" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). This points again to the key role of the Jewish left in propagating Holocaust memorialisation as outlined in Chap. 2.

⁹⁷ For an outline of the two camps thesis, the Soviet Union's peace campaign and CPA activity during this period, see Douglas Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960" (Victoria University, 2011), 83–159; Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920–1955* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), 208–214.

⁹⁸ H. Brezniak, "Some Reflections on a Year Past," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 6

We can see here how the defence of antifascist principles and an antifascist analysis gained a wider social and geopolitical application. The association of fascism, reaction, and antisemitism was key for the Jewish left during this period. This triad was always posed against a politics of progress, peace, and democracy and an end to colonial oppression. War and imperialism were discussed as generating racist oppression. Waten, in his article on fascism and antisemitism, suggested that ‘if we study the post-war fascist movements in the United States and Great Britain and West Germany, the similarity with Italian fascism, and German Hitlerism is striking’. An antifascist politics was thus extended to a wider need to combat oppression and reaction, ‘whether it appears in a “respectable” guise or whether it shows the ugly face of German and Italian fascism’; in either case it was figured as a ‘deadly menace to the existence of the Jewish people’.⁹⁹

Similarly, Hyam Brezniak’s 1948 review of a pamphlet by Nettie Palmer and Len Fox on the Australian contribution to the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War suggested, in a reference to American imperialism, that ‘[t]he Spanish struggle is on again. The cause of the people will have to be fought in Washington as in Madrid, so that never again will the earth know the terror of Guernica and Treblinka.’¹⁰⁰ The rhetorical effect achieved by drawing Guernica and Treblinka together was an analysis of fascism as a transnational phenomenon not confined to Nazi Germany. The mention of ‘Washington’ reveals a morphing of this perspective to reflect the Cold War ‘two camps’ thesis. The feature review of this pamphlet in 1948 indicates the extent to which Jewish antifascism was connected with the wider antifascist movement and indeed how it still related to the pre-World War Two antifascism of the 1930s and the wartime antifascism of the early 1940s.¹⁰¹ Brezniak and Waten both made clear the continued salience of an antifascist politics in the post-war period and its extendibility to a wider anti-imperialism and critique of Western democracies.

(1949). Although a mainstream antifascism quickly dissipated in Australia following World War Two, it was still popular in the Jewish community, see Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art* (Melbourne: Allen Lane 1981), 224. Traverso suggests that by the end of the war in 1945 ‘antifascism was the hegemonic current in European culture’. Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 255. In the United States, Alan M. Wald names this cultural period of left-wing literature, ‘late antifascism’. This is also an apt term in the Australian Jewish context that makes clear the continuities of the politics of the Popular Front and an ongoing political memorialisation of the Holocaust. Alan M Wald, *American Night: The Literary Left in the Era of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012). See Chap. 2 for further discussion of the Wrocław conference.

⁹⁹ Waten, “Fascism Is Anti-Semitic.” This was not an uncommon extension of antifascist rhetoric on the wider left internationally. Vials discusses how for many in the US left ‘fascism was often less a specific regime in Europe than a way to conceive the relationship between apparently distinct struggles’. Vials, *Haunted by Hitler*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ H. Brezniak, “Reading a Pamphlet,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1948).

¹⁰¹ For a US-based overview of left antifascism through this period, see Vials, *Haunted by Hitler*, 30–125. There was a close connection between wider Australian antifascism and the Jewish left through the 1930s and early 1940s. One indicator of this was a 1941 precursor exhibition to the famous 1942 Contemporary Art Society’s (CAS) ‘Anti-Fascist exhibition’ organised by the Kadimah youth group

‘Who are the big donors behind the agitator?’: Critical Theory, Antifascism, and Antisemitism

An antifascism that broadened into a wider critique of reactionary tendencies within Western democratic societies was not an uncommon transnational phenomenon in the post-war years. Such an analysis was not only a feature of the pro-Soviet left but also of the theorists of the Frankfurt School, the informal name that collectively describes the thinkers, many of whom were Jewish, who were associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research.¹⁰² The Frankfurt School went into exile in the United States in the early 1930s, and in the 1940s and early 1950s it was sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, a large mainstream Jewish advocacy organisation, to produce a series of publications called ‘Studies in Prejudice’.¹⁰³ This was a major research project into antisemitism, producing most famously *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), which controversially claimed that a good proportion of the American population were antisemitic and potentially fascists.¹⁰⁴ The ‘Studies in Prejudice’ series was the most in-depth and influential study of antisemitism and associated phenomena produced during this period.¹⁰⁵

On the one hand, the studies produced by the Frankfurt School under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee expressed an affirmation of democratic values via a ‘spearhead theory’ of antisemitism. The spearhead theory held that antisemitism was a precursor to, or first step in, a wider attack on democratic rights and institutions.¹⁰⁶ As Jack Jacobs notes, such a thesis was fully in accord with the stated goals of the American Jewish Committee: ‘the belief that the civil and religious rights of the Jews

at the Kadimah Jewish cultural centre, with works by artists such as Noel Counihan, Vic O’Connor, Yosl Bergner, and others. Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 148; Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 171. The CAS was ‘a national body of artist and intellectuals whose opposition to reaction and fascism, communism and anti-fascism was conceived in international political and cultural terms’. Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 75.

¹⁰² See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973).

¹⁰³ For a discussion of this partnership, see Jack Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 66–67.

¹⁰⁴ Jacobs notes that Adorno’s contribution to *The Authoritarian Personality* was critiqued in the pages of *Commentary* for suggesting that we live in potentially fascist times. Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁵ Jack Jacobs quotes the then head of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Max Horkheimer, on the centrality of an analysis of antisemitism to critical theory: ‘society itself can be properly understood only through Antisemitism’. Ibid., 64.

¹⁰⁶ For an interesting discussion of the extent to which Adorno and Horkheimer did embrace the spearhead theory, see Lars Fischer, “Contribution to Review Forum on Jacobs, Jack. The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism,” *The German Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (2016): 93–97. Fischer quotes Adorno’s statement in *The Authoritarian Personality* which although endorsing a version of the theory expresses some unease at it as ‘hackneyed and apologetic: the minority most immediately threatened seems to make an all-too eager attempt to enlist the support of the majority by claiming that it is the latter’s interest and not their own which really finds itself in jeopardy today’. Ibid., 95.

in the United States are dependent upon the maintenance of our democratic form of government', and antisemitism was a 'miserable anti-democratic and anti-American manifestation'.¹⁰⁷ This theorisation accorded well with a version of Popular Front antifascist politics that emphasised a defence of enlightenment values against a fascism imagined as irrational, mystical, reactionary, and anti-modern.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, elements of these studies employed the critical theory developed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, most famously in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which diagnosed political antisemitism *not* as a foreign element to democracy but as symptomatic of mass capitalist society and indeed enlightenment instrumental rationality more generally.¹⁰⁹

Despite some similarities in analysis—and indeed similar tensions and contradictions, as discussed further below—there is little evidence of any direct influence of the Frankfurt School or the 'Studies in Prejudice' series on Jewish left ideas during this period. However, we can surmise that this material was being read in the Australian Jewish community in milieus adjacent to the Jewish left. In its June 1950 edition, the *Australian Jewish Review*, the magazine of Liberal Judaism (the Australian branch of the Reform movement of Judaism), published a glowing review of a prominent book in the 'Studies in Prejudice' series: *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (1949) by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman.¹¹⁰

In this review, Mortimer J. Cohen noted that 'the authors of this book are eminent scholars who, under the aegis of the American Jewish Committee, together with other social scientists, are making a thorough, scientific study of the social and psychological roots of prejudice'. The only criticism Cohen suggested was that 'one wishes ... that the

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Jacobs, *Frankfurt School*, 68.

¹⁰⁸ For a critique of post-war international antifascist ideology's failure to transcend a Popular Front defence of enlightenment values and thus failure to recognise how the Holocaust was in part a product of modernity, see Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 263–264, 273–276.

¹⁰⁹ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, [1944] 1997), 168–208. Whereas these empirical studies have often been thought of as disconnected from the critical theoretical work of the Frankfurt School, Jacobs has shown that although these works were not thoroughly integrated, so as to appear part and parcel of a coherent project, there was in fact a substantial dialectical interrelationship. Jacobs, *Frankfurt School*, 43–110. For another take on this issue, see Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 227–263.

¹¹⁰ Mortimer J. Cohen, "Brilliant Study of Antisemitic Agitators," *The Australian Jewish Review* 11, no. 2 (1950). Michael A Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 203–206. Rabbi Sanger of Temple Beth Israel, the liberal synagogue in Melbourne was a close associate of Walter Lippmann and a key Jewish Council ally until around 1950, see "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 26th April 1950" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). Jacobs notes that *Prophets of Deceit*, more than other books in the series closely reflected the Frankfurt school's theoretical work, studying 'agitation as a surface manifestation of deeper social and psychological currents' and suggesting that the agitators used techniques of psychological manipulation, underlying the importance of analysing the latent rather than manifest meaning in fascist speeches using psychoanalytic concepts. Jacobs, *Frankfurt School*, 97.

authors had given fuller treatment to the motivations of the agitator himself. Who are the big donors behind the agitator? Why should they be interested in subsidizing the agitators?' While a convincing and 'brilliant' study, a wider social and economic explanation was sought.¹¹¹ This explains the reason why, despite some obvious similarities in analysis, the Frankfurt School and their 'Studies in Prejudice' may not have attracted much attention by the transnational antifascist Jewish left and the Australian Jewish left by extension.

The disconnection between the Frankfurt School and the Jewish left was principally caused by the latter's scepticism towards psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically inspired theories. In a 1948 issue of *Unity*, Ernest Platz (who we met in Chap. 2) reviewed several overseas publications including the June 1948 edition of *Jewish Life*. Platz declared that *Jewish Life* was 'outspoken and fearless'.¹¹² He focused on an article by Walter S. Neff on 'Psychoanalysis and Anti-Semitism', endorsing its conclusion that it is 'regrettable and dangerous that so many who wish to fight against fascism and antisemitism are heavily influenced by this self-defeating philosophy which lies at the basis of Freudian psycho-analysis'. Neff had assessed the recently released collection, *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease* edited by Ernst Simmel and containing chapters by Horkheimer and Adorno amongst others. Neff suggested that the problem with all the contributors' analyses was that they considered antisemitism as:

related to certain universal and biological attributes of mankind and fundamentally not as a product of certain historical and social conditions. All these writers admit the importance of economic, social and political factors in stimulating or controlling anti-Semitic attitudes, but they really see their origin in certain hypothecated instincts of aggression, destruction and hate which organized society must combat.¹¹³

Although psychoanalysis was never as popular in Australia as in the United States, it certainly was prominent in international analyses of the problem of antisemitism.¹¹⁴ We can surmise that based on assessments such as Neff's, psychoanalytic explanations were not salient for the type of politics and analysis expounded by the transnational

¹¹¹ Cohen, "Brilliant Study." Jacobs suggests that the economic explanation for antisemitism, that originated in Horkheimer's 'Jews and Europe' essay and continues through to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, still plays a part in the analyses of the 'Studies in Prejudice' series, though reduced to one factor amongst many rather than as underlying or primary cause. In brief, this economic explanation relied on an analysis of monopoly, state, or late capitalism as making the sphere of circulation redundant. Jews were imagined as representative of this now obsolete sphere. Jacobs, *Frankfurt School*, 58–59.

¹¹² Platz, "A Review of Jewish Overseas Publications."

¹¹³ Dr. Walter S. Neff, "Psychoanalysis and Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Life* 2, no. 8 (1948).

¹¹⁴ For a history of psychoanalysis in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s, see Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 179–255.

Jewish left.¹¹⁵ Psychoanalysis, particularly in its conservative US post-war rendering, was not critical enough of the existing social structures which produced antisemitism.¹¹⁶

This critique also extended to other non-materialist theories of antisemitism. In June 1949, *Unity* republished Louis Harap's scathing review, from *Jewish Life*, of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946). Sartre's 'existentialist nonsense' was condemned as ahistorical and abstracted, while his conception of Jews was assessed as both shallow and at times itself antisemitic.¹¹⁷ Harap sharply criticised Sartre's wholly negative conception of Jewishness (as a product only of antisemitism), and his conception of antisemitism as something chosen by a certain psychological type rather than socially or historically produced. As Michael Walzer has noted, Sartre's work was characterised by its wilful ignorance of Judaism.¹¹⁸

While setting out a historical materialist critique, one of the most notable parts of the review is Harap's assessment of Sartre's claim that '[t]he Jews ... have one friend, the democrat. But he is a feeble protector'.¹¹⁹ This was because the democrat, according to Sartre, only protects or defends the Jew as a human being, rather than specifically as a Jew, echoing Marx's famous critique from *On the Jewish Question*.¹²⁰ Harap suggested that Sartre's critique should be directed against the 'bourgeois democrat' rather than 'the democrat' in general. In Harap's rendering the socialist movement held an advanced version of liberal democratic values, as such it was 'among the Marxists, that is, the most advanced democrats, that the Jews find their sturdiest defenders'. Harap reframed the issue to suggest that the project of combating antisemitism fell under the broader project of an advanced version of emancipation through 'more profound concepts' of Enlightenment democracy. Such a view echoed the broad politics of a Popular Front antifascism but with a critical edge suggesting that 'bourgeois democracy'

¹¹⁵ Another reason for the Jewish left's disinterest in the 'Studies in Prejudice' series was their association with the AJC, a body proclaimed to be reactionary by *Jewish Life*. In a series of articles published in 1948, Louis Harap, the editor of *Jewish Life*, took the AJC to task. According to Harap the AJC was oligarchic, and anti-democratic, representative of the rich and powerful elite of the Jewish community; actively anti-communist and red-baiting; the AJC's foreign policy sided with Western imperialism against both the Soviet Union and the new democracies; they had a 'hush-hush' approach to combating antisemitism; and most importantly, they were against the Jewish national struggle in Palestine. Louis Harap, "The American Jewish Committee Oligarchy," *Jewish Life* 2, no. 6 (1948).

¹¹⁶ See Dagmar Herzog, *Cold War Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 21–86.

¹¹⁷ Louis Harap, "Sartre on Anti-Semitism," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949). It is notable that *New Life*, the British equivalent magazine, had published a largely positive review of Sartre's volume, celebrating its condemnation of antisemitism, see Maurice Carr, "A Frenchman's View on Anti-Semitism," *New Life* 1, no. 7 (1947). *Unity* chose to republish the more radical critique.

¹¹⁸ Michael Walzer, Preface to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), vii. See also Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 68–116; Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-Antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Harap, "Sartre on Anti-Semitism."

¹²⁰ Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1843; reprint, 1972).

was false or insufficient. Harap advanced a more critical version of the spearhead theory, suggesting that antisemitism was a tool of reaction against democracy, whilst also criticising bourgeois democracy as wholly compatible with a structural antisemitism.¹²¹

The spearhead theory, with its associated Popular Front style ideology of Enlightenment values and ‘democracy’ opposing fascism, was commonly employed by the Australian Jewish left. However, as in Harap’s analysis, this conception was held in tension with a more critical assessment of the structural inequalities of capitalist societies and the assimilatory homogenising forces of modernity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the memorialisation of the Holocaust within an antifascist framework was linked to critical anti-racist and anti-colonial politics. I consider further below how Jewish antifascist principles in an Australian context related to a critique of assimilationism.

‘Less Jewish Jews’: Assimilation, Antisemitism, and Jewish Political Subjectivity

Whilst the spearhead theorisation of antisemitism certainly predominated on the Jewish left, there is also evidence of more multi-faceted critiques. Julian Rose, a key Sydney activist, explored sources of antisemitism in Christianity and English literature in a series of articles for *Unity*. Rather than associating antisemitism chiefly with reactionary and fascist political movements, these articles explored the widespread basis of antisemitic myths in religious and educational institutions.¹²² The most substantial appraisal of the structural nature of antisemitism offered by the Australian Jewish left in this period was through a widely read booklet authored by Dr M. Mushin.¹²³ The tone of Mushin’s booklet, *And Thou Shall Tell Thy Child*, was markedly different from earlier Jewish Council pamphlets which were largely defensive, myth-busting pamphlets aimed at a non-Jewish audience.¹²⁴

Mushin’s booklet was aimed at a Jewish audience, particularly the Jewish parent, and was heavily influenced by the psychological theories of Kurt Lewin.¹²⁵ In theorising

¹²¹ Harap, “Sartre on Anti-Semitism.” There are resonances here with interwar Jewish socialist thought in Germany which incorporated liberal *Bildung* values, see George L. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 1993), 144, 148–149.

¹²² Julian Rose, “That Crucifixion Story,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949); “The Jewish Stereotype,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

¹²³ Dr. M. Mushin, *And Thou Shalt Tell Thy Child* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1947). This pamphlet was reviewed very favourably by Joachim Schneeweiss in *Unity*, see Joachim Schneeweiss, “Education against Antisemitism: A Review of Two Booklets,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948). Dr Maccabee Mushin was the brother of two of the founding and long-time members of the Jewish Council, Alick Mushin and Aaron Mushin. See NAA: A6119, 102/REFERENCE COPY, “Mushin Aaron Volume 1” (1936–1953).

¹²⁴ For example, Fox, Australia and the Jews.

¹²⁵ Kurt Lewin was a pioneering figure in social psychology. He was a Jewish refugee from Germany

the causes of antisemitism, Mushin for the most part reflected an analysis centring on the spearhead theory. However, this was also combined with a psychological theory that recognised that although there were various political interests promoting antisemitism, one also needed to recognise the ideological and pathological nature of antisemitism. For Mushin '[a]nti-Semitism [was] at one and the same time grimly logical and madly illogical, and it is this paradox that causes so much confusion in the minds of many adult Jews'.¹²⁶

Mushin suggested that Jewish children were very likely to encounter antisemitic attitudes and stereotypes in school and that it was incumbent upon parents and teachers to talk to Jewish children and challenge this antisemitism.¹²⁷ Mushin disputed, what he suggested was the widespread notion among Jews, that the chief cause of antisemitism was the appearance and behaviour of Jews and the concomitant notion that the answer to antisemitism was to become inconspicuous and assimilate. Mushin suggested that such attitudes were the products of what we would now call internalised antisemitism: '[h]ammered at often enough a Jew, especially the child, will come to believe in some vague way that he is indeed inferior to his surroundings.'¹²⁸

The Jewish left's analysis of an internalised antisemitism was influential within the wider Jewish community. In September 1949, *Unity* republished a rather blistering editorial from the *Sydney Jewish News* which recounted an event at which a 'well-known Sydney fighter against Anti-Semitism was addressing a Jewish audience' reiterating that antisemitism was not caused by Jewish behaviour and 'therefore, nothing was to be gained by an attitude of self-effacing mimicry'.¹²⁹ During the question and answer period, a member of the audience 'demanded to know what could be done about a number of Jewish housewives who were in the habit of assembling outside a kosher butcher shop on Sunday mornings, there to debate the ills of the world in general, and in particular the merit, or otherwise, of their purchases.' The editorial responded: 'such a person is not a reformer. He does not want wiser Jews, braver Jews, more useful Jews. No, what he wants is more careful Jews and if possible less Jewish Jews ... He is an emotional Albino; a man in which oppression has become inverted and the denunciations of others have turned to self-hate.' The editorial ended with a suggestion for curing this self-hatred: to 'discover something about Jewry, its history,

who moved to the United States in 1933, see Alfred Jay Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

¹²⁶ Mushin, *And Thou Shalt*, 16. The spearhead theory can be thought of as concomitant of the 'puppet master' theory of fascism whereby the capitalist class are the ones pulling the strings and racism and fascism are 'epiphenomenal smoke screens'. Vials, *Haunted by Hitler*, 76. For a discussion of this idea on the US left and its transcendence by wide-ranging and sophisticated analyses of the origins and strength of racial ideologies, see *ibid.*, 70–89.

¹²⁷ Mushin, *And Thou Shalt*, 8–9.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11. For further discussion of internalised antisemitism, see Chap. 2.

¹²⁹ "As We See It!: Jewish Anti-Semitism?," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949).

its traditions, its politics'.¹³⁰ The solution to the internalisation of antisemitism was to form a proud Jewish consciousness.

Mushin drew together an analysis of antisemitism, class, and power suggesting that Jews were 'under-privileged on account of anti-Semitism' and that 'a steady and constant economic and social blockade, as well as persecution has achieved this unnatural division in society'.¹³¹ This division and the pressures of assimilation created a certain compromised role for Jewish leaders. Mushin wrote:

[T]hey achieve eminence or power amongst non-Jews by professional, industrial or cultural merit, but are prevented from assimilating completely by the usual anti-Semitic restrictions. So they remain leaders, though of an under-privileged group, while at the same time moving spiritually away from it. This divided loyalty imposes grave limitations on their leadership. They are those so-called 'respectable' Jews whose outward approach is perfect, but who inwardly hold in contempt those whom they lead.¹³²

In other words, antisemitism coupled with the inequalities of class society did not allow for a viable Jewish representative politics within the established order. A Jewish political subjectivity was necessary but only itself achieved through a struggle to change society in co-operation with others.

For Mushin, although strengthening group belonging was the answer to combating antisemitism, this was not figured as a good in itself. In Mushin's rendering, 'this united front, or "group-belonging" allows its individuals, who become freed of inhibitions imposed by anti-semitism, greater freedom'. Instead of internalising antisemitism, the Jewish person who is comfortable in their own group belonging will turn their attention to examining and combating antisemitism and will 'align his thoughts and actions with progressive tendencies in [the wider] society'. The goal of a strengthening of group belonging was in Mushin's words to foster 'sanctuary, not isolation', and inspire the courage for positive interaction and political co-operation with non-Jews. As I will discuss further in the following chapter, this idea was implicitly posed against Jewish nationalist and Zionist ideas, which saw the strengthening of Jewish group belonging as a means of building Jewish power and security in the form of a separate nation-state.

¹³⁰ Ibid. It is interesting to note the gendered aspect of the 'Jewish anti-Semite's' denunciations. *Unity's* stance on this issue compares favourably to *New Life's* analysis which generally followed a similar line on the causes of antisemitism with the exception of its column for women readers which declared that 'it is not good enough that we protest against anti-Semitism and discrimination whilst we place in the hands of the perpetrators weapons which they will not hesitate to use against us'. "What Women Talk About: Stamp It Out," *New Life* 1, no. 5 (1947).

¹³¹ *Mushin*, *And Thou Shalt*, 12.

¹³² Ibid., 13. Mushin also suggested that there were a great number of middle-class Jews moving 'towards the barrier, many of whom remain on the fringe unable to move in either direction' and that they blamed other Jews for thwarting their attempts at assimilation. Ibid.

Analyses such as Mushin's were certainly of a piece with other criticisms of assimilationism and an emerging politics of cultural pluralism. This case was put most strongly in an article in *Unity* titled 'Assimilation is Desertion' by A. Szulman.¹³³ Szulman was replying to an earlier letter to *Unity* by Trudy Kingsley, who in his words 'believed that to become a complete Australian it was necessary to rid herself of her Jewishness'. According to Szulman, 'Australia wants a complete liquidation of all minority cultures on the altar of the British way of life'. Counter to this, he urged a 'cultural pluralism' as beneficial both to wider Australian society, the psychic health of the individual, and as a type of political solidarity, suggesting that, 'it isn't right to escape from the Jewish masses and leave them at one of the most tragic periods of their history'.¹³⁴ Szulman's article makes clear that for the post-war Jewish left, a large part of their definition of Jewishness was not to be figured in terms that were national, racial, or religious.¹³⁵ Their conception instead was tied to a broader political vision. To resist assimilation did not mean clinging to tradition on one hand or inventing a new ethno-nationalism on the other. The importance of a distinctive Jewishness was figured through a politics of antifascist solidarity, among Jews and with non-Jews.

If the Jewish left's post-war analyses of antisemitism often placed a heavy emphasis on the spearhead theory, leading at times to a somewhat crude exaltation of 'democratic values' at the expense of a more critical account of the sources of antisemitism, their wider interpretation of fascism did make their attendant antifascism more capacious. It allowed the Jewish left to be both more historically prescient (danger to Jews not having to come in the form of jackboots and swastikas alone) and also allowed for the development of a wider anti-racist and anti-assimilatory politics. An analysis which held that antisemitism was a manifestation of reaction, 'a weapon to bludgeon and beat back progress and upward change' or 'political trickery and demagogic hate', by itself provided a rather rudimentary explanation. It did, however, have the benefit of providing a *political* and thus historical explanation of antisemitism.¹³⁶ Such an analysis could be taken in more sophisticated and ambitious directions. Arguments such as Mushin's successfully combined a socio-political, psychological, and ideological analysis, adding critical depth to the Jewish left's analysis of the workings of a social order characterised by class divisions and racial and religious oppression.

Thus, according to the British Jewish communist intellectual Hyman Levy in an article republished in *Unity*,

[I]t is possible to strike at antisemitism with clear vision and with understanding, and to see that freedom and equality for Jewry come with freedom and equality for other oppressed peoples. Despair can be left to those who

¹³³ A. Szulman, "Assimilation Is Desertion," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1950).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ I explore this further in the following chapter.

¹³⁶ Pinchas Goldhar, "Jewish Antisemitism," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948); Julian Rose, "Anti-Semitism and Reaction," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951).

have come to believe that the roots of antisemitism lie deep in the psychological and emotional make-up of Jew and non-Jew, for such people have unconsciously accepted the Nazi theories of racism.¹³⁷

This analysis of antisemitism as a structural product of a contingent set of historical and political circumstances, when connected with a Jewish antifascism that emphasised the importance of a Jewish political subjectivity, provided a basis for a connection to a wider field of political struggle figured through the necessity of solidarity with other oppressed people. A critical historical analysis of antisemitism, combined with an understanding of its irrational ideological workings, provided the tools for a more critical analysis of racism, colonialism, Anglo cultural supremacy, and assimilationism. This analysis critiqued the unequal structure of society and indeed of the Jewish community itself. In this sense, Australian Jewish antifascists saw the fight against racialisation as important and valid political action within the prosecution of a more universal social struggle.

The Jewish antifascist left held that Jews could not be liberated from antisemitism through forms of Jewish nationalism. They emphasised the importance and validity of diasporic Jewish communities and culture. A necessary concomitant of these politics was a theory of antisemitism as contingent and combatable wherever Jews may live. Thus, the Australian Jewish antifascist left offered a critical theory of antisemitism joined to a critical analysis of societies in which Jews lived (in this case Australia). They questioned assimilationism as a strategy and outlook for Jews as well as Australian assimilationism more generally. This was a necessary part of a Jewish cultural-political outlook which validated the dynamic futurity of Jewish diasporic communities. In order to actualise this critique, a specifically Jewish political subject was needed to fight racialisation. This fight was envisioned as one part of a wider political struggle. The challenge of creating a non-nationalist Jewish political subjectivity and cultural politics posed against both Jewish assimilationism and Zionism is addressed in the following chapter.

¹³⁷ Hyman Levy, "A Letter to Jewish Intellectuals," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948).

4. The Jewish Left, Zionism, and the Diaspora

Max Kaiser⁽⁴⁾

Living in Israel in a Jewish state is the ideal, and the alternative is exile, with all the connotations of that description. And now we have been given such a state again, how can we say “thanks, but actually exile is quite all right after all”?

Rabbi James Kennard, Principal of Mount Scopus Memorial College.¹

MALKE: And can't they work in our plantations?

BERL: Of course they can't. Let them work in their own.

David Martin, 'The Shepherd and the Hunter'²

In an April 1950 article for *The Zionist*, prominent Zionist leader, Aaron Patkin laid out a critique of the Jewish antifascist left. In his rendering, the 'policy and the tactics' of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (Jewish Council) '[do] not “combat” but “spread” Antisemitism' in an effort he considered 'both futile and undignified'.³ For Patkin, the Jewish Council was a 'useless' organisation because he believed that a Jewish politics that tried to intervene against antisemitism in Australia was doomed to failure.⁴ This prevalent Zionist analysis, which saw antisemitism as an unavoidable and omnipresent product of Jews living as minorities in 'diaspora' communities, contended that the only realistic means of dealing with antisemitism

¹ Rabbi James Kennard, Public Facebook comment, 2 January 2017, *Galus Australis Facebook group*, <http://bit.ly/2llQMN7>, Accessed 06/02/2017.

² David Martin, *The Shepherd and the Hunter* (London: Allan Wingate, 1946), 20.

³ A. L. Patkin, "Press Review: The 'Unity'," *The Zionist*, April 1950. On *The Zionist* see Max Kaiser, "Zionism, Assimilationism and Antifascism: Divergent International Jewish Pathways in Three Post-War Australian Jewish Magazines," in *The Transnational Voices of Australia's Migrant and Minority Press in a Global Context*, edited by Catherine Dewhirst and Richard Scully (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

⁴ Ibid.

⁽⁴⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser

was to create a radically new international political situation for the Jewish people through the Jewish nation-state.

‘A world of free peoples living in peace’: Yishuvism Not Zionism

The two world-shaking events for Jewish people internationally in this period were the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel.⁵ In the post-war world, there was initially a close affinity between the Jewish antifascist left and the Zionist movement. Although they were informed by different philosophies, they had common cause in supporting the Yishuv (Jewish settlement) in Palestine, particularly through the immediate post-war years and 1948.⁶ The Zionist movement in Australia was contesting the established, conservative, and assimilationist politics of the Jewish community. In the post-war, post-Holocaust years this was even more so the case.⁷

After a long, if uneven, sponsorship by the British under the mandate system, the Zionist movement in the Yishuv turned increasingly against the British after 1945, in its quest for unlimited immigration to Palestine and ultimately for an independent state.⁸ This meant Zionist activists in Australia had to turn against the previously ideologically hegemonic Jewish identification as loyal subjects of the British empire.⁹ The Soviet Union, tentatively from 1945 onwards but particularly after UN Ambassador Gromyko’s May 1947 speech, reversed its long-standing anti-Zionism and supported the establishment of Israel.¹⁰ Communist parties worldwide thus embraced the inde-

⁵ Dr. Nahum Goldmann, “Opening Address,” in *Papers from the World Jewish Congress Second Plenary Assembly* (Montreux, Switzerland: World Jewish Congress (WJC). Available at <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=22287>, 1948).

⁶ In Australia the Jewish antifascist left’s embrace of an alliance with Zionists dates to the inception of the new Popular Front unity politics circa 1943, see NAA: A6122, 444, “Proposals for Unity by Jewish Communists.”

⁷ *Suzanne Rutland, Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia (Sydney, NSW: Collins Australia, 1988), 295–310.*

⁸ This began with the 1939 MacDonald White Paper, restricting Jewish immigration. However, the Yishuv’s fortunes were inextricably tied to the fortunes of the British empire in World War Two, dampening protests until after the war. *Ibid.*, 307–310. For the role of the British in facilitating Zionist colonisation, see Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 31–64.

⁹ The Australian intelligence services were thus concerned not only with communist activism within the Jewish community but also with Zionism, see NAA: A6122, 155 REFERENCE COPY, “Jewish Unity Association” (1941–1949).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the intersection between Popular Front politics, a changing communist position on Palestine and the shift in Soviet foreign policy, see Paul Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism: History of a Divorce* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), 86–106. For an examination of the change in Soviet policy, see Laurent Rucker, *Moscow’s Surprise: The Soviet-Israeli*

pendence struggle.¹¹ The international Jewish left thought of the struggle of the Yishuv within the framework of global post-war struggles for decolonisation and national independence.¹² The Jewish Council, in the events leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel, was its strong proponent, seeing a defence of Israel as inextricable from the fight against antisemitism.¹³ *Unity* itself had on its editorial board writers and activists who had been active in the socialist Zionist movement.¹⁴ The cover of the third issue even featured a photo of Israeli soldiers, with the caption ‘Defenders of State of Israel’.

The Jewish antifascist left in Australia adapted very quickly to the new importance and popularity of Zionism within the Jewish community. However, despite its general support for Israel, the Jewish antifascist left in Australia did not reflect a straightforwardly Zionist perspective.¹⁵ Notwithstanding its uncompromising support of the Yishuv, the Jewish antifascist left practiced a different mode of Jewish politics and identity. In line with the broader transnational Jewish left, in the post-war period, activists in the Jewish antifascist left in Australia took a binationalist position up until the UN partition vote of November 1947.¹⁶ Although not always explicitly referred to as such, this was the expression of an ideology that was common across the international antifascist Jewish left, that of Yishuvism.

Alliance of 1947–1949 (Cold War International History project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005). For Gromyko’s speech, see Andrei Gromyko, “Palestine at UNO: Extracts from the Speech Made by Mr. Andrei Gromyko at the General Assembly of UNO on May 14th,” *New Life* 1, no. 5 (1947).

¹¹ For an account of how the Soviet Union’s support for Israel allowed the communist David Martin to briefly edit the *Sydney Jewish News*, see David Martin, *My Strange Friend: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1991), 213–214.

¹² For example, “Safeguard the Jewish State!,” *Jewish Life* 2, no. 3 (1948); Ber Mark, “Voice of the Oppressed: World Congress of Intellectuals in Wroclaw, Poland, August, 1948,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 6 (1949).

¹³ See Burgoyne Chapman, “The Vindication of [],” *Australian Jewish News*, 21 July 1950. Philip Mendes, “The Australian Left’s Support for the Creation of the State of Israel, 1947–48,” *Labour History* (2009): 137–148. It is understandable why the Jewish Council drew these two issues together. While there were no antisemitic riots around the issue as there were in Britain, the period saw an upshot in antisemitism in the Australian press, and as Norman Rothfield then put it ‘there was undoubtedly an attempt by anti-Semitic groups in this country to utilise the situation in Israel for the purpose of creating ill-feeling towards the Jews in Australia’. Quoted in Norman Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace* (Fairfield: Yarraford Publications, 1997), 23.

¹⁴ “Jewish Unity Association;” Dr. Joachim Schneeweiss, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 19 April & 22 June 1987, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/168–169. Although this did not mean that *Unity* was a socialist Zionist magazine.

¹⁵ The Jewish left in Australia certainly had a closer affinity with the Zionist movement than the Jewish left elsewhere. In Sydney there were a number of prominent Zionists involved in *Unity*/SCCFAS. This was the case in Melbourne too, although by the late 1940s these figures were not in leading positions in the Jewish Council. “Jewish Unity Association;” Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, 22. There seems to have been little engagement by *Unity* with the non-Zionist Israeli Communist Party/Palestine Communist Party despite David Martin’s involvement in the party, see Martin, *My Strange Friend*, 96.

¹⁶ Evelyn Rothfield, *Whither Palestine* (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1947). I discuss Roth-

Yishuvism was developed as an ideology by a strand of the Palestine Communist Party in the late 1920s.¹⁷ As Paul Kelemen has documented, it formed a strand of thinking developed by the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) from the late 1930s onwards.¹⁸ The idea was to separate the Jewish community and its political/national rights in Palestine from the doctrine of Zionism. Yishuvism ascribed a progressive role to the Jewish settlement project, particularly in economic development, as furthering the ideals of a socialist planned economy against the feudal structures of the region.¹⁹ This idea was of a piece with left/labour Zionism as, through this period, one of the idiosyncratic features of Zionist colonialism was that there was no suitable or capable capitalist class, so it was the labour movement which took the lead in colonisation and state formation.²⁰ Yishuvists however rejected Zionism and advocated binational unity between ‘Arabs’ and Jews against British, and later American, imperialism.²¹ The popularity of this ideology increased rapidly in the international Jewish left but also in the wider communist movement with the Soviet Union’s support for the Yishuv in the period immediately following World War Two.²²

As Kelemen suggests, Yishuvism’s tenets were largely unsustainable. Despite the heterogeneity and wide array of political ideologies in the Yishuv, it was not possible to consider the Jewish community in Palestine without understanding its ‘raison d’être [as] economic separatism’ and its ultimate inseparability from Zionist structures and ideology.²³ Certainly by the 1940s, any anti-Zionist ideology was marginal within the Yishuv.²⁴ This analysis is backed by many scholars who have analysed the material

field’s pamphlet further below. Binationalist and Yishuvist views were expressed throughout the run of *The Voice*, the Melbourne Jewish communist magazine. For an example of this position on the international Jewish left, see R.S. Gordon, “The Jewish Dilemma in Palestine,” *New Life* 1, no. 1 (1947). David Martin’s play ‘The Shepherd and the Hunter’ produced by the Unity theatre in London in 1946 and by the New Theatre in Sydney in 1947 is an example of a broadly Yishuvist politics in the Australian Jewish and non-Jewish left during this period. Martin, *The Shepherd and the Hunter*. See Max Kaiser and Lisa Milner. “‘Part of What We Thought and Felt’: Antifascism, Antisemitism and Jewish Connections with the New Theatre,” *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History* 120, no. 1 (2021): 106–111.

¹⁷ Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919–1948* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1979; repr., 2010), 9.

¹⁸ Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, 96–103. As suggested by Evan Smith, after the dissolving of the Comintern in 1943 the CPGB ‘became an influential leader’ in analysing and providing political direction for anti-colonial movements in the British Empire, see Evan Smith, *British Communism and the Politics of Race* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 33–34.

¹⁹ Budeiri, *Palestine Communist Party*, 9.

²⁰ Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 54–56.

²¹ For example, see “Palestine – a World Issue: World Jewry’s Responsibility,” *New Life* 1, no. 9 (1947).

²² Australian Communist Party Jewish Sub-Committee, “We Support the Yishuv in Palestine,” *The Voice*, November 1945; S. Mikunis, “Set Palestine Free,” *The Voice*, March 1947. Mikunis was a key figure in the Palestine Communist Party.

²³ Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, 100.

²⁴ *Ran Greenstein*, *Zionism and Its Discontents: A Century of Radical Dissent in Israel/Palestine*

basis of Zionism in Palestine as an instance of settler colonialism, with a concomitant ideology of eliminationism.²⁵ Zionist institutions did not aim for coexistence or the exploitation of Palestinian labour, their central purpose was to replace Palestinians on their land with Jewish settlers. The Yishuv bought up Palestinian land for exclusive use by Jews, an endeavour funded by the World Zionist Organisation through the Jewish National Fund.²⁶ This practice was combined with the doctrine of *Avoda Ivrit* (Hebrew Labour)—meaning that Jews should hire only Jewish labour—creating a Jewish separatist economic structure.²⁷ This was a logical outgrowth of the need to expand Jewish settlement; a separate expensive Jewish labour market that did not have to compete with the cheaper Arab Palestinian labour market was needed to attract more Jewish settlers.²⁸ In other words, there were major structural imperatives in the hegemonic ideology of the Yishuv, working against the possibility of any substantial Arab-Jewish political co-operation.

Despite its contradictions, Yishuvism did express a genuine concern for coexistence, Arab-Jewish unity, and an internationalist politics. Although Yishuvism provided an ideological cover for the Soviet Union and international communism's support for the establishment of Israel, it should not be dismissed as mere window dressing, or for that matter as insincere or cynical.²⁹ Yishuvism offered a different vision of Jewish world politics, although ultimately it failed to recognise the settler colonial nature of the Zionist enterprise and rested upon well-worn tropes of European cultural and economic superiority. Two widely read pamphlets aimed at the Jewish and wider community

(London: Pluto Press, 2014), 50–103.

²⁵ See Patrick Wolfe, "Purchase by Other Means: The Palestine Nakba and Zionism's Conquest of Economics," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 133–171; Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2012), 19–87.

²⁶ Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 223.

²⁷ Ibid., 223–235; Steven A. Glazer, "Language of Propaganda: The Histadrut, Hebrew Labor, and the Palestinian Worker," *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXVI, no. 2 (2007): 25–38. David Martin's short story 'Kibush Avodah' is a searing indictment of this doctrine. Martin was briefly a member of the Palestine Communist Party and this story is evidence of objections to 'Avoda Ivrit' amongst sections of the international Jewish antifascist left. David Martin, "Kibush Avodah," in *The Shoes Men Walk In* (London: The Pilot Press Ltd, 1946). In a similar vein, see Walter Kaufmann, "Dawn," in *The Curse of Maralinga, and Other Stories* (Berlin: Seven Seas Publishers, 1959).

²⁸ Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 45–90; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 50–57.

²⁹ While Johan Franzen attributes a somewhat overblown role to the Yishuvist ideological campaign in influencing Soviet policy, the majority of scholars emphasise a more realist strategic calculus behind this change. The Soviet change of policy had multiple causal factors including that of supporting world-wide decolonisation efforts and the dismantling of the British empire. Johan Franzen, "Communism Versus Zionism: The Comintern, Yishuvism, and the Palestine Communist Party," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, no. 2 (2007): 6–24; Rucker, *Moscow's Surprise*; Yaacov Ro'i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice: The USSR and Israel, 1947–1954* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1980), 15–293.

written by Evelyn Rothfield, a leading Jewish Council activist and intellectual, are instructive here.³⁰ In *Whither Palestine*, published in March 1947, Rothfield outlined a short history and political diagnosis of the situation in Palestine.³¹ Rothfield's history was dismissive of any grievances the Palestinian Arab population had with the Jewish settlement. She suggested that the (often violent) Arab opposition to Jewish settlement in the late 1930s was the result of the 'Arab land-owners' who 'fomented [the riots] with the help of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany'.³² As was common to the discourse of the Jewish left at the time, Rothfield combined a typical settler colonialist trope of 'the rising standard of living of the Arab peasant and working man in Palestine' thanks to Jewish settlement, with a call for further Arab-Jewish co-operation.³³

It is notable, however, that Rothfield, in line with the Yishuvist outlook, as well as the politics of major left Zionist group in Palestine, Hashomer Hatzair, forcibly rejected partition as it 'would divide the Arabs from the Jews; emphasise and accentuate their differences instead of solving them [as well as] deprive both peoples of something which they feel vitally to be theirs'.³⁴ Rothfield's position here could be productively compared with Hannah Arendt's contemporary advocacy of a federated Palestine within a broader world federation.³⁵ As historian Gil Rubin has established, rather than a utopian anachronism, these ideas were very much of a piece with broader international political currents in trying to provide a model for the new post-war, decolonised world.³⁶ Rothfield argued in an internationalist mode that suggested the harmony of Jewish and 'Arab' interests in Palestine and a rejection of political Zionism's aim of an independent Jewish state: 'The world today provides countless examples of successful

³⁰ Rothfield was a founding member of (the socialist Zionist group) Habonim in the United Kingdom in the 1930s and had strong links with the Yishuv/Israel. She visited family and stayed on a Kibbutz in 1947. However, she was not active in Zionist organisations after she migrated to Australia in 1939. Evelyn Rothfield, *The Future Is Past* (Fairfield, Victoria: E. Rothfield, 1992); Evelyn Rothfield, *Whither Palestine* (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1947); Evelyn Rothfield, *Israel Reborn* (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1948).

³¹ Both pamphlets were published by Dolphin Publications which I discuss further in Chap. 6.

³² For an account of Palestinian Arab opposition to Jewish settlement during this period, see Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 65–139. The idea that there were no Palestinian people with a national claim and that Arab opposition to Zionism was fomented by a reactionary elite minority was a mainstay of left Zionist ideology in this period. See Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 45, 63–65.

³³ See Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 33–43. Rothfield's politics and international Yishuvism more generally could also be compared with the British Labour Party's support for the 'elevated colonialism' of Zionism. David Feldman, "Zionism and the British Labour Party," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, eds., Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 197–206.

³⁴ Rothfield, *Whither Palestine*. On the shifting politics of Hashomer Hatzair in this period see Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 348–351.

³⁵ Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis of Zionism," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

³⁶ For a discussion of the post-war politics of federalism and how Arendt's vision of Palestine fitted within these ideological currents, see Gil Rubin, "From Federalism to Binationalism: Hannah Arendt's Shifting Zionism," *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 3 (2015): 393–414.

co-operation between different peoples in one land to their mutual advantage. And, with successful co-operation, the people of Palestine can strive for and attain that freedom and independence which is the aim of all people.’ Rothfield ended her pamphlet on a universalist, internationalist note: ‘a free and independent Palestine would co-operate with the people of the Empire and all the United Nations in laying the foundation for the sort of world we all want to see—A WORLD OF FREE PEOPLES LIVING AT PEACE.’³⁷

Rothfield expressed a politics that ran counter to the ideas of national self-determination implemented in Europe after World War One—meaning one nation per state, per territory—which had required large-scale population transfers and afforded wholly inadequate protections for formalised ‘minority’ groups.³⁸ The ideas proffered by the Jewish antifascist left prior to 1948 instead reflected federalist thought. They argued that the national rights of Jews in the Yishuv should not be achieved through the creation of an exclusivist nation-state. This was connected to a fundamental principle of the Jewish antifascist left, as we have seen: that Jewish liberation and an end to antisemitism were inextricably bound up with a wider global struggle of oppressed peoples.

Jewish Life reprinted many documents and communiques from both the Zionist left (Hashomer Hatzair and Mapam) and the communist left in Palestine.³⁹ While never challenging or indeed recognising Jewish settlement in Palestine as a settler colonial project, these are important perspectives to consider. They help both to illuminate a degree of heterogeneity amongst the Jewish political left in Palestine with regard to the wars of 1947–1949 and also to indicate that these perspectives were being disseminated internationally to communist and left-wing parties and organisations both Jewish and non-Jewish.⁴⁰

One such letter was from the Young Communist League of Israel to the World Federation of Democratic Youth.⁴¹ In line with an international communist policy (re-

³⁷ Rothfield, *Whither Palestine*.

³⁸ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1951; repr., 1976), 267–290. Roni Gechtman notes that there was an alignment between Wilsonian self-determination and the Soviet Union’s communist ideal of national self-determination. Roni Gechtman, “A ‘Museum of Bad Taste’? The Jewish Labour Bund and the Bolshevik Position Regarding the National Question, 1903–1914,” *Canadian Journal of History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 65. Adom Getachew, by contrast, emphasises the counterposed character of Wilsonian counter-revolutionary self-determination and communist self-determination, at least in its 1917 iteration. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 37–70.

³⁹ For example, see “Jewish and Arab Communists Unite,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 3 (1949). For an overview of the politics of these groups in this period, see Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There?: Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 24–55. See also Amir Locker-Biletzki, “Colonialism and Imperialism in Communist Thinking in Palestine/Israel, 1919–1965,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (2018): 384–399.

⁴⁰ See also R.S. Gordon, “The Arab Left Wing,” *New Life* 1, no. 5 (1947).

⁴¹ Young Communist League of Israel, “Israeli Youth Calls to World Youth,” *Jewish Life* 2, no. 2 (1948).

flected by the transnational Jewish left and Evelyn Rothfield), the conflict in Palestine was painted as an imperialist plot on behalf of the Arab countries acting on behalf of British and (sometimes) American interests:

In view of all these facts of imperialist intrigue, it is of utmost importance to stress that the main portion of the Arab working and trading masses of Palestine remained outside the attacking camp, and that this is the main reason for the great propaganda for Arab ‘volunteers’, and finally the invasion from Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt etc. We had many examples of local truces between Arab and Jewish villages, there were whole districts where Arab villages and workers maintained their contacts with their Jewish neighbours for long months. Where they worked and traded together and in some cases even resisted the infiltration of reactionary Arab gangs.⁴²

This image is borne out by recent archival research by Ariella Azoulay, who has unearthed documentation of the hundreds of ‘civil alliance’ compacts made between Jewish and Arab Palestinian communities between November 1947 and May 1948.⁴³ As suggested above such an emphasis (and a little known or publicised set of facts) was part and parcel of the antifascist Jewish left’s non-Zionist emphasis on the possibilities for co-operation between Jews and ‘Arabs’ in Palestine against a common imperial oppressor.⁴⁴ The following passage, from the Young Communist League’s letter, however illustrates the limited analysis of this perspective:

we have actions by Jewish circles, the reactionary military organizations of Irgun Zwai Leumi and Stern, which objectively help British imperialism and Arab feudal reaction to widen the gap between the broad masses of Arabs and Jews. So they perpetrated ... the brutal attack on the Arab peasants of Deir Yasseen village in which many women and children were butchered ... While fighting, it is our duty to be on the alert against chauvinistic tendencies on the one hand and against pro-imperialist “compromising” on the other.

⁴² *Ibid.* See Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

⁴³ The period after the UN’s partition decision and before the establishment of the state of Israel and the subsequent invasion of the Arab states’ armies. Ariella Azoulay, “Civil Alliances – Palestine, 1947–1948,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 4 (2014): 413–433.

⁴⁴ For explorations of these possibilities, or more often the lack of possibilities, for co-operation, see Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Deborah Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000); Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

In other words, the Young Communist League backed Jewish territorial expansion while implying that the chauvinism and cause of ‘Arab’-Jewish disunity was the fault only of the far right. There was no criticism of the *Haganah*, or its leadership, as implicated both in the specific massacre of Deir Yassin and also in a larger project of Palestinian ethnic cleansing.⁴⁵ The limits of an internationalist solidarity seemed to be reached when it came to assessing a project of Jewish settler colonial dispossession.

Rothfield followed up *Whither Palestine* with another pamphlet titled *Israel Reborn*, published in July 1948, which struck a decidedly different tone.⁴⁶ Rothfield here reversed her previous opposition to partition, suggesting that ‘the United Nations’ proposals ... give complete independence to both Arabs and Jews, which is the only basis for a satisfactory solution’. *Israel Reborn*, as well as celebrating the creation of the Jewish state, strongly condemned the British for siding with the ‘Arabs’ against the Yishuv in the wars of 1947–1948, suggesting that ‘American policy [too] had little more to commend it’. Rothfield’s exalted celebration of the establishment of the new state certainly represents the zenith of the Australian Jewish antifascist left’s support for Israel, as it became indistinguishable from Zionist ideology:

For two thousand years before the dispersal the Children of Israel cultivated the soil of the Promised land, lived there and produced an immortal literature and culture. Today after a lapse of 1900 years, the Jewish people once more have a land of their own on soil consecrated by two thousand years of history. Much of it has lain barren for centuries, waiting to be fertilised by the blood and sweat and tears of thousands of Jewish pioneers who quite literally gave their lives to the rebuilding of Israel.⁴⁷

Israel Reborn’s foreword was written by the Anglican Bishop C.V. Pilcher, who quoted Winston Churchill’s statement of support for the Zionist movement at length. In September 1948, *Unity* published an article by Pilcher titled ‘Jewish achievements have benefited Palestine Arabs’, which furthered a fairly typical Zionist narrative that:

Jewish immigrants entered the Land of their forefathers with immense enthusiasm. They also brought with them the scientific and agricultural skills

⁴⁵ See Ilana Kaufman, “Communists and the 1948 War: PCP, Maki, and the National Liberation League,” *Journal of Israeli History* 33, no. 2 (2014): 115–144; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006). For discussions of Mapam’s approach to Palestinian refugees, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 184–187; Beinín, *Was the Red Flag*, 31–39. For the involvement of the Haganah at Deir Yassin, see Irene L. Gendzier, *Dying to Forget: Oil, Power, Palestine, & the Foundations of U.S. Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 123.

⁴⁶ Mendes suggests that the Jewish Council distributed 25,000 copies of this pamphlet. Mendes, “The Australian Left’s Support,” 144. Norman Rothfield suggests that 100,000 were distributed of both, with the assistance of trade unions and churches. Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, 21.

⁴⁷ Rothfield, *Israel Reborn*.

of Europe. As a result, the land which had lain desolate for so many centuries began to blossom and to flourish.⁴⁸

There was no mention of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who were being pushed out of the new State.⁴⁹ While the Jewish antifascist left seemed to take a principled stand against the doctrine of an exclusivist nation-state form in the lead-up to 1948, following the declaration of statehood, their Yishuvism was exposed in its lack of critical capacity to assess Jewish settler colonialism as inimical to a project of ‘successful co-operation between different peoples in one land to their mutual advantage’. The ideological image of the ‘desolate’ land made to ‘flourish’ through a progressive, anti-imperial colonialism obscured the possibility of a more critical approach.

‘Does the state of Israel solve the Jewish question?’: After ’48

While maintaining a stance that was generally supportive of Israel, *Unity’s* focus on Israel/Palestine was displaced by other concerns in the years following 1948.⁵⁰ An exception was in May 1949 when, on the first anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, *Unity* printed a number of articles as part of a symposium on the question ‘Does the State of Israel Solve the Jewish Question?’ The symposium ran the gamut of opinions. H.B. Newman, President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, titled his contribution ‘Israel has restored our dignity’ and suggested that ‘the Jewish problem has definitely been solved by the establishment of the State of Israel’.⁵¹ Conversely L. Harry Gould, Director of the Marx School, suggested that although the establishment of Israel was a great victory, a wider solution to antisemitism and for peace and security for all Jews lay in the defeat of imperialism by the forces of

⁴⁸ C. Venn Pilcher, “Jewish Achievements Have Benefited Palestine Arabs,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1948).

⁴⁹ While there was only a passing reference to the Palestinian refugees in *New Life*, *Jewish Life* printed a very sympathetic interview in January 1949 with the ‘Arab progressives’ which highlighted the issue of the refugees. *Jewish Life* went on to press for the return of the refugees in an August 1949 editorial. “Israel’s Arab Problem,” *New Life* 2, no. 6 (1948); A.B. Magil, “I Meet the Arab Progressives,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 3 (1949); “Cold War Against Israel,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 10 (1949). This was despite this stance being, at the time, the policy of the United States and of no interest to the USSR. On the changing positions of the United States on the refugee issue circa 1948–1949, see Gendzier, *Dying to Forget*, 201–239.

⁵⁰ After 1953 the Jewish Council returned to a consistently pro-Israel position, following closely the line of the Mapam party, see Philip Mendes, “The ‘Declining’ Years of the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1954–1970,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 17, pt.3 (2004): 3–5.

⁵¹ H.B. Newman, “Israel Has Restored Our Dignity!,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949).

democracy, and ultimately in socialism.⁵² G. de Vahl Davis, President of the Sydney Liberal synagogue Temple Emanuel, suggested that the establishment of the state while certainly a positive development was not necessarily an answer to antisemitism and had caused new problems for Jews. According to de Vahl Davis, local Zionist leaders now saw no point in building local community institutions. They viewed antisemitism in the diaspora as inevitable and advocated that all community resources should be devoted to Israel.⁵³ Other contributors to the symposium suggested that the establishment of Israel was ‘nearer the solution’, as ‘the Jew’ has now acquired ‘a prestige among the nations with whom he lives’.⁵⁴

While de Vahl Davis’ view comes closest to representing a Jewish left position in this part of the symposium, a feature article in the same issue of *Unity* by Brezniak is more revealing. The article ‘There Is No Neutrality’ starts as an enthusiastic celebration of the establishment of Israel. The fight for the establishment of Israel, Brezniak claimed,

had the support of ... all who aim in historical progress for the independence of nations, full defeat of Nazism and racialism, breaking colonial and feudal systems, doing away with all manner of anti-Jewish prejudices and restrictions, and for the right of peoples for their own nationhood.

However, in Brezniak’s rendering, now that Israel had emerged as a state like any other, support for it from progressive Jews was entirely conditional on its wider geopolitical positioning.⁵⁵ Brezniak suggested that Israel should push for an independent Arab state of Palestine alongside Israel, in fulfilment of the UN Partition decision rather than follow the ‘imperialist policy of handing it over to King Abdullah’. Brezniak asked, with reference to relations with Spain, Greece, and the United States:

Is Israel on the side of national movements fighting for national liberation and independence; or is the State of Israel ranged with those who keep them subservient?... [O]n the answers to those questions will depend the future support of the freedom-loving people for the State of Israel.⁵⁶

⁵² L. Harry Gould, “Socialism the Solution,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949).

⁵³ G. de Vahl Davis, “New State – New Problems,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949).

⁵⁴ N. Jacobson, “Nearer the Solution,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949); Dr. A. Cymerman, “Free from ‘Galuth’ Psychology,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949).

⁵⁵ H. Brezniak, “There Is No Neutrality,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* According to Paul Morawetz one of the central reasons why he resigned from the Jewish Council was the ambivalence around Israel. Morawetz suggested that in particular Norman Rothfield and Judah Waten wanted a new neutral position on Israel as they were suspicious that it was ‘an outcrop of nationalism, that Israel was in a way an imperialist design and that the Jews might become imperialists in Israel themselves and that the Jabotinsky line might be pursued’. “Notes from Peter Medding’s interview with Paul Morawetz” (papers of Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, State Library of Victoria, MS 14257, undated).

This section of the Jewish antifascist left still gave primary allegiance to the international anti-imperialist struggle (as led by the Soviet Union), with any allegiance to Israel secondary and highly conditional.

In the September-October issue of *Unity*, the symposium continued. Nate Zusman, a key figure in *Unity* and the Sydney Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, suggested that '[t]his symposium has strikingly revealed the acceptance, either consciously or unconsciously, of the accusation of the Jew-baiters that the Jew himself is the cause of the discrimination exercised against him'.⁵⁷ Zusman disputed claims that Israel 'frees the "new Jew" from any slur of inferiority' or gives the Jew 'a new standing in his own eyes'. Zusman continued:

Were we inferior and without dignity before the creation of the Jewish state? No! ... This outlook ... lessens our ability to fight back when we are challenged. If we can only free ourselves from the "Galuth" psychology by going to Israel then those who do not go will only be able to "free" themselves by escaping from their Jewishness. There is no greater danger to our consciousness as Jews and human beings than the corroding influence of this self-hate and inferiority complex The solution of the problem for the majority of Jews who live, and will continue to live outside of Israel, lies only in the victory of the democratic forces pledged to eradicate all forms of racial and religious discrimination.⁵⁸

Yishuvism then, rather than representing an ultimate political goal indistinguishable from Zionism, was contingent and conditional on the political circumstances of the time. It was subservient to a larger transnational politics aimed at Jewish emancipation through the democratic and anti-racist transformation of the world.

Nevertheless, Yishuvism did not substantially challenge the settler colonialist imaginary which essentially disavowed the dispossession of Palestinians.⁵⁹ This complicates, therefore, our understanding of what Zusman meant by 'the victory of the democratic forces pledged to eradicate all forms of racial and religious discrimination'. Despite their increasing scepticism of Israel and Zionist ideology in this period, the Australian Jewish antifascist left never mounted any serious public campaign or challenge to Zionism after the establishment of the state. Instead, for the most part, a critical analysis of the situation in Israel/Palestine was neglected as a political issue.⁶⁰ This eventually

⁵⁷ Zusman was notably given the final word in the symposium. Nate Zusman, "Self-Respect and Democracy – the Solution," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ For an exploration of such disavowals as common across settler colonial imaginaries, see Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2008): 363–379.

⁶⁰ The Jewish Council Annual Report for 1949–1950 is striking for the complete absence of any mention of Israel. "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Annual Report 1949–1950" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

had serious consequences for the Jewish antifascist left. The Jewish left, rather than presenting a consistent and universally applied politics, dealt sometimes haphazardly, with the international and local political circumstances in which they found themselves. In this period the political approaches of the various Jewish factions to these circumstances were highly differentiated.

‘For God, for King and for Country’: Responses to Assimilationism

During the immediate post-war period the Jewish antifascist left and the Zionist movement seemingly had common cause against the previous assimilationist establishment leadership of the Jewish community. Both movements were struggling to define a Jewish politics involving a certain measure of collective rights and autonomy, rather than seeing Jewishness simply as a private matter of religion.⁶¹ An epiphenomenon of this struggle within the Jewish community was the formation of *The Australian Jewish Outlook* (*AJO*), a short-lived journal established to counter the growing dominance of Zionism within the Jewish community.⁶² The *AJO* was set against both anti-British Zionism and communism.⁶³ In June 1947, *The Voice* published an article condemning the *AJO*.⁶⁴ *The Voice* (1944–1947) was a Jewish monthly magazine with an openly communist perspective (and fairly low production values), edited by the prominent Jewish communist Itzhak Gust and published in Melbourne.⁶⁵ The article, in a somewhat overblown tone, accused the *AJO* of being:

⁶¹ As Hannah Arendt suggests, the category of ‘Jewishness’ as something quantifiable and subject to internal contestation was only possible as a result of modern Jewish emancipation and assimilation. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 83–84.

⁶² For an account of the fortunes of this journal, see Louise Hoffman, “A Review of the Jewish Press in Western Australia,” *Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society* 8, no. part 2 (1978).

⁶³ The *AJO* was against what it called ‘political Zionism’, which aimed at the creation of an independent Jewish State. It was in favour of ‘Zionism as a humanitarian and cultural movement designed to facilitate the migration to Palestine of Jews who, because of racial and religious discrimination, cannot or will not live in the country of their birth or adoption.’ “The ‘Australian Jewish Outlook’: Editorial Policy Outlined,” *Australian Jewish Outlook* 1, no. 1 (1947).

⁶⁴ For a more favourable discussion of the sort of politics represented by the *AJO*, embodied by Isaac Isaacs, see John Docker, *1492: The Poetics of Diaspora* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), 171–188. Despite on the surface there being little in common politically between the *AJO* perspective and a Jewish left analysis, there were a number of echoes, particularly in their scepticism of Zionism. By 1946, Isaac Isaacs was a weekly visitor to the Jewish Council offices, advising them on legal matters and adding his name to official approaches to government. Rabbi Raymond Apple, “Isaacs & Monash: The Jewish Connection,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 11, pt. 6 (1993): 985–999. According to Rothfield, Isaacs ‘remained a staunch supporter until his death’ in 1948. Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, 21.

⁶⁵ See the ASIO file “Jewish Unity Association” for evidence of the different approaches of *The Voice* and *Unity*.

the voice of a small body of Jews who are anxious to carry favour with the most conservative, reactionary elements in this country. They would destroy the communal organisations of the Jewish people, which include religious, cultural and social bodies; they would prevent communication between Jews of this country and prevent communication between Jews of this country and the Jewish people of the rest of the world; they would preach complete subservience to those reactionary forces who masquerade under the slogan “For God, for King and for Country”.

This quote illustrates well the then apparent alignment between the aims of the Jewish antifascist left and the Zionist movement. Both needed to challenge the old established principles of a non-political Jewishness, figured as a private matter of religion, to further their political goals involving a transnational Jewish political consciousness.

The *AJO*’s primary anxiety around Zionism was that it would lead to a disidentification of Jews from a fundamental political and national loyalty to Australia and by extension the British empire. The *AJO* denied that ‘the Australian Jew is a homeless or Stateless exile; it insists that Australian Jews, either born or naturalised, live in Australia as Australian citizens by right and not by sufferance, and must accept to the fullest degree the obligations of citizenship equally with all other Australians’.⁶⁶ The *AJO*’s reference to ‘exile’ here was a response to the widespread Zionist notion of ‘*shelilat hagalut*’ or ‘negation of exile’.⁶⁷ Developed through the early twentieth century, this notion suggested that a diasporic or exilic existence of the Jewish people was no longer possible or desirable and that a territorial concentration and a re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty was necessary to return the Jewish people to their full political and cultural potential. In a world situation defined by modern nationalisms, Jewish life in ‘exile’ was judged to be dangerous, distorting, and unnecessary.⁶⁸

Daniel H. Weiss has suggested that this Zionist concept of the ‘negation of the *galut*’ suffered from a misapprehension of the Jews’ supposedly then exilic existence. Weiss defines the pre-modern rabbinical conception of *galut* as referring to a ‘nation in exile’, indicating the politically bounded nature of a Jewish collectivity; its universal geography; lack of ties to any particular territory; and lack of ultimate political allegiance to the law or military defence of any nation where Jews were situated.⁶⁹ As

⁶⁶ “The ‘Australian Jewish Outlook’: Editorial Policy Outlined.”

⁶⁷ Shalom Ratzaby, “The Polemic About the ‘Negation of the Diaspora’ in the 1930s and Its Roots,” *Journal of Israeli History* 16, no. 1 (1995): 19–38.

⁶⁸ Ibid. See also Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Exile Within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of the ‘Negation of Exile’ in Israeli Culture,” *Theory and Criticism*, no. 4 and 5 (1993): 23–56, 113–132.

⁶⁹ Daniel H. Weiss, “A Nation without Borders?: Modern European Emancipation as Negation of Galut,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 34, no. 4 (2016): 72. This notion of nationhood does not imply a modern concept of nation as produced by modern nationalism. See also Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Jewish Memory Between Exile and History,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 530–543.

suggested by the *AJO*, Weiss argues that the political rights bestowed upon Jews as individuals in modern Western nation-states had already in effect negated the situation of *galut*.⁷⁰ The ‘negation of the *galut*’ through the political emancipation of Jews was most famously phrased during the French Revolution as: ‘The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals.’⁷¹ The *AJO* was in agreement with this formulation; for them the historical debate on the global place of the Jews was essentially done and dusted. They emphasised a ‘non-political’, religious version of Jewish identity and an ultimate and primary allegiance to Australia and the British empire.⁷² Much to their chagrin, in the post-war period this subject became one of live debate.

The post-war Jewish community actively debated the political implications of various definitions of Jewishness. For the *AJO*, Jews were a non-politically defined religious group; for the Zionists and territorialists, Jews were a nation; for others, Jews were a racial group. For the Jewish antifascist left, Jewishness meant none of the above. In December 1947, the *AJO* featured a debate on how to define what Jewishness was. There were three major articles: ‘The Case for the Racial Group’ by David J. Benjamin; ‘The Case for the National Group’ by S. Stedman, the editor of the territorialist *Australian Jewish Forum*; and ‘The Case for the Religious Group’ by Phillip Masel.⁷³ Masel’s opinion was reflective of the *AJO*’s editorial line. He suggested that Jews could not be defined as a common race, as they have ‘intermingled with all the other racial groups of the world’ producing everything from ‘Jews of essentially Nordic appearance’ to ‘communities of black Jews’. Masel disputed the argument that Jews in Palestine were building an all-encompassing Jewish nation, suggesting that they were in fact building a new type of nationality: ‘[j]ust as the Jew is different from the Israelite of the past, so the Israelite of the future will be different from the Jew of today. The Jew must be a member of the religious group; the Israelite of the future may or may not be.’⁷⁴ For Masel there was only one thing that marks the modern Jew as a Jew: ‘It is solely his religious faith’.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Weiss, “A Nation without Borders?”

⁷¹ Cited in *ibid.*, 80. For a discussion of Jews and the French Revolution, see Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 17–49; David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 91–101. For a discussion of Jewish emancipation and the emergence of modern antisemitism, see Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 85–111.

⁷² The origins of this ideology lie with the maskilim of the Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment who venerated the state, seeking to turn Jews into individual state citizens above all else. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 98–117.

⁷³ David J. Benjamin, “The Case for the Racial Group,” *Australian Jewish Outlook* 1, no. 8 (1947); Philip Masel, “The Case for the Religious Group,” *Australian Jewish Outlook* 1, no. 8 (1947); S. Stedman, “The Case for the National Group,” *Australian Jewish Outlook* 1, no. 8 (1947).

⁷⁴ Philip Masel, “The Case for the Religious Group.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* For a discussion of the transformation of the idea of Judaism into a ‘religion’ rather than a political entity, see Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish*

In Benjamin's definition race was not biological; he held that 'race does not depend entirely on descent'. Benjamin's very loose definition of race was not entirely distinct from the religious definition. He suggested that Judaism as a religion, coupled with a feeling of common descent and the inheritance of Judaism through the ages, made Jews into a race.⁷⁶ Unlike in the United States, a Jewish discourse about a racial Jewishness was marginal in post-war Australia.⁷⁷ Stedman built his definition of Jews as a nation on the basis of a contemporary and historical assessment of the political self-definition and external treatment of Jews. He disputed a purely religious definition of Jewishness by pointing to the example of Jews living in *kibbutzim* in Palestine who, while not observing what was traditionally thought of as religious practice, were 'carrying into practice the very essence of the Jewish religion'. These collective farmers had come 'to Palestine with the sole intention of rebuilding the National status which has been trampled under foot by oppressors of Jewry.'⁷⁸

According to Stedman, the socialist Jewish Labour Bund too, despite being anti-Zionist, 'wish[ed] to assist the building of a new world as a national group'.⁷⁹ Stedman went on to claim that the Jews had been recognised by the Balfour Declaration and by Napoleon Bonaparte as a nation, and now the Soviet Union treated the Jews as a nation and assigned them their own territory and state (Birobidjan). Finally, Stedman suggested that what bound Jews together as a nation was 'our common history and culture, common suffering in the face of centuries-long persecution'. He claimed that the Holocaust had also occasioned a new sense of Jewish transnational political solidarity which reflected a turn towards a politics of Jewish nationhood.⁸⁰ Although Stedman's definition of a nation conflated a number of differing political definitions in an ahistorical manner, his view was reflective of an increasingly dominant Zionist historiography of Jewish nationhood.⁸¹ Writing in *The Zionist*, Patkin (himself a historian) underlined a stark choice between assimilationism and Jewish nationalism. In his historical account, any resistance to assimilation, from the Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] onwards, was evidence of Jewish nationalism.⁸²

Unity's intervention into this debate was a reprint from *New Life* of Hyman Levy's article 'What is a nation?' Levy, utilising a materialist analysis, suggested that Jews

Thought (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (Rutgers University Press, 2018).

⁷⁶ Benjamin, "The Case for the Racial Group."

⁷⁷ Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 165–206.

⁷⁸ Stedman, "The Case for the National Group."

⁷⁹ For a discussion of the 'nationalisation' of the Bund within Zionist historiography, see Roni Gechtman, "Nationalising the Bund? Zionist Historiography and the Jewish Labour Movement," *East European Jewish Affairs* 43, no. 3 (2013): 249–264.

⁸⁰ Stedman, "The Case for the National Group."

⁸¹ See David N. Myers, "On the Idea of a Jewish Nation: Before and after Statism," *Perush* 1 (2009).

⁸² This account was contained in a withering critique of the *AJO* as a 'medley of ignorance and treachery towards those who in this crucial hour of our history are at one with the people'. A. L. Patkin,

did not qualify as a nation, but nor could they be defined simply as a religious group.⁸³ Jews were dispersed throughout the world, he argued, and lived in a large variety of societies, cultures, and economic systems:

In spite of the common tradition and history, religious and secular, they tend naturally to adopt the customs and social habits of the people among whom they live ... There are many bonds of unity and sympathetic understanding, many cultural bonds of a traditional nature originating in past and in present history, but it would be the veriest of confusions to identify these with what is clearly a very different thing—the sense of national unity ... There is, however, most definitely a sense of united consciousness among Jews, of unity of understanding, but to label this as a sense of national consciousness would be a violation of history and of common-sense ... Those who, with blinkered vision, cannot see Jewry as other than single nation must wring their hands in despair as they witness [what they see as] the disintegration of Jewry everywhere throughout the world except in the particular spot where they imagine the true essence of nationhood is being preserved and developed. What they are, in fact, doing is to react in despair to the disintegration of their own narrow outlook on the growth and expansion of Jewry. Those, on the other hand, who are conscious both of unity and of diversity in Jewry can witness with delight the rich and varied forms in which this internationally distributed people express themselves in culture—; music, literature, art, and in language, contributing in a unique way to the pattern of civilisation and at the same time reflecting like many facets of a diamond of their own intrinsic beauty.⁸⁴

Jewishness, in this rendering, was a historically determined, legitimate, and important collective identity.⁸⁵ Its diasporic nature was positive rather than negative. The

“An ‘Australian Jewish Outlook’,” *The Zionist*, June 1947.

⁸³ Levy’s analysis of what constituted a nation was informed by Joseph Stalin’s 1913 definition of a national group, see Joseph Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question,” in *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (Moscow: Co-operative Pub. Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1935), 3–53.

⁸⁴ Hyman Levy, “What Is a Nation?,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948). Levy expanded upon this in his 1958 booklet *Jews and the National Question* (London: Hillway Publishing Company, 1958).

⁸⁵ The Jewish left historical materialist account of Jewish history is set out comprehensively in a series of articles by Moses Miller published in *Jewish Life* disputing a nationalist (or religion-based) Jewish historiography, see Moses Miller, “Zionism and the State of Israel : 1,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 7 (1949); “Zionism and the State of Israel : II,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 8 (1949); “Zionism and the State of Israel: III,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 9 (1949); “Zionism and the State of Israel : IV,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 10 (1949); “Zionism and the State of Israel : V,” *Jewish Life* 3, no. 11 (1949). For Miller both a nationalist and a religious interpretation of Jewish history were founded on an idealist conception of a national or divine will as historical subject, discounting material factors.

answer to antisemitism was not nationalism but to ‘see that freedom and equality for Jewry come with freedom and equality for other oppressed people’.⁸⁶ This was an underlying philosophy of *Unity* and indeed the transnational Jewish antifascist left as a whole during this period. Levy’s reference to ‘the particular spot where they imagine the true essence of nationhood is being preserved and developed’ is clearly a derisory reference to the Yishuv as the centre of a Jewish nation. In line with the Yishuvism of Rothfield in her 1947 incarnation, a politics of Jewish self-determination which upheld the importance of a unitary state, nation, and territory was deemed wholly inadequate for the flourishing of an international diverse people. While Levy’s article was a rejection of Jewish nationalism, it did not preclude a transnational, transhistorical identification or solidarity in line with a Jewish antifascist Popular Front politics as outlined in Chap. 3. Whilst the Jewish antifascist left rejected Jewish nationalism, they did not seek like the *AJO* to confirm a ‘negation of the *galut*’ via political assimilation in Western nation-states. Jewishness in their rendering had a strong political, rather than only cultural or religious, valence, but it transcended an allegiance to particular nation-states or nationalist ideologies, including Australia, Israel, and other figurings of Jewish nationalism.

‘Nationalist and petty bourgeois in ideology and leadership’: The Antifascist Jewish Left and the Bund

This anti-nationalist formulation that figured Jewish freedom as bound up in a more general struggle for social change and emancipation was not a new one. This was a fundamental philosophy of Jewish socialist parties in Europe in the early part of the twentieth century, most prominently the Jewish Labour Bund. The Bund, a mass Jewish working-class party, walked a difficult political line emphasising a politics of ‘national-cultural autonomy’ but with a firm opposition to nationalism per se.⁸⁷ The Bund developed a sophisticated political position which, like the federalists, ran counter to the doctrine of nation-state self-determination. They advocated for a level of Jewish cultural autonomy that would extend to all Jews across Russia (and subsequently Poland), whilst seeing their struggle as inextricable from the broader struggles of the working class to achieve a socialist society. They saw their allies as the non-Jewish

⁸⁶ Hyman Levy, “A Letter to Jewish Intellectuals,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948).

⁸⁷ The ‘national’ in this case did not refer to all Jews constituting a nation but to the historically determined case of Yiddish-speaking Russian and Eastern European Jews who constituted a particular cultural-linguistic group, see Roni Gechtman, “Jews and Non-Territorial Autonomy: Political Programmes and Historical Perspectives,” *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 72–77; Roni Gechtman, “National-Cultural Autonomy and ‘Neutrality’: Vladimir Medem’s Marxist Analysis of the National Question, 1903–1920,” *Socialist Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007): 75–77.

working-class socialist movement, whilst the Zionist and Jewish bourgeois parties were their sworn enemies.⁸⁸ They rejected the idea of a Jewish national solidarity that would cut across class lines.⁸⁹ Nation, state, and territory were thus entirely discontinuous in this political vision of working-class Jewish emancipation. Despite their socialism, Bund demands for autonomy within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and a limited Jewish cultural autonomy under a future workers' government were forcibly rejected by the Bolsheviks as reflecting a bourgeois nationalism or separatism.⁹⁰

Following World War One and the Russian Revolution, the Bund reconstituted in Poland and became a powerful political and cultural force.⁹¹ From the early 1920s onwards, the Polish Bund were thoroughly opposed to the communists and the Soviet Union.⁹² During World War Two there were some signs of a rapprochement between the Bund and the Soviet Union, but this did not last long. Victor Alter and Henryk Erlich, two prominent leaders of the Bund, were in the midst of talks with Soviet authorities to establish an 'all-world anti-Hitlerite Jewish committee' when they were arrested at the end of 1941 by their supposed new allies.⁹³ This cemented the intense enmity between Bundists and communists internationally, including in Australia.⁹⁴

By the end of World War Two, as the Bund became more active in Melbourne, one of their main political priorities was combating communism.⁹⁵ Despite on paper the pro-Soviet Jewish antifascist left and the Bund having a similar outlook for Jewish politics, in practice they were stridently opposed to each other. Their stances towards the Communist Party and communism more generally gave them very different political priorities. The Jewish antifascist left was very happy to work with the peace movement,

⁸⁸ Gertrud Pickhan, "Yiddishkayt and Class Consciousness: The Bund and Its Minority Concept," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2009): 255–259; Mario Kessler, "The Bund and the Labour and Socialist International," in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001).

⁸⁹ Pickhan, "Yiddishkayt and Class Consciousness," 258–259; Roni Gechtman, "Nationalising the Bund?"

⁹⁰ For an account of this political clash, see Gechtman, "A 'Museum of Bad Taste'?"; Yoav Peled, "Lenin on the Jewish Question: The Theoretical Setting," *Political Studies* 35 (1987): 61–78.

⁹¹ Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

⁹² Gechtman, "A 'Museum of Bad Taste'?", 64.

⁹³ Isabelle Tombs, "Erlich and Alter, 'the Sacco and Vanzetti of the USSR': An Episode in the Wartime History of International Socialism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 4 (1988): 531–549; Shimon Redlich, "The Erlich-Alter Affair," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 9, no. 2 (1979): 24–45. While Erlich was believed murdered until after the fall of the Soviet Union, he in fact killed himself in an NKVD prison. Lucian Dobroszycki, "Last Hours of Erlich Emerge in Red Files. Hero of the Bund Killed Himself in May 1942," *Forward*, Dec. 11, 1992: 1–2. I am indebted to Jack Jacobs for this correction and reference.

⁹⁴ The Bund in Australia was given assistance by Arthur Calwell in publicising the apparent murders of Erlich and Alter. David Slucki, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 140.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 157–158. Clare Fester, "Migrant Politics and the New Australians Council, 1955–59" (Monash University, 2013), 27–42. The two factions previously had an uneasy alliance, see Slucki, *International Jewish Labor Bund*, 140.

left churches and trade unions, and left writers and artists during this period. A large portion of these allies were in some way affiliated with the Communist Party or were at least to some extent fellow travellers.⁹⁶ These affiliations precluded the Bund from making the same connections. They found their allies on the centre and right of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), drawing them deeper into an anti-communist politics and establishing a primary political allegiance to the ALP.⁹⁷

The Australian Jewish antifascist left for their part did not acknowledge any influence of Bundist thought on their own. This was likely the result of two factors: firstly, the real history of the Bundist movement and their politics was likely obscured through its interpretation in communist dogma. *Jewish Life*, for instance, curtly dismissed the Bund in 1948 as ‘nationalist and petty bourgeois in ideology and leadership’.⁹⁸ Secondly, in the post-war world the Melbourne Bund were known in the Jewish community for their emphasis on anti-communist politics as well as a certain dogmatic clannishness. The Bund, as a forceful and organised Jewish political party pushing their own particular politics and quite unconcerned with Jewish ‘unity’, were viewed with horror in polite Jewish society.⁹⁹ The Jewish Council, along with other Jewish leaders, blocked their communal affiliation for many years.¹⁰⁰ In sum, despite there being formal similarities between the philosophies of the two Jewish left groupings, in post-war Australia their politics were put into practice in very different ways.

While, as we saw in the last chapter, the Jewish antifascist left proffered a critical analysis of the classed nature of Australian society, on the whole they were less likely to highlight class divisions in Australian Jewish communities than the Bundists (this was likely tied to their own varied class composition; not an insignificant number of pro-Soviet Jewish antifascist left activists were also successful business owners).¹⁰¹ Though as David Slucki suggests, the generalised upward class mobility of the Jewish community in the 1950s also meant the Bund significantly tempered its previous class rhetoric.¹⁰² Apart from anti-communism, the Bund’s other major focus in Australia, reflective of their vision in Europe, was the promotion of Yiddish language and culture

⁹⁶ See Chap. 5 of this book.

⁹⁷ For an account of these dynamics, see Fester, “Migrant Politics”; Slucki, *International Jewish Labor Bund*, 151–159; David Rechter, “Beyond the Pale: Jewish Communism in Melbourne” (University of Melbourne, 1986), 148–149.

⁹⁸ Morris U. Schappes, “Resistance Is the Lesson,” *Jewish Life* 2, no. 6 (1948).

⁹⁹ A. Shulman, “The Melbourne Bund – A Skit,” *Australian Jewish Forum* 6, no. 44 (1946). Also see the incident at the Kadimah as outlined in Chap. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Slucki, *International Jewish Labor Bund*, 148.

¹⁰¹ Sam Goldbloom, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 12 April 1988, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/135; Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*; Itzhak Gust, *Such Was Life: A Jumping Narrative from Radom to Melbourne* (Caulfield South, VIC: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2004).

¹⁰² Slucki, *International Jewish Labor Bund*, 165–167.

as an essential part of their vision of Jewishness.¹⁰³ While the Jewish antifascist left were also proponents of Yiddish culture, their cultural vision was wider in scope.

Jewish Culture, Diasporism, and Multilingualism

While Australian Jewish cultural institutions such as the Kadimah had existed for many decades, the 1940s saw a flowering of Jewish politics, arts, and debate.¹⁰⁴ This decade saw a conscious effort to create Jewish ‘culture’, as something to be consumed, discussed, and produced. Magazines such as the *Australian Jewish Forum*, *Unity*, *The Zionist*, and even the *AJO* (which despite its religious definition of Jews also highlighted Jewish ‘cultural’ products) were evidence of both a robust political debate and also an attempt to search out and define and create Jewish arts and literatures that transcended a solely religious criterion of Jewishness. Despite their political differences, all these magazines had common cause and commitment to debating and defining Jewish culture and politics.

A key impetus for these changes was a new transnational Jewish solidarity occasioned by the Holocaust. As we have seen, a major component of this was a literature of the Holocaust which was written and circulated through Jewish communities worldwide. The flourishing of Jewish ‘culture’ was also occasioned by the transformation of Australian Jewish communities by pre-war German and Austrian refugees and post-war Holocaust survivors. As noted by Richard Haese, the background of many refugee families meant they had ‘brought with them an appreciation of art and a cultural breadth rare anywhere in Australia’.¹⁰⁵ This brought them into close contact with Australian artists and writers keen for both an appreciation of high culture and European spurs to cultural innovation. In addition, as evidenced by *Unity’s* overseas relationships, closer connections to international Jewish communities, particularly those in the United Kingdom and the United States, led to increased literary and artistic production. The heightened role of and appreciation of Jewish ‘culture’ in the United States echoed a general post-war ‘culture’ boom occasioned by the rise of mass cultures of consumption, increased wealth and leisure time, and an increase in the levels of higher education.¹⁰⁶ As in the United States, many Jews in Australia were well positioned to ride this post-war economic boom, particularly through their roles in the clothing industry and their enthusiastic embrace of professional roles through higher education.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ibid., 144–145.

¹⁰⁴ Susan Bach, “The Kadimah: 1911–1961” (Monash University, 1979).

¹⁰⁵ Richard Haese, *Modern Australian Art* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1982), 235.

¹⁰⁶ Emily Alice Katz, *Bringing Zion Home: Israel in American Jewish Culture, 1948–1967* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 13–16.

¹⁰⁷ Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (*Rose Bay: Brandl & Schlesinger 1997*), 259–273; *Medding*, *Assimilation to Group Survival*, 18–26.

This ‘culture’ boom was embraced by the Jewish left who saw the emergence and shaping of Jewish ‘culture’ as a key aspect of their political vision. Unlike the relatively overt (though often internally contested), outlining of a progressive Jewish culture by *New Life* and *Jewish Life*, *Unity* did not proffer an explicit progressive Jewish cultural project. It was the younger Jewish antifascists, mostly Communist Party members, who formed the leadership of the Kadimah Youth Organisation (KYO) and the Jewish Council youth section, who were more successful in prioritising and creating progressive Jewish cultural expression. *Unity* often seemed to celebrate Jewish culture qua Jewish culture, but a closer look reveals an often implicit ideal of Jewish culture as diasporic, multilingual, and multicultural. Like *New Life* and *Jewish Life* (as outlined in the previous chapter), *Unity* refused to hierarchise types of Jewishness and rejected a crude Jewish nationalism which tied Jewish culture inextricably to a certain language. We can see these implicit ideals emerge more clearly through an examination of *Unity*’s approaches to Hebrew and Yiddish.

As discussed above, since the 1930s the Zionist movement with its associated Hebraism was in the ascendant in Australia. By the late 1940s the movement was coming to dominate a majority of spheres of Jewish life.¹⁰⁸ In an article translated for *Unity*’s second issue, Pinchas Goldhar, a non-Zionist, outlined a comprehensive critique of the way Zionism was advanced in Australia:

With them it is merely a matter by which to facilitate the process of assimilation, to have ready access to the melting-pot as a minority with the status of an own homeland like all other minorities ... That is the reason why Zionism here is so bereft of spirit, without any Jewish verve. And the whole work of the Jewish Zionist movement is concentrated exclusively around money-collecting activities.¹⁰⁹

Goldhar contrasted this mode of Zionist activism negatively with how it was practiced before the war in Eastern Europe, where there was a focus on promoting Hebrew language and culture. He suggested that ultimately Zionism was not capable of combating antisemitism and bringing respect for Jewish culture and values. This was because of its conception of the “negation of the *Galut*,” with its empty relation to everything in Jewish life outside Eretz Israel, and with its negative attitude to Yiddish and all cultural and social achievements of the Jewish communities in the dispersion’.¹¹⁰ In Goldhar’s rendering, Zionism promoted only one mode of idealised Jewishness, disparaging other Jewish traditions, cultures, and modes of living.

The three-sided battle between English, Hebrew, and Yiddish was a subject of lively and impassioned debate during this period, representing in many ways a debate over

¹⁰⁸ For instance, see M. Kusher, “The Jewish Cultural Conference: Critical Comments,” *Australian Jewish Forum* 8, no. 71 (1948).

¹⁰⁹ Pinchas Goldhar, “Jewish Antisemitism,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the projected future for Jewishness in Australia.¹¹¹ One important flashpoint for this debate was the establishment of Mt Scopus Memorial College in 1949 in Melbourne, the first co-educational Jewish day school in Australia. An editorial from *The Zionist* in August-September 1948 made clear the prevailing Zionist sentiment. The occasion for the editorial was a vote of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD) carried by an ‘overwhelming majority’ to exclude Yiddish from the compulsory part of the curriculum of the new school, while including Hebrew.¹¹² In *The Zionist’s* rendering:

Yiddish lost its importance in our daily life both through linguistic assimilation of East European immigrants in English-speaking countries, and through the physical annihilation of East European Jewry. Hebrew, on the one hand, became the official language of the nation ... [and] the living language of the Jews residing in our spiritual, cultural and political centre. Yiddish, on the other hand, becomes more and more a matter of sentiment.¹¹³

This point of view represented a typical argument for the Zion-isation of Jewish communities worldwide. Such a view is echoed through to today, with one example provided by this chapter’s epigraph. In this rendering, Jewish communities outside of Israel can only be secondary and in the service of Israel as the idealised centre of Jewish life.¹¹⁴

Unity was not anti-Hebrew or opposed to Hebraic literature and culture. In November 1949, it ran an article celebrating the tenth anniversary of the ‘Sifriat Hapoalim’ publishing house.¹¹⁵ This publishing house in Palestine was created by the socialist Zionist movement Hashomer Hatzair. As well as publishing a wide array of literary and scientific works, it was well known for publishing Marx and Engels, Lenin, and

¹¹¹ There is a long history of Jewish campaigns against Yiddish. After the *maskilim* of the Jewish enlightenment, these campaigns were taken up by the Zionists. Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 176–186, 232–238. For an examination of both the importance of language to the ideology of Zionism along with a history that contradicts that ideology in Palestine, see Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Liora R. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

¹¹² For a rather partisan history of Mt Scopus during this period, see Benzion Patkin, *Heritage and Tradition: The Emergence of Mount Scopus College* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1972). Benzion Patkin was the nephew of Aaron Patkin and the driving force behind Mt Scopus’ establishment. There were differing views within the Jewish Council on the establishment of Mt Scopus. Norman Rothfield and the majority of the council were opposed, whereas Walter Lippmann was in favour and Joseph Redapple became the school’s first treasurer. *Ibid.*, 106–116.

¹¹³ “Editorial – Yiddish in the Day School,” *The Zionist*, August-September (1948).

¹¹⁴ See Jordana Silverstein, *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 99–131; Barbara Bloch, “Unsettling Zionism: Diasporic Consciousness & Australian Jewish Identities” (University of Western Sydney, 2005), 120–190.

¹¹⁵ “Great Cultural Institution in Israel,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949).

other important Marxist works in Hebrew. The article ended with the confident statement that ‘Sifriat Hapoalim’ will continue to develop a ‘genuine and progressive modern Hebrew culture’.¹¹⁶ Hebrew culture here was not figured as a teleological goal for Jewishness, instead it was imagined as part of a broader progressive socialist project.

A piece published in *Unity* titled ‘The Yid and the Hebrew’ by the author David Martin further illustrates this point.¹¹⁷ Martin takes Arthur Koestler’s exaltation of the ‘Hebrew’ as opposed to the ‘Yid’ as his starting point.¹¹⁸ He suggested that Koestler employed the term ‘Yid’ as would an antisemite to denote a passive ‘grovelling individual’, whereas he used the term ‘Hebrew’ to denote a ‘modern Maccabean’. Koestler sought to drive a wedge between the two. Martin suggested that Koestler made two mistakes: firstly, he did not see ‘how much the Hebrew is, in fact, a Yid’; secondly, he had a ‘fundamentally reactionary conception of Heroism’. Martin suggested that much of Hebrew culture in Israel was heavily indebted to and interconnected with Yiddish culture.¹¹⁹ The division between the ‘diasporic Jew’ and the ‘New Hebrew’ was much overstated by a Zionist narrative.¹²⁰ There was no necessary contradiction between the two languages or two cultures. In Martin’s progressive internationalist framework, a ‘Hero’ was not a thing ‘isolated in an unheroic world’ which needs ‘the baseness of others to appear glorious’. Instead, Martin pointed to the heroism of those in the Spanish Civil war, suggesting from his own experience that ‘[i]n the trenches before Madrid you could hear Yiddish and Hebrew spoken in one and the same company of the International Brigade’—an example par excellence of Jewish multilingual antifascism.¹²¹

Despite *Unity* being an English language magazine, Yiddish held a special place in its implicit cultural vision. Yiddish was spoken by many of the contributors, including the editor Hyam Breznia who had a lifelong passion for Yiddish literature and poetry.¹²² *Unity* had a focus on reviewing, translating, and promoting both local and international Yiddish literature and culture.¹²³ Judah Waten, one of the key translators of Australian Yiddish literature into English, wrote an article for *Unity* in 1948 on

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ David Martin, “The Yid and the Hebrew,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1949). David Martin joined *Unity*’s editorial board on his arrival in Australia, having been a former literary editor for *New Life*.

¹¹⁸ Koestler was something of a bête noire of the Jewish left internationally, see A.B. Magil, “Koestler’s Evil Journey,” *Jewish Life* 4, no. 4 (1950).

¹¹⁹ For an elaboration on this theme in the interwar period, see Naomi Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew & Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016).

¹²⁰ Chaver, What Must Be Forgotten.

¹²¹ Martin, “The Yid and the Hebrew.”

¹²² Hyam Breznia, interview by Hazel de Berg, 29 April 1975, National Library of Australia, Hazel de Berg collection.

¹²³ Dr. Joachim Schneeweiss, “Whither the Yiddish Theatre,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949); Pinchas Goldhar, “The Funeral,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949); Hertz Bergner, “Yosel Birzstein’s First Book of Poetry,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949).

‘Yiddish Literature in Australia’ which was something of a programmatic statement. He suggested that the new Yiddish literature in countries such as the United States, Argentina, and Australia

has been an expression of the continuation in other lands of the culture of the home countries. But a living literature must not remain static: it must adapt itself to the new environment if it is to survive. In Australia, Yiddish has as yet been the only vehicle through which the Jew has expressed the deepest feelings and aspirations of his people.¹²⁴

Waten went on to describe the class nature and anti-assimilationist quality of this literature: ‘[t]he Yiddish writers have painted the life of the Jewish people without capitulating to the so called superior culture of the ruling classes of their adopted country’. In other words, a living Australian Yiddish literature was part of a progressive internationalist, cultural pluralist vision. As such, *Unity* was not just a venue for the translation of Yiddish into English, it also covered the reverse. Goldhar had a keen interest in bringing Yiddish culture and progressive Australian literature into conversation, writing a long article on ‘Australian Literature’, notably translated from the Yiddish by Nita Bluthal and Stephen Murray-Smith for publication in *Unity*.¹²⁵ Goldhar had also translated Australian authors such as Henry Lawson, Vance Palmer, and Katherine S. Prichard into Yiddish.¹²⁶

Indicative of the importance of Yiddish culture to the Jewish left at this time and their embrace of a multilingual model of Jewish culture was a review by George Berger of a book called *Royte Pomerantsen*, a selection of classic Yiddish humour, written in Yiddish but transliterated into the roman alphabet.¹²⁷ For Berger, having a transliterated version of this book meant that the formal qualities of the language and the way it was told were preserved while making it accessible to those who were not educated in the Hebrew aleph-bet or the Yiddish alef-beys but could understand spoken Yiddish ‘quite well’. Berger suggested that the book ‘can also be more than a selection of Jewish humour to many of us; it is a splendid text-book for improving one’s knowledge of Yiddish’.¹²⁸ Berger’s interest in Yiddish was replicated by other German-speaking refugees in Australia, particularly those associated with the Jewish left milieu.¹²⁹ As discussed in Chap. 2, this interest in Yiddish culture from German

¹²⁴ Judah L. Waten, “Yiddish Literature in Australia,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948).

¹²⁵ More on this in Chap. 6.

¹²⁶ “Book Review: Goldhar’s Collected Works,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1950).

¹²⁷ George Berger, “Book Review: An Unusual Monument to an Unusual People,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Alfred Ruskin, “The Melbourne Scene,” in *Community of Fate: Memoirs of German Jews in Melbourne*, ed. John Foster (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 103; Robert Exiner, “From the Spree to the Yarra: Memories of an Emigration,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 12, pt. 3 (1994):

and Austrian Jews represented a post-Holocaust revaluation of the worth of Eastern European Jewish cultures.

Despite their general enthusiasm for the diversity and importance of Yiddish culture, this strand of the Jewish left were not Yiddishists.¹³⁰ For them Yiddish was not essential to a Jewish culture, nor was it sacred, unique, or untranslatable.¹³¹ In an article reprinted in *Unity* from *New Life* titled ‘Words and the Tricks They Play’, ‘L. Chaim’, the pseudonymous author, suggested that:

There is a magic in words because they are more than a mere combination of letters. They drag in their train a whole history of a people, and this is especially true of Yiddish, which has grown and thrived not only by expressing the feeling and memory of past traditions but by absorbing within its vocabulary, words and phrases from all the environments in which the Jews have settled for several centuries past. These absorptions have enriched the language and made it infinitely susceptible of expressing shades and varieties of meaning without which it would have been just a dialect of German.¹³²

This was an articulation of Yiddish not as a component of national separatism, but as reflecting a history of relatedness and interconnectedness.¹³³ Although celebrating Yiddish language and culture, as we saw above, Waten too did not see Yiddish as essential to a dynamic ongoing Jewish culture. He stated:

it is not to be concluded that Jewish literature in Australia will always find expression in the Yiddish language. As English becomes the language of Jewish people of the second and third generations, it is probable that there will arise an Australian Jewish literature in English ... It is certain that the work of Jewish writers in English will be profoundly influenced by the work of Yiddish writers in Australia.¹³⁴

536–558. German Jews speaking Yiddish in Melbourne are also featured in Pinchas Goldhar, “Café in Carlton,” in *Southern Stories, Poems and Paintings* (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1945). The interest in Yiddish, as not just culturally but politically important, was echoed in a review of a new textbook by Morris Schappes in *Jewish Life*: ‘Now of course Yiddish is a language, and the fight for respect for that language is part of the struggle for the equality of the Jewish people, and therefore is part of the class struggle’. Morris U. Schappes, “Yiddish Grammar in English,” *Jewish Life* 4, no. 2 (1949).

¹³⁰ Goldhar is the Yiddishist exception here, see Pam Maclean, “‘Jewish Life Appears to be Frozen, Static, Like a Puppet Play’: Pinchas Goldhar’s Struggle for Yiddish Cultural Authenticity in Australia,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 23, pt. 3 (2017): 491–500. For a partial history of Yiddishism as a cultural-political movement, see Katz, *Words on Fire*, 264–278. See also Cecile Esther Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹³¹ See Frances Butwin, “Book Review: A New Translation of Peretz,” *Jewish Life* 2, no. 3 (1948).

¹³² L. Chaim, “Words and the Tricks They Play,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1948).

¹³³ See also J.B. Jackson, “Yiddish,” *New Life* 1, no. 2 (1947).

¹³⁴ Waten, “Yiddish Literature in Australia.”

This was indicative of the transnational Jewish left's cultural outlook which validated and encouraged Jewish cultures 'created in Yiddish, Hebrew or, for that matter, in any other language and in any land where Jews live and work'.¹³⁵

Waten's notion of a Jewish literature in English was evidence of a cultural and political optimism. In this rendering, an ongoing Jewish culture—as in Mushin's projection of an ongoing Jewish politics—did not require a separate Jewish language as in Yiddishism or Zionism; a separate national self-conception tied to a separate state as in Zionism; or a separate territory as in territorialism, Zionism, and for that matter Birobidjan. An ongoing Jewish politics and culture could be forged through a continued struggle against antisemitism and racial oppression along with other oppressed groups and progressive forces in society. Far from being an endorsement of assimilationism, Waten's formulation suggested the dynamic futurity of diasporic Jewish politics and cultures formed in relationships with other languages, cultures, and peoples.

While *Unity* represented a Popular Front turn to a left-wing vision of a Jewish culture and consciousness that could be expressed in 'non-Jewish' languages, it did not seek to denigrate or replace Jewish languages. Yiddish was a living Jewish language and an important aspect of Jewish culture as was modern Hebrew. In line with an emerging multiculturalism and multilingualism in the Jewish community, *Unity* advanced an implicitly cultural pluralist ideology within a framework of progressive internationalism.¹³⁶ This internal Jewish multiculturalism, which entailed a cultural revaluation in light of the Holocaust and a continuing struggle against antisemitism, was a concomitant of a wider anti-assimilationist, non-nationalist Jewish left politics.

The Jewish antifascist left strove to create a non-nationalist Jewish political subjectivity that embraced and validated the dynamic futurity and diversity of Jewish diasporic communities. One of the main features of this subjectivity was its essential alliance with non-Jews. This meant a rejection of Jewish liberation figured through Jewish nationalism. It also meant a cultural vision which embraced a multilingual model of Jewish culture that was formed in relationship with both international Jewish cultures and non-Jewish cultures.

However, the international Jewish antifascist left's embrace of 'unity' politics meant that it was susceptible to the uncritical reproduction of Zionist ideology, presenting no significant challenge to an envisioning of the Yishuv's struggle as progressive and anti-imperialist in the lead up to 1948. In the Australian case this meant there was no basis for a sustained and coherent challenge to Zionism in the period immediately following this, despite Israel's growing position as an ally of Western imperialism. I have suggested that it was the settler colonial nature of the Zionist enterprise, as a supposedly progressive anti-imperial project, that generated a mystificatory ideology where intra-Jewish solidarity seemingly trumped anti-racist principles.

¹³⁵ J.B. Jackson, "A Matter of Importance: A Reply to Mr Koenig," *New Life* 1, no. 6 (1947).

¹³⁶ For a brief personal account of the then emerging multiculturalism within the Jewish community, see Miriam Kuna, "Castles in Caulfield," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 16, pt. 3 (2002): 317–318.

Such an analysis may be more useful than two other ways of looking at the Jewish antifascist left's support for the dispossession of Palestinians: that it was an inconsistency in their principles, a sort of *realpolitik* and emotional blind spot in an otherwise salutary global anti-colonial ideology, or that it was in fact part and parcel of an ideology that, while pretending to universal application, primarily privileged the foreign policy imperatives of the Soviet Union and secondarily privileged Jewish (figured as European) struggles. Although both of these angles contain an element of truth, tackling too closely to either side obscures our historical vision. To delve further into these questions I turn to an analysis of the Australian political and cultural context and explore how the Jewish left positioned itself within Australian nationalism and its settler colonial imaginary.

5. The Anti-German Migration Campaign and the Fall of the Jewish Antifascist Left

Max Kaiser⁽⁵⁾

FLIP: It's Nazis we're talking about, not Germans.

Laurence Collinson, 'Traitor Silence'¹

MATTHEW: My main interest is the good reputation of the Jewish community.

SIM: On what does this good reputation depend?

MATTHEW: Silence.

Laurence Collinson, 'Traitor Silence'²

On 26 February 1951, on a warm summer's night, over 2500 people crammed into the Sydney Town Hall, a venue supposed to hold only 2000 people. Inside the Hall, before the meeting began, the crowd chanted 'we want Evatt, we want peace'. Outside the Hall over 1000 people clamoured to get into the packed meeting. As the police barred the entranceway, those outside, according to various reports, were regaled with a version of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' by a woman in a negligee from the fourth-floor window of a nearby hotel. As the crowd banged on the doors the woman switched to a rendition of 'O Come All Ye Faithful'.³

Whether the woman was meaning to encourage the crowd, dissuade them, or antagonise them is unknown, but her choice of songs remains highly ironic as most of the

¹ Laurence Collinson, "Traitor Silence," (The Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts, University of Queensland Library, ca. 1953), 6.

² Ibid., 28.

³ "Lively Scene at Meeting: Protest against German Migrants," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1951; "Evatt's Huge Sydney Rally," *The Argus*, 27 February 1951; "6000 Flock to Meeting," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 2 March 1951.

⁽⁵⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser
Email: kaiserm@unimelb.edu.au

crowd were not in fact Christian, but Jewish. Most of them were, in the parlance of the time, ‘New Australians’: immigrants who had arrived in the 1930s as refugees from Nazi Germany or post-war migrants escaping a devastated Europe.⁴ The ‘Evatt’ the crowd were chanting for was H.V. Evatt, soon to become the leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the most prominent supporter of the anti-German migration campaign.⁵ The public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall was the culmination of months of protest and agitation aimed at preventing a migration deal between Prime Minister Robert Menzies’ government and West Germany which would see tens of thousands of non-Jewish Germans come to Australia. As other historians have noted, what is striking about this campaign is that it was the first time the Jewish community had organised publicly against Australian government policy.⁶ This was at a time when Jews were in a precarious position within Australian society. Australian antisemitism was at a high point in the late 1940s and Australia’s official immigration policies were still based on racial hierarchies. Immigration was restricted for Jews up until the early 1950s.⁷

‘A real contribution to the spread of justice and good will in the world’: The Political Context of the Anti-German Migration Campaign

In response to a serious labour shortage after World War Two the Australian government established a mass migration scheme from Europe.⁸ There was also a strong settler colonial imperative to the scheme. An editorial from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1950 made an explicit comparison between the contemporary era and ‘the early days of colonial settlement’, stating: ‘if we are to have moral right and the means to hold this continent, we must people it and make full use of its resources’.⁹ Although there was a strong government preference for British migrants, a serious shipping shortage

⁴ “Lively Scene at Meeting: Protest against German Migrants.” In contrast to the Germans who were being offered assisted passage, Jewish Holocaust survivors in the post-war period had to pay their own way and were sponsored by Jewish community organisations in Australia. Very few were accepted through the DP programme. For details on Jewish migration to Australia during this period, see Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Sydney, NSW: Collins Australia, 1988), 174–256.

⁵ After Ben Chifley died Evatt became ALP leader on 20 June 1951.

⁶ Philip Mendes, “Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under,” *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 119 (2002): 73–92; Suzanne Rutland and Sophie Caplan, *With One Voice: A History of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies* (Sydney: Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1998), 55.

⁷ Suzanne Rutland, “Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria: A Case of Racial or Religious Bigotry?,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003): 69–79.

⁸ Andrew Markus, “Labour and Immigration 1946–9: The Displaced Persons Program,” *Labour History*, no. 47 (1984): 73–74.

⁹ “Successful Migration Means Nation-Wide Effort,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1950.

after the war and a lack of willing migrants made large-scale migration from Britain impossible.¹⁰ In 1947, the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, took the opportunity to take migrants from the Displaced Persons (DP) camps of Europe.¹¹ By 1950, the Immigration Department had an annual target of 200,000 migrants. The Secretary of the Department, Tasman Heyes, referring to the urgent need to populate Australia, described this as ‘our survival target’.¹² However, by 1950 the International Refugee Organisation, which had run the DP camps and had organised for the migration of millions, was starting to wind up its operations. The Australian government needed to look for new sources of migrants to fill its ambitious quota.¹³

The post-war migration programme was always framed by the Cold War. The programme was sold to the Australian public with the idea that Australia needed to ‘populate or perish’, intimating strongly that Australia risked invasion from non-white and/or communist forces to the north if the population did not grow and economically develop.¹⁴ The post-war migration programme, in particular the scheme for DPs, was heavily biased in favour of right-wing and anti-communist migrants and against communist and left-wing migrants.¹⁵ Jews were also discriminated against in this scheme.¹⁶ When the Nazis were defeated at the end of World War Two, an estimated 12 million ethnic Germans or *Volksdeutsche* fled or were forced to leave their former homes in Eastern Europe and migrate to West Germany (what was to become the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949).¹⁷ The millions of *Volksdeutsche* living in West Germany, often in dire conditions, soon became seen as a major security issue and political liability.¹⁸ In February 1949 the Tripartite Working Party on German Refugees (representing the French, British, and American governments) approached the Australian government

¹⁰ Markus, “Labour and Immigration,” 75–79.

¹¹ *Ibid.* See also Jayne Persian, *Beautiful Balts: From Displaced Persons to New Australians* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2017).

¹² NAA: A434, 1950/3/45637, “Memorandum for the Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department from T.H. Heyes, 20 April 1951.”

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For example, see “Calwell: Populate or Perish,” *The Daily News*, 18 June 1948.

¹⁵ Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 1988), 70; Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960” (Victoria University, 2011), 176–78. Jayne Persian suggests that ‘[i]n Australia, as in other settlement countries, the issue of race tied in neatly with that of politics’. Jayne Persian, “‘Chifley Liked Them Blond’: DP Immigrants for Australia,” *History Australia* 12, no. 2 (2015): 96–98.

¹⁶ Suzanne Rutland, “Subtle Exclusions: Postwar Jewish Emigration to Australia and the Impact of the IRO Scheme,” *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 10, no. 1 (2001): 50–66.

¹⁷ Mark Aarons, *Sanctuary: Nazi Fugitives in Australia* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), 116. Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Angelika E. Sauer, “Model Workers or Hardened Nazis? The Australian Debate About Admitting German Migrants, 1950–1952,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 45, no. 3 (1999): 428.

to take some of these *Volksdeutsche* refugees to assist with the stabilisation of West Germany.¹⁹

After winning the December 1949 elections, the new Liberal Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, announced in February 1950 the government's consideration of a German migration scheme to begin in 1951.²⁰ This was subsequently developed into a scheme to take 100,000 German migrants over a four-year period.²¹ This bilateral agreement was concurrent with Australia's attempts to involve West Germany in efforts to scupper the plan for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to coordinate international migration.²² A telegram sent to London and copied to multiple international governments, including West Germany, outlined Australia's concerns that 'pressure in the ILO for "Universality" and "Non-discrimination"' would 'expose governments to criticism on the grounds of discrimination'.²³ The bilateral migration agreement represented, then, not just a Cold War benefit to West Germany and the Western powers more generally; it also represented an aspect of Australia's continued effort to avoid international scrutiny and interference with its racially discriminatory immigration policy.²⁴

The Immigration Minister, Harold Holt, openly promoted the German migration scheme as part of the Cold War battle. He argued that by accepting German migrants and helping to alleviate the security situation in West Germany, Australia would be making 'a real contribution to the spread of justice and good will in the world'.²⁵ The government, recognising possible resistance, prioritised winning the support of the Returned and Services League (RSL)—a conservative social and political organisation representing Australian returned soldiers—for its mass German migration scheme.²⁶ The vigorously anti-communist leaders of the RSL were won over to the idea, accepting the Cold War logic of the policy.²⁷ The announcement provoked an immediate reaction

¹⁹ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 116.

²⁰ Sauer, "Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?," 429.

²¹ "Evatt's Huge Sydney Rally."

²² Sean Brawley, *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1919–1978* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), 272–279.

²³ NAA: A9857, 352/6, "Telegram from Canberra to Bonn, 6th September 1951."

²⁴ For a history of this policy as it pertained to the international arena, see Brawley, *The White Peril*.

²⁵ Harold Holt, "Immigration Minister Says: 'Volksdeutsche Are Not All Bad,'" *The Argus*, 14 September 1950. As well as the assistance to West Germany's Cold War aims, the government consistently emphasised the value of the migrants as their labour power, see NAA: A9306, 353 Part 1, "Address by the Minister for Immigration, Hon. H. E. Holt, M.P., on the Government's Migration Programme to the Jubilee Citizenship Convention, 1951." The government's migration politics and implied political/racial hierarchy here were closely reflected by the ALP aligned leadership of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. "Minutes of a Meeting between Mr R Broadby, Secretary of the ACTU, Mr. A.S. Leibler, Mr. G Casper and Mrs C. Isaacson," ca. 1951, State Library of Victoria, Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies Collection, MS 9352 Y, Box 7.

²⁶ G. L. Kristianson, *The Politics of Patriotism: The Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966).

²⁷ Sauer, "Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?," 429. The membership viewed the policy less favourably. The Federal Executive had to overturn the defeat by the NSW branch of a pro-German migration motion, see *ibid.*

from groups in the Jewish community, who eventually escalated their private protests to the Minister to very public protests, often organised in conjunction with non-Jewish left groups including sections of the ALP, church groups, and trade unions.²⁸

H.V. Evatt, the man for whom the mass meeting at Sydney Town Hall had been chanting, was seen as a strong defender of civil liberties, as well as representing a peaceful alternative to Menzies' warmongering.²⁹ The debate around the German Migration Scheme was taking place against the background of an increasingly Manichean world. The period 1950–1953 was the hottest period of the early Cold War.³⁰ In September 1950, Menzies broadcast a speech preparing Australia for compulsory military training and a large borrowing programme to finance a military build-up.³¹ After referring to 'a gang of wreckers right here in Australia', Menzies somewhat apocalyptically said 'if the evil day dawns on which the last great world struggle begins, we must all be prepared to fight wherever it is essential that the enemy be met and overcome'.³²

Evatt, as Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949, was widely seen as directing a relatively independent foreign policy, even if in actuality this policy never deviated too far from the United States' imperial programme in the post-war period.³³ Before losing office in 1949 the Labor government never took the threat of war initiated by the Soviet Union seriously either in its public pronouncements or defence policy. Because of this stance, Evatt and the ALP were routinely attacked as pro-Soviet or pro-communist by the press and the Liberal Party.³⁴ Thus, Evatt, a well-known opponent of Menzies' anti-communist crusade, represented a defence of civil liberties and a strong proponent of peace.³⁵ The enthusiasm for his presence at the meeting and

²⁸ Mendes, "Jews, Nazis and Communists," 79–84; NAA: A434, 1950/3/45637, "Report on Melbourne German Migration – Jewish Meeting by H. Beilby, 21 November 1950."

²⁹ For Evatt's role in opposing the Communist Party Dissolution Act, see George Williams, "The Suppression of Communism by Force of Law: Australia in the Early 1950s," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 42, no. 2 (1996): 220–40.

³⁰ Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947–1956* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000); Barbara Carter, "The Peace Movement in the 1950s," in *Better Dead Than Red: Australia's First Cold War: 1945–1959, Vol.2*, eds. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

³¹ This programme of borrowing and military spending was one of the major causes of the 1951–1952 recession, see Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 44.

³² Robert Menzies, "The Defence Call to the Nation: First Broadcast by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies, K.C., M. P., 20th September 1950," *Current Notes on International Affairs* 21, no. 9 (1950): 658–669.

³³ Dean Ashenden, "Evatt and the Origins of the Cold War," *Journal of Australian Studies* 4, no. 7 (1980): 73–95. For a differing view see Christopher Waters, "The Great Debates: H. V. Evatt and the Department of External Affairs, 1941–49," in *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats – Australian Foreign Policy Making 1941–1969*, eds. Joan Beaumont, David Lowe, Christopher Waters, and Garry Woodard (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2003).

³⁴ Meredith Burgmann, "Hot and Cold: Dr Evatt and the Russians, 1945–1949," in *Australia's First Cold War*, eds. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 108.

³⁵ Kylie Tennant, *Evatt: Politics and Justice* (Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1970), 262.

the chanting for ‘peace’ indicates the connection of the German migration question to wider political issues, particularly a concern to avert a third world war.

With ‘the enormous condescension of posterity’, it is easy to dismiss the anti-German migration campaign as irrational.³⁶ The German and *Volksdeutsche* migrants did have strongly held political beliefs and many were indeed Nazis and war criminals.³⁷ Despite a high proportion of German migrants having Nazi sympathies, however, most of them were alienated from Australian society and remained politically inactive after arriving in Australia.³⁸ This seems to be exactly the case for the German immigrants studied by the sociologist Jean Martin in 1953.³⁹ But from the perspective of 1950, that was not at all clear or predictable. There were far-right movements in Australia such as the New Guard in the early 1930s; antisemitism was still a significant factor in Australian political culture; some of the DPs who were coming from Eastern Europe were spotted with SS tattoos and had harassed Jews in migrant reception centres; and Eastern Europeans were being actively recruited to fight the communists in the unions.⁴⁰

The Jewish community knew that the screening processes for prospective German migrants would be far from adequate. They were aware that many Nazi collaborators, war criminals, and fascists had got through the screening applied to DPs and that the Australian immigration screening procedures lacked the language skills, access to information, and indeed the political priorities to screen out Nazis.⁴¹ It did not help when Sir John Storey, the chairman of the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council,

³⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963). Phillip Adams prompted Norman Rothfield, of the Jewish Council, into such an assessment in a 2005 radio interview, see “Norman Rothfield,” podcast audio, *Late Night Live*, (original broadcast 27 October 2005), available at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/norman-rothfield/3371206>.

³⁷ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 155–161.

³⁸ Although there is evidence of German Nazi cells operating in South Australia in the early 1950s, see *ibid.*, 160–161.

³⁹ Jean Martin, *Refugee Settlers* (Kingsgrove, NSW: Halstead Press, 1965), 95–97.

⁴⁰ Lyn Richards, *Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in the Australian Political Context* (Department of Sociology, La Trobe University, 1978); Martin, *Refugee Settlers*, 95–97; Rutland, “Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria”; Aarons, *Sanctuary*. Mark Aarons and others have established that many Eastern Europeans who migrated as part of the DP scheme were war criminals and committed fascists. Some of these migrants went on to be active in right-wing politics in Australia, see *ibid.* The Jewish Council wanted to mount a public campaign around the Nazi and fascist DPs in late 1947 but were reined in by others in the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, see William D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History: Volume 2, 1945 to the Present* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991), 400.

⁴¹ Andrew Menzies, *Review of Material Relating to the Entry of Suspected War Criminals into Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Public Service, 1987), 63–75; Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 89–100. In one notable instance Sam Goldbloom, who was to become one of the most prominent figures in the Jewish Council, disguised himself as a plumber, sneaked into the shower block at Bonegilla and took photos of the scars under migrants left armpits, where they had removed their SS tattoos, see *ibid.*, 97–98.

said that Nazi Party membership would not be a barrier to entry.⁴² All of this meant that Jews had very good reason to fear a large influx of German and *Volksdeutsche* migrants. For historian Angelika Sauer, the anti-German migration campaign was a Cold War political dispute.⁴³ Although the Cold War was a key determining factor, Sauer's analysis shows little understanding of the culture and politics of Australian Jewish communities. The anti-German migration campaign was reflective of popular Jewish antifascism.

Transnational Discourses: Debating the De-Nazification of Germany

The anti-German migration campaign was the product of the widespread antifascist consciousness in Australia that had particular purchase in the Jewish community and persisted through World War Two into the post-war years. Soon after Holt's public announcement that the government was considering a mass migration agreement with the West German government, the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (Jewish Council) started discussing mobilising a major campaign 'among non-Jews' against German migration.⁴⁴ Such a stance was not controversial within the Jewish community. The *Australian Jewish News*, the more popular of the two major Jewish weeklies in Melbourne, editorialised against the German migration scheme stating: '[w]hat concerns us more is the horrible possibilities of seeing in this country a thriving Bund organisation complete with jackboots and a faithful replica of Der Stuermer on our newsstands'.⁴⁵ A delegation from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the peak representative body of Australian Jews, was sent to see Holt to express dissent to any proposal for mass German migration.⁴⁶ The NSW Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women passed a resolution expressing 'serious concern' with the government's mass German migration plan.⁴⁷ German migration was a key issue in Rabbi Sanger's High Holyday sermon, where he stated forcefully: '[l]et no-one bring to this great Commonwealth the curses of Europe, the sparks of hatred which kindled the fires that laid Europe waste—racial hatred, national bigotry and anti-

⁴² "Nazi Party Followers as Settlers," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1950.

⁴³ Sauer, "Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?"

⁴⁴ See "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 21st February 1950" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁴⁵ "Is the New Broom Sweeping Clean? (Editorial)," *Australian Jewish News*, 24 February 1950. The *Australian Jewish News* was broadly sympathetic to the Jewish Council through the years of the anti-German migration campaign, see Sender Burstin, "The Board, the Council and German Immigration (First published in *Undzer Gedank* 1952)," in *Sender Burstin: Yiddish Melbourne Observed*, eds. Ben Burstin and David Burstin (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2013).

⁴⁶ "No German Migration This Year," *Australian Jewish News*, 10 March 1950.

⁴⁷ "Unanimous Resolution on German Immigration," *Australian Jewish News*, 10 March 1950.

Semitism.⁴⁸ A 1948 survey had found that eighty-three percent of Melbourne Jews were against German immigration.⁴⁹ The grounds were thus laid for a campaign that had widespread support across many sections of the Jewish community.⁵⁰ The politics of the Jewish left was informed by a hegemonic antifascism which had a sophisticated international political analysis. As such the anti-German migration campaign was also informed by a transnational political imagination based on an understanding of West German society and politics and a political ethic of memory centred on the Holocaust.

The Students of Cologne University and the Failed De-Nazification of West Germany

A key example of the workings of this transnational discourse occurred in an exchange between students at the universities of Cologne and Melbourne in 1951. In mid-1951, an issue of the Melbourne University student newspaper *Farrago* ended up in the hands of a group of students at Cologne University in Germany. Inside the magazine they found an article reporting on a speech by Maurice Ashkanasy, who was then President of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD). Ashkanasy had delivered this speech to a public meeting at Melbourne University co-hosted by the ALP club and the Jewish Students' Society. The report of his address was entitled 'Jewish Students Denounce Mass-Migration: "Germans Will Betray Us"'.⁵¹ The discovery of this article by the Cologne students led to numerous meetings and many hours of discussion. Finally, the students decided to write to *Farrago* to dispute Ashkanasy's claims.⁵² The German students' response to the article, as well as the subsequent reply to their letter by the Jewish Students' Society, reveals the wider issues at stake within the anti-German migration campaign.

The German students' letter was indicative of a general post-war drive in German society to forget, move on, and forge a new politics of consensus.⁵³ In the letter they

⁴⁸ Rabbi Dr. H. M. Sanger, "Points from the Pulpit," *Australian Jewish Review* 11, no. 6 (1950).

⁴⁹ Oscar Adolf Oeser and Samuel Battle Hammond, *Social Structure and Personality in a City* (Routledge and Kegan Paul London, 1954), 84.

⁵⁰ There are two notable exceptions to this widespread support. Firstly, the fanatical anti-communist, Newman Rosenthal, who was head of the Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (VAJEX), published an open letter to the RSL and the government condemning the anti-German migration campaign and its communist links and disassociating VAJEX from the campaign. Holt made good use of the letter to dispute the unanimity of the Jewish community's support of the anti-German migration campaign. Rosenthal was widely condemned, including by his own organisation who eventually forced his resignation over the issue. Although they were not as fanatical, Rosenthal's successors were also very anti-communist, see Mendes, "Jews, Nazis and Communists," 85–86. The second source of opposition was the Jewish Labour Bund. This is discussed in further detail below.

⁵¹ "Jewish Students Denounce Mass-Migration: "German Students Will Betray Us"," *Farrago*, 28 March 1951.

⁵² "German Students Ask for Understanding," *Farrago*, 19 September 1951.

⁵³ *Norbert Frei*, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*

denied that the whole nation was still indoctrinated by Nazism. They insisted that the majority of Germans only wanted unity and peace in a new vision of Europe and explained the poverty and destitution of *Volksdeutsche* refugees in Germany. They suggested that the Australian students should visit Germany and that they could come to understand and know more about each other; in the meantime, they suggested continuing a correspondence to promote mutual understanding.⁵⁴ Michael S. Cohen replied on behalf of the Jewish Students' Society. He expressed disbelief that the majority of young Germans, who established their values during the Nazi period, had completely 'rid themselves of the Nazi ideology'. He said there might be a minority of students who have genuinely done this, but it was doubtful that it was a generalised trend—anecdotal evidence they had received in fact indicated the exact opposite. Cohen argued that those who were not brought up under Nazism would make suitable migrants and underlined that their opposition was not to Germans as a whole but against a specific age group. He continued: '[O]ur statements on those matters have never been and are not now bitter. We have suffered too much for 2000 years from bitter discrimination against us and we shall never indulge in it ourselves, but we feel that to allow Nazis into our country would be tragic.'⁵⁵

Cohen was well justified in his disbelief regarding ideological de-Nazification. In 1952, opinion polling in West Germany revealed that 25 percent of Germans had a 'good opinion of Hitler', while 37 percent said that it was 'better for Germany to have no Jews on its territory'.⁵⁶ The students from Cologne did not appear to be Nazi sympathisers, but the politics revealed by their letter in fact reinforced rather than undermined the political reasoning behind the anti-German migration campaign. Their letter was indicative of a serious refusal to accept any measure of collective responsibility for the war, destruction, enslavement, and mass murder of the Nazi regime, a regime enabled and supported by very large sections of German society.⁵⁷ It was this refusal of responsibility and avoidance of repentance that made any co-operation with West Germany, let alone a migration agreement, repugnant to the antifascist values of the Jewish community. These values were built on the traumatic personal and collective memories of the Holocaust. As Ashkanasy underlined in an open letter to Harold Holt: '[t]o many Jews the prospect of large numbers of Germans being received and welcomed as "New Australians" was an insult to the memory of their dear ones who perished at the hands of the Nazi murderers.'⁵⁸

(Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ "German Students Ask for Understanding."

⁵⁵ "German Students Ask for Understanding: Jewish Students Reply," *Farrago*, 19 September 1951.

⁵⁶ *Tony Judt*, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Random House, 2011), 58.

⁵⁷ The most recent historiography covering the Nazi regime, indicates the extent to which Nazism was pervasive within German society and was 'enthusiastically embraced' by the majority of Germans, see Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press Oxford, 2010), 257.

⁵⁸ "Mr. Ashkanasy Attacks Migrant Plan," *Australian Jewish News*, 1 September 1950.

According to Norbert Frei, the founding of the West German state had as its concomitant a pervasive and passionately felt desire to provide amnesty for the great majority convicted for Nazi crimes. Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of West Germany, himself called for a post-war ‘tabula rasa’.⁵⁹ The German students’ requests cannot be read as a simple request for understanding and a disputation of prejudice. In context they read as both a protestation of innocence and a request reflecting a consensus wish within West German politics to wipe the slate clean.⁶⁰ Such a request to the Jewish community in Australia represented an obvious denial of justice, but also indicated a continuation of fascism within West German society, a fascism that needed to be combatted on an international level.

Such a need was often expressed stridently in the pages of the Jewish international press, with many of these articles reprinted in Australia. In 1948, an American Rabbi, Dr S. S. Schwarzschild, was sent to Germany by the World Union for Progressive Judaism to serve for two years as the Liberal Rabbi for Berlin. At the time there were around 7000 Jews living there, making it the largest Jewish community in Germany. He was a popular and well-respected Rabbi across both East and West Berlin. His farewell sermon, however, was the source of great controversy. In it he pledged never ‘to set foot on German soil again’.⁶¹ On his way back to the United States, he passed through London and was interviewed by a journalist from the *Jewish Chronicle*. He told the journalist that his vow was based on his ‘conviction that the German people as a whole had failed to show the feeling of remorse and shame that might have been expected at Nazi crimes against the Jews’.⁶² He observed that there had been a resurgence of nationalism and overt antisemitism and that both East and West Germany were using the cover of the Cold War ‘to foster their own unchanged aims of nationalism and expansionism’.

The resultant article was eventually republished in the *Australian Jewish News*.⁶³ Schwarzschild chose to speak to the *Jewish Chronicle*, a London newspaper that not only had a large circulation in the United Kingdom but also syndicated its content to Jewish newspapers overseas, including to the *Australian Jewish News*. The *Jewish Chronicle* in the post-war years had a major focus on European politics, in particular on Germany. Many of the *Jewish Chronicle* articles written on the farce of de-Nazification in Germany and the resurgence of nationalist and right-wing forces found their way to the pages of the *Australian Jewish News*. In between 1950 and 1952, these articles were often coupled with sympathetic items about the anti-German migration campaign.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Frei, Adenauer’s Germany, 5–6.

⁶⁰ Though this consensus was not completely unanimous or pervasive, see Sean A. Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁶¹ “Rabbi Vows Not to Return to Germany,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, 2 June 1950.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Dr. Schwarzschild’s Pledge on Germany,” *Australian Jewish News*, 1 September 1950.

⁶⁴ See David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge University

In 1950 this strong line against West Germany was common across international Jewish politics. In mid-1950 the World Jewish Congress (WJC) facilitated a representative conference of German Jewry for the first time since the war. Summarising the main concerns of the conference, the WJC declared that ‘Germany and any German government ... must accept collective responsibility for the crimes committed against the Jews and for their consequences.’ The German government was called upon to redress the wrongs of the Nazi regime against the Jews. The WJC also called for the German people to ‘accept the facts of the extent and enormity of their crimes against the Jews’ and argued that it was necessary for the German government to publish an official record of the Nazis’ persecution.⁶⁵ Almost concurrently, in July 1950, the Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, President of the British Board of Deputies, laid out the agenda for the first Commonwealth conference of Jewish communities. On this agenda, alongside the issue of Israel, was future co-ordination between Jewish communities, Jewish education, and most prominently the failure of de-Nazification. Cohen suggested that the conference would address ‘what can be done in the face of this disturbing situation, not only to overcome a menace to the Jewish remnant which is living under these conditions, but also to neutralise an evil which imperils the future of mankind’.⁶⁶ The politics of post-war Germany was thus a central feature of global Jewish consciousness.⁶⁷ An article published in the *Australian Jewish News*, reprinted from *World Jewish Affairs*, summarises the connection between the Jewish world’s post-war concern with Germany and a popular international Jewish antifascism: ‘This remains a problem of Jewish concern, even after the last Jew has left Germany. As a nation, the Jewish people in Israel and elsewhere can only survive in a democratic world.’⁶⁸

Press, 1994), 204. Oftentimes there was a significant delay in between original publication and republication in the *Australian Jewish News*. For instance, this article was first published in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 2 June 1950, while it only appeared in the *Australian Jewish News* on 1 September 1950. This was also the day that Ashkanasy’s open letter to Holt was published on the front page. This indicates that articles from overseas were very much chosen in line with local political events.

⁶⁵ “Germany Must Accept Collective Responsibility,” *The Australian Jewish Review* 11, no. 4 (1950). Despite Cold War pressure the WJC continued to speak out against West Germany as ‘not worthy of democracy’s trust’ until at least 1951, see “Well-Known Ex-Nazis Appointed to West German Foreign Office,” *Australian Jewish News*, 10 August 1951.

⁶⁶ The Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, “Commonwealth Jewry in Conference,” *Australian Jewish News*, 28 July 1950.

⁶⁷ For example, Hasia R. Diner suggests that Germany’s responsibility for the Holocaust and the failed process of de-Nazification featured strongly in American Jewish public discourse. Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), 216–65.

⁶⁸ “German Responsibility – Past and Present,” *Australian Jewish News*, 17 March 1950.

The Jewish Left, the Communist Party, and the Anti-German Migration Campaign

If Australian Jewish communities were acutely aware—through an international Jewish press and global Jewish co-ordination and organisation—of the failed de-Nazification of Germany, then the Jewish left were particularly adept at amplifying this message and expounding their antifascist analysis. The Jewish Council was the leading organisation on the Jewish left, and the leading proponents of a militant antifascist politics within the Jewish community. The Jewish Council was more willing than others in Jewish representative bodies to have a wider political analysis and position in international affairs. It was also more inclined to build alliances with unions, groups, and international speakers from the left. An example of this was the Jewish Council's relationship with the peace movement.

On 16 April 1950, 10,000 people crowded into the Melbourne Exhibition Building for the opening rally of the Australian Peace Congress, a major national event organised by the Australian Peace Council.⁶⁹ Although recent scholarship disputes the allegation that the Australian Peace Council was purely a communist front, many delegates, union representatives, and speakers were certainly communists or fellow travellers.⁷⁰ As well as other international speakers, the star of the show was the Red Dean, Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury and a well-known socialist and supporter of the Soviet Union.⁷¹ Norman Rothfield, then president of the Jewish Council, was one of the speakers at the opening rally. Rothfield, speaking 'as an individual Jew',⁷² argued that 'when Jews thought about war [...] they thought in the first instance in terms of 10 million Jews surviving after the slaughter of six million Jews, and the way in which politicians were now trying to bring about the re-armament of Western Germany'.⁷³

⁶⁹ "Tremendous Enthusiasm at Peace Congress," *Australian Jewish News*, 21 April 1950.

⁷⁰ Kim Thoday, "'A Harder Thing Than Dying': Peace Activism and the Protestant Left in Australia During the Early Cold War," in *Fighting against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber (Melbourne: Leftbank Press, 2015); Douglas Jordan, "The Trojan Dove?: Intellectual and Religious Peace Activism in the Early Cold War" (Victoria University, 2004).

⁷¹ See Dianne Kirby, "Ecclesiastical McCarthyism: Cold War Repression in the Church of England," *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2 (2005): 187–203. While in Melbourne for the Peace Congress Johnson also addressed a Jewish Council 'human rights rally' public meeting along with other speakers from the congress and Jewish Council speakers. This event elicited both public and private condemnation, with the Council losing the trust of previous prominent members and supporters. "Dean at Human Rights Rally," *Australian Jewish News*, 21 April 1950; "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 18th April 1950, 26th April 1950" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁷² This would have been to avoid associating the Jewish Council too clearly with the Congress.

⁷³ "Tremendous Enthusiasm at Peace Congress." Rothfield also had firsthand experience of West German society. After travelling there, he wrote an article for the *Australian Jewish News* in 1951 stating: 'I wandered all over Germany and spoke to Germans in all walks of life. Speak to a German for ten minutes and marvel at his industry and politeness. Drink beer with him for an hour or more and you find a different man! You see how deeply ingrained in him are fifteen years of Hitlerite propaganda. Many

Here Rothfield posited a Jewish subject position that drew political lessons from the Holocaust that lead to a particular position on a key issue in international affairs.

As discussed in Chap. 3, the Jewish left's analysis of antifascism often placed them in a tacit alliance with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and with the cause of the Soviet Union. The Jewish Council had close connections with the CPA through a number of its most prominent executive members and spokespeople, including the communist author Judah Waten, who acted as a principal intermediary between the Council, the CPA, and communist-linked groups.⁷⁴ The Jewish Council was an active opponent of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, and the two organisations had common cause in their objection to the large number of fascists and collaborators who been selected as migrants as part of the DP scheme.⁷⁵ But the CPA had a more ambiguous stance on the issue of German migration. In the years 1950–1952, the years of the public anti-German migration campaign, *The Guardian*, the CPA's Melbourne weekly, ran only six articles on the German migration issue, two of them reports of public meetings.⁷⁶ This may be partly explained by the CPA's concentration in these years on fighting Menzies' Communist Party Dissolution Bill, the major political issue of the era, and literally a fight for their own survival.⁷⁷

There was, however, another political factor that dampened their enthusiasm for the campaign. The CPA was running a propaganda line on West Germany at the

Germans I met know all about the atrocities which were perpetrated—knew of the torture and mass murder—of the chambers and the crematoria. Not five out of a hundred expressed any shame or concern at these crimes. Their greatest resentment was at the attempts—now abandoned—of Denazification.' Norman Rothfield, "Why Screening of Germans Will Fail," *Australian Jewish News*, 8 June 1951.

⁷⁴ For example, see "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 3rd April 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). At this stage Waten was not a party member. The radical Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, who travelled to and reported from Germany in the immediate post-war years, was a prominent ally of the Jewish Council in the anti-German migration campaign. Burchett featured as a speaker at the Melbourne Town Hall public anti-German migration campaign protest meeting as well as numerous Jewish Council 'drawing room meetings' and fundraisers. Burchett also drafted one of the Jewish Council's anti-German migration campaign pamphlets, see Wilfred G Burchett, *Cold War in Germany* (World Unity Publications, 1950); "Protest against Nazi Migration to Australia – Advertisement," *The Age*, 18 November 1950; "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 19th September 1950, 3rd October 1950, 28th November 1950" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁷⁵ "Jewish Council Statement on Bill," *Australian Jewish News*, 26 May 1950; Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 160–209.

⁷⁶ See "Menzies' Secret Plans to Recruit Nazis for Army," *The Guardian*, 15 May 1952; "German Minister Secretly in Australia for Migrant Deal," *The Guardian*, 17 May 1951; "Feeling Rises against Importation of Nazis," *The Guardian*, 8 March 1951; "Menzies & Co. Want to Nazify Australia," *The Guardian*, 1 March 1951; "Nazi Migrants Will Be Dangerous 5th Column Here," *The Guardian*, 15 February 1951; "Nazi Officers Form Organisation Here," *The Guardian*, 22 September 1950.

⁷⁷ Evidence suggests that as well as Menzies' attempt at banning the party, government contingency plans were being drawn up, in the event of war, to inter up to 16,000 communists and communist supporters, see L.J. Louis, "Pig Iron Bob Finds a Further Use for Scrap Iron," *The Hummer*, no. 35 (1993).

time that differed markedly from the analysis of the Jewish Council.⁷⁸ Rather than being unrepentant Nazis or Nazi sympathisers manipulating the Cold War for their own ends, as in Schwarzschild's analysis, the CPA claimed that 'West Germans' were trying to actively resist being manipulated into the Cold War by US capitalism.⁷⁹ This was echoed in the line they took on German migration. The CPA's focus in articles such as 'Menzies' Secret Plans to Recruit Nazis for Army' was on the enemy being the United States, and Australian ruling classes as the architects of war and working-class immiseration rather than a historical or political analysis of German fascist indoctrination.⁸⁰ Its opposition to German migration was couched within a general anti-migration stance, unlike the Jewish Council who always publicly supported the mass immigration scheme.⁸¹

Douglas Jordan suggests that the CPA used the Jewish Council as a vehicle to pursue the anti-German migration campaign.⁸² Evidence does point to the communist-aligned faction having a controlling influence in the Jewish Council by around 1950.⁸³ However, this faction operated for the most part autonomously from the CPA.⁸⁴ The Jewish Council thus undertook their own analysis, made political decisions, and created their own propaganda based on their understanding of international politics. Although the Jewish Council was certainly conscious of the Cold War background of the policy, their propaganda line for the most part emphasised the dangers of the migrants themselves and the failure of de-Nazification in West Germany.⁸⁵ Thus, the politics of the Jewish Council in the anti-German migration campaign were a specifically Jewish politics, a product of a Jewish antifascism that was determined partly by Cold War politics

⁷⁸ Jordan suggests that the involvement of leading ALP figures in the campaign limited the extent to which the CPA could also be involved in the anti-German migration campaign, as this period was an era of intense enmity and distrust between the ALP and CPA, particularly within the union movement, see Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 216. Indeed in 1949 Evatt was being personally denounced as an imperialist lackey by the CPA. However by late 1951–1952, the party was on the defensive and adapted a much more conciliatory approach to the ALP, see Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920–1955* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), 213–214, 269–271.

⁷⁹ "West Germans Sign Resolution against Use of Atomic Bomb," *The Guardian*, 2 June 1950; "West Germans Unite to Fight U.S. War Pact," *The Guardian*, 5 June 1952; "Germans against War, Says Young Australian," *The Guardian*, 17 January 1952. This line reflected Soviet foreign policy imperatives aimed at German unification, see Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 350–359.

⁸⁰ "Menzies' Secret Plans to Recruit Nazis for Army," *The Guardian*, 15 May 1952.

⁸¹ For the CPA's anti-immigration policy, see "Conflict in the Unions," 160–245. For the Jewish Council's support of mass immigration, see *German and Volks Migration Will Flood Australia with Nazis* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1950).

⁸² Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 210.

⁸³ Itzhak Gust, *Such Was Life: A Jumping Narrative from Radom to Melbourne* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2004), 210, 15–16; "Meeting Jewish National Groups Sydney, 11 November 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁸⁴ Gust, *Such Was Life*, 210. Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 101–02.

⁸⁵ *German and Volks Migration*; Walter Lippmann, "Our Approach to German Migration," *Unity*:

but was joined inextricably with an historical understanding of Nazism and an ongoing political commemoration of the Holocaust.

‘People who not only experienced Fascism themselves, but attempted to practice it’: The Anti-German Migration Campaign, Holocaust Survivors, and the Bund

As well as utilising connections with left-wing groups and individuals, the Jewish Council sought to reach out to and mobilise Yiddish-speaking Holocaust survivors. Their participation in the anti-German migration campaign adds another crucial dimension to our analysis of the transnational nature of the campaign. It was their memory and traumatic experience of the Holocaust that was being mobilised in Australia. The Jewish Council was largely made up of Anglo-Jews, more established Eastern European migrants, and some pre-war German and Austrian migrants. Ernest Platz was the only prominent member who had been imprisoned in a concentration camp.⁸⁶ As part of foregrounding the experience of Jews in the Holocaust, the Jewish Council attempted to collaborate with Holocaust survivors in Melbourne. The politics of this were not straightforward. The post-war migrants from Poland and Lithuania were considered to be unintegrated with the rest of the community.⁸⁷ The Jewish Council’s main (political) connection to these Holocaust survivors was through Mendel Balberyszski. Balberyszski and his family were originally from Lithuania, where he was a highly active participant in the Jewish community and a leading member of the Folkspartei, a Jewish political party.⁸⁸

A Magazine of Jewish Affairs 3, no. 3 (1951). For Jewish Council consciousness of the Cold War political background to the implementation of the German migration scheme, see “Mr. Goldbloom Indicates – the Dangers of German Migration,” *Australian Jewish News*, 25 August 1950. The Jewish Council drew on works by prominent sociologist Charles Price on the nature of the impact of transnational pan-German ideology on Germans in Australia. This was crucial evidence for the anti-German migration campaign’s linking of West Germany’s failure to de-Nazify with an antifascist struggle against potential German migrants to Australia. In their reckoning if Nazi ideology was still active in Germany, this would have a strong effect on Germans in Australia. “The Menace of German Re-Armament, Immigration,” *Australian Jewish News*, 27 July 1951; Charles Price, *German Settlers in South Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1945). Though by November 1951, the Jewish communist fraction had decided to push to ‘continue the agitation against German Nazi migration, but to skilfully change this over to a campaign against German and Japanese rearmament as a preparation for war.’ “Meeting Jewish National Groups Sydney, 11 November 1951” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁸⁶ Rechter, “Beyond the Pale,” 116.

⁸⁷ See “Rabbi Dr. Sanger Comments on Communal Problems,” *Australian Jewish News*, 30 June 1950.

⁸⁸ Theo Balberyszski and Deborah Zuben, in *Fun Himen Blayene Tsu Bloye Teg (from Leaden Skies*

As we have seen, the Bund in Melbourne was very hostile to the Jewish Council because of its communist connections, but Balberyszski came from a different political perspective and was initially willing to work with the Council on a common cause. After arriving in Melbourne in December 1949, Balberyszski became a founding member and the chairman of a new group called ‘The Association of Former Nazi Victims’ or the *Katzetler* society.⁸⁹ In August 1950, Balberyszski, representing the *Katzetler* society, appeared at a Jewish Council sponsored meeting on German migration at the Kadimah, the centre of Yiddish culture and community in the Melbourne suburb of Carlton.⁹⁰ At the crowded meeting Platz, a member of the *Katzetler* society as well as the Jewish Council, told of his own experience in Buchenwald and the murder of twenty-one members of his family in the Holocaust. He implored the audience not to be scared of telling their neighbours of the dangers of German migration, implying that they should relate their experiences of the Holocaust to non-Jews as part of the anti-German migration campaign. Balberyszski for his part ‘described the Nazis as cannibals, and said they should be kept in cages’.⁹¹

Following this public meeting, Balberyszski discussed with Waten the organisation of a deputation to Canberra, regarding the German migration scheme, of former victims of concentration camps. Although this deputation appears to have never taken place, a meeting was held between the Jewish Council executive, the Jewish Council youth section, and the *Katzetler* society to explore its possibility.⁹² The Jewish Council demonstrated a strong interest in engaging with the Yiddish-speaking Holocaust survivors, discussing the idea of issuing statements and propaganda in Yiddish and having another meeting at the Kadimah purely in Yiddish.⁹³ They also attempted to engage the Bialystok and Warsaw *landsmanschaftn* centres in holding fundraising events for the anti-German migration campaign.⁹⁴

The growing power of the anti-communist Jewish Labour Bund, however, created serious problems for the Jewish Council and the anti-German migration campaign in

to Blue Days): 45 *Stories of Growing up in Jewish Carlton 1945–1975*, ed. Julie Meadows (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2014), 218.

⁸⁹ A Yiddish word meaning concentration camp prisoner. For an account of the formation of this group, see Stanley Robe, “Wiedergutmachung,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 11, pt.1 (1990): 180–182. For a discussion of the formation of *Katzetler* societies in the US context, see David Slucki, “A Community of Suffering: Jewish Holocaust Survivor Networks in Postwar America,” *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 120–121.

⁹⁰ “Meeting Protests against German Migrant Plan,” *Australian Jewish News*, 25 August 1950.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 19th September 1950.”

⁹³ “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 7th March 1951” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

⁹⁴ “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 14th March 1951” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1); “Landsmanschaft Postscript: The Bialystoker Centre in Melbourne, Australia 1927–1977,” *Holocaust Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 57–78.

mobilising this community. The Jewish Council had made use of the facilities at the Kadimah for many years and enjoyed friendly relations with its executive. Following the Bund's takeover (of the Kadimah) in December 1950, however, the Jewish Council was progressively excluded from the Kadimah, beginning with the ousting of 'veteran Kadimah workers' who were associated with the Jewish Council.⁹⁵ In March 1951, Platz reported in his regular column 'Yarra Whispers' in *The Hebrew Standard* (one of Sydney's Jewish weeklies) that the new Kadimah committee had voted to censure the Kadimah Youth Organisation (KYO) 'because their opposition to German migration was too strong'.⁹⁶ A month later, five members of the Kadimah executive resigned in protest, giving a statement to the Jewish press, which read in part:

The Bundist leadership of the Kadimah Committee does not want to fight against German migration. The representatives from the Kadimah to the Board of Deputies voted with the small minority on the Board not to be active in the campaign against German migration as planned by the Board of Deputies.

Their statement also objected to the exclusion of the Jewish Council from the Kadimah's Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemoration and the ongoing attacks on the KYO.⁹⁷ The KYO was a large organisation that had a significant membership in common with the Jewish Council youth section. Its leadership and a significant minority of its members were communists.⁹⁸ The Bundist-dominated Kadimah committee's major objection was not to the anti-German migration campaign as such but its perceived alignment with both Jewish communists and a pro-Soviet position in the Cold War.⁹⁹ The Jewish Council actively responded to the Bund's opposition. In May the Council published a reply in the Yiddish section of the *Australian Jewish News* to an attack on the Jewish Council by the Bund. They resolved to increase their activities aimed at winning support from the Yiddish-speaking community and instructed Waten to organise 'a number of public and private drawing room meetings in North Carlton'.¹⁰⁰

The increasing conflict in the Melbourne Jewish community came to a violent head in July 1951, spelling the end of any co-operation between the Jewish Council and the

⁹⁵ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 119. It is important to note that at this time the Bund only represented about ten percent of the Kadimah's membership, but they were highly organised. Ibid, 131.

⁹⁶ "Yarra Whispers," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 2 March 1951. Platz only lasted in his role as 'Melbourne correspondent' for a year. Although he was obviously a talented writer and journalist he did not shy away from a very left and pro-Jewish Council bias.

⁹⁷ "Yarra Whispers," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 20 April 1951.

⁹⁸ Lou Jedwab, "The Kadimah Youth Organisation in Melbourne: Reminiscences 1942–53," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 12 pt.1 (1993): 179–187.

⁹⁹ Burstin, "The Board, the Council and German Immigration (First Published in *Undzer Gedank* 1952)."

¹⁰⁰ "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 1st May 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

Katzetler group. The *Katzetler* society had invited the Jewish Council to participate in a public meeting in early July at the Kadimah. The meeting was called to protest the KYO's decision to send a delegate to the Berlin Youth Festival in East Berlin.¹⁰¹ The ostensible reason for the *Katzetler* society hosting this meeting was to object to any Jew on principle having any contact with Germany.¹⁰² Balberyszski, who was chairing the meeting, and Bono Wiener, a prominent Bundist leader, endorsed this position to enthusiastic applause.¹⁰³ Norman Rothfield, a leading figure in the Jewish Council and part of the communist-aligned faction, endorsed the KYO's position and suggested that 'as in the case of Jews attending the Nuremberg trials, the main question was not whether to go to Germany, but what was the purpose and use of going there'.¹⁰⁴

As David Rechter suggests, the issue of the Berlin delegation was something of a pretext for a final Bundist attack on the KYO.¹⁰⁵ The night of the *Katzetler* meeting, the KYO had been locked out of the building by the Kadimah committee; in protest they decided to hold their meeting in the foyer. The meeting was violently attacked by the Bundists, who tried to force them out of the building, causing scenes of chaos. The KYO eventually dispersed their meeting and mingled in with the *Katzetler* meeting.¹⁰⁶ As Rothfield and Lou Jedwab, a leader of the KYO and the Jewish Council youth section, addressed the crowd they 'were greeted with cries of "Heil Hitler" and counter cries of "Schumacher",¹⁰⁷ accompanied by the fascist salute, and were subjected to a barrage of interjections when they took the platform'.¹⁰⁸ Jewish communism here was being overtly associated with Nazism. The conduct of the Bundists that night was widely condemned; a subsequent public meeting of over 200 people, called by five former presidents of the Kadimah, passed a motion condemning the attack on the KYO as 'unprecedented and a violation of fundamental democratic principles and the traditions of the Kadimah'.¹⁰⁹ Platz wrote of the *Katzetler* meeting that 'the writer

¹⁰¹ "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 26th June 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). This delegate was to go under the auspices of the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council, a broader representative youth body, that at this point was heavily influenced by Jewish antifascist politics. Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 132.

¹⁰² "N. Rothfield Tells Katzetlers," *Australian Jewish News*, 6 July 1951.

¹⁰³ "Ugly Clashes Marred Katzetlers' Meeting," *Australian Jewish News*, 6 July 1951.

¹⁰⁴ "N. Rothfield Tells Katzetlers."

¹⁰⁵ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 133. The following month at a Melbourne Jewish Youth Council public meeting Jedwab noted that 'nothing had been heard from the Kadimah Committee about the Berlin Festival since the news had been received of a Bundist delegation at Frankfurt'. "MJYC Protests against Kadimah K.Y.O Action," *Australian Jewish News*, 10 August 1951.

¹⁰⁶ "Ugly Clashes Marred Katzetlers' Meeting."

¹⁰⁷ A reference to Kurt Schumacher, then leader of the Social Democratic Party in Germany. He was famous for calling communists 'red-painted Nazis', see Patrick Major, *The Death of the KPD: Communism and Anti-Communism in West Germany, 1945-1956* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 43. See also Arthur D. Kahn, "Kurt Schumacher: Pied Piper of the Marshall Plan," *Jewish Life* 2, no. 3 (1948).

¹⁰⁸ "Ugly Clashes Marred Katzetlers' Meeting."

¹⁰⁹ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 133.

of this column was intimidated by three people who not only experienced Fascism themselves, but attempted to practice it at the Kadimah'.¹¹⁰ It is notable here that the anti-German migration campaign was not the only political activity to which the new leadership of the Kadimah objected; they also condemned the KYO for engaging in activity they considered too 'political' such as 'a symposium on conscription and a talk on aborigines [sic]'.¹¹¹

In this case the transnational dimension of the political imagination was very much working against the Jewish Council, the KYO, and the anti-German migration campaign. The Bundists, many recently arrived from Eastern Europe, and having experienced first-hand communist repression, were appalled by the pro-Soviet attitudes they found in some sections of the community.¹¹² Their experiences compounded Bundist attitudes to the Soviet Union which had soured considerably after the early 1940s murder of Bundist leaders Victor Alter and Henryk Erlich, as discussed in the previous chapter. The incident at the *Katzetler* meeting is evidence, not just of the force of antifascism in the Jewish community but of the contestation of its meaning. That this central political contestation within the Jewish community took place at a meeting of Holocaust survivors is no coincidence. The conflict represented a struggle over the meaning of the Holocaust and the political legacy of antifascism. For the Jewish communists antifascism meant sympathies with the Soviet Union; for the Bundists it was the very opposite. If the Jewish Council had previously established Jewish left antifascism as hegemonic, then this hegemony was very quickly and at times violently coming to an end. The ending of this hegemony, as with its establishment, was to a large extent the result of transnational factors: a contest over memory and European politics which played out in the newspapers and halls of Jewish Australia. The anti-German migration campaign as well as the Jewish Council was destined to suffer as a result. However, despite their increasingly contested hegemony, the Jewish antifascist left found a distinctive political voice through the anti-German migration campaign.

¹¹⁰ "Yarra Whispers," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 13 July 1951.

¹¹¹ The Bund appear to have been in league in this attack with the right-wing revisionist Zionists, represented by Jehudah Honig, see David Burstin, "Carlton, a Yiddish Shtetl," Yiddish Melbourne website, available at <http://future.arts.monash.edu/yiddish-melbourne/memories-david-burstin/>. The State Zionist Council were party to this attack too, moving an amendment to establish a new 'non-partisan' Kadimah youth group. "Kadimah Meeting Votes in Turbulent Atmosphere," *Australian Jewish News*, 31 August 1951.

¹¹² Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 129. John Goldlust estimates that approximately 4–5000 Polish Jews in Australia survived the war in the Soviet Union. He outlines the varied, yet overall negative, experiences of Polish Jews in the Soviet Union during this period. John Goldlust, "A Different Silence: The Survival of More Than 200,000 Polish Jews in the Soviet Union During World War II as a Case Study in Cultural Amnesia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 21, pt. 1 (2012): 13–60. Moshe Ajzenbud, a prominent Melbourne Bundist wrote a scathing memoir, thinly veiled as a novel, about his time in the Soviet Union, first published in Yiddish in 1956. Moshe Ajzenbud, *The Commissar Took*

‘People whose emotions are stronger than their loyalty to Australia’: Jews as Political Subjects in the Anti-German Migration Campaign

The Jewish left and others in the political leadership of the Jewish community found it difficult to know how to position Jews and Jewishness in relation to the campaign. As noted above, it was the first (and for all intents and purposes, only) major public campaign opposing government policy that was initiated and driven largely by the Jewish community. The spokespeople and literature of the campaign had not just to negotiate antisemitism within the wider community but also to carefully position their arguments in order to avoid claims of ‘bitterness’ and ‘sectionalism’. To have a real influence and impact, the anti-German migration campaign needed to appeal to non-Jews.¹¹³

The anti-German migration campaign served as something of a testing ground for Jewish ‘governmental belonging’ in Australia. Ghassan Hage defines ‘governmental belonging’ as ‘the feeling that one is legitimately entitled in the course of everyday life to make a governmental/managerial statement about the nation’.¹¹⁴ In a meeting between Perth community leader Rabbi Louis Rubin-Zacks and Paul Hasluck, then Minister for Territories, Hasluck warned Rubin-Zacks that any Jewish campaign against German migration could create an antisemitic backlash. Rubin-Zacks wrote to Executive Council of Australian Jewry, President Ben Green following his meeting with Hasluck:

Would he suggest that Jews, for the fear of anti-Semitism, should accept the position of second rate citizens, and lose their self-respect as human beings? I, for one, would absolutely reject such a contention, and informed him that the overwhelming majority of Jews felt the same way.¹¹⁵

As outlined in previous chapters, such a statement represented a new post-war attitude of Australian Jewry, no longer content with the ‘ostrich’ approach to dealing with antisemitism.

Immigration Minister Holt, clearly worried about the growing influence of the anti-German migration campaign, issued a press release the day after the big protest meeting at the Sydney Town Hall. Holt said that the public meetings had highlighted ‘the sectional character of the opposition to the Government’s policy’:

Care, trans. Leah Ajzenbud (Fitzroy, VIC: Globe Press, 1986).

¹¹³ “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 21st February 1950.”

¹¹⁴ Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), 46.

¹¹⁵ Benjamin Green quoted in Rutland and Caplan, *With One Voice: A History of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, 55.

Sponsored by members of the Jewish community, whose bitterness towards the German race is certainly understandable, they have attracted to their platforms a few public figures, Dr. Evatt being the most conspicuous of them, who, while highly vocal on the danger of Nazis being admitted to this country, have been strangely silent on the danger of Communists slipping through the screening net.¹¹⁶

Thus, whilst avoiding overt antisemitism, Holt painted the anti-German migration campaign as a joint venture between emotional and irrational Jews and communist sympathisers. ‘Sectional’ here implied Jews acting in self-interest rather than in the interests of the nation as a whole.¹¹⁷ Holt used a similar line of attack in a newspaper debate with Jewish Council member Ernest Platz (noted above for his role as a prominent campaigner in the anti-German migration campaign).¹¹⁸ In September 1950, Platz engaged in a heated debate with Harold Holt over the issue of *Volksdeutsche* immigration in the pages of Melbourne newspaper *The Argus*. Drawing on his own experience in Buchenwald, Platz outlined the cruelty he and other Jews suffered at the hands of *Volksdeutsche* and their key role in disseminating antisemitic propaganda in Eastern Europe.¹¹⁹ Holt in reply emphasised his sympathy but also tried to use Platz’s personal experience in an effort to discredit him, stating that Platz’s feelings of ‘bitterness’ were ‘gaining the upper hand’ over ‘calm reasoning’.¹²⁰ In a similar vein, the official RSL magazine accused Jews of being ‘people whose emotions are stronger than their loyalty to Australia’.¹²¹

The government and RSL’s strategy here played on anti-communist paranoia, and constructions of Judeo-communism, to contest Jewish governmental belonging.¹²² They also sought to feminise the Jewish anti-German migration campaign as sectional, bitter, and emotional as against a rational masculine properly governmental subject.¹²³ Both of these ideas played on tropes originating in nineteenth-century Europe which racialised Jewish bodies as physically unable to serve in national armed services, mak-

¹¹⁶ NAA: A9306, 353 Part 1, “Press Statement by the Hon. H.E. Holt, M.P. Minister for Immigration, 27 February, 1951.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Tennant, *Evatt*, 263.

¹¹⁹ Ernest Platz, “‘Volks’ Spread the Goebbels Plan,” *The Argus*, 12 September 1950.

¹²⁰ Harold Holt, “Immigration Minister Says: ‘Volksdeutsche Are Not All Bad,’” *The Argus*, 14 September 1950.

¹²¹ Quoted in Lippmann, “Our Approach to German Migration.”

¹²² For a discussion of the Jewish Council and Judeo-Communism, see Phillip Mendes, “Constructions of Judeo-Communism and the Unravelling of the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1949–1950,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 20, pt. 1 (2010): 110–122.

¹²³ In Wendy Brown’s theorisation, governmentality is figured as regimes of masculine domination predicated on calculability, predictability, and control. The objects of these regimes of control are feminised. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 193.

ing them both inherently disloyal and ineligible to claim full citizenship status.¹²⁴ Hage suggests that ‘whiteness’ in Australia is something that can only be fully achieved when accompanied by governmental belonging.¹²⁵ It is apparent that a genuine national subject in this period had to be figured as fully white, rather than ‘marginally white’, and as rational and masculine.¹²⁶ The government’s discourse was countered by the Jewish community, but not in these same terms. The counter-arguments did not necessarily rest on a claim to proper whiteness or a purely rational masculinity. Although some of the rhetoric did express these ideas, the discourse of the Jewish Council appealed to a historical account and an internationalist antifascist politics informed by a political ethic of memory.

The opening of the Jewish Council’s 1952 pamphlet *Keep Australia Free From Nazis* begins with the following paragraph:

We Australians should oppose the present government plan to bring thousands of young Germans to this country. It is natural because Jews have suffered most under Fascism, they should be the most vigilant and outspoken against the Nazi threat wherever and in whatever form it arises. The introduction of Nazi Germans into this country—educated and reared under Fascism—is a matter which concerns all Australians who cherish their democratic ideals and traditions. It is not a question of “Jewish vindictiveness” or “Jewish racialism” (for we welcome any Germans who are anti-Nazis), but of the economic and political security of all Australians.¹²⁷

This paragraph was in part an answer to the attacks made on the Jewish campaign as emotional, vindictive, and discriminatory. The pamphlet thus began on a defensive note with ‘We Australians’, a claim to the universal, national claims of the campaign. The next sentence switched from the universal to justify the particular Jewish interest in antifascism. The following sentence switched back to a universal claim, merging antifascism with nationalism through an appeal to Australian ‘democratic ideals and traditions’.¹²⁸ This is a language familiar to us from the Jewish left’s spearhead theorisation of antisemitism. The last sentence disputed claims of ‘Jewish vindictiveness’ or ‘Jewish racialism’ and once again appealed to a national subject, ‘all Australians’. However, in the middle of this passive sentence, a ‘we’ was inserted in parentheses

¹²⁴ Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 40–59.

¹²⁵ Hage, *White Nation*, 57.

¹²⁶ Jon Stratton, “Multiculturalism and the Whitening Machine, or How Australians Become White,” in *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of Jean Martin’s the Migrant Presence*, eds. G. Hage and R. Couch (Sydney, NSW: Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, 1999).

¹²⁷ *Keep Australia Free From Nazis* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1952).

¹²⁸ A common trope of the Australian post-war left at the time, see Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, 196. See also Chap. 6 of this book.

that was clearly Jewish. Thus, despite the intentions of the paragraph outlined in the first sentence—to speak as, and appeal to, a national subject—by the time the reader arrived at the last sentence, it was clear that they were reading the arguments of a distinct Jewish political position associated with those taking the lead in the campaign. This was an attempt to claim Jewish governmental belonging through the use of antifascist Popular Front style oppositional rhetoric that both embraced and pushed the limits of progressive nationalism. The difficulties of speaking from such a subject position are illustrated in the ambivalences of the paragraph.

Throughout the 1940s, the Jewish Council and associated groups were not shy about confronting antisemitism. However, in line with the Jewish left's more critical turn in the last years of that decade, the anti-German migration campaign represented a qualitative break in the development of their public discourse. Previously there was a defensive emphasis on persuading Australians that Jewish stereotypes and conspiracies did not align with reality and that Jewish Australians should be welcomed into Australian society.¹²⁹ In the anti-German migration campaign the Jewish antifascist left, leading the Jewish community, was self-posed as a political subject, operating with political autonomy from an Australian state which sought to delegitimise and contain their political activity.

‘Finkanasy’s ragtime bund’ and the New Strategy

The attack on the Jewish Council came not only from the Bund, but also from the anti-communist right of the Jewish community. This attack was led by the anti-communist ALP member and barrister Maurice Ashkanasy, the president of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD) through much of this era and beyond. His motley alliance, with Leo Fink (prominent Zionist and the head of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in Melbourne), the Bund; VAJEX (Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen); and other conservatives, was dubbed ‘Finkanasy’s ragtime bund’ (hereafter, the Jewish right), a play on the title of a popular song of the time—‘Alexander’s Ragtime Band’.¹³⁰ Following a series of events whereby the Jewish Council ran afoul of Ashkanasy and the VJBD, Ashkanasy, formerly a patron of the Jewish Council’s fundraising appeal, turned solidly against the Jewish Council, denouncing them as pro-communist.¹³¹ He waged a yearlong campaign against the Jewish Council, eventually manoeuvring to dissolve the joint Anti-German Migration Committee to prevent the Jewish Council’s involvement.¹³² Phillip Mendes suggests that although

¹²⁹ Brian Fitzpatrick, *Refugees: Hitler’s Loss, Our Gain* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1944); Len Fox, *Australia and the Jews* (Melbourne: Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1945).

¹³⁰ Burstin, “The Board, the Council and German Immigration (First Published in *Undzer Gedank* 1952)”; “Yarra Whispers,” *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 29 June 1951.

¹³¹ Mendes, “Constructions of Judeo-Communism.”

¹³² “Vic. Board of Deputies – Zionist Amendment Defeated: Campaign Set-up Scrapped,” *Australian*

Ashkanasy and his allies were also in favour of the anti-German migration campaign, their objection to the Jewish Council's involvement was because of its association with communism and refusal to follow proper procedure.¹³³ There were also serious ideological differences over how to prosecute the campaign. These differences illustrate the distinctive Jewish left antifascist ideology developed by the Jewish Council.

Firstly, in contrast to the Jewish Council strategy of public mobilisation and grass-roots engagement with left civil society and trade unions, the major prong of Ashkanasy and the Jewish right's strategy was to try and develop a closer relationship with the virulently anti-communist RSL, to persuade them to alter their policy on German migration. In a particularly rowdy meeting in June 1951, the VJBD voted to dissolve the joint Anti-German Migration Committee. The *Australian Jewish News* reported that Mr. E. Joseph, President of the Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen, arguing in favour of the dissolution motion said: '[O]nly ex-servicemen should approach [the] RSL on anti-semitic issues. Other Jewish approaches would be "like a red rag to a bull." RSL State leader Joyce is not anti-semitic'. The *Australian Jewish News* reported that this remark was met with 'widespread laughter, but "hear, hear" from Mr Ashkanasy'. Joseph then stated that 'all [Joyce's] adverse statements were only the results of pinpricks and provocation. The motion would enable such approaches.'¹³⁴

Jewish News, 8 June 1951. The committee was designed to have two VJBD representatives, and two Jewish Council representatives under the chairmanship of the chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the VJBD, Sam Cohen, who was affiliated with the Jewish Council. In a fit of panic about the ineffectiveness of the new post-dissolution replacement 'the Public Relations Bureau', the VJBD voted to re-establish the Joint Anti-German Migration Committee in November 1951. However, the attacks on the Jewish Council and their strategy did not cease, the new Joint Committee never properly met, and the Jewish Council appear to have decided that working through the structures of the VJBD was more trouble than it was worth, preferring to carry out their own campaign, see "Overwhelming Vote Recreates A.G.M. Committee," *Australian Jewish News*, 23 November 1951; "Jewish Council Withdraws from Board," *Australian Jewish News*, 27 June 1952; "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 24th April 1952" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). Although this decision seems have been a rational reaction to the Jewish right's anti-communist fervour and obstinacy, the Jewish Council as a whole was far from faultless in this whole debacle. The Jewish Council under the leadership of the communist aligned faction had become dogmatically pro-Soviet refusing to countenance the possibility of Soviet antisemitism. This led one of the most prominent and respected Jewish Council members, Walter Lippmann, to resign from the Jewish Council executive. In a letter to the Jewish Council executive he suggested that Ashkanasy's crusade was only part of the reason for the Jewish Council's fall from grace; the communist aligned faction had operated in a thoroughly unstrategic way alienating the Jewish community. Lippmann especially condemned the Jewish Council's refusal to condemn the oppression of Jews in Eastern Europe. Walter Lippmann, "Letter to the President & Executive of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 30 May 1953" (Lippmann collection, 1953). Itzhak Gust and Norman Rothfield both members of the pro-communist faction, later too admitted that they had made serious strategic mistakes. Norman Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace* (Fairfield: Yarraford Publications, 1997), 38–43; Gust, *Such Was Life*, 214–16.

¹³³ Mendes, "Jews, Nazis and Communists," 86.

¹³⁴ "Vic. Board of Deputies – Zionist Amendment Defeated: Campaign Set-up Scrapped." For more on the VJBD's RSL engagement strategy, see "Victorian P.R. Committee Activities," *Australian Jewish News*, 6 July 1951.

In late July, as a result of this new strategy the VJBD claimed that ‘cordial relations [had] been established’ with the RSL, the issue of German migration had been discussed, and ‘progress [had] been made’.¹³⁵ Less than a month later, George Holland, the head of the RSL, on his return to Australia from Europe, completely contradicted this claim. He suggested that Australia needed to act quickly to snap up German migrants before they all went to America and Canada, stating: ‘we are in the market for migrants to-day, and many of the best possible types are in Germany’.¹³⁶ In September 1951, the RSL not only supported the call for German migration but attacked Jewish migrants as ‘doubtful security risks’.¹³⁷ The Jewish Council condemned the utter failure of the RSL engagement strategy, a view that was also echoed by the *Australian Jewish News*, who editorialised that the RSL was acting as a government attack dog and that ‘it shows it is far better for us to be fearless and to stand up to untruth and bias, not to shrink away from them’.¹³⁸

Hand in hand with the approaches to the RSL, the second major change in strategy mooted by the VJBD was to begin opposing German migration as a whole, rather than focusing on particular categories of Germans. This new approach was highly controversial. From early on in the anti-German migration campaign, the Jewish Council had emphasised that their objection was not to German migration as a whole. Their approach to the campaign emphasised the need to avoid slipping into a negative racialisation of Germans. Their argument was a political one: that the generation of Germans being proposed for migration, those aged 21–35, were those educated under the Nazi regime and hence thoroughly indoctrinated.¹³⁹ Much of the force of the anti-German migration campaign came from an acute awareness of West Germany’s failure to de-Nazify. This failure was understood in political terms rather than as a racial or cultural inevitability. The Jewish Council emphasised in their anti-German migration campaign pamphlet that ‘in this struggle we acknowledge the great achievements of the German people in former times, and look forward to the day when we can welcome back a repentant and democratic Germany into the comity of nations’.¹⁴⁰ A pamphlet issued by ‘A group of Progressive Jewish Youth’ circa 1950, most likely the communist leadership group of the KYO (a group allied with the Jewish Council), also emphasised a rather crude but thoroughly political and historical rather than racial or cultural explanation of Nazism. The Holocaust and the war crimes of the Nazis, they stated, were ‘what the people who produced Goethe and Schiller descended to after a short period of conditioning by monopoly capitalism’.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ “P.R. Committee’s First Public Meeting,” *Australian Jewish News*, 27 July 1951.

¹³⁶ “R.S.L. Head Says Bring Germans,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1951.

¹³⁷ “Combating Mass German Migration Needs United Jewry,” *Australian Jewish News*, 14 December 1951; “E.C.A.J. Replies to R.S.L.,” *Australian Jewish News*, 14 September 1951.

¹³⁸ “Editorial – Inspired Statement?,” *Australian Jewish News*, 14 September 1951.

¹³⁹ For example, see “Mr. Goldbloom Indicates – the Dangers of German Migration.”

¹⁴⁰ Keep Australia Free from Nazis.

¹⁴¹ *Stop! Fascism Here* (Melbourne: A Group of Progressive Jewish Youth, n.d. ca. 1950). For a

There were certainly elements of the anti-German migration campaign's discourse that did racialise the Germans or skirted very close. Rather than utilising the discourse of an antifascist, anti-racist left nationalism like the Jewish Council, these elements fell back on an exclusivist racial nationalism. This nationalism depended on an appeal to whiteness as the basis of Jewish governmental belonging and German exclusion. Erwin Frenkel writing in the *Australasian Jewish Review* said: '[S]everal decades ago the Australian people decided in favour of a White Australia. Today it faces a much more important issue: IS AUSTRALIA TO REMAIN WHITE AND HUMAN OR IS IT TO BECOME WHITE AND GERMAN?'¹⁴² Abram Landa, a prominent member of Sydney's Jewish community and NSW MLA, said at a public protest meeting: '[W]e would not admit the Japanese because of the White Australia policy, but to me ... the Germans are as black as those coloured people we try to exclude.'¹⁴³ Ashkanasy, in his speech at Melbourne University, quoted approvingly Oscar Oeser, a prominent professor of psychology, as saying: '[F]undamentally, Germans are authoritarian, arrogant, and quite unable to understand the democratic, and, above all, the British way of life.'¹⁴⁴

Along with the attempted political alliance with the RSL, the Jewish right seemed to embrace the exclusivist, racial nationalism the RSL was so well practiced in.¹⁴⁵ Part of the VJBD's post-dissolution strategy was a much vaunted new pamphlet 'fully and objectively setting out the case against German immigration', of which 50,000 copies were to be printed at considerable cost.¹⁴⁶ A draft of the pamphlet was eventually circulated revealing the VJBD's new policy of not just opposing Nazi indoctrinated Germans but opposing all German migration, a policy which could only be justified on racial grounds. In a critical memo on the pamphlet, Waten outlined a number of objections to its contents including that 'German history and thought are dealt with in an unscholarly and one-sided manner, designed to bolster up the racial case against

discussion of economic theories of fascism in the US context, see Christopher Vials, *Haunted by Hitler: Liberals, the Left and the Fight against Fascism in the United States* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 70–89.

¹⁴² Erwin Frenkel, "Did Niemoller Win?," *The Australasian Jewish Review* 11, no. 6 (1950). Frenkel was an avowed Zionist, see "We Certainly Agree with Mr. Frenkel," *Australian Jewish Outlook* 1, no. 7 (1947).

¹⁴³ "Every Jew and Every Citizen Has a Duty," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 21 September 1951.

¹⁴⁴ "Jewish Students Denounce Mass-Migration: 'German Students Will Betray Us'." Christopher Vials has discussed this sort of racialised analysis of fascism as prevalent amongst liberal antifascists in the United States who asserted the fundamental goodness of the American character. Vials, *Haunted by Hitler*, 85–86.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of the racism of the RSL, see Rutland, "Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria"; Kristianson, *The Politics of Patriotism*. For a representative sample of RSL discourse from their monthly Victorian magazine, see "Get Tough with the Communists: Traitorous to British Race," *Mufti*, July 1950.

¹⁴⁶ "P.R. Committee's First Public Meeting"; "Anti-German Migration Campaign," *Australian Jewish News*, 28 September 1951.

Germans'.¹⁴⁷ He also noted that '[t]here is no outright condemnation of the present Nazi movement in Germany, nor of Dr. Adenauer and the restored Nazi gerbils, who are principal agents of re-militarisation ... in Germany'.¹⁴⁸ The Jewish Council read the pamphlet's contents as 'a danger to the Jewish communities of Australia' and urgently communicated to the Jewish public and the VJBD their reasoning as to why its publication should be prevented.¹⁴⁹ Sam Goldbloom, a prominent Jewish Council activist, publicly condemned the new VJBD policy, as embodied by the pamphlet's opposition to all German migration, as 'dangerous'.¹⁵⁰

The antifascist values of the Jewish left clashed very obviously here with the exclusivist nationalism of the Jewish right. The Jewish Council strategy relied on winning left and union support for their campaign, attempting to shape Australia's future through an appeal to popular antifascism. Although there were certainly contradictions and ambiguities in this strategy, antisemitism here was viewed as the product of fascism and the enemy of democracy, allowing the Jewish Council to inhabit a larger anti-racist, pro-civil liberties and pro-peace political space. Their particular theorisation of antisemitism suggested that the Jewish community's struggle was bound up in an international struggle for justice and democracy. The Jewish right's (failed) strategic alignment with the RSL, and their Cold War positioning, meant a repudiation of the earlier hegemonic left antifascism of the Jewish community. They attempted to fall back on an exclusivist, racialised nationalism. Although this strategy failed in the short term, there was another type of exclusivist nationalism in the ascendancy within the Jewish community. This was a transnational politics par excellence, which also served to displace the left antifascist hegemony.

‘Israel had no alternative but to deal directly with Germany on this issue’: Israel, Zionism, and West Germany

On 7 January 1952, 10,000 protestors took to the streets of Jerusalem. Attempting to storm the Israeli parliament, they threw stones at the police lines guarding the building. The police responded with tear gas, some of which filtered through smashed windows into the parliament. In chaotic scenes the police then poured petrol down the

¹⁴⁷ "Memo on Public Relations Committee's Booklet," ca. December 1951, State Library of Victoria, Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies Collection, MS 9352 Y, Box 7.

¹⁴⁸ "Memo on Public Relations Committee's Booklet."

¹⁴⁹ "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 11th December 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

¹⁵⁰ "Combating Mass German Migration Needs United Jewry." Thankfully the VJBD eventually saw sense and shelved the pamphlet, see "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 15th January 1952" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

streets and set it alight in order to ward off the protestors. Two hundred protestors and 140 police were injured in the stand-off. Four hundred people were arrested. The protestors, led by the right-wing leader Menachem Begin, were trying to prevent a crucial parliamentary vote authorising Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to negotiate with West Germany for Holocaust reparations.¹⁵¹ To the demonstrators chanting ‘No truck with Hitler’s heirs’, accepting reparations from West Germany was akin to accepting blood money in return for legitimating a regime still dominated by Nazis.¹⁵² The protestors were ultimately unsuccessful in preventing the vote and the Israeli government entered into negotiations with West Germany. This issue provoked major debates among Jews worldwide, not least in Australia.¹⁵³

The issue of German reparations was central to breaking the alliance between the Australian Zionist movement and the Australian Jewish antifascist left. Israel and Zionism were, and still are, central to the transnational Australian Jewish political imagination. Zionism was highly contested in the Jewish community through the 1930s and 1940s, but with the 1948 War and the establishment of the state of Israel, Zionism was firmly established as a pervasive aspect of the transnational Jewish political imagination.¹⁵⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, the Jewish Council, in the lead up to the establishment of Israel, were its strong proponents, seeing a defence of Israel as inextricable from the fight against antisemitism.¹⁵⁵

The debate over negotiations between West Germany and Israel over Holocaust reparations was largely concurrent with the anti-German migration campaign.¹⁵⁶ It is important to note the international dimensions of this debate. Both Israel and West Germany utilised the reparations agreement as a means of securing their place within

¹⁵¹ “341 Hurt in Wild Rioting in Israel,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 1952. The other major players in the protests were the Israeli left, with both the Communist Maki party and the Marxist Zionist party Mapam opposing the agreement. Michael Brecher, “Images, Process and Feedback in Foreign Policy: Israel’s Decisions on German Reparations,” *American Political Science Review* 67, no. 1 (1973): 76. The Jewish Council sympathised with and had contacts with the Mapam party at the time. “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 11th July 1950” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

¹⁵² “341 Hurt in Wild Rioting in Israel.”; Brecher, “Images, Process and Feedback.”

¹⁵³ Brecher, “Images, Process and Feedback”; Suzanne Rutland, “Debates and Conflicts: Australian Jewry, the Claims Conference and Restitution, 1945–1965,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28, no. 3 (2014).

¹⁵⁴ For a useful overview of Australian Zionism in this period, see Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Rose Bay: Brandl & Schlesinger 1997), 295–323. The exception to this was the anti-Zionist Bund. However, they too eventually, reluctantly supported the State of Israel, if not the Zionist ideology, see Burstin, “Bund, Zionism and the State of Israel (First Published in *Undzer Gedank* 1966),” in *Sender Burstin: Yiddish Melbourne Observed*, ed. Ben Burstin and David Burstin (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2013).

¹⁵⁵ See Burgoyne Chapman, “The Vindication of [],” *The Australian Jewish News*, 21 July 1950; Philip Mendes, “The Australian Left’s Support for the Creation of the State of Israel, 1947–48,” *Labour History* (2009): 137–148.

¹⁵⁶ For example, see “Israel and Germany,” *Australian Jewish News*, 21 July 1950.

a new US-led imperial order. As succinctly put by Daniel Marwecki, ‘for Jerusalem, the road to Washington went via Bonn; for Bonn, the road to Washington went via Jerusalem’.¹⁵⁷ The main issue in Israel was gaining funds for the new state to be able to build vital economic and social infrastructure. However, Israel also positioned itself as representing world Jewry. It was negotiating on behalf of all Jewish people, laying claim to the heirless property and wealth stolen in the Holocaust. A proportion of the money was to be distributed internationally, including to Australia’s Jewish institutions, through the Jewish Claims Conference.¹⁵⁸

The issue caused much controversy in Australia. Through the first half of 1952, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (the peak national representative body), based in Victoria that year, resolved not to support Israel having direct negotiations with West Germany.¹⁵⁹ The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, clashing with the Victorians, supported Israel’s position.¹⁶⁰ This made the Australian Jewish community, for a short time, one of only three Jewish communities in the world to oppose direct negotiations with West Germany.¹⁶¹ At the half yearly conference of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in February of 1952, Leo Fink, the head of the Jewish Welfare Society and a critic of the Jewish Council, summed up the Victorian case:

Australian Jewry was in a different situation to the Jewish communities in other countries, as it was actively engaged in fighting German migration ... we [can] not approach Australian authorities expressing opposition to German migration to this country and on the other hand, favour direct negotiations with Germany on reparations.¹⁶²

That a critic of the Jewish Council took such a stance is indicative of the depth of feeling associated with the anti-German migration campaign and the strength of the campaign.¹⁶³

The Zionist faction, previously peacemakers on the VJBD, eventually turned on the Jewish Council, precipitating the Council’s resignation from the board. Previously, West Germany’s non-recognition by Israel meant that on an international level there

¹⁵⁷ Daniel Marwecki, *Germany and Israel: Whitewashing and Statebuilding* (London: Hurst & Company 2020), 38.

¹⁵⁸ Rutland, “Debates and Conflicts,” 159.

¹⁵⁹ The Executive Council of Australian Jewry switched between being based in Melbourne and Sydney every two years.

¹⁶⁰ Rutland, “Debates and Conflicts,” 159–60.

¹⁶¹ “Votes of Reparations Discussion with Germany,” *Australian Jewish News*, 25 January 1952.

¹⁶² Fink is being paraphrased here by the journalist. “ECAJ Conference Discusses Reparations, Migration,” *Australian Jewish News*, February 15 1952. Walter Lippmann suggested, in an interview decades later, that Fink, a native of Bialystok, was not a Bundist but had political sympathies with the Bundists. Walter Lippmann, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 4 September 1984, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/157.

¹⁶³ For the Jewish antifascist left’s stance here, see I Perl, “Selling out to Germany,” *The Clarion: A Progressive Jewish Monthly*, no. 1 (1952).

was no contradiction between strong support of Israel and a vigorous campaign against the West German regime. This allowed the Zionist movement in Australia to support the Jewish left and the anti-German migration campaign. While Israel did not recognise West Germany formally until 1965, the reparations agreement represented a significant rehabilitation of West Germany's image on the international stage.¹⁶⁴ Israel's decision to negotiate was eventually accepted by Jewish communities and organisations worldwide.¹⁶⁵ The Jewish establishment's acceptance of West Germany as a legitimate and necessary state within the new Cold War order was conditioned by Israeli foreign policy. Representative here was the realpolitik stance of the prominent Zionist Samuel Wynn, who is reported to have said 'that Israel had no alternative but to deal directly with Germany on this issue'.¹⁶⁶ By July 1952 the Executive Council of Australian Jewry had reversed its stance, reflecting a similar realpolitik.¹⁶⁷ It is thus no coincidence that the resignation of the Jewish Council from the VJBD over the issue of protests against the visiting West German ambassador closely followed Israel's new position on negotiations. The Zionists' realpolitik analysis meant the Jewish Council's position on West Germany was increasingly anomalous.

That political positions on West Germany were still in flux through 1952, with Victorian Jewry expressing an internationally anomalous position, points to the purchase of the left antifascist hegemony within the Jewish community. Even as the Jewish Council itself was being progressively marginalised, the arguments of a left antifascism were still significant and influential. The eventual resolution of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the resignation of the Jewish Council, however, points to a new supremacy of Israel and Zionism, within a Cold War context, in the mainstream Jewish transnational political imagination. With the agreement signed for reparations from West Germany to Israel and the international Claims Conference, the financial future of the Australian Jewish community and its welfare and educational institutions became tied to both countries.¹⁶⁸ The Soviet Union's increasing opposition to Zionism, and Israel's growing strategic orientation towards the United States, meant that Zionism was increasingly aligned with anti-communism.¹⁶⁹ The speed at which the change occurred is indicative of both the force of international events in the poli-

¹⁶⁴ Brecher, "Images, Process and Feedback." For a discussion of West German reparations payments in the context of Israel's economic dependence on an alliance with Western powers and Israel's strategic alignment with West Germany, see Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There?: Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 70–75.

¹⁶⁵ Dr. Nahum Goldmann, "The Germans – Who Will Talk to Them?," *Australian Jewish News*, 4 January 1952. "Votes of Reparations Discussion with Germany."

¹⁶⁶ "ECAJ Conference Discusses Reparations, Migration."

¹⁶⁷ Rutland, "Debates and Conflicts," 160.

¹⁶⁸ Suzanne Rutland, "Debates and Conflicts."

¹⁶⁹ Irene L. Gendzier, *Dying to Forget: Oil, Power, Palestine, & the Foundations of U.S. Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206–255.

tics of the Australian Jewish community and the large changes in consciousness that were occurring. As Rechter suggests, an increased Jewish focus on Israel, the Soviet Union's escalating anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and the politics of the Cold War in the Jewish community, effected a 'radically altered... Jewish political atmosphere'.¹⁷⁰

‘It was a most disappointing protest’: The End of the Anti-German Migration Campaign

Re-arming West Germany was a key part of US and Western Europe's Cold War strategy.¹⁷¹ The Jewish Council's unwavering position on German rearmament soon placed them on the other side of the Cold War, as the mainstream institutions of Western Jewish communities acceded to Western foreign policy imperatives. The London *Jewish Chronicle*, despite its keen attention to West German politics and focus on the failure of de-Nazification, took a Cold War stance and justified German rearmament in a 'long and torturous' article in late 1949; an editorial stance which generated much controversy.¹⁷² In the United States, mainstream Jewish groups tended to grudgingly accept German rearmament as a 'realistic necessity', whilst outright opposition to German rearmament was left to groups on the Jewish left, often associated with the American Communist Party.¹⁷³ In this same period in Mexico, Argentina, France, and Canada, Zionists and mainstream Jewish institutions turned aggressively against pro-Soviet Jewish antifascists and communists.¹⁷⁴

Similarly in Australia, the Jewish Council's strong line on West German rearmament was initially very popular.¹⁷⁵ However, by 1952 their strong position on West Germany, as well as their refusal to condemn Soviet antisemitism, ultimately led to the separation of the Jewish Council from the VJBD and their increasing political iso-

¹⁷⁰ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 136.

¹⁷¹ Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European Defense after World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006).

¹⁷² Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 204–205.

¹⁷³ Diner, *We Remember*, 227–228.

¹⁷⁴ Adina Cimet-Singer, "The Last Battles of Old-World Ideologies in the Race for Identity and Communal Power: Communists Vs Bundists Vs Zionists in Mexico, 1938–1951," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe* 5, no. 2 (1994): 59–84; Lawrence D. Bell, "Bitter Conquest: Zionists against Progressive Jews and the Making of Post-War Jewish Politics in Argentina," *Jewish History*, no. 17 (2003): 285–308; Ester Reiter, *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 123–149; Norman Erwin, "Confronting Hitler's Legacy: Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust Discourse" (University of Waterloo, 2014), 214–238; Zoé Grumberg, "‘L’antisémitisme est l’auxiliaire obligatoire du fascisme’: Jewish Communists, Antifascism and Antisemitism in France, 1944–1960s", *Fascism* 9, 1–2 (2020): 94–95.

¹⁷⁵ For example, see "German Re-Armament (Editorial)," *Australian Jewish News*, 29 September 1950.

lation in the Jewish community.¹⁷⁶ Samuel Wynn summed up the establishment Jewish community's emerging new consensus Cold War view. In the debate over the Jewish Council's planned protest against the West German ambassador, he stated: 'Now the Council was fighting against 56 nations of the U.N. and against the Australian government policy approved by both Parties. This is not a fight against anti-Semitism but a childish futile demonstration.'¹⁷⁷

The ascendance of Jewish anti-communism and the purging and disowning of the Jewish left meant a fundamental change in Australian Jewish politics and identity. A representative example here is Ashkanasy's declaration about the Jewish Council: 'We cannot stop them calling themselves Jews, but we can say that they are not authentic. Let us declare them bogus for they are utterly non-Jewish and pro-Communist.'¹⁷⁸ As perspicuously noted by W.D. Rubinstein it is at this juncture that we can assess a certain continuity between the pre-World War Two Jewish establishment and the post-war leadership of people such as Ashkanasy.¹⁷⁹ While there had been a seeming change in orientation towards a new Jewish consciousness and a repudiation of the 'inconspicuous' approach to combatting antisemitism, a fundamental conservatism was reasserted. Whereas the old leadership saw themselves as utterly loyal to the British empire, the new leadership, by way of Israel's geopolitical positioning within Western imperialism, could transfer their political loyalties to 'Israel-centred "Jewish peoplehood" within the new geo-political framework of the post-war world'.¹⁸⁰ In other words, the quashing of an independent Jewish political subjectivity by the new Jewish right was necessary to reaffirm Jewish political loyalty to the Australian state under Cold War warrior Menzies, and within an evolving new US-led Western imperialism, which featured a special place for Israel.¹⁸¹ Whereas Zionism in Australia, for a short

¹⁷⁶ The Jewish Council was eventually disaffiliated from the VJBD over their refusal to call off a protest against the visiting West German ambassador, see "Board Ultimatum to Jewish Council – 'Toe the Line or Get Out'," *Australian Jewish News*, 20 June 1952. The Jewish Council were not entirely politically isolated at this point as their line on West German rearmament was endorsed by the left leaning youth groups, see, for example, "MJYC Resolution on German Rearmament," *Australian Jewish News*, 27 June 1952.

¹⁷⁷ "Board Ultimatum to Jewish Council – 'Toe the Line or Get Out'." The Zionists then commanded the largest voting bloc in the VJBD and had previously paid a peace-making role between the Jewish Council and the anti-communist right wing bloc, often favouring the Jewish Council, see Burstin, "The Board, the Council and German Immigration (First Published in *Undzer Gedank* 1952)." For details on Wynn's life. see Allan Wynn, *The Fortunes of Samuel Wynn: Winemaker, Humanist, Zionist; a Biography* (Cassell Australia, 1968).

¹⁷⁸ Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 144.

¹⁷⁹ Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, 9.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Rubinstein here refers to the concept of peoplehood that became common in the US post-war as a means of conceptually aligning American Jewish interests insolubly with Israel's interests. Noam Pianko, *Jewish Peoplehood: An American Innovation* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2015). This 'peoplehood' concept was dissimilar to the Jewish antifascist internationalist version.

¹⁸¹ Which is not to say that the relationship between Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia was always one of straightforward unanimity and co-operation during this period. The

period, signified an anti-imperialism, by the early 1950s it was firmly entrenched as its opposite. The forces of Jewish anti-communism and Zionism were thus joined in forcing a radical circumscription of Jewish politics and identity.¹⁸² As per Pinchas Goldhar's critique of Australian Zionism, Jewish nationalism had become a route towards a different sort of assimilation.¹⁸³

The anti-German migration campaign did not end completely with the dissolution of the joint Anti-German Migration committee. The Jewish Council continued a campaign of public meetings and initiated a mass petition against German migration, which garnered the support of prominent ALP MPs, union leaders, academics, and churchmen.¹⁸⁴ In September 1952, a full two and a half years after his initial announcement, Holt announced that an agreement had been signed with West Germany to take approximately 5000 German migrants per year. Over the next decade approximately 50,000 Germans would be sponsored to immigrate to Australia.¹⁸⁵ The Executive Council of Australian Jewry sprang into belated action, announcing public protest meetings to be held in each capital city.¹⁸⁶ Following these meetings, the anti-German migration campaign appears to have petered out. Mendes suggests that the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's strategy changed to an emphasis on private lobbying, focusing on re-

US and Israel's 'special relationship' was only properly consolidated after the 1967 war. Beinun, *Was the Red Flag*, 75. The Menzies government very closely backed British foreign policy imperatives in the Middle East through the 1950s, see Chanan Reich, *Australia and Israel: An Ambiguous Relationship* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 17–102. See also Gendzier, *Dying to Forget*; Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁸² Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 138–145.

¹⁸³ A 1949 letter, from Ashkanasy to the Secretary of the Immigration Department, Tasman Heyes, is revealing in this regard. Ashkanasy (paraphrased here by Rutland) outlined that although the Jewish community was completely opposed to an 'assimilation' that meant 'the abandonment of their religion' and 'included the natural extension of love of Zion', in his rendering (again paraphrased by Rutland) the 'Jewish community strongly supported the government's policy of assimilation, meaning that [inter alia] new immigrants should give their complete allegiance to the British crown'. Suzanne Rutland, "The History of Australian Jewry, 1945–1960" (University of Sydney, 1990), 344.

¹⁸⁴ "Important Public Meeting (Advertisement)," *Australian Jewish News*, 20 July 1951; "Good Response to Petition against German Migration," *Australian Jewish News*, 26 October 1951. The Cold War and the Jewish right's activism also had an impact on the Jewish Council's previous close relationship with the ALP in Victoria. In 1951 the ALP limited Jewish Council contacts with local branches over a perceived infraction relating to the German migration petition. Many allege this was engineered by Ashkanasy, himself an influential member of the ALP right. Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 147; Mendes, "Jews, Nazis and Communists," 89.

¹⁸⁵ "German Migrants," *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 5 September 1952; Suzanne Rutland, "Nazis Unwelcome! The Jewish Community and the 1950s German Migrations Scheme," in *National Socialism in Oceania: A Critical Evaluation of Its Effect and Aftermath*, ed. Emily Turner-Graham and Christine Winter (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 219. For a discussion of the proportion of *Volksdeutsche* origin migrants that came to Australia as part of this intake, see Kristy Ann Kokegei, "Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation, 1945–1960" (University of Adelaide, 2012), 208–212.

¹⁸⁶ "German Migrants"; "Jewish Action Has Prevented Govt. Sponsored Germans for Australia," *Australian Jewish News*, 7 November 1952; "Protest Meeting on German Migration," *Australian Jewish News*, 5 December 1952.

stricting the numbers of Germans entering rather than opposing the scheme in toto.¹⁸⁷ This approach suggests a certain level of ideological compromise, but also a recognition of the incapacity, as well as unwillingness, of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to carry out an effective public protest campaign without the Jewish Council. A letter from J.L. Komesaroff to the *Australian Jewish News* following the Melbourne public protest meeting in December 1952 suggested that: ‘For most of us who attended ... it was a most disappointing protest. The workers who have been carrying on the *main* battle against Fascism and Anti-Semitism were totally ignored.’¹⁸⁸ Komesaroff doubted the ability of the new Public Relations Bureau to effectively campaign on the issue:

[T]hey are an unknown quantity as far as Church leaders, Union Leaders, Editors of the country press, Rotary Clubs and country Labour branches are concerned. The Jewish Council *is* known to every worthwhile organisation. It has the experience, machinery and ability to lead and assist in our communal struggle against German Migration, and to combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism in this country—but our Board of Deputies does not make use of them.¹⁸⁹

It is clear that the separation of the Jewish Council from the VJBD and Executive Council of Australian Jewry also meant a drastic reconfiguring of the mainstream Jewish community’s relationship with the left, the union movement, and civil society. While some have claimed that the big decrease in German immigrants from the numbers originally announced—25,000 per year, down to 5000 per year—was a result of the strength of the campaign, historians such as Suzanne Rutland have suggested that an economic downturn in 1951–1952 may have also played a role in this revision.¹⁹⁰ Holt certainly seems to have been worried enough about the anti-German migration campaign to threaten the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Jewish Council in a private meeting, that if the campaign continued the government could intervene to stop Jewish organisations from sending money to Israel.¹⁹¹ The government here had played an effective game of ‘divide and conquer’ by attacking ‘Jewish communists’ as a means of neutering the anti-German migration campaign and fostering a more quiescent Jewish leadership.¹⁹² Mark Aarons notes that despite the end of the campaign,

¹⁸⁷ Mendes, “Jews, Nazis and Communists,” 90.

¹⁸⁸ J.L. Komesaroff, “Letter to the Editor,” *Australian Jewish News*, 19 December 1952. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁰ “Jewish Action Has Prevented Govt. Sponsored Germans for Australia,” *Australian Jewish News*, 7 November 1952; “Protest Meeting on German Migration”; Rutland, “Nazis Unwelcome!,” 230; Mendes, “Jews, Nazis and Communists,” 88.

¹⁹¹ Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, 38; Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 150. The timing of these threats is disputed by historians, see Mendes, “Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under,” 90.

¹⁹² Walter Lippmann, “Before It Is Too Late,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951).

over the years following, allegations about fascists, Nazis, and war criminals arriving in Australia persisted. The evidence grew stronger and the ‘government’s response more deceitful as many Nazis became active supporters of the Liberal Party’.¹⁹³ It is crucial to note here that the purging of the Jewish antifascist left was not only determined by international factors. In the Australian context, it was concurrent with a downturn in working-class struggle and industrial action and a large upturn in political repression.¹⁹⁴ The defeat of the Jewish left took place in the context of a wider programme of political repression, achieved here very effectively with the aid of the Jewish right.

Along with the effective dissolution of the public anti-German migration campaign, the Jewish right’s attitude towards independent anti-imperialist Jewish political action was made obvious in its approach to the Jewish Council’s ‘unauthorised’ protest against the visit of Nazi pianist Walter Giesecking in March 1952.¹⁹⁵ Rather than endorsing a public confrontation with Giesecking as a matter of principle, this protest was judged to be inviting antisemitism and endangering the respectability of the Jewish community.¹⁹⁶ It was this affair that was dramatised by Laurence Collinson in the unperformed play ‘Traitor Silence’ which provides this chapter’s epigraphs.¹⁹⁷

In an interview with Suzanne Rutland, many years later, Sam Goldbloom, a prominent Jewish Council activist, made damning assessments of the end of the anti-German migration campaign and its ongoing significance for the culture and politics of the Jewish community.¹⁹⁸ He suggested that: the real campaign against the Jewish Council

¹⁹³ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 151.

¹⁹⁴ Allan Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere and Communist Cultural Discourse in Cold War Australia” (University of Queensland, 1993), 40–42. Tom O’Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism* (Sydney: Stained Wattle Press, 1985), 53–94. Whereas the period of 1945–1947 was a high point of industrial struggle and 1947 was the zenith of communist power in the ACTU. Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, 181, 201–202.

¹⁹⁵ See Ernest Platz, “Rommel and Giesecking,” *The Clarion: A Progressive Jewish Monthly*, no. 1 (1952).

¹⁹⁶ “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 4th March 1952, 11th March 1952” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1); “Vic. Board Statement on Nazi Pianist,” *Australian Jewish News*, March 7th 1952.

¹⁹⁷ Laurence Collinson, “Traitor Silence,” The Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts, University of Queensland Library, ca. 1953. Collinson, a young gay Jewish communist, was employed for a short time by the Jewish Council, where amongst other things, he set up a drama group with the Youth section. “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Annual Report 1952–1953,” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). He also contributed to the short lived Jewish Council affiliated Jewish left magazine, *The Clarion* (1952), see Laurence Collinson, “New Europe,” *The Clarion: A Progressive Jewish Monthly*, no. 1 (1952). For more on Collinson, see Max Kaiser and Lisa Milner. ““Part of What We Thought and Felt”: Antifascism, Antisemitism and Jewish Connections with the New Theatre,” *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History* 120, no. 1 (2021): 103–106; William Hatherell, “The Brisbane Years of Laurence Collinson,” *Queensland Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 1–12; Graham Willett, “Moods of Love and Commitment: Laurence Collinson in Melbourne,” *The La Trobe Journal*, no. 83 (2009): 77–91.

¹⁹⁸ Sam Goldbloom, interview by Suzanne Rutland, 12 April 1988, State Library of New South Wales, Suzanne Rutland collection, CY MLOH 437/135.

in the Jewish community began with the Council refusing to accept the government dictate to end the anti-German migration campaign; the split between the VJBD and the Jewish Council brought about the dismantling of strong links between the Jewish community and civil society and trade union movements; and following the split, there was a serious demise of liberal and progressive ideas within the mainstream Jewish community, 'McCarthyism became absolute'.¹⁹⁹ Goldbloom recalled that in this period to be anything other than one hundred percent supportive of Israel or supportive of the Australian government of the day—to harm the goal of the community being an 'Israeli outpost in the South Pacific'—became unacceptable.²⁰⁰

I have suggested that the anti-German migration campaign was not a straightforward assertion or product of 'governmental belonging'. As articulated by the Jewish left, it represented the assertion of a Jewish political subjectivity through a particular antifascist version of nationalism. The legitimacy of this political claim was contested by the government and conservative groups such as the RSL, who sought to dispute the rationality of the campaign, painting it as emotional and sectional. Throughout the 1940s, the Jewish community, the Jewish Council, and other left-wing groups made claims to belonging in Australia as loyal, productive, and contributing citizens. These were public arguments against antisemitism and for Jewish migration. The anti-German migration campaign and its associated propaganda represented a qualitative break with this earlier public discourse. Although the propaganda was often framed within a progressive nationalist language, a transnational antifascist political imaginary was a major constitutive element of the thinking, action, and organisation of the anti-German migration campaign.

The Jewish right, in the ascendancy in the early 1950s as a result of the Cold War, had a more conservative strategy which depended on an exclusivist nationalism to claim a governmental belonging based on whiteness. Whiteness should be understood here in its geo-political dimensions. The conservative Jewish push to escape antisemitism through an embrace of whiteness was enabled through a new congruence between Zionism, anti-communism, and Cold War foreign policy. This meant a new post-war Jewish respectability politics involved purging the Jewish left along with claims that they were no longer authentically Jewish. The terms of Jewishness were redefined to exclude elements which would prevent Jewishness from becoming compatible with whiteness, figured here as achievable through political loyalty and quiescence. As Zionism became congruent with anti-communism, Jewish nationalism and a new form of Jewish assimilationism became conjoined, edging out alternative political formations.

The short-term failure of the Jewish right's strategy itself demonstrates both the barriers to whiteness for Jews in this period, betrayed by their supposed allies the RSL,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

and also the failure of attempts to effectively racially other German migrants.²⁰¹ A 1948 survey showed non-Jewish German migrants were consistently rated by Australians as more desirable than Jewish migrants.²⁰² As Rutland suggests, one of the most salient points to take from this entire affair was that while 50,000 Germans ended up being sponsored by the government to migrate to Australia during the 1950s, there were restrictions on Jewish migration until the mid-1950s. Fewer than 25,000 Jews, largely sponsored by Australian and American Jewish organisations, were allowed to migrate to Australia in the entire period from 1946 to 1959.²⁰³

The following two chapters analyse the Jewish antifascist and Australian cultural landscape in the period from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s. While there was a strong relationship between contemporaneous political developments and cultural products, they do not map neatly onto each other. Indeed, issues were raised in Jewish antifascist writing and painting that were not central to Jewish antifascist political organising. It is in the creative works associated with Jewish antifascism, rather than in political campaigns, that we find the most significant engagement with issues such as the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people in Australia, and it is here that we can find a deeper understanding of the Jewish antifascist imagination.

²⁰¹ For an overview of the very quick rehabilitation of the image of Germans in the Australian media following World War Two, see Gisela Kaplan, "From 'Enemy Alien' to Assisted Immigrant: Australian Public Opinion of Germans and Germany in the Australian Print Media, 1945–1956," in *German-Australian Cultural Relations since 1945*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

²⁰² Oeser and Hammond, *Social Structure and Personality*, 64.

²⁰³ Rutland, "Nazis Unwelcomed," 230; Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 405.

6. Jewish Antifascism, Australian Cultural Nationalism, and Settler Colonialism

Max Kaiser⁽⁶⁾

The road to an Australian literature, read by an Australian audience, is not a self-conscious Australianism clamant for more and better gum leaves. The poet can afford to twang his lyre without draping himself in flags; you will know his note when you hear him sing.

Brian Fitzpatrick¹

‘A Nazi Writes Home’ by ‘L.F.’ was published in *Unity* in July 1951.² It was a fictional letter of furious irony from ‘Fritz’, a Nazi in Australia, to another Nazi named ‘Hans’ in Germany, reporting on his experiences. Fritz described how he initially hated the egalitarianism of Australia but then realised how brutally Aboriginal people were treated. He then celebrated Australia as an exemplary country of white supremacy or as ‘Fritz’ put it, ‘the true Aryan theory’. Fritz ran through the different ways that Aboriginal people were discriminated against and segregated in a typical country town he had visited:

They try to rent houses ... Occasionally they get an old ruined hovel, but they are not allowed even that for long ... They try to get in the dances but the doorkeeper bars the way. Under some Social-Democratic Education Minister, the colored children were some years ago allowed into the school. But the whites quickly organised a strike. I do not like strikes. But I like that strike. It soon sent the colored children back into their ghetto.

¹ Brian Fitzpatrick, *Songs & Poems* (Melbourne: Wilke & Co., 1931), 5.

² L.F., “A Nazi Writes Home,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951). The effect of anonymising the piece was to tie it more closely to the editorial position of *Unity*. There is certainly no distancing disclaimer accompanying the piece as there had been for other articles in *Unity* on controversial subjects.

⁽⁶⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser

Fritz suggested that ‘Australia is a land where the principles of National-Socialism are not altogether foreign’. Although the article was satirical in genre, it was a clear statement of solidarity between Jewish antifascism and Aboriginal struggles of the period.

Lorenzo Veracini suggests that rather than a binary relationship between settlers and Indigenous people, in settler colonial situations there is a third structural position, that of the migrant. In his account, although both migrants and settlers move from one place to another, often staying there permanently, only settlers attempt to recreate their original society in the new place, actively displacing the sovereignty of Indigenous people and constituting a new political order. Migrants face an already established political order which they variously ‘subvert, accommodate to, or are coopted by’.³ Although all migrants ultimately benefit from the dispossession of Indigenous people, they can only be ‘coopted within settler colonial political regimes’ on an individual basis.⁴ Veracini does not discuss how or why various migrants are accepted or not accepted into the polity, nor does he countenance a measure of collective agency in how various migrant groups negotiate their inclusion within the political order and their relationship to settler colonialism. While Veracini’s discussion is useful, my analysis here stems instead from Patrick Wolfe’s position that under conditions of settler colonialism, being a settler is not a matter of choice or consciousness: one is either a settler or Indigenous and one does not have degrees of ‘settlerness’ which can be indexed according to a volitional scale. The designations of settler and Indigenous are structural positions.⁵

In Veracini’s account the possibility of non-Indigenous people acting or not acting in solidarity with Indigenous people to resist ‘settlerism’, the practice and ideology of settlers eliminating Indigenous people in order to replace them, is a matter for the individual.⁶ Counter to this emphasis on individual deviation from or acceptance of the norms of settlerism, and taking inspiration from scholars such as Eric L. Goldstein (who has worked on Jewish positioning in the changing US racial order), I suggest that by aiming for inclusion within ‘whiteness’ or a national settler polity, migrant or ethnic groups can collectively collude with an oppressive regime of racialisation, exclusion,

³ Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵ Wolfe, “Recuperating Binarism: A Heretical Introduction,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013). See also Candace Fujikane, “Introduction: Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawai’i,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai’i*, eds. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

⁶ Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, 40; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409. ‘Settlerism’ is a term employed by Marcelo Svirsky, see Marcelo Svirsky, “On the Study of Collaborative Struggles in Settler Societies,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 4 (2014): 434.

and elimination.⁷ Jewish people in this rendering are not passive objects defined solely through a changing governmental racial discourse. They deploy varied political and cultural ideologies which involve differing notions of race, religion, and ethnicity to partially shape their own positioning within Jewish and non-Jewish discourse.⁸ In both the United States and Australia this positioning takes place within a racial regime determined by settler colonialism.

Veracini and Wolfe both highlight that settlerism functions as a displacement of internal social conflict. Veracini suggests that settlerism relies on the constitutive fantasy of a society without wage labour and without set class relations.⁹ In Australia the change from a colonial to a settler colonial regime thus involved the institution of a new political order which imagined ‘an egalitarian, classless society’ and a ‘conflict-less body politic’.¹⁰ Wolfe too emphasises the effect of frontier ideology in the ‘suppression of divisions within settler society’, suggesting that this flows through to the post-1970s ideology of multiculturalism where, despite a society riven with racialised structures of exploitation and domination, these differences are suppressed and contained through the imagination of, in Alex Trimble Young’s wording, a ‘pluralist yet ultimately unified national polity’.¹¹

Although Jewish people in this period were subject to structural racism, they were at the same time participants in furthering an eliminationist ideology which buttressed white supremacy. I understand white supremacy here as built on differing logics of racialisation with material foundations in differing forms of exploitation and domination. Antisemitism, as discussed in the Introduction, was linked in Australia to an Orientalist and imperialist White Australia Policy which saw non-whites as a civilisational, moral threat whereas the racist, genocidal ideas and practices deployed against Indigenous people in Australia are based in a settler colonial ‘logic of elimination’, where Indigenous people must be removed to enable the settler’s exploitation of the land.

Although these aspects of white supremacy are interrelated, they are also distinct, allowing for an account in which those who are oppressed or subjugated under one logic can also participate in another. For our purposes, the most important example of this would be that someone who is racialised through antisemitic discourse can still

⁷ Which is not to analyse these groups as being able to act as a monolithic whole, see Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). See also Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxiii–xxvi.

⁸ Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*.

⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, “Ian Turner’s *The Australian Dream* and Australia’s ‘Settler Transition’,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2016): 305.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹¹ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), 168, cited in Alex Trimble Young, “Settler Sovereignty and the Rhizomatic West, or, the Significance of the Frontier in Postwestern Studies,” *Western American Literature* 48, no. 1–2 (2013): 118.

participate in the settler colonial project, benefitting from and furthering a racial and political order constituted in an ongoing way by the exploitation of stolen land. Rather than a simple white, non-white binary, different logics of race apply to racialised groups based on the material foundation of their racialisation.¹² This materialist account of the different logics of white supremacy allows for a historically grounded understanding of racialised subjects' agency and interaction.

Like other migrant groups, Jewish people were not passively defined under these discourses; they struggled often in a contested and contradictory manner to collectively self-define themselves in relationship to both antisemitism and settler colonialism. Jewish antifascist literature provides a lens through which to examine some of these complexities. Jewish antifascist cultural expression of this period was at once the product of a settler subjectivity but also provides evidence that migrant or racialised non-Indigenous people can have some measure of limited collective agency in negotiating their position within the dominant racial order.

This complex negotiation of the positioning of Jewish subjectivities within the Australian racial order manifested in often highly contradictory ways in Jewish cultural production of this period. As argued in previous chapters, elements of Popular Front antifascist ideology tended towards a cross-class emphasis on the defence of Enlightenment values, suppressing class politics in the defence of national 'democracy'.¹³ In the case of Jewish antifascism in Australia, this often meant a discourse highlighting a struggle of progressives or democrats against reactionaries rather than a framing in explicit class terms. This emphasis on the national-popular cross-class fight against fascism meant that Jewish antifascists were susceptible to the reproduction of settlerist ideology which similarly promised a vision of egalitarian and multi-ethnic national belonging which could guarantee Jewish safety without the prospect of class conflict. As we will see below this was also key to the Australian cultural nationalist movement. However as suggested in previous chapters, there were also more critical strands to Jewish antifascism which particularly emphasised an internationalist anti-racism and anti-imperialism. These more critical frameworks for thinking the transnational place of Jewish antifascism provided openings for Jewish solidarity with Aboriginal struggles (as well as other anti-colonial struggles).

¹² Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London and New York: Verso, 2016).

¹³ For an analysis of different ideas of 'democracy' within 1930s European antifascist discourse, see Tom Buchanan, "Anti-Fascism and Democracy in the 1930s," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 39–57.

‘What good was it to the black man to be an Australian?’: Three Modes of Engagement with Settler Colonialism

While ‘A Nazi Writes Home’ made reference to the genocide in Tasmania as ‘a magnificent example’ of racial extermination, the piece should not be read as a direct comparison between a past genocide of Aboriginal people and the Holocaust.¹⁴ Instead it suggested that the contemporary government policies of repression, elimination, and exclusion of Aboriginal people were pleasing to and along the lines of Nazi reactionary anti-egalitarian racial thinking. The analogy was not historical but current, the Nazi characters in the story being evidence of an ideology still very much in play and in need of combatting in the post-war world. The context of ‘A Nazi Writes Home’ should be understood with reference to the antifascism of *Unity* turning further towards a critique of imperialism and colonialism, as well as multidirectional comparisons being made between the Holocaust, fascism, and anti-colonial struggles.

The other major context for ‘A Nazi Writes Home’, and indeed the context which conditions all the cultural expression discussed in this chapter and the next, were the substantial changes in the situation of Aboriginal people in the immediate post-war years, the wave of union organising and mobilisation in the Pilbara and in the Northern Territory in particular.¹⁵

One of the main conduits for the national publicisation and support of these campaigns were activists involved in the Communist Party, associated trade unions, and civil society groups. Evidence of this is the highlighting in ‘A Nazi Writes Home’ of Fred Nadpur Waters, a Larrakia elder and union leader, whose plight became a cause célèbre across Australia, spread particularly through left and trade union networks.¹⁶ The campaign around Waters resulted in the formation of the Melbourne-based Coun-

¹⁴ L.F., “A Nazi Writes Home.”

¹⁵ According to Deborah Wilson, Australia’s war efforts meant large numbers of Aboriginal workers were employed in the north-west, receiving proper wages, while a similar situation occurred in the Northern Territory for Aboriginal people employed by the military. This experience of relative equality with white workers was a major spur for a wave of organising across pastoral stations after the War. Deborah Wilson, *Different White People: Radical Activism for Aboriginal Rights 1946–1972* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Publishing, 2015), 39–42. Anne Scrimgeour is critical of this argument and suggests that it was in fact the hardening of racial restrictions during this period that helped to catalyse the Pilbara strike. Anne Scrimgeour, *On Red Earth Walking: The Pilbara Aboriginal Strike, Western Australia 1946–1949* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2020), 43–46.

¹⁶ Katherine Ellinghaus and Leonie Stevens, “Mind the Gap: Micro-mobility, Counter Networks and Everyday Resistance in the Northern Territory in 1951”, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 19, no. 2 (2018); Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960” (Victoria University, 2011), 300–302. One of the prominent co-sponsors of a major public protest meeting on the matter, along with Canon Farnham Maynard and Doug Nicholls, was Alan Marshall who I will discuss later in this chapter. Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 132–136.

cil for Aboriginal Rights (CAR). The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism became affiliated to the CAR and sent a delegate to meetings regularly. This was one site of many where Jewish antifascists had the opportunity to become acquainted with Aboriginal activists through left connections.¹⁷

For the character Fritz, the banishment of Waters, ‘who dared to demand that aborigines [sic] be treated as human beings’, caused him to ‘laugh with joy’, while similar mirth was inspired by the atrocious treatment of the Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira.¹⁸ This highlighting of Aboriginal agency and resistance meant ‘A Nazi Writes Home’ was a significant advance on the discourse of a previous article written by Rt. Rev. Dr. E. H. Burgmann for *Unity*. Burgmann’s article titled ‘Civilisation is not Enough’, although noting that ‘our present occupation of Australia has been at the price of the lives of an interesting and innocent race’, discussed Aboriginal people in a sympathetic though ultimately assimilationist mode. Burgmann furthered the idea of the dying or doomed race, utilising this trope to prompt questions about the survival or extinction of Western civilisation.¹⁹ It is notable that the assimilationist discourse employed by sympathetic white reformers of the time was criticised in ‘A Nazi Writes Home’. The discourse of Christian missionaries treating Aboriginal people with ‘benevolence’ was praised by Fritz as ‘clever deceptive phrases’ as their methods were leading to assimilation and the elimination of Aboriginal people. The idea of ‘half-castes’ as opposed to ‘real aborigines’ in assimilationist discourse was pilloried by ‘L.F.’ as akin to Nazi racial science.²⁰

By drawing attention to Nazism as a transnational racial ideology with a clear analogue in Australian government policy, ‘L.F.’ not only drew a clear link between the ongoing fascist threat and the white supremacist racial order of Australian settler colonialism but crucially opened a space for antifascists to see clear continuities between their politics and the struggles of Aboriginal people and their allies. There was an explicit linking here of the oppression of Jews, African American and Aboriginal people

¹⁷ Ibid., 132–136; “Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 14th March 1951, 25th July 1951” (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1). The large civil society peace congresses and campaigns around peace, and civil and human rights including the fight against the Communist Party Dissolution Bill were also occasions of participation from both the Jewish Council and Aboriginal activist groups. For example, “19 Illawarra Delegates Attend Peace Congress,” *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, May 4 1950.

¹⁸ L.F., “A Nazi Writes Home.”

¹⁹ Dr. E.H. Burgmann, “Civilization Is Not Enough,” *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949). For an appraisal of this idea in settler literature, see Hamish Dalley, “The Deaths of Settler Colonialism: Extinction as a Metaphor of Decolonization in Contemporary Settler Literature,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 30–46.

²⁰ The distinction between ‘full Aborigines’ and lesser or ‘part Aborigines’ was a mainstay of the discourse of this period even amongst progressive allies of Indigenous people. The CPA nominally retained these distinctions until 1954, see Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions,” 256; Bob Boughton, “The Communist Party of Australia’s Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Rights 1920–1970,” in *Labour & Community: Historical Essays*, ed. Raymond Markey (Wollongong: University of Wollongong, 2001).

in phrasing such as '[t]hey go to the cinema, but they are forced to sit in the Jim Crow section. The ghetto.' The sentence about the strike also indicates the positioning of Nazism as part of a reactionary ideology aimed at stemming the progressive social change associated with the organised working class. The effect of 'A Nazi Writes Home' was to place the oppression of Aboriginal people within an international antifascist framing and, by doing so, implicitly suggest that antifascists needed to join in solidarity against the racial 'traditions' of Australia and the policies of the Australian state.

While 'A Nazi Writes Home' stands out for its clarity and ferocity, it was not a wholly isolated or anomalous representation of these politics. 'Where a Man Belongs' is a short story by David Martin, published in the same issue of *Unity* as 'A Nazi Writes Home'.²¹ It engaged with similar themes, albeit in a different mode. Martin's story was very much in the 'strange Jew in strange Australian environs' genre typical of Pinchas Goldhar.²² 'Where a Man Belongs' is the story of Mr. Cowen, a Hungarian Jewish migrant who travels to a country town to sell frocks manufactured in Melbourne.²³ The name 'Cowen' as we later learn is an assimilated version of 'Cohen', while his new first name 'Jack' replaces 'Jacob'. The first lines of Martin's story indicate the forced and uncomfortable nature of the putative egalitarianism expected of new settlers in Australia.²⁴ Cowen wakes up with a 'stale taste in his mouth' from a night of drinking: 'he was unused to beer and had done it only to be matey'. Cowen is not immediately comfortable inhabiting a settler subjectivity. In terms that recall the figure of the Western frontier common to both Australia and North America, for Cowen 'this was the first time that he had come so far west, and already he regretted his curiosity'. In the first half of the story Martin highlights Cowen's statelessness as well as his inability to make adjustments in his thinking suitable to the new country he has found himself in. Cowen is alienated by the manners and social customs of the new society and feels self-conscious about his clumsy use of slang as he attempts to fit in.

In the second half of the story, Cowen receives his letter of naturalisation, bringing a wave of relief as well as reflections on the precarious 'guilty innocence' of the immigrant alien with no citizenship rights or permanence. Buoyed by this news Cowen imagines his new Australian life, feeling a new sense of connection and belonging to the people he encounters as he walks through the town exclaiming '[a]n Australian ... fair dinkum!' Cowen then crosses a bridge and comes across an Aboriginal man living in poverty in

²¹ David Martin, "Where a Man Belongs," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1951).

²² See Pinchas Goldhar, *The Collected Stories of Pinchas Goldhar: A Pioneer Yiddish Writer in Australia* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2016).

²³ Martin, "Where a Man Belongs."

²⁴ An excellent representation of the violent and coercive nature of this pseudo-egalitarianism is in the classic Australian film and novel 'Wake in Fright'. See Docker's analysis of the film's depiction of a masculine 'inclusive coloniser cosmopolitanism' in John Docker, "Epistemological Vertigo and Allegory: Thoughts on Massacres Actual, Surrogate and Averted—Beersheba, Wake in Fright and Australia," in *Passionate Histories: Myth, Memory and Indigenous Australia*, eds. Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys, and John Docker (Canberra: ANU e-press, 2010), 64.

a 'little humpy'. In an extraordinary scene Cowen goes under a fence and gives the man some tobacco for his pipe and

a feeling as of pity welled up in Mr. Cowen. Also a consciousness of the strangeness of their meeting: here were they, the oldest and the newest Australian, and the new one had a right to be sorry for the old one. A right to be sorry! What good was it to the black man to be an Australian? What good indeed? Only to be left, rotting and abandoned, with a slum all to himself at the edge of the town.²⁵

After smoking the tobacco, the Aboriginal man asks Cowen if he 'belong this place?' Cowen initially shakes his head in a gesture we can interpret as half a negative answer and half a shake to himself regarding the difficulty of answering the question. He then answers: 'Yes I belong here ... But I've come a long way. I am a Jew. You don't know what that is, I suppose?'²⁶

The title of Martin's story here comes into focus. In the Aboriginal English evoked here, asking where you 'belong' also meant asking where you come from and which group you are part of.²⁷ Cowen still buoyed by his naturalisation regards himself now as a new Australian and thus has 'a right to be sorry', a peculiar phrase that Martin has Cowen repeat twice. Cowen here takes on a certain sense of 'governmental belonging': as an Australian he feels a new sense of responsibility, pity, and power. He also apprehends the nature of his Australianness and its contingent racial character anew, recognising the very different racialisation experienced by a new Australian such as himself and the 'oldest' Australian.

The feeling of national and governmental belonging that Cowen could achieve was barred to the constitutively excluded 'black man'. The idea of the 'Australian' was only possible through settler colonisation. While Martin's story could have ended here, the twist in the tale comes at the end with the Aboriginal man's answer: "'Jew", he said, nodding his head with sober deliberation. "I know Jew, him belong fellas kill Jesus?" Mr Cowen turned and walked quickly back to the fence and the bridge.' Martin, rather than falling into a mystical or doomed image of Aboriginal people, typical of Australian literature at the time, turns this image on its head allowing the Aboriginal character the particular modernity of antisemitic prejudices.²⁸ Cowen's

²⁵ Martin, "Where a Man Belongs."

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ This question in fact has multiple interpretations, depending upon how the term 'belong' was being used: '[I]n Central Australian Aboriginal English, *belong* is used as a preposition to mark possession and purpose (comparable to *of* and *for* in Australian English).' Farzad Sharifian, "A Cultural-Conceptual Approach and World Englishes: The Case of Aboriginal English," *World Englishes* 25, no. 1 (2006): 14 paraphrasing Harold Koch, "Central Australian Aboriginal English: In Comparison with the Morphosyntactic Categories of Kaytetye," *Asian Englishes* 3, no. 2 (2000).

²⁸ While this was an anti-Jewish trope that preceded modern antisemitism, in the Jewish antifascist analysis these older tropes had been reconditioned to perform a significant ideological role in modern

sense of governmental belonging involving pity towards this man is suddenly and rudely upended and his Australianness brought again into question. He is turned back to the symbolic, potentially violent ambiguity inherent in the structures of national belonging, 'the fence and the bridge'.

One reading of Martin's story is that it pessimistically suggests that idealistic notions of Jewish-Indigenous solidarity against an interlinked racially oppressive order are an impossibility. There is too much distance between a Jewish man struggling desperately to find belonging through assimilation into white supremacist settler colonialism and an Aboriginal man with an imbibed Christian consciousness and no interest in, or anything to gain at this juncture, from anti-racist solidarity. I suggest however that the depiction of this unhappy encounter of mutual misunderstanding indicates a broader interrogation of the historical and political forces which made this encounter possible. Its outlining of the Jewish migrant's position as a settler was a necessary precursor to any real politics of anti-racist solidarity.

As discussed above, there is a tendency within some scholarship to a flattening of racist practices, suggesting that all non-white people are equally and in the same way the victims of a monolithic notion of racism, instead of seeing that 'their historical oppressions are not the same'.²⁹ These differing histories come into focus when we recognise the transnational or international dimension of Martin's story. Rather than a simple story of an ethnic Hungarian coming to Australia, Cowen's past as a stateless refugee is foregrounded: 'he was a Hungarian when last he had a passport'. Martin here already problematises the notion of nationality and belonging or rather recognises the immense political problem thrown up by antisemitism, European nationalisms, and the production of millions of stateless people. That no justice was forthcoming for Jews from the new post-war creation of West Germany is also highlighted: 'Mr Cowen's claims for compensation from the German Government for the robbery of his old business were collecting dust in Bonn.' In the moment of joy over his naturalisation, Cowen recalls 'the old days'. Cowen says in an oblique reference to the Holocaust, 'the old days were dead, they had been killed'. Reflecting the post-war Jewish antifascist worldview, Martin's story was not a depiction of a world that had made a clear break from Nazism and the Holocaust; rather, the injustices, consequences, and ongoing threat of fascism were foregrounded.

The story, typical of Australian Jewish antifascist literature of the period, despite the very characteristic Australian small-town setting, takes a global, transnational perspective and by doing so problematises the very fact of Jewish participation in settler colonialism. Martin's story asks sincerely: what were Jewish migrants doing there? How did they get there and what situation had they come into? The most

manifestations of racial antisemitism, see Julian Rose, "That Crucifixion Story," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1949); Suzanne Rutland, "Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria: A Case of Racial or Religious Bigotry?," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003): 69–79.

²⁹ Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 282.

important question posed by the story is to ask what degree of agency Jews have to criticise, question, and position themselves differently from participation in settlement and white supremacy. Martin highlights the constructed, political and contingent nature of belonging in a particular Australian racial order in a transnational perspective. Cowen and the unnamed Aboriginal man meet as subjects produced through broad and powerful historical events and structures. Martin's story is broadly representative of a mode of Jewish literary engagement with Indigenous people during this period that aimed to produce a social critique and appraisal of differing racial positionalities. While certainly not a clear statement of antifascist or anti-racist solidarity, this mode of expression problematised Jewish participation in Australian settlement by drawing attention to the differing experiences of racialisation encountered by Jews and Aboriginal people. This was achieved by an attempt to view these issues from a transnational perspective, conditioned by a transnational or migrant audience.

The third piece which highlights another mode of contemporaneous Jewish engagement with these themes is a book review published in the November-December 1949 issue of *Unity*. Entitled 'Henry Lawson in Hebrew', this was a review of a book titled *Eretz Chadasha* [New Land], containing 22 selected stories of Henry Lawson translated into Hebrew by Chaya Kaufman and published by Sifriat Poalim (the left-wing Israeli publishing house mentioned in Chap. 4). The reviewer 'H.B.' (very likely Hyam Brezniak) noted that:

They may have something in common, the man of the new Jewish State and the man of the Australia of which Henry Lawson wrote. Lawson belonged to a time when the country was in the making. He expressed pain, struggle and triumph, and because of that the "Australian classic", as he is called in the translation, can catch the imagination of the young people of Israel, who came to drain the swamps and build from a barren soil, who through sweat, pain and struggle could see the birth of a new nation.³⁰

The reviewer continued, suggesting that Lawson was 'among the first to build the new Australian literature' and that '[t]his was the literature which became national in its character and which is also an inspiration to those people who also are in their first struggles for a life which produces new traditions and literature to give expression to the new man on new soil'.

The mode of engagement here was an uncritical embrace of a settler subjectivity tied to the ideals of cultural nationalism.³¹ In Zionist discourse the idea of 'a barren soil', draining the swamps and making the desert bloom were ideological tropes used to project an image that the land in Palestine was either vacant or unproductive until

³⁰ H.B., "Henry Lawson in Hebrew," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949).

³¹ As discussed above, settlerism represents a certain mystifying form of bourgeois nationalism, putatively egalitarian but in reality, suppressing of class contradictions within settler society and eliminationist against Indigenous people.

the arrival of European Jewish settlers. This was meant to indicate that either the land was literally vacant—a ‘land without a people, for a people without a land’—or, as per Locke, that those who made the land productive by mixing their labour with the land had a greater moral claim to it.³² In any case, this idea was often combined in Zionist ideology with the idea of making ‘New Jews’.³³ In this sense Zionism was only one expression of a very popular notion (originating with the Haskalah) amongst European Jews that Jews were in an abnormal position within society: stuck in ‘non-productive’ economic positions in either finance, commerce, or trade on the one hand or *luftmenschen* (people living on nothing) on the other.³⁴ This was deemed a social effect as well as a cause of antisemitism, and thus to combat antisemitism, Jews needed to become economically ‘normal’ people. In some ideologies this meant a normal distribution across class society. In the Soviet Union it meant Jews becoming proletarians. But in many visions, it was infused with a romantic pastoralism and culminated in the idea of Jews returning to the land to redeem themselves physically, spiritually, and economically through agricultural labour.³⁵

The idea of the ‘New Jew’, with a new type of united Jewish consciousness and a new Jewish culture, was also prevalent amongst post-war antifascists, although Jewish antifascists for the most part had a different analysis of antisemitism and methods for its combat. In the review by ‘H.B.’ there is a celebration of the typical Zionist idea of the ‘New Jew’ forged in the struggle to colonise Palestine but it is in the context of a discussion of Henry Lawson. Lawson’s work was at the centre of the 1940s and 1950s revival of the idea of an egalitarian, anti-authoritarian, typically Australian cultural tradition.³⁶ This tradition made particular reference to the bushmen of the 1890s. ‘Henry Lawson in Hebrew’ was not so much an indication of a broader trend of Zionist

³² Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press 2010), 33–37; Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 217, 225; Cole Harris, “How Did Colonialism Disposess? Comments from an Edge of Empire,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2003): 171.

³³ Tamar Mayer, “From Zero to Hero: Masculinity in Jewish Nationalism,” in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (London: Routledge, 2000); George L. Mosse, “Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992): 565–581.

³⁴ Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 224–229. This idea was heavily gendered, see Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 221–312.

³⁵ See Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock’s Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). For an examination of how these ideologies were formed and functioned in practice in Belorussia in the early 1920s, see Andrew Sloan, *The Jewish Revolution in Belorussia: Economy, Race, and Bolshevik Power* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017), 83–113.

³⁶ John Docker, “Culture, Society and the Communist Party,” in *Australia’s First Cold War: 1945–1953*, eds. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (North Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 188–189; Allan Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere and Communist Cultural Discourse in Cold War Australia” (University of Queensland, 1993), 121, 181, 328. This movement was certainly not one dimensional and there were different debates and tendencies within it, as discussed below.

or Yishuvist enthusiasm for, or appropriation of, Australian discourse celebrating ‘pioneer culture’ and the particular masculine nationalist tropes shared by ‘the Bushman’ and the Zionist settler. Rather participating and helping to define Australian cultural nationalism during this period addressed two related concerns for Australian Jews and perhaps particularly left-wing antifascist Jews.

One concern was the need to encourage a new Jewish identity that was a decisive break with past internal and external conceptions of Jewish identity. As discussed in previous chapters, a new Jewish political subjectivity and cultural conception were seen as needed to face the social and political realities of the post-Holocaust world still riven with the dangers of fascism, reaction, and antisemitism. Embracing elements of Australian cultural nationalism meant that such a project became possible in the Australian political and cultural context. The apparent ideals of cultural nationalism—including a break with British identity, so closely tied to British imperialism, and an egalitarianism posed against hierarchical social structures—could be understood as the embrace of progressive ideals against outmoded reaction.³⁷ There was a perceived homology between the celebration of certain Australian folk traditions and Yiddish folk culture, meaning that cultural nationalism was partly understood as opening a voice for marginal and ‘ordinary’ people. All of the above was very attractive for left-wing Jews of this period.

The second concern that aspects of Australian cultural nationalism could be seen to address was the position of Jews in relation to both a transnational and a particularly Australian racial order as discussed above. Abigail Bakan suggests that the establishment of Israel as a European settler colonial state, understood and coded as modern, white, and beneficial for Western imperialism, was ‘a ticket to Jewish whiteness’ for white Jews internationally.³⁸ As we saw in the previous chapter, Israel’s post-1950 geopolitical positioning meant Zionism could easily slot into a new form of hegemonic political assimilationism tied to an embrace of Cold War politics and exclusivist whiteness in Australian Jewish communities. Although this had more to do with Israel’s position within Western imperialism, a minor current of Australian Jewish discourse also invoked the type of settler solidarity present in ‘H.B.’s’ review.³⁹ There was an obvious homology here between pseudo-egalitarian settler ideology in Palestine, as refracted through the global Jewish diaspora, and an Australian settlerism. The celebration of the democratic and pioneering character of Australian literature acted as

³⁷ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), xiii.

³⁸ Abigail B. Bakan, “Race, Class, and Colonialism: Reconsidering the ‘Jewish Question,’” in *Theorizing Anti-Racism: Linkages in Marxism and Critical Race Theories*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan and Enakshi Dua (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 262.

³⁹ This settler colonial solidarity and settler colonial ideological homology has been explored in the US context, see Hilton Obenzinger, “Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism, Americanizing Zionism: The Settler Colonial Basis to Early-Twentieth Century Progressive Thought,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 4 (2008): 651–669; Steven Salaita, *The Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

a means of cognitive mapping for Jews to negotiate their place within a narration of Australian settler colonialism. In the literature surveyed in this chapter, it is this negotiation in an Australian context (rather than in Palestine/Israel) that is primary.

Goldhar's 'Australian Literature' and Settler Subjectivity

Settler subjectivity is necessarily riven with certain contradictions as regards the place of Indigenous people and the settler's own sense of belonging.⁴⁰ This was reflected in the Jewish embrace of Australian literature and cultural nationalist ideas. These contradictions are nowhere better illustrated than in an extraordinary feature article on 'Australian Literature' written by Pinchas Goldhar and notably translated from Yiddish by Nita Bluthal and Stephen Murray-Smith for initial publication in *Melbourne University Magazine* in 1947 and republication in *Unity* in 1948.⁴¹ As Goldhar had it, the problem with Australian literature was the opposite one to that of Yiddish literature. Yiddish literature had a language but no country, whereas Australian literature had its own country but not its own language. The problem of Australian literature was how to differentiate it from English literature.

Goldhar gave a very typical narration of the birth of Australian folk culture and the key place of Henry Lawson, suggesting that 'swagmen told their stories and wove their songs', and these stories passed around the country as yarns. The structure of these yarns was that of the short story, 'both in form and content it was uniquely Australian'. He further noted that Lawson was a master of Australian English, putting into writing 'the charms of Australian idiom, and, just as Mendele [the famous Yiddish writer, 1836–1917] did for Yiddish, he raised it to a high level of artistic expression'.⁴² Goldhar suggested the similarities between Australian English and Yiddish literature, noting that both were anti-elitist projects of common people.

Echoing other Australian cultural nationalists of the period, Goldhar argued that there were two defining qualities of Australian literature—its 'pioneering tradition and democratic impulse'.⁴³ For Goldhar, these two 'progressive elements in Australian lit-

⁴⁰ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75–94.

⁴¹ Pinchas Goldhar, "Australian Literature," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 5 (1948). The partnership of Stephen Murray-Smith, who would go on to be a prominent radical cultural nationalist, and Nita Bluthal exemplified the link between young Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals and activists, particularly as they met in left circles at Melbourne University. Rechter, "Beyond the Pale," 106–107. See also Amirah Inglis, *The Hammer & Sickle and the Washing Up: Memories of an Australian Woman Communist* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1995). This piece was also published in Goldhar's posthumous *Collected Writings* (1949) as a preface to his translations into Yiddish of various pieces of Australian literature.

⁴² Goldhar, "Australian Literature."

⁴³ *Ibid.*

erature are interlinked'. 'Outback on the barren plains,' he suggested, 'in the grim struggle against nature, each man finds in the other a friend'. In a somewhat more critical manner this is what Veracini has discussed as the double imperative of settler egalitarianism, needing to form a pseudo-egalitarian collectivity to struggle for autonomy against the metropole on one hand (here the British empire) and the Natives on the other.⁴⁴ In other words, 'the grim struggle against nature' signified the interlinked struggle to take possession of the land and eliminate the Native.⁴⁵ Rather than locating Indigenous resistance as the barrier to the completion of the settler colonial project of elimination, Goldhar located it, perhaps in an unconscious analogy, in 'the strangeness of the Australian countryside, its flora and fauna'. He continued: 'Here we seem to find a primeval natural strength which would not be subdued, so that even after a century and a half of colonising, the white man is still a pioneer struggling with the unconquered forces of nature.'⁴⁶ It is striking here that Goldhar makes an explicit reference to the racial nature of colonisation, emphasises its incomplete nature, and uses the military metaphor of 'conquering'.

At first glance Goldhar's review of Australian literature seems a classic case of settler disavowal, whereby Aboriginal people are fully equivalent to 'nature' and 'flora and fauna' and thus not worthy of mention at all. However, the strangeness of Goldhar's article, suggestive of a broader settler cognitive dissonance particular to mid-century Australian 'progressives', is borne out in the section on the 'popular theme [of] the problem of the aborigines [sic]'. For Goldhar the prominence of this theme, in works by writers such as Xavier Herbert and Katherine Susannah Prichard,

expresses the democratic and progressive spirit which is interwoven in Australian writing. The wholesale destruction and demoralisation of the aborigines [sic] following white colonisation is depicted with deep sincerity and understanding in a number of works. The Australian writer does not come out merely as a defender of the blacks, but tries to interpret their primitive psychology and present the colour problem as a question of human equality and brotherhood ... The tragedy of the native peoples, downtrodden by the remorseless march of white colonisation, is so realistically dealt with in Australian literature that its equal is hard to find in any other literature of the New World.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, 61 cited in Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 32.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the pioneer legend in Australian mythology and the interlinked imaginaries of settler struggle with nature and with Indigenous people, see Ann Curthoys, "Expulsion, Exodus and Exile in White Australian Historical Mythology," *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (1999): 6–10, 13–16.

⁴⁶ See also Pinchas Goldhar, "From the Carriage Window," in *The Collected Stories of Pinchas Goldhar: A Pioneer Yiddish Writer in Australia* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2016).

⁴⁷ Goldhar, "Australian Literature." On Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo*, see Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 53–57.

In this paragraph there are two different references to ‘white colonisation’ in different temporal registers. Firstly, it appears as something that seems to have happened in the past, but which led to the subjectless ‘destruction of the aborigines [sic]’. Secondly, it is figured as an ongoing ‘remorseless march’ at once malevolent but also inevitable and irresistible. This sort of phrasing of colonisation as an inevitability, producing a dying or doomed race antithetical to modernity, is a frequent settler colonial trope. This trope often coexists with other contradictory ideas about the plight of Native peoples, though all imagine the elimination of the Native in one way or another.⁴⁸ This phrasing of ‘white colonisation’ is close to its use in the passage quoted above where, in apparent contradistinction, it is clear that colonisation is an unfinished and continuing project, with Goldhar noting: ‘even after a century and a half of colonising, the white man is still a pioneer struggling with the unconquered forces of nature’.⁴⁹ The closeness of this phrasing, naming what seems to be the same process, though in different temporal registers, bespeaks a certain anxiety about the constitutive (of Australian society and its cultural production) nature of settler colonisation as well as its ongoing and incomplete character.⁵⁰ It seems Goldhar realised, perhaps only unconsciously, not only the violent racial character of colonisation but that the egalitarian and ‘democratic’ nature of the culture borne from settler colonisation was riven with unresolvable contradictions.

This is thrown into relief in the last section of the article where Goldhar suggested the importance of Australian literature on an international scale, the scale implicitly cast as the scale Jewish people should be, or already were, thinking on. Goldhar suggested that Australian literature

is a significant product of an age-old culture transplanted to foreign soil, and from it we can learn about the processes which have shaped the citizen of the New World. These have more than an academic interest for the Jewish people in these countries. They deeply affect our present existence and indeed the very future of Jewry.⁵¹

Like Martin’s story we are left with a somewhat contradictory image of Australia’s history of colonisation and the Jewish place within it. There was an unacknowledged tension here between progressive anti-racist values of ‘human equality and brotherhood’ and ‘what shapes the citizen of the new world’: an unavoidable settler positionality. Although significantly Goldhar’s question was not what happens when Jews meet an Anglo-centric Australian culture, rather it was a global, transnational question for Jewry. What happens when Jews sought to continue the ‘future of Jewry’ as settlers

⁴⁸ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 8–9.

⁴⁹ Goldhar, “Australian Literature.”

⁵⁰ Wolfe, “Recuperating Binarism,” 259.

⁵¹ Goldhar, “Australian Literature.”

in ‘the new world’? The three most obvious candidates for this ‘new world’ conception being Australia, the Americas, and Palestine. The central anxiety was not simply about Jewish assimilation but about Jews becoming settlers.

These themes were also taken up in Goldhar’s fiction. Part of the penetrating nature of Goldhar’s stories was his deep pessimism about Jewish life in Australia.⁵² While stories such as ‘In a Quiet Street’ involved a caustic class critique of exploitation of Jewish workers by Jewish bosses, the majority of his stories tended towards a type of pessimistic moralism which made the answers provided by cultural nationalism attractive.⁵³ Goldhar’s disillusion with the Jewish community as the source of his attraction to Australian cultural nationalism also illustrates something deeper about the turn of much of the left towards these ideals in this period too.⁵⁴ Stemming from a pessimism about attempts to transform society through forms of class politics, what many felt was needed was a sort of moral and spiritual reformation.⁵⁵

‘Art will be required to exercise its varied and subtle means’: Southern Stories

Jewish left engagement with a reinvigorated Australian cultural nationalism, in the immediate post-war period, was not straightforward, nor for that matter was Australian cultural nationalism itself. As discussed by David Carter, although a type of Australian literary nationalism had been in existence since the 1890s, up until the mid-1940s there did not exist any authoritative discussion, compilation, or even definition of a particularly Australian tradition.⁵⁶ *Southern Stories*, a compilation of stories, poems, and paintings published in 1945 by Dolphin Publications, was one of the earliest

⁵² See, for instance, the story about Goldhar related by the Yiddish writer Yehoshua Rapaport. Pam Maclean, “‘Jewish Life Appears to be Frozen, Static, Like a Puppet Play’: Pinchas Goldhar’s Struggle for Yiddish Cultural Authenticity in Australia,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 23, pt. 3 (2017): 493.

⁵³ For example, Pinchas Goldhar, “Old Friends,” in *The Collected Stories of Pinchas Goldhar: A Pioneer Yiddish Writer in Australia* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2016). One of Goldhar’s most famous stories and one of the only ones translated into English during his lifetime was ‘Café in Carlton’ published in *Southern Stories* (1945). As noted by Pam Maclean, this story strikes a different tone to most of Goldhar’s oeuvre. There is more of a post-war optimism to the depiction of a Jewish community reinvigorated by the new arrivals, while the critique is aimed at antisemitism and its psychological effects as in Goldhar’s ‘antisemitism’ essay rather than at a perceived moral or character flaw of the main Jewish protagonist. Maclean, “‘Jewish Life Appears to be Frozen,’” 494.

⁵⁴ We can discern here the strong influence of Vance and Nettie Palmer on Goldhar. Nettie Palmer, “Tribute to Pincus Goldhar,” *Meanjin* 6, no. 1 (1947).

⁵⁵ Goldhar, “From the Carriage Window”; Louis Esson, “The Drovers,” trans. Pinchas Goldhar, *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 9 (1947); Goldhar, “The Pioneer,” in *The Collected Stories of Pinchas Goldhar: A Pioneer Yiddish Writer in Australia* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2016).

⁵⁶ David Carter, “‘An Important Social Duty’: The Brief Life of Dolphin Publications,” *Publishing Studies*, no. 6 (1998): 3–13.

publications to suggest that not only was there a distinct literary tradition, but that it was connected to a projected post-war dynamic future of a new, particularly Australian culture.⁵⁷ Dolphin Publications was a short-lived commercial venture of Judah Waten and Vic O'Connor, the communist, lawyer, and painter. *Southern Stories*, their first publication, was edited by Waten, with the painter and communist Noel Counihan and the famous historian and civil libertarian, Brian Fitzpatrick, both of whom were very close to the Jewish left in this period.⁵⁸ The collection sought to collate, define, and exhibit a particularly Australian literary tradition.

Notably, out of the thirteen writers featured (such as Alan Marshall and Frank Sargeson), four were Jewish migrants. As well as a piece authored by Waten, there were stories by Herz Bergner and Pinchas Goldhar that Waten had translated from Yiddish. There was also a poem 'freely translated from the Yiddish' from Yossel Birstein. One of the pieces published in the collection, attributed to a Matt Turner, was actually written by Waten, making it five pieces by Jewish migrants.⁵⁹ The collection also had an art supplement that included paintings from Yosel Bergner's respective Jewish and Aboriginal series. That the compilation featured 'dead Jews, hanged Jews, a Greek café, a miner in the narrow seam at Wonthaggi and a Communist funeral', and could be titled 'Southern Stories' and claim to represent an Australian tradition, was objectionable for some contemporary reviewers.⁶⁰

Both Fitzpatrick, who wrote the introduction, and Waten, who wrote an essay on realist literature and painting for the publication, emphasised the democratic and progressive nature of the Australian tradition.⁶¹ For Fitzpatrick the common denominator in the collection was:

a lively sense that contemporary art and letters are functions of democracy. We all feel part of a tradition which can fairly be described as Australian. This, although we include three New Zealand writers and four Polish Jews. I do not think the term "Australian" is so narrow that it does not cover them.⁶²

Here was a rather remarkable definition of the fluid boundaries of an ongoing Australian tradition, neither needing to originate in Australia, be ethnically Australian or even to take as a subject Australian life, characters, or society. Instead an Australian tradition here was defined formally as a realist tradition with a progressive

⁵⁷ Brian Fitzpatrick, ed. *Southern Stories, Poems and Paintings* (Melbourne: Dolphin, 1945).

⁵⁸ Carter, "'An Important Social Duty'."

⁵⁹ David Carter, *A Career in Writing: Judah Waten and the Cultural Politics of a Literary Career* (Toowoomba: Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 1997), 54.

⁶⁰ "'Southern' Stories Belie Their Title," *The Advertiser*, 5 January 1946.

⁶¹ Brian Fitzpatrick, "Introduction: The Australian Tradition," in *Southern Stories, Poems and Paintings*, ed. Brian Fitzpatrick (Melbourne: Dolphin, 1945), 14–15; Judah L. Waten, "Reflections on Literature and Painting," in *Southern Stories, Poems and Paintings*, ed. Brian Fitzpatrick (Melbourne: Dolphin, 1945).

⁶² Brian Fitzpatrick, "Introduction: The Australian Tradition."

orientation.⁶³ This definition of the Australian tradition was markedly different to the narrower one that developed in the early 1950s.

Waten outlined the need to further this aspect of the tradition to counter the threat of fascism. He emphasised the realist tradition as a transnational tool in the battle against fascism:

And now with the final military destruction of the Fascist powers, this heritage of oppression, obscurantism and racial nonsense that fascism has bequeathed to the world must be combated, and every trace of it wiped from the face of the world. In this tremendous task, art will be required to exercise its varied and subtle means[.]⁶⁴

Waten went on to suggest that it was only through the ‘rational examination of life’ in the realist tradition in painting and writing that this was possible. He invoked the new realism of the Soviet Union (socialist realism) as progress from the nineteenth-century realist tradition because of its emphasis on ‘real active struggle to build the conditions of human happiness’. Notably Waten described similar progress in the Australian artistic tradition, suggesting that ‘in Australia we now perceive an artistic upsurge, perhaps surpassing that of the 90s, based on the realistic tradition which is the dominant feature of Australian art’. The subjects for artists in this ‘upsurge’ such as Vic O’Connor, Yosl Bergner, Noel Counihan, and Russel Drysdale were notably not confined to the bushman or a rural idyll, instead they were ‘the sombre country street, the demonstration, the plight of the aborigines [sic], the working man and woman’. Represented also by the great writers of Australia such as Katherine Prichard, Vance Palmer, and Alan Marshall, Waten claimed, ‘the will to liberate Australia from the death grip of custom and prejudice, to assert the vigorous, democratic beliefs and aspirations of the working man flows like a strong undercurrent’ through this new cultural movement. Waten emphasised an important connection to past traditions but also, resembling similar ideas in Jewish antifascism, a post-war and antifascist break with the past, tying Australian culture to the ‘new humanism’ of ‘American painters’ and ‘Soviet artists’ just as much as to ‘Lawson’, ‘Furphy’, ‘McCubbin’, and ‘Streeton’.⁶⁵

Carter suggests that Australian cultural nationalism in the post-war period was a contingent and minority construction within and often counter to a larger national imaginary. It defined itself through being both marginal and mainstream; through being a hidden and struggling tradition, but also as the secret truth of Australian culture.⁶⁶ Whereas left cultural expression in the 1920s and 1930s hewed closer to an idea of the avant-garde seeking a radical break with bourgeois society, the post-war conditions were more propitious for an accent on forms of cultural continuity. Although

⁶³ Carter, “‘An Important Social Duty’,” 5, *passim*.

⁶⁴ Waten, “Reflections on Literature and Painting.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ *Carter, A Career in Writing*, 54.

this was certainly the case in *Southern Stories*, Waten's contribution suggests that antifascism was a key force in defining a consciously new strain of cultural nationalist activity in dialogue with an international (socialist) realist tradition in the process of reinvention. This was reflective of the radical and central role assigned to culture in Jewish antifascism, as assessed in previous chapters. In what remains of this chapter, I examine the wider cultural context of the Australian left, and particularly the place of anti-racist and anti-colonial ideas, before turning in Chap. 7 to assess further how the Jewish antifascist left figured within this context.

Communist Culture, Australianism, and Decolonisation

Allan Gardiner suggests there was an ongoing struggle between what could be deemed a 'radical nationalist' wing and a more Marxist wing in the Realist Writers Group (RWG) in Melbourne in the early 1950s.⁶⁷ The RWG, formed in 1945 and consolidating in 1950, had counterparts in other capital cities and was composed of left-leaning writers, most affiliated with the Communist Party.⁶⁸ However up until a certain point the RWG acted autonomously from the party leadership.⁶⁹ The RWG faction grouped around Frank Hardy and Eric Lambert pushed for socialist writing tied directly to the experiences and struggles of the working class. Indeed, Hardy pushed for the RWG and the Party to organise a new factory and union-based grassroots infrastructure of working-class reading, writing, and publishing.⁷⁰

The radical nationalist faction in the RWG, grouped around Stephen Murray-Smith and Ian Turner, by contrast, saw their task as progressive writers as continuing the (supposedly) democratic and egalitarian ideals of the 'Lawson' tradition of the 1890s. They aimed to further a nostalgic reverence for the 1890s and its unique masculine rural lifeways as an organic and authentic reference point against which modernity and the inadequate and non-'culturally specific' nature of urban Australian culture

⁶⁷ Gardiner suggests that the rank and file of the RWG were much more sympathetic to the Marxist faction, and critical of the Australasian Book Society move to publish apolitical books. Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 85.

⁶⁸ Allan Gardiner, "Frank Hardy and Communist Cultural Institutions," in *Frank Hardy & the Literature of Commitment*, ed. Paul Adams and Christopher Lee (Carlton North: The Vulgar Press, 2003), 39. Gardiner notes that Frank Hardy was the leading figure in the RWG's founding, envisioning the group's bulletin as expanding into a major literary journal along the lines of the Soviet Union's *Novy Mir*. Ibid.

⁶⁹ Or perhaps more accurately, autonomously from the national Sydney-based structures of the party. For discussion of this point, see Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 119–140.

⁷⁰ Gardiner, "Frank Hardy and Communist Cultural Institutions." For a discussion of the influence of the RWG on Hardy, the explicit direction of the CPA in the creation of *Power Without Glory* (1950) and the contradictory nature of applied Zhdanovism, see Jeff Sparrow, "Engineering Your Own Soul: Theory and Practice in Communist Biography and Autobiography" (RMIT University, 2007), 43–51.

and society could be critiqued.⁷¹ According to Docker, this meant an inbuilt elitism (as in the *Meanjin* project), whereby a certain class of writers and intellectuals stood ready to ‘fertilise the national life, if the popular response was there’.⁷² This was in some senses modified by the time of the establishment of *Overland* magazine in 1954, where Turner called for a focus on Australian writing on the urban working class.⁷³ However, as Gardiner suggests, this was not based on an orientation towards the working class as historical agent but on a perceived need to ‘update and modernise’ the 1890s tradition by carrying over the ideals of rural Australian egalitarianism and strength of character to an urban population in need of moral and spiritual reformation.⁷⁴

The appeal of cultural nationalism in this period, with a downturn in class struggle and an upturn in Cold War political repression, was that it was a means of maintaining a popular progressive cultural orientation without communism and without class politics.⁷⁵ For those communists who joined in the period of the Popular Front, cultural nationalism seemed a means of riding out this political repression and also a means of maintaining a broadly progressive politics while separating oneself from communism.⁷⁶ The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) leadership, and elements associated with it, maintained a continual thread of criticism of radical nationalism for its nostalgic orientation and lack of class critique.⁷⁷ However, the CPA itself was not averse to cultural nationalism and elements of national chauvinism couched in different reference points.⁷⁸

The Australasian Book Society was a battleground for these debates.⁷⁹ It is commonly painted as a type of communist front. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Aus-

⁷¹ Docker, “Culture, Society and the Communist Party,” 184–186; David Carter, “Capturing the Liberal Sphere: *Overland*’s First Decade,” in *Outside the Book: Contemporary Essays on Literary Periodicals*, ed. David Carter (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1991). Murray-Smith and Turner were internationalist in their other political commitments, but their cultural project was nationalist.

⁷² Docker, “Culture, Society and the Communist Party,” 186, quoted in Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere,” 60.

⁷³ On *Overland*, see Carter, “Capturing the Liberal Sphere.”

⁷⁴ Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere,” 168.

⁷⁵ For a political overview of this period and its effect on the CPA, see O’ Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, 53–94. For an anecdotal account of the everyday repression and marginalisation faced by communists in this period, see Inglis, *The Hammer & Sickle*.

⁷⁶ Carter, “Capturing the Liberal Sphere,” 180. For Turner’s own historicisation of the left turn to ‘the concepts of nation and “the common man”’, see Ian Turner, “Australian Nationalism and Australian History,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 3, no. 4 (1979): 6. See also Lorenzo Veracini, “Ian Turner’s the Australian Dream and Australia’s ‘Settler Transition’,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2016): 302–318.

⁷⁷ See Docker’s outlining of Jack Beasley’s critique of Henry Lawson. Docker, “Culture, Society and the Communist Party,” 186–189.

⁷⁸ Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere,” 47–48, 81, 134, 148; C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), 1–14; Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 151–161.

⁷⁹ Significantly Ralph de Boissiere, the Trinidadian Australian communist writer, sided with the

tralian publishing in the late 1940s was in dire straits and Australia's liberal bourgeois writers, such as A.A. Phillips and Leonard Mann, were willing to make an expedient alliance with the CPA to further a new literary infrastructure. As noted by Gardiner, the priority of the Australasian Book Society ended up being to promote a lowest common denominator literature that was 'national in form, nationalist in content'.⁸⁰ This was a compromise between liberal nationalist writers and the priorities of the party, mediated by radical nationalists such as Turner.⁸¹ Gardiner suggests that the Australasian Book Society 'might be called a liberal bourgeois front, masquerading as a far-left organisation only so long as the Party was of use to the liberals as a supplier of volunteer workers and of funds from affiliated trade unions'.⁸² Throughout the 1950s there were significant clashes between the radical nationalist wing and the leadership of the Party over the publications of the Australasian Book Society.

Gardiner notes that the first eight publications (in 1952 and 1953) of the Australasian Book Society can hardly be deemed Australianist, as they did not take as their subject Australian characters in Australian settings expressing a particularly Australian 'structure of feeling'.⁸³ In marked contrast to this, almost all subsequent Australasian Book Society publications up until the mid-1960s could be deemed Australianist. Both the radical nationalists and CPA Australianists were unhappy with this start to the Australasian Book Society, and particularly that the more Marxist works, such as Ralph de Boissiere's and Walter Kaufmann's, were not set in Australia.⁸⁴ This was evident from CPA leader J.D. Blake's review of Kaufmann's *Voices in the Storm* (an antifascist novel set in pre-war Germany). Although Blake assessed the novel positively he finished his comments with a hope that Kaufmann's second novel 'will have as its subject Australian people'.⁸⁵ Jack Beasley, in his 1979 memoirs of this period, suggests that de Boissiere's *Crown Jewel* (a novel of Trinidadian working-class anti-colonial struggle) was only chosen as the first Australasian Book Society novel 'because no suitable manuscript of Australian life was available'.⁸⁶ In this narrow inter-

CPA in interventions in the RWG and the ABS in the early 1950s. He saw a better chance of resisting an uncritical embrace of Australianism in the approach of the Party as it retained a class politics and socialist realist orientation. Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 82–83, 86.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 72–73. For discussion of the role of grassroots CPA members, see also Jack Beasley, *Red Letter Days: Notes From Inside an Era* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979), 148–149.

⁸³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128–135. Despite their Australian characters and setting, the S.F. Bannister books published in 1952 did not properly qualify, at least for the Party. The depicted moral failings of the characters and lack of any working-class solidarity meant an accusation of 'naturalism' over 'realism' and a disqualification from the 'Lawson' tradition. For a discussion of the Bannister controversy, see Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 102–118.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ J.D. Blake, "Tribune Discussion Will Keep ABS on Right Track," *Tribune*, 9 September 1953, quoted in Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 95.

⁸⁶ Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, 137.

pretation of realism and radical nationalism, Australian characters and settings had to feature—a stark contrast with the vision of Australian literature put forward in *Southern Stories* in 1945.

In the early 1950s there was strong evidence in both the RWG and associated left-wing cultural institutions, such as the New Theatre, of an embrace of non-Australianist themes. Works enthusiastically touted by the RWG in its 1953 bulletin—such as Nance McMillan's (AKA Nance Wills) anti-Korean war drama (written for the New Theatre), featuring a Black American character who turns on his commanding officer in sympathy with the Korean people's struggle—reflected non-Australianist themes of anti-imperialism, and anti-racism, including Jewish antifascist works by Judah Waten, Walter Kaufmann, and Laurence Collinson.⁸⁷

Works that expressed opposition to racism and colonialism shone through as counterweights to Australianist pressures from both radical nationalists and the leadership of the CPA. Though as the RWG editorial makes clear, the more Marxist and to an extent orthodox wing of communist cultural politics created both the infrastructural and political space for these themes and social issues to be tackled. The RWG, the New Theatre, and, to an extent, the Australasian Book Society were all important in providing the infrastructure for the cultural expression of the Jewish left. Non-Australianist texts, grouped around anti-racist themes and produced through the influence of antifascist and anti-colonial struggles, created the discursive space for their co-consideration and for these ideas to assume greater currency in left-wing and progressive cultural circles.

As well as the RWG and the Australasian Book Society, the New Theatre was another key venue for cultural expression. It was a left-wing theatre movement that had branches throughout Australia, but was particularly strong and active in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane.⁸⁸ There were numerous Jewish connections. The prominent Jewish Council member Itzhak Gust played a role in helping to fund the New Theatre in Melbourne.⁸⁹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that a good proportion of New Theatre audiences, particularly for antifascist themed plays, were Jewish.⁹⁰ There were a slew of

⁸⁷ David Carter, *Always Almost Modern: Australian Print Cultures and Modernity* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), 203–204. David Martin was also mentioned in the RWG editorial as in the previous year having, 'with regular publication of verse in working-class press, emerged as the most widely-read contemporary poet in Australia'. See Allan Gardiner, "Pushed into the Bourgeois Camp: David Martin and the CPA," *Overland Journal*, no. 142 (1996): 27–30; David Martin, ed. *New World, New Song: A Selection of Poems from the Left* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1955).

⁸⁸ For histories, see Connie Healy, *Defiance: Political Theatre in Brisbane, 1930–1962* (Mount Nebo: Boombana Publications, 2000); Angela O'Brien, "The Road Not Taken: Political and Performance Ideologies at Melbourne New Theatre 1935–1960" (Monash University, 1989); Sydney New Theatre, *The "New" Years, 1932–: The Plays and Events of 75 Years of Sydney's New Theatre* (Newtown: New Theatre, 2007). Indeed, the New Theatre still exists in Sydney.

⁸⁹ Jock Levy, interview by Wendy Lowenstein, 2 June 1995, Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project Series, National Library of Australia.

⁹⁰ This was at least in the estimation of the Australian intelligence services. Phillip Deery and Lisa

antifascist and Jewish themed plays produced through the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s mostly taken from US scripts. The Sydney New Theatre produced ‘Sky Without Birds’ by Australian left-wing playwright Oriel Gray in 1952. The play was notable for one of its central characters being a Jewish Holocaust survivor, with his trauma, memory, and the antisemitism directed against him in Australia, being principal themes.⁹¹ The young gay Jewish communist, Laurence Collinson, was heavily involved in the New Theatre in Brisbane, including as set designer and actor.⁹² Notably, he wrote a one act Jewish family drama called ‘Friday Night at the Schrammers’ performed in Brisbane in 1948. The play dealt with family conflict over issues of assimilation, religion, antisemitism, and politics.⁹³ As discussed in Chap. 5, Collinson’s major theatrical work of this period was ‘Traitor Silence’, written in 1952–1953 but never performed.⁹⁴ The play still stands as an excellent encapsulation of Jewish antifascist politics of this period and political and class tensions within the Jewish community. Despite never being produced we can still suggest that the anti-racist, antifascist, and pro-working-class struggle orientation of the New Theatre opened up discursive space for the possibility of presenting works such as these and thus the conditions for their writing.

Although Australianist works such as ‘Reedy River’ were huge successes for the New Theatre, I suggest that this was balanced by productions such as those detailed below as well as numerous plays with a focus on workers’ struggle.⁹⁵ There was something of an inbuilt internationalism to the New Theatre as they were heavily reliant on sourcing scripts from overseas, mostly from the United States, but also from the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ As noted by Connie Healy, plays with anti-racist and anti-colonial themes assumed a new importance in the immediate post-war years in

Milner point towards a 1937 CIS report on a Melbourne production of Clifford Odets’ ‘Till the Day I Die’, an antifascist play banned by authorities in Melbourne and Sydney after intervention from the Nazi government. According to the report, over ‘60 percent of the 1200’ member audience ‘comprised foreigners or persons of alien extraction, jews predominating’. Phillip Deery and Lisa Milner, “Political Theatre and the State: Melbourne and Sydney, 1936–1953,” *History Australia* 12, no. 3 (2015): 121. On Jewish connections with the New Theatre in this period see Max Kaiser and Lisa Milner. “‘Part of What We Thought and Felt’: Antifascism, Antisemitism and Jewish Connections with the New Theatre,” *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History* 120, no. 1 (2021): 95–116.

⁹¹ Healy, *Defiance*, 165–166. Oriel Gray, “Sky without Birds,” in *Plays of the 50s*, ed. Katharine Brisbane (Sydney: Currency Press, 2007). Gray was a CPA member but left the Party in 1949. Michelle Arrow, *Upstaged: Australian Women Dramatists in the Limelight at Last* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2002), 147–148.

⁹² See Michele Elizabeth Anderson, “Barjai, Miya Studio and Young Brisbane Artists of the 1940s” (University of Queensland, 1987), 110–139; NAA: A6126, 689, “Collinson, Laurence Henry” (1950–1964).

⁹³ William Hatherell, “The Brisbane Years of Laurence Collinson,” *Queensland Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 9; Laurie Collinson, “Friday Night at the Schrammers,” in *Australian One-Act Plays*, ed. Greg Branson (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1962).

⁹⁴ By this time Collinson had moved to Melbourne, see Hatherell, “The Brisbane Years.”

⁹⁵ Healy, *Defiance*, 110–123.

⁹⁶ For an exploration of aspects of this transnational interchange amongst radical theatres in Australia and the United Kingdom, see Cathy Brigden and Lisa Milner, “Radical Theatre Mobility: Unity Theatre, UK and the New Theatre, Australia,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2015): 328–342.

a mode that was not typical of the 1930s.⁹⁷ Post-war Aboriginal struggles as well as global decolonisation made a significant impact on the theatre's output.⁹⁸

Two of the most famous New Theatre productions on Indigenous issues were tied directly to Aboriginal political struggle. 'White Justice' was an Aboriginal ballet produced jointly by the Melbourne New Theatre and the Australian Aborigines League in 1946.⁹⁹ It was based on contemporary Aboriginal industrial campaigns in the Pilbara and dramatised economic and sexual exploitation of Aboriginal people as well as their joint struggle with white unionists against the repressive legal apparatus of the state.¹⁰⁰ The year 1947 saw the first production in Sydney of what was to become a New Theatre mainstay, 'Rocket Range'.¹⁰¹ Written by communist Jim Crawford, the play was part of a popular campaign led by Aboriginal and left organisations against weapons testing ranges in central Australia.¹⁰² This campaign drew together anti-war and anti-imperialist ideas with support for Aboriginal groups being dispossessed from their land and subject to grave health effects as a result of the weapons testing.¹⁰³

As described by Deborah Wilson, 'Rocket Range' was notable for being centred on Aboriginal agency, with seven Aboriginal characters and only one white policeman character.¹⁰⁴ The play not only functioned as a protest play against white oppression but also to educate audiences about the Aboriginal ways of life taught to Crawford through his own close relationships with Aboriginal people in Northern Queensland.¹⁰⁵ Wilson's analysis highlights the play's attack on Australian nationalism and patriotic pride. In the last scene, after the white policeman's brutal murder of one of the central

⁹⁷ Healy, *Defiance*, 149.

⁹⁸ Of particular note here are works by Mona Brand, Ralph de Boissiere, Nance Macmillan and Dymphna Cusack, see Mona Brand, *Enough Blue Sky: The Autobiography of Mona Brand, an Unknown Well-Known Playwright* (Potts Point, NSW: Tawny Pipit Press, 1995); O'Brien, "The Road Not Taken," 167, 188–192; Gardiner, "Ralph De Boissiere," 141–156. Arrow, *Upstaged*, 180–181; Ken Goodwin, "Dymphna Cusack as a Precursor of Commonwealth Literature," *Kunapipi* 26, no. 2 (2004): 122–135; Marilla North, "Cusack, Ellen Dymphna (Nell) (1902–1981)," National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

⁹⁹ The Australian Aborigines League (AAL) was a revived form of William Cooper's pre-war organisation led by Cooper's protégé Doug Nicholls along with Eric and Bill Onus as its central figures. Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 194.

¹⁰⁰ O'Brien, "The Road Not Taken," 142.

¹⁰¹ Healy, *Defiance*, 151–154.

¹⁰² Jim Crawford was the author of another short play titled 'Refugee', written in Melbourne but first staged by the Brisbane Eureka Youth League in 1947. O'Brien, "The Road Not Taken," 161. Although very crude, it was a genuine effort to interrogate issues of antisemitism and featured multiple Jewish characters. Jim Crawford, "Refugee: A Play in One Act," The Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts, University of Queensland (1946).

¹⁰³ For an overview of this campaign including the role of 'Rocket Range', see Wilson, *Different White People*, 95–181.

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that unlike in 'White Justice' (play), Aboriginal characters were normally played by white people. Although notably in the Brisbane production, the Aboriginal warrior 'Namalka' was played by Bob Anderson, a prominent Aboriginal trade unionist. Healy, *Defiance*, 151–152.

¹⁰⁵ Healy, *Defiance*, 65.

Aboriginal characters, the ‘policeman reloads his gun and buckles his spurs as Advance Australia Fair is played in the background’.¹⁰⁶ This scene highlights how Aboriginal resistance and its cultural effects, as mediated through the left at this time, interrupted and questioned a left nationalist cultural project. The invocation of ‘Advance Australia Fair’ was thoroughly ironic, highlighting the disjuncture between its high-minded ideals and what was presented as a fundamental truth of Australian society: its basis in violent dispossession.¹⁰⁷

Oriel Gray, who wrote ‘Sky Without Birds’, also wrote three plays for the New Theatre about the plight of Aboriginal people.¹⁰⁸ They were all, to an extent, criticised for political shortcomings by others in the New Theatre. A representative example is the Melbourne New Theatre management committee’s negative assessment of ‘Had We But World Enough’ for portraying Aboriginal people as ‘mere passive victims in the struggle’.¹⁰⁹ This sort of cultural and ideological intervention was not an anomaly of this period. Gardiner points us towards a 1953 incident played out in the pages of the CPA’s national newspaper *Tribune*. The story ‘Clara’ by Roland Robinson, then recently published in the short story anthology *Coast to Coast* (1952), came in for serious criticism by Eric Lambert for its depiction of Aboriginal characters, setting off a back and forth between Robinson and Lambert, and culminating with Lambert publishing his own re-written version of the story in *Tribune*.¹¹⁰

Robinson claimed he was truthfully representing the ‘inescapable degradation’ of Aboriginal people in order to rouse the audience to pity and societal self-reflection. Lambert countered that Robinson’s brand of realism only reproduced existing ideology and that realism needed a conscience in order to better express ‘the whole truth’ of society:

Aborigines [sic] I met at the Youth Carnival, at the Assembly for Human Rights, and elsewhere, convince me that there are Aborigines [sic] who resist the role that the politicians have thrust upon them. I say the ruling classes don’t mind how many stories we write about the Aborigines [sic]—as long as we keep quiet about the fact that they are proud intelligent

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, *Different White People*, 128–129. Noel Counihan played a role in the campaign through drawing satirical cartoons. *Ibid.*, 131–132.

¹⁰⁷ See also the 1951 Melbourne production of ‘Out of the Dark: An Aboriginal Moomba’, a project of the Australian Aborigines League, featuring an all Aboriginal cast. Sylvia Kleinert, “‘Jacky Jacky Was a Smart Young Fella’: A Study of Art and Aboriginality in South East Australia 1900–1980” (Australian National University, 1994), 215–224; John Ramsland and Christopher Mooney, “Out of the Dark: The First Successful All-Black Musical Aboriginal Celebrity and Protest,” *Victorian Historical Journal* 78, no. 1 (2007): 63–79.

¹⁰⁸ Gray made a direct connection between carrying on the antifascist fight and addressing racial injustice at home. Arrow, *Upstaged*, 144.

¹⁰⁹ Gabriela Zabala, “Voices Unheard: The Representation of Australian Aborigines by Left-Wing Playwrights 1940s–1960s,” *Australasian Drama Studies*, no. 60 (2012): 48.

¹¹⁰ Gardiner, “Ralph De Boissiere,” 108–109.

people who will take their part in winning a better life; that they need more than our pity, and have much to give us.¹¹¹

There was a direct connection here between the growing power and influence of Aboriginal resistance and activist groups in the post-war era and a cultural reassessment by elements of the left of a 'doomed race' ideology inextricable from continued dispossession and settler colonialism. It is also notable that Lambert, in his critique of 'Clara', drew together the Aboriginal struggle with global struggles for decolonisation, suggesting that millions were in the process of ending their own oppression and that 'that fact is at the core of every social situation today'.¹¹² As well as the texts highlighted above, this further suggests the impact of global decolonisation on the changing nature of cultural discourse of this period and the discursive space opened up by it for the co-consideration and potential solidarity of anti-racist liberation movements.

While the CPA of this period has been criticised by cultural historians such as Susan McKernan for its commitment to socialist realism, seen as crude censoriousness or political correctness, these examples show that communists correctly saw that artistic production was always already ideological.¹¹³ To critique and then intervene in the artistic process thus meant a conscious interruption of the reproduction of dominant ideology. In these cases, it meant understanding that depictions of Aboriginal people as passive (or doomed) victims was a product of racist ideology and served to reproduce their oppression. Although much of CPA cultural criticism of this period was indeed crudely dogmatic and Stalinist, criticism such as Lambert's was not directly taken and mindlessly copied from official Soviet theory. Instead it involved a complex dialectic between dogma and political and social developments. In this case CPA criticism of texts that reflected racist ideas about Indigenous people was directly influenced by the activities of Aboriginal industrial and political campaigns.

This chapter has outlined a theory of how migrants, and particularly Jewish migrants, fit within an Australian racial order determined by settler colonialism. Australian Jewish communities are not monolithic—they contain a multitude of different economic, social, ethnic, and political divisions—but this does not mean that Jewish Australians become or do not become settlers on an individual basis. All non-Indigenous people are settlers but settlers, in this case migrant settlers, have a certain amount of collective agency in how they position themselves in relation to the reproduc-

¹¹¹ Eric Lambert, "Yes, We Want Better Realism," *Tribune*, 24 June 1953.

¹¹² "Eric Lambert Replies to Roland Robinson on Short Story," *Tribune*, 18 February 1953. Jordan notes that from 1945 onwards the CPA newly prioritised Aboriginal issues, consistently linking this to support for the post-war struggles for decolonisation of all colonial empires including Australia's imperialism in Papua New Guinea, see Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 256.

¹¹³ See Susan McKernan, *Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 24–25. This sort of cultural criticism was very similar to Jewish communist critiques of depictions of African American characters during this period. For example, see Eve Merriam, "Jewish Short Stories, Review of This Land, These People, Edited by Harold U. Ribalow," *Jewish Life* 5, no. 4 (1951).

tion of the racial ideologies of settler colonialism. This is/was contingent on the impact of Aboriginal political struggle and anti-colonial struggle internationally. Antifascist Jews encountered the settler colonisation of Australia as a problem through the lens of a settler subject position. However, in doing so they deployed Jewish antifascist ideas and cultural resources in struggling to understand this problem. Because of the sometimes anti-colonial, anti-racist transnational perspective gained from these cultural resources and an antifascist worldview, ideas which could be deployed in solidarity with Indigenous people occasionally shone through. Despite an inescapable structural position as settlers, Jewish political subjectivities could, given the right conditions, partially break from the reproduction of the racial ideologies produced through settler colonialism.

There were two broadly defined visions of progressive cultural expression in the late 1940s and early 1950s: an Australianism that looked towards an emphasis on national character as a replacement for class politics and a more amorphous internationalist branch of culture operating in a space opened up by Marxist ideas, Aboriginal struggle, and global decolonisation. This was a space for a thinking together of colonialism, settler colonialism, and fascism thus potentially engendering new resistant solidarities. In the case of Aboriginal people, the CPA was able to appraise the role of cultural representations in reproducing racial oppression. While this appraisal would not have been possible without the upsurge in Aboriginal political struggle, the CPA and its associated cultural infrastructure provided an important venue for anti-racist cultural production. With this context, we can move to an assessment of the cultural project of *Jewish Youth* and the anti-racist works of Yosl Bergner and Judah Waten.

7. Defining a Jewish Antifascist Minor Literature

Max Kaiser⁽⁷⁾

We must attack reaction, no matter whence it comes. Dutch aggression against the Indonesia Republic is our concern, as is also the lynching of negroes in America, or the maltreatment of Aborigines [sic] in Australia ... We Jews can only be secure in a secure world. It is a world situation of conflict and strife together with a situation in Australia of intense class conflict which lays the ground for a campaign of anti-Semitic prejudice greater than any previous attacks in this country against a racial or religious minority.

Norman Rothfield, 1947¹

In January 1947 Pinchas Goldhar died from a heart attack, aged 46. At this time Goldhar was the most famous and influential Yiddish writer in Australia. His loss was deeply felt by the Kadimah Youth Organisation (KYO) and the editors of the Melbourne magazine *Jewish Youth*. Attributing the formation of the magazine to Goldhar's inspiration,² the editors emphasised Goldhar's cultural-political significance, describing him as someone who:

well understood that the further development of Jewish culture is inseparable from the struggle against reaction, which has again begun to rear its head against our people in this country ... His life and death will be an inspiration to the increasing number of Jewish young people who wish to play their part in defence of their culture, and who realise that this is an

¹ Quoted in William D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History: Volume 2, 1945 to the Present* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991), 13.

² "In Memory of Pinchas Goldhar," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 7–8 (1947).

⁽⁷⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser
Email: kaiserm@unimelb.edu.au

inseparable part of the struggle against those who seek to undermine our very existence.³

This is a neat summation of the project of *Jewish Youth* itself; Jewish culture was envisioned as an active political project, pitched against an antisemitism intimately connected to wider political forces of social reaction.

The space opened up by Waten and his collaborators in *Southern Stories* for the expression of Jewish experience and migrant subjectivity in dialogue with wider Australian cultural expression is key to understanding the place of *Jewish Youth*.⁴ *Jewish Youth* is evidence of an alternative cultural trend to the folksy jingoism of a bourgeois cultural nationalism fixated on the rural idyll. *Jewish Youth* formed part of a cultural project that emphasised the progressive realist and democratic part of Australian cultural nationalism and made space within an invented tradition for the introduction of critical new voices, political subjectivities, and modes of social critique.

Jewish Youth was a trilingual magazine published in Melbourne in English, Yiddish, and Hebrew from 1946 to 1947. It started as a publication of the KYO and in its last few issues became the organ of the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council. It aimed to be a pluralist magazine representing and appealing to a wide spectrum of Jewish thought, culture, and politics. There were two overarching concerns and preconditions for the magazine: firstly, a strong idea of the importance and relative autonomy of youth culture and politics; secondly, an emphasis on the importance of culture as transformative.⁵ These ideas were both merged in a generalised opposition to conservative and assimilationist establishment forces within the Jewish community. Like *Unity*, *Jewish Youth* explicitly positioned itself as part of a post-Holocaust re-assessment of a global Jewishness and advocated solidarity among Jews in combatting fascism and antisemitism.

Jewish Youth, which underrepresented women writers compared to other contemporary left-wing cultural institutions, involved key male Jewish left cultural figures. Judah Waten and Yossel Birstein were on the editorial board as well as writing for the publication, whilst items were regularly published by Walter Kaufmann, Herz Bergner, Pinchas Goldhar, and Yosl Bergner. Waten was soon to become a very famous author in Australia, through the publication of his collection of short stories,

³ "Comment: Pinchas Goldhar," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 9 (1947). As noted by Maclean, Goldhar was closely associated with the left. His first book, published in 1939, was illustrated by Noel Counihan, and both Vance Palmer and Brian Fitzpatrick spoke at the launch. Pam Maclean, "The Convergence of Cultural Worlds—Pinchas Goldhar," in *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, ed. W.D. Rubinstein (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 133.

⁴ See Carter's discussion of Waten's project of clearing a space within Australian literature for the migrant voice without 'losing the marks of its cultural difference'. Carter, *A Career in Writing: Judah Waten and the Cultural Politics of a Literary Career* (Toowoomba: Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 1997), 194.

⁵ For the importance of 'youth', see Harry Stein, "Youth Problems," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946); J.B., "World Youth Conference: Interview with Bert Williams," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946).

Alien Son (1952).⁶ Birstein was a prominent Yiddish poet in Australia, who would go on to be a famous short story writer in Israel.⁷ Kaufmann's *Voices in the Storm* (1953)—a partly autobiographical, social historical novel chronicling the Nazis rise to power in Germany—was one of the first books published by the Australasian Book Society.⁸ Herz Bergner's 1946 novel *Between Sky and Sea*, translated from the Yiddish by Waten, won the Australian Society of Literature's Gold Medal for Book of the Year in 1948.⁹ Pinchas Goldhar's works of this period, many published posthumously, were also central to a new Australian Jewish cultural expression.¹⁰ The painter Yosl Bergner brought a notable visual element to *Jewish Youth*. This chapter discusses how *Jewish Youth* developed into the site of a 'minor culture' rather than a contributory or national culture and examines how the paintings of Yosl Bergner and the writings of Judah Waten engaged with cultural nationalism and settler colonialism, reflecting some of the contradictions of Jewish antifascism as well as the contingent nature of its wider and more critical potentialities. To best understand how these works would have resonated with *Jewish Youth's* readers, we must first understand the cultural milieu and conditions in which these writers and artists were brought together in *Jewish Youth*.

In the first two or three years after the War it was possible for a young Jewish person to have sympathies with pro-Soviet Jewish antifascism, Zionism, and Yiddishism with no particular sense of contradiction or mutual exclusivity between the three.¹¹ While battlelines became more clearly drawn amongst older Jewish political actors, representing differing positions, *Jewish Youth* itself is evidence of a somewhat more pluralistic political culture amongst young Jewish progressives.¹² As outlined by Lou Jedwab, a

⁶ Carter, A Career in Writing.

⁷ Boris Sandler, "Yiddish Writers Monologues: Yosl Birshiteyn," available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSPbGC8x1hs> (Forverts, 2017); Shachar Pinsker, "'That Yiddish Has Spoken to Me': Yiddish in Israeli Literature," *Poetics Today* 35, no. 3 (2014): 325–356.

⁸ Kaufmann moved back to East Germany where he had a successful writing career. See Alexandra Ludewig, "Walter Kaufmann: Walking the Tightrope," in *Australian Literature in the German Democratic Republic: Reading through the Iron Curtain*, eds. Nicole Moore and Christina Spittel (Anthem Press: London, 2016).

⁹ It was produced via a collective translation process, involving Herz Bergner, his nephew Yosl Bergner, Goldhar, and Waten, see Yvonne Fein, "1: A Retrospective: A Morning with Judah Waten," *Melbourne Chronicle* 57, no. 1 (1988). Herz Bergner was the brother of Melekh Ravitch, a key figure in the world of Warsaw Yiddish literature, while Yosl Bergner was Ravitch's son, see Rebecca Margolis, "Remaining Alive in Silence? Melekh Ravitch as Yiddish Catalyst: Montreal, 1941–1954," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46, no. 2 (2016): 192–209; Clive Sinclair, "The Kimberley Fantasy," *Wasafiri* 24, no. 1 (2009): 33–43.

¹⁰ Maclean, "The Convergence of Cultural Worlds—Pinchas Goldhar."

¹¹ An interesting example here is a glowing review in English of the Hebrew play, 'This Earth', about Jewish pioneers in Palestine, which was translated into Yiddish and performed by the David Herman Kadimah Theatre group in Melbourne. Senia Rosenberg, "Theatre Review," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946). For more on the David Herman Theatre, see Arnold Zable, *Wanderers and Dreamers: Tales of the David Herman Theatre* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1998).

¹² Though as we saw in Chaps. 4 and 5 these ideologies became almost completely divergent and

former leader of the group, the KYO was a relatively large organisation of hundreds of Jewish youth ranging from ten to thirty years old and segmented by age in three separate groups. Only a minority of the organisation were actively committed to only one particular Jewish political ideology. In general, KYO members were interested in Zionism, Yiddishism, and Jewish antifascism as proud Jewish movements which answered urgent political and existential questions for the Jewish people. The KYO was the centre of a vibrant social and cultural world involving theatre, social events, classes, talks, and debates. They regularly had hundreds of people attending events.¹³ As Jedwab notes, the most prominent faction within the KYO, which was consistently elected as its leadership, were the pro-Soviet Jewish antifascists.¹⁴ As discussed below, this was reflected in the editorial positions taken by *Jewish Youth*. However, this did not mean the enforcement of one dogmatic perspective.

Multiple Languages, Multiple Audiences

The most obvious sign of *Jewish Youth's* cultural and political pluralism was in the trilingual form of the magazine itself. The importance of this trilingualism was spelled out in the first issue, in terms not too far from those of *Unity*, *Jewish Life*, and *New Life*: 'we will present without prejudice the work of all Jewish writers and thinkers in whatever country they live and whatever their language'.¹⁵ However, this multilingualism was to an extent in tension with a strong Yiddishist cultural emphasis in the magazine. The magazine featured numerous exhortations to read the Yiddish sections, and the KYO formed Yiddish reading groups to encourage the learning of Yiddish. In the opening editorial Yiddish was deemed to be necessary to Jewish culture in Australia:

The Australian Jewish boy or girl who lacks a knowledge of Yiddish, the living language of millions of Jews throughout the world, the language of the Polish Jewish people who were massacred by Hitler, and the language of the Soviet and American Jewry, is to an extent barred from full access to the soul and life of his people. And in general, a lack of knowledge of Hebrew cuts one off from a fuller view of the life of the Jewish people in Palestine. But the Australian Jewish youth who speak neither of these languages must not be lost to our people. The literatures of both of these languages are so rich and extensive that many examples are to be found in English translations. A great deal is always lost in translation, but these

counterposed in the early 1950s. Symptomatic of this was the decline of the KYO itself. Lou Jedwab, "The Kadimah Youth Organisation in Melbourne: Reminiscences 1942–53," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 12 (1993): 186–187.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Comment by the Editors," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 1 (1946).

examples of our heritage provide a starting point for our English-speaking young people. It is only through a knowledge of our culture that we can learn seriously what it means to be a Jew.¹⁶

Despite this stated Yiddishism, in practice the magazine functioned to promote a multilingual Jewish culture, and indeed like *Unity* held a privileged place for the promotion of a new Jewish culture in English.

My analysis here focuses on the English language section due to the vast majority of *Jewish Youth*'s original content being published in English. While the Hebrew section certainly should not be entirely discounted from an analysis of *Jewish Youth*, it was certainly the smallest and likely least read section of the magazine.¹⁷ As per Goldhar's critique of Zionism in Australia, *Jewish Youth* desired to add some cultural depth to Australian Zionism, urging Jewish youth to learn modern Hebrew and appreciate Hebrew poetry.¹⁸ The contents of the Hebrew section however certainly reflected Goldhar's critique of the poverty of Australian Hebraism in this period. The only significant original pieces written for the section were an article praising *Jewish Youth*'s trilingual nature by Semitic studies professor at the University of Melbourne, Morris David Goldman, and later a short tribute to Pinchas Goldhar by H. Rubinstein.¹⁹

The Yiddish section was more vibrant, larger, and contained original pieces by Yossel Birstein and Pinchas Goldhar, as well as contemporary poetry and prose from overseas Yiddish writers such as Der Nister and Dovid Bergelson, both members of the Soviet Union's Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC), as well as older canonical writers such as Sholem Aleichem. The English section was certainly privileged despite the trilingual nature of the publication. It contained the editorials, political articles, and letters. It featured multiple translations from Yiddish and Hebrew writers such as I.L. Peretz and Aleichem as well as contemporary Yiddish writers such as Bergelson and Sholem Asch. Whereas within a Yiddishist imagination Yiddish was a Jewish lingua franca, the situation of Jews in post-war Australia meant in practice this role was increasingly assigned to English, not least because of the interest in Jewish culture and politics from Jews who did not come from Yiddish-speaking backgrounds.

One indication of this was in the KYO's approach to new arrivals, with *Jewish Youth* urging its readers to help settle new Jewish migrants and teach them English.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Modern Hebrew was not widely learned or understood in Australian Jewish communities before 1948. Pinchas Goldhar, "Jewish Antisemitism," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948); Ben-zion Patkin, *Heritage and Tradition: The Emergence of Mount Scopus College* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1972).

¹⁸ See discussion in Chap. 4. In a similar mode to *Unity*, while *Jewish Youth* gave strong support to the Yishuv, it emphasised Jewish-'Arab' unity and criticised the idea that Palestine was the ultimate destination of the Jewish people.

¹⁹ Morris David Goldman, "Our Future is in Our Hands," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 1 (1946); H. Rubinstein, "My Debt to Pinchas Goldhar," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 7-8 (1947).

²⁰ "In the News," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 5-6 (1946). Another reason for the prominence of the English

This suggests there was an acceptance of the idea of a majority English-speaking Jewish community in Australia. This was reflected in the KYO's cultural activities. The enthusiasm for Yiddish culture encouraged by *Jewish Youth*, rather than competing in a zero-sum game with other languages, produced a flow on enthusiasm for Jewish cultural expression in English. A *Jewish Youth* editorial noted, for example, that the success of the KYO Yiddish dramatic group at a 1946 concert led to 'people ... clamouring for an English group', a wish which was shortly fulfilled.²¹ *Jewish Youth* considered English an additional and co-existing means of Australian and transnational cultural dialogue with Jews as well as non-Jews. For instance, multiple poems were published by the Canadian Jewish poet Abraham M. Klein. His poetry on themes of the horrors of war and fascism were introduced in issue two with a quote declaring that 'the Jewries of English speech have at last found ... a poet of their own'.²²

Jewish Youth played a role as a self-conscious cultural arbiter, featuring in the English section (sometimes self-referential) articles which made clear its multilingual and transnational cultural project. 'Jewish contributions to art in Australia', for example, published in the first issue of *Jewish Youth*, outlined the multiple audiences of 'those who are writing in Yiddish on specifically Jewish themes, and others who write in the English language on themes Jewish and otherwise', and noted that the case was similar for Jewish painters who 'are making a definite contribution to Jewish and Australian culture'.²³ The article made specific mention of Goldhar and Herz Bergner, suggesting that their 'fame has spread far beyond Australia, and their stories have won acclaim in the Jewish press throughout the world'.²⁴ The article went on to detail the successes of Goldhar, Herz Bergner, and Birstein (all writers for *Jewish Youth*), publishing to acclaim in English translation in Australia as well as in the international Yiddish press.

In the article 'Bergner, Jewish Painter: An Appreciation,' which was featured in the same issue and reflected a similar orientation, artist Vic O'Connor discussed Yosel Bergner's work within the context of the fight against fascism.²⁵ O'Connor framed Bergner as an important Jewish antifascist artist responding to the Holocaust. He underlined the link between the production of a new Jewish culture in Australia and the international character of the Jewish struggle against fascism, noting that:

section is one that draws our attention to the power relations inherent in language use. Issues three and four of the magazine were issued only in English. Although the government's assimilationist rhetoric was largely bluster, they did enforce a prohibition on the publication of foreign language magazines or newspapers without express permission. This led to a temporary period of forced monolingualism for *Jewish Youth*. Notably Vic O'Connor acted as the legal representative of *Jewish Youth* in this matter, see NAA: A6122, 153 REFERENCE COPY, "Kadimah (Jewish Youth Organisation in Victoria)" (1946–1953).

²¹ Alex Rosenberg, "From the President of the KYO," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 5–6 (1946).

²² Abraham M. Klein, "Ballad of the Days of the Messiah," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946).

²³ M.R., "Jewish Contributions to Art in Australia," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 1 (1946).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ V.G. O'Connor, "Bergner, Jewish Painter: An Appreciation," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 1 (1946).

as cultural magazines begin to arrive from overseas, particularly from the Soviet Union, and from America, it can be seen that artists all over the world have been moved by the same idea ... This is very good, for it shows that there is a growing group of artists who will add another chapter to Jewish culture, and will help to ensure that the suffering of the last decade shall never again come to their people or any other people.²⁶

Jewish Youth's Yiddish to English translations also reflected this multilingual Jewish internationalism that validated Jewish culture practiced in 'whatever country they live and whatever their language'. The opening editorial suggested that English translations were merely an ersatz stand in for a full appreciation of Jewish culture. In practice, however, the original translations published by *Jewish Youth* were clearly impressive cultural works in themselves, functioning to bring famous Yiddish works to an English-speaking audience, both Jewish and non-Jewish, but also to contribute to the world of Jewish literature as a whole, which was characterised by translations between multiple languages.²⁷

Some of the most striking examples of the artful nature of these translations are Margaret Birstein's translations of two short stories by the famous Soviet Yiddish writer and JAFC figure David Bergelson.²⁸ The major translation work produced by *Jewish Youth* was a heart stopping story of two young Jewish children during the Holocaust, written by Sholem Asch. The story 'It is Commanded We Live' was 'translated for the first time into English from the "Morning Freiheit" by Margaret Birstein and H. Ross' and took up most of the English section of issues seven and eight. The translation was obviously a major undertaking, of which the editors of *Jewish Youth* were very proud, touting its forthcoming publication in prior issues, indicating that it was an important cultural achievement in itself rather than merely an inferior substitute for the real thing.²⁹

While *Jewish Youth* certainly had an international outlook, it also focused on Australia and was also sometimes hyperlocal, containing Melbourne Jewish news and sometimes gossip or in-jokes related to the KYO.³⁰ In this sense it functioned as a method of community-making on multiple levels. In issue number four, for instance, the editorial

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For an historical overview of Jewish literature as world literature, see Lital Levy and Allison Schachter, "Jewish Literature/World Literature: Between the Local and the Transnational," *PMLA* 130, no. 1 (2015): 92–109. For an overview of the post-war Yiddish literary world, see Jan Schwarz, *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015).

²⁸ Margaret Birstein was born Margaret Waisberg. She left Frankfurt after Kristallnacht and learnt Yiddish with Yosel Birstein who she married when she was 18 in Melbourne; '[s]he was with him for the rest of his life, and translated almost all of his work into English', see Andrew Firestone, "Yosel Birstein's Melbourne Years," http://www.yoselbirstein.org/pdf/about/YBs_Melbourne_Years.pdf.

²⁹ "Comment by the Editors," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 4 (1946).

³⁰ For example, see Ida Ginter, "K.Y.O. News," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946); "In the News," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 3 (1946).

expressed a wish to feature more content on ‘day to day issues that confront our youth in Australia ... we believe that a cultural magazine cannot be a living force unless it is able to link the fruits of culture with everyday matters—matters that concern us, right here in Melbourne, in Australia.’³¹ In other words the magazine was not envisioned as a vehicle of transmission of ‘Jewish culture’ in Yiddish, Hebrew, and in translation, to young people who lacked it. The aim was for the magazine to act as a forum for the ideas and creative expression of Jewish young people in Australia to be publicised, encouraged, and debated, and for this to be in dialogue with Jewish ideas and culture, past and present, internationally. Rather than simply re-publishing Jewish literature from overseas, the magazine itself became a central organ for the creation of a new Jewish culture in Australia, formed in dialogue with the international Jewish world. Jewish culture was not an imposition from elsewhere but something to be generated in local contexts as part of a transnational, multilingual cultural-political project.

Left Internationalism

The issues referred to as ‘confront[ing] our youth in Australia’ were above all political, connected to the need to fight war, fascism, and antisemitism. Like the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism these political concerns were mediated through strong associations with the non-Jewish Australian left. An article on ‘Anti-Semitism in the Australian Press’, for example, decried the daily antisemitic press attacks on Jewish refugees that blamed them for housing shortages and high prices.³² The author ‘M.R.’ suggested that antisemitism was taking hold ‘throughout the whole Empire’ as Jews in DP camps and in Palestine were being continually maligned. ‘M.R.’ suggested that ‘reaction’—‘newspapers and the interests they represent’—aimed to repress progressive working-class movements and believed that ‘if they can divert attention to the Jews, their plans will succeed’. The only answer to this was for ‘Jewish youth’ to ‘play an important part in the struggle against anti-Semitism’ by forming ‘stronger bonds with the progressive youth and their organisations in Australia’.³³

The KYO was keyed into discussions of colonialism and racism on an international and national level. For instance, an editorial in issue four suggested that ‘[o]ne [event] which will be remembered for a long time was Alan Marshall’s informal talk on his sojourn in the north of Australia’. This trip was the basis for his 1948 book *Ourselves Writ Strange*, an account of Marshall’s encounters with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and Queensland.³⁴ While the book was certainly flawed, it did represent a rare attempt by a non-anthropologist to write an anti-racist account of Aboriginal

³¹ “Comment by the Editors,” *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 4 (1946).

³² See Rutland, “Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria.”

³³ M.R., “Anti-Semitism in the Australian Press,” *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 3 (1946). See also “Gullett and Antisemitism,” *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 9 (1947).

³⁴ Alan Marshall, *Ourselves Writ Strange* (Melbourne: FW Cheshire, 1948).

communities that was critical of government policy and written for a general audience.³⁵ We can postulate that Marshall's talk to the KYO ran along similar lines. While the KYO and *Jewish Youth* did not, at this stage, have a fully developed analysis of colonialism in Australia, in the years to come connections with people such as Marshall would serve as an important link between Jewish antifascists and Aboriginal activists.³⁶

As well as politics and international affairs, the KYO was involved in discussions around Australian arts and literature. One of the numerous talks given by Australian left-wing writers to the KYO was a talk by Alan Marshall and Frank Dalby Davison on the new publication *Twenty Great Australian Stories* (1946), a collection edited by Waten and O'Connor.³⁷ Dalby Davison on another occasion gave a talk on Henry Lawson, evidence of the KYO's engagement in the cultural nationalist ideas of the time.³⁸ As Lou Jedwab outlines, this was just one of the many talks given to the KYO in the period 1945–1948. His list includes a wide variety of Jewish speakers—from Norman Rothfield of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism to Bundist Sender Burstin to Zionist Aaron Patkin—and also features non-Jewish cultural luminaries such as Nina Christesen who addressed the KYO on 'Russian and Soviet Literature', Noel Counihan who spoke on 'Realism in Art', and other well-known figures associated with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) such as Kath Bacon who spoke on 'Conditions in S.E. Asia'.³⁹

The breadth of topics attended to by the KYO and *Jewish Youth* provoked criticism from conservative Jewish quarters who preferred that they kept to strictly 'Jewish topics'. In reply *Jewish Youth* decried elements of the current leadership of the Jewish community as 'smitten by the bug of complacency' and suggested that 'there is more than a suspicion that they belong to that strata of society which possesses more than its fair share of worldly goods'.⁴⁰ In the ninth issue of *Jewish Youth*, Margaret Birstein offered a passionate defence of the KYO's approach, suggesting that keeping only to 'Jewish topics':

betrays a lack of understanding of even the Jewish question. If we were to foster this attitude amongst our members, we would soon degenerate into

³⁵ For a fairly scathing contemporary review, see Ronald M. Berndt, "Review of Ourselves Writ Strange by Alan Marshall," *Oceania* 19, no. 3 (1949): 302–304.

³⁶ In 1951, the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism became affiliated to the Council for Aboriginal Rights and sent a delegate to meetings regularly. The Council was formed following a major public protest meeting co-sponsored by Canon Farnham Maynard, Doug Nicholls and Alan Marshall. See Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 132–136; "Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism Executive Committee Minutes, 14th March 1951, 25th July 1951" (University of Melbourne Archives, Norman Rothfield Collection, 2002.0014, Box 1).

³⁷ "From the President of KYO," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 2 (1946).

³⁸ Alex Rosenberg, "From the President of the KYO," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 4. (1946).

³⁹ Jedwab, "Kadimah Youth Organisation," 183.

⁴⁰ "Comment by the Editors," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 1 (1946).

a chauvinistic sect and end up in a dead end. We Jews can least afford to shut ourselves in water-tight compartments, ignoring the outside world, for, to-day, more than at any other time in our history, we are so much dependent upon the general flow of world events.⁴¹

Thus, political and cultural questions for Jews were understood as necessarily imbricated with wider social and political questions, particularly as they pertained to racial oppression, nationalism, war, and colonialism. This comes further into focus when we look at the KYO's association with other left-wing groups. The KYO had a close relationship with the Eureka Youth League, a youth organisation affiliated with the CPA. Harry Stein, reporting back from the Eureka Youth League conference for *Jewish Youth*, in a typical formulation of the time, suggested that youth needed to struggle for world peace and against nuclear bombs and to 'battle hard against the remnants of fascism and those forces who would once again plunge the world into war'. He argued that 'to work for peace, it is necessary to eradicate fascism in such countries as Spain and Greece and help to develop democratic regimes there. Also to withdraw foreign troops now preventing the people of Palestine, Indonesia, Iceland, Egypt, India and many other countries from running their own affairs.'⁴² As discussed in previous chapters, the threats of fascism and the struggles for post-war decolonisation were often drawn together as such in Jewish antifascist discourse.

African American struggles also influenced the Australian Jewish left's attitudes towards issues of racial oppression in this period.⁴³ One of the more remarkable reviews in *Jewish Youth* was a feature book review by Yossel Birstein of *Lay My Burden Down* (1945), a recently published collection of oral histories of slavery in the United States, 'told by thousands of ex-slaves themselves'.⁴⁴ This review was followed by the reprinting of selected excerpts from the book. *Lay My Burden Down* resonated with the similar necessity for Black Americans and Jews to collect, record, and invent new ways of representing and invoking their experiences of suffering and oppression. Birstein's review here was contemporaneous with the wide circulation of Holocaust survivor writing. Botkin, the editor of the collection, was an American folklorist from a Jewish background, and the volume of testimonies published represented only a small portion of the 'tens of thousands of reminiscences and stories' that were collected by 'hundreds of writers and journalists' as part of the New Deal Federal Writers Project in the

⁴¹ Margaret Birstein, "The K.Y.O. Open Forum," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 9 (1947).

⁴² Harry Stein, "A Youth Conference," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 5–6 (1946).

⁴³ See, for instance, Ruth Faerber, "Move up Can'tyer," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948); Paul Robeson, "Robeson," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1949); George Berger, "Books in the Fighting Line against Discrimination," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1948). This was in line with the enormous impact of African American struggles on both the Jewish left in the United States and also on communist approaches to racial oppression and imperialism internationally. For example, see Carl Vedro, "The Menace of White Chauvinism," *Jewish Life* 4, no. 8 (1950).

⁴⁴ Jossel Birstein, "Our Book Review "Lay My Burden Down"," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 4 (1946).

1930s.⁴⁵ Birstein's review thus serves as a link between the African American anti-racist threads of US Popular Front culture and post-war Australian Jewish antifascism. It also sheds some light on the resonance of folk culture in Australian cultural nationalism for left-wing Jews at the time, as discussed by Goldhar. Folklore or folk history in this rendering did not represent a racially or ethnically homogenous reactionary nostalgic ideal but was a means of recovering an oppressed past of racialised and marginalised groups and giving a voice to ordinary people.⁴⁶

While there was no explicit comparison drawn between Jewish experience and Black American experience in the review article, solidarity was certainly invoked. As Birstein noted: 'Although the coloured people of America are still struggling for freedom and equality, the abolition of slavery represented a great step forward in the history of mankind, an important step towards a more humane world.' The black struggle was thus one of universal importance, part of a global fight for 'freedom and equality' for all oppressed people. As we will see, the idea that separate struggles against racial oppression were in fact profoundly connected was also key to Yosl Bergner's Jewish antifascist cultural practice.

Yosl Bergner, Aboriginal Resistance, and Australian Jewish Antifascism

Jewish Youth published many works by writers and artists associated with the Jewish antifascist cultural movement. Notwithstanding Judah Waten, the most well-known figure to emerge from this Melbourne Jewish left milieu was Yosl Bergner. After Bergner's arrival in Melbourne from Warsaw in 1937 he became involved in the Kadimah Younger Set (the precursor to the KYO) and became close with Pinchas Goldhar and Judah Waten.⁴⁷ Waten introduced Bergner to his close friend and comrade Noel Counihan and into a wider left-wing social circle.⁴⁸ Bergner had a Bundist and

⁴⁵ Ibid. According to Jerrold Hirsch '[a]s a Popular Front intellectual, Botkin made it clear that he found repulsive the connection between the search for folk purity, the hatred of the allegedly impure, and the growth of fascism.' Jerrold Hirsch, "Rediscovering America: The FWP Legacy and Challenge," *Community Literacy Journal* 77, no. 1 (2012): 21. See also Susan G. Davis, "Ben Botkin's FBI File," *Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 487 (2010): 3–30.

⁴⁶ This was echoed in Birstein's account of the development of Yiddish poetry in another issue of *Jewish Youth*, see Y. Birstein, "Bards of the Yiddish Language," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 5–6 (1946).

⁴⁷ Yosl Bergner, *What I Meant to Say: Stories and Travels as Told to Ruth Bondy*, trans. Valerie Arnon (Tel Aviv: Hed Arzi Book Pub, 1997), 93–95; Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art* (Melbourne: Allen Lane 1981), 80.

⁴⁸ Bergner was instrumental in inspiring Counihan to begin painting. Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 163–164. For the close relationship between Counihan and Waten see *ibid.*, 97. For descriptions of their left-wing social milieu, see Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 27; Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 104–106; Yosl Bergner, *What I Meant to Say*, 96.

Yiddishist schooling but was most politically active as an antifascist during the war and in the immediate post-war years in Australia.⁴⁹

He joined the CPA in the early forties and was actively engaged, along with Vic O'Connor and Noel Counihan, in trying to take the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), a large, recently formed organisation of dozens of artists, in a more radical direction.⁵⁰ O'Connor, Counihan, and Bergner positioned themselves as the social realist faction, dedicated to an art which would in Counihan's terms, 'give an objective picture of contemporary Australian society in its movement and development' by revealing 'the social relations involved in our most intimate experience'.⁵¹ In other words, the technique they developed was to take their own experiences and paint scenes of great meaning and emotion but to relate these images to an objective social world, rather than mythic or psychological symbols or other types of 'subjectivism' that were then popular in the modernist art produced by others in the CAS. Perhaps the first manifestation of this new movement was an exhibition held as a fundraiser for the Australian and Soviet Red Cross at the Melbourne Jewish cultural centre, the Kadimah, in 1941. Bergner, Counihan, and O'Connor featured along with others such as James Wigley and Nutter Buzzacott.⁵² This was followed by the CAS's famous 'Anti-Fascist Exhibition', driven by the social realist faction, in 1942.⁵³

Bergner started painting Aboriginal people as early as 1937, and after the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 he began painting increasingly anguished and upsetting images depicting the plight of Polish Jews.⁵⁴ Aboriginal people became more of a focus after his joining of the Army Labour Company in late 1941 and being sent to the small town of Tocumwal to load and unload trains on the Victoria, New South Wales border.⁵⁵ Richard Haese notes that in the CAS's 'Anti-Fascist Exhibition' in 1942, Bergner featured two paintings each from his concurrent two series on the persecution of Polish Jewry and Aboriginal people. The vast majority of Bergner's paintings between 1942 and 1946 were concerned with painting Jews in Poland and Aboriginal people in Australia.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Bergner, *What I Meant to Say*, 34; Frank Klepner, *Yosl Bergner: Art as a Meeting of Cultures* (Macmillan Education AU, 2004), 52.

⁵⁰ For an account of the creative and political partnership between O'Connor, Bergner, and Counihan, see Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 162–200.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 189–190. For a wider discussion of the relationship between Counihan, Bergner, and O'Connor's project, with Soviet socialist realism and CPA cultural policy, see Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 186–197.

⁵² Haese calls this 'the first indication of a coherent left-wing movement'. Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 148; Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 171.

⁵³ Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 126–129. This was a large exhibition including art from the entire CAS rather than a particularly social realist exhibition.

⁵⁴ Bergner, *What I Meant to Say*, 112–113.

⁵⁵ Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 84.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

These paintings did not emerge in a political vacuum, the background was the substantial changes in the situation of Aboriginal people during the war and in the immediate post-war years. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a major wave of Aboriginal political and industrial organising in this period and activists involved in the CPA, and associated trade unions, cultural organisations, and civil society groups played important support roles.⁵⁷ World War Two also occasioned a rapid increase in Melbourne's Aboriginal population, as people came to take up employment in munitions factories and other war industries.⁵⁸ As highlighted by Richard Broome, the war years saw the emergence of a new pan-Aboriginal movement in Melbourne, led by Doug and Gladys Nicholls.⁵⁹ Bergner would have had occasion to encounter this movement through his membership of the CPA and involvement with associated left cultural organisations.⁶⁰ The plight of Aboriginal people resonated with Bergner and he became the first Australian settler painter to paint urban Aboriginal people.

Up until Bergner the dominant modes of portraying Aboriginal people in Australian settler art were variously, according to Frank Klepner (following Bernard Smith), as assimilated with nature; as 'noble savages'; as the 'treacherous brute'; and as a 'doomed race'.⁶¹ Although many of the Aboriginal people that Bergner painted were modelled on people living at the edge of the small country town of Tocumwal, all his paintings in this series, bar one, are of urban Aboriginal people.⁶² Bergner was rejecting the

⁵⁷ Douglas Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960" (Victoria University, 2011), 246–306; Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 132–136.

⁵⁸ Richard Broome, *Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2015), 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15–18. Doug Nicholls and Eric and Bill Onus revived the Australian Aborigines' League (AAL) shortly after the War. Nicholls, the Onus brothers, and the AAL cooperated with CPA activists and unions on a number of projects and campaigns in this era. See Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 194; Broome, *Fighting Hard*, 29–31; Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions," 125–134; Angela O'Brien, "The Road Not Taken: Political and Performance Ideologies at Melbourne New Theatre 1935–1960" (Monash University, 1989), 142.

⁶⁰ See Albert Tucker, 'Backdrop Designed by Bert and Yossell [Yosl] Bergner, 1939, for Melb New Theater "Where's That Bomb?" [photograph]', 1939, Collection of Contact Prints, Depicting Aspects of the Artist's Life and the Artistic Community in Melbourne, 1930–1945, State Library of Victoria.

⁶¹ Klepner, Yosl Bergner, 95–96; Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

⁶² Aboriginal people were barred from Tocumwal and lived in humpies at the edge of the town. Klepner, *Yosl Bergner*, 93. The exceptional painting was 'Aborigines Chained to a Tree' (1946). As Klepner reports this image based on a response to newspaper reports from Western Australia from earlier that year and was exhibited in the 'Three Realist Artists' exhibition at the Myer art gallery in Melbourne in July 1946 along with photographs of Aboriginal prisoners. *Ibid.*, 100. Scrimgeour highlights how images of Aboriginal prisoners in chains circulated during this period as part of solidarity campaigns. Anne Scrimgeour, *On Red Earth Walking: The Pilbara Aboriginal Strike, Western Australia 1946–1949* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2020), 420. Yosl Birstein, Bergner's close friend, also modelled for many of Bergner's paintings of Aboriginal people while they shared a tent for four years in Tocumwal. See Nissim Aloni and Rodi Bineth-Perry, *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1938–1980* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1981), 206.

depiction of Aboriginal people as a ‘dying race’ incompatible with modernity, imagery typical of settler colonialism.⁶³ Bergner’s Aboriginal people are complex modern subjects, displaced and dispossessed in a world of urban poverty inseparable from the wider social relations of Australia.

Unlike earlier depictions of Aboriginal people as somehow outside of or counterposed to Australian society, in Bergner’s paintings their situation was featured as Australian society’s hidden and central truth. There was a continuity in these paintings with Bergner’s earliest work featuring street sweepers and rat catchers in Melbourne. These paintings and drawings aimed to unveil the reality of capitalism and urban poverty.⁶⁴ Bergner’s achievement here was to realise a portrayal of Aboriginal people cast within a wider social critique. His understanding of the racist character of the oppression of Aboriginal people is highlighted by the dual nature of his painting project, being also focused on the plight of Polish Jewry. It is perhaps best summarised by Counihan in a 1943 letter to Bernard Smith: ‘[f]or the first time these abused people are being painted by a painter with an understanding of their sufferings and exploitation. It has taken a Polish Jew to interpret the aborigine [sic] realistically without patronage or sentimentality.’⁶⁵

The aforementioned piece on Yosl Bergner by Vic O’Connor in *Jewish Youth* was a review of a solo exhibition of Bergner’s in 1946 at the Kadimah. We can surmise that this was something of a retrospective covering the past five years or so of Bergner’s paintings. O’Connor made clear that not only did Bergner’s paintings express empathy and admiration for those suffering under fascism in Poland, they also served as a riposte to the scepticism of those in the West who questioned the extent of Nazi atrocities.⁶⁶ O’Connor noted that the order in which the paintings were exhibited did not reflect the order in which they were painted, instead they reflected the chronology of reality, progressing from paintings of old Warsaw to the Nazi occupation, to the ‘terrible pictures of the final days’.⁶⁷

O’Connor suggested that the story was ‘not complete yet’ because the story of resistance still needed to be portrayed, in particular the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although not included in this exhibition, Bergner did complete two paintings along these lines, in ‘The Dead Nazi’ and ‘Ghetto Uprising’. Haese suggests that these paintings ‘add little to what Bergner had already said’ but O’Connor’s review gives us pause to assess the importance of these paintings for Bergner in terms of the larger project of *Jewish*

⁶³ See Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Liz Conor, *Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Publishing, 2016).

⁶⁴ Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 168. See reproductions in Aloni and Bineth-Perry, *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1938–1980*, 28, 208.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 182.

⁶⁶ See Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford, UK, & Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994).

⁶⁷ O’Connor, “Yosl Bergner”.

Youth and Jewish antifascism.⁶⁸ O'Connor also notes that the exhibition included his 'aboriginal paintings', where Bergner had 'painted their story with the same sympathy which he painted that of his own people'. The frequency with which Bergner exhibited these two sets of paintings together indicates the strong connections Bergner sought to indicate between the plight of the two people and how his Jewish antifascism as situated in Australia was inextricably bound up in a politics of solidarity with Aboriginal people.

Bergner's work featured in a number of issues of *Jewish Youth*. One is a whimsical sketch concerning the fictional town of Chelm.⁶⁹ The others are illustration to stories by I.L. Peretz.⁷⁰ These sorts of folksy illustrations caused Bergner to fall afoul of the CPA in the years following World War Two, because of his move away from social realism.⁷¹ The Peretz illustrations, along with the illustrations Bergner developed for other famous Yiddish stories, gave expression to the frustrated writer in Bergner, who given his immersion in Yiddish culture had a strongly literary imagination.⁷² Given Bergner's brief to paint and draw for a Jewish culture magazine with a strong emphasis on Yiddish culture, it is not surprising that he produced these sorts of images.

These deviations from social realism seem not to have been an issue for the leftist editors of *Jewish Youth*. We can surmise that they did not see such a stark contradiction between the ideology informing the Peretz illustrations and Bergner's social realist works. Neither was Bergner's work in this context read as necessarily proto-Zionist or proto-Nationalist. As outlined above, the Jewish left cultural project, often with a strong Yiddish component, saw the development of proud Jewish cultural projects as part and parcel of a progressive antifascist politics.⁷³ Bergner always emphasised his strong Jewish identity in his dealings with Australia's creative world. George Luke, a fellow artist and close friend at the time, reminisced that one of Bergner's first statements upon their meeting and indeed a very frequent one was 'I am a Jew'.⁷⁴

Bergner's work in this period should thus be situated in a Jewish antifascist framing which encompassed an emphasis on the development of a new proud Jewish culture, a celebration of the greatness and continuing relevance of the classics of Yiddish culture,

⁶⁸ Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 170.

⁶⁹ J. Bergner, "Beginning of Chelm," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 3 (1946).

⁷⁰ See J. Bergner, "The Bass Viol," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 5-6 (1946); "The Magician," *Jewish Youth* 1, no. 4 (1946).

⁷¹ Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 170. Yosl Bergner's account of him being told off by Jack Blake of the CPA is in Smith, *Noel Counihan*, 523-524.

⁷² Klepner, *Yosl Bergner*, 119-120.

⁷³ Neither was this sort of non-social realist work deemed heretical by the wider Jewish antifascist left. Frank Klepner notes the influence on Bergner of Marc Chagall in the post-war more whimsical work and the large influence of Chaim Soutine on his more painterly expressionist work. Soutine and Chagall both featured in *Unity*. Klepner, *Yosl Bergner*, 41, 120; George Berger, "Soutine: Painter of Suffering," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1948); H. Brezniak, "Marc Chagall: The Painter of 'Casrilivke'," *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1949).

⁷⁴ Klepner, *Yosl Bergner*, 51.

an antifascist understanding of and memorialisation of the Holocaust, and a wider critical anti-racist consciousness that connected antisemitism to broader and international social forces. As discussed above with reference to African American struggles, Bergner's work is evidence of the impact of Aboriginal activism and mobilisation, 'dynamic expression[s] of Aboriginal sovereignty', on the way the Australian left envisioned the key social struggles of the period.⁷⁵ Bergner's work was neither strictly Jewish nor strictly Australian; it formed part of an antifascist, anti-racist struggle imagined on a transnational scale. His paintings developed from both a proud Jewish consciousness and a collective social realist project of radical social critique.

A Jewish Antifascist Minor Culture

We can understand both Bergner's paintings and *Jewish Youth* with reference to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's famous definition of a 'minor literature', which they argue has three characteristics: the 'deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual and the political', and 'the collective arrangement of utterance'.⁷⁶ Deterritorialisation is achieved through intensifying the characteristics of the minor (ethnic, subcultural, or otherwise) usage of a majority language.⁷⁷ The connection of the individual to the political is a product of the fact that a minor literature, unlike a major literature, is not concerned with producing psychological portraits of the plight of individuals while pretending to universality. Instead in a minor literature each individual character portrayed cannot be separated from their social milieu, meaning their plight is always a venue for the discussion of wider social and communal problems and politics.

The 'collective arrangement of utterance' similarly refers to the fact that given the paucity of great talents or major figures, works are produced in a self-consciously collective process. Unlike the writer in a major literature, who can pretend to the individualised figure of the great artist, the minor writer is intimately aware of their own social and political production. Seeking to consciously engage this 'collective arrangement of utterance', the minor writer often appeals to a collectivity not yet properly invented and in doing so helps to produce that collectivity: 'to force the means for another consciousness and another sensibility'.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Crystal McKinnon, "Expressing Indigenous Sovereignty: The Production of Embodied Texts in Social Protest and the Arts" (PhD thesis, La Trobe University 2018), 10.

⁷⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?," *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): 18.

⁷⁷ See Chana Kronfeld's critique of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of a minor literature as necessarily utilising a major language. Chana Kronfeld, "Beyond Deleuze and Guattari: Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism in the Age of Privileged Difference," in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, ed. Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?," 17.

Deleuze and Guattari's formulation was developed to analyse Kafka's choice to write in German and clearly does not directly apply to a multilingual, or for that matter multimedia, cultural project. David Carter notes that although in Waten's work there is some sense of linguistic experimentation in how he renders Yiddish dialogue in English, it is certainly subtle.⁷⁹ For the most part, this is common across all of the literature surveyed in this book, which in hewing towards realism was not particularly concerned with linguistic experimentation.⁸⁰ Despite this, in my own reformulation of Deleuze and Guattari's concept, there are three related factors that make the antifascist Jewish literature and painting moulded in *Jewish Youth* a minor literature, or better, a minor culture. It was a self-consciously collective project with an oppositional political stance, most obviously against antisemitism, racism, and fascism; a political and cultural minoritarianism and resistance to assimilation via a proud Jewish consciousness; and a multilingualism, tied to the transnational deterritorialised nature of its project and plurality of audiences. These three factors mean that this culture cannot be read simply as ethnic culture, giving voice to and representing a particular set of 'Jewish experiences' in Australia. This literature and painting had a disassembling effect on what was taken to be majority or hegemonic culture; it was aimed not at simply diversifying the status quo or carving out a place within it, but at challenging and remaking Australian and international cultures through an ambitious programme of antifascist social critique and cultural production allied with political movements.

It cannot be viewed simply as a contribution to Australian culture, it was not aimed at a purely Australian audience nor was it only expressed in English. Neither did it aim to contribute to the development of a strictly Jewish national culture, it did not have a set language in which to do this and it did not aim at only a Jewish audience. Jewish antifascist cultural expression cannot be understood without reference to the antifascist political project of constructing a Jewish political subjectivity in alliance with non-Jewish progressive forces to combat fascism and racial oppression more broadly.

My other reason for considering Deleuze and Guattari here is to suggest that the liberatory potential of a minor culture is fraught, if following Jodi Byrd, we consider the newly transformed collectivity imagined through this culture as premised on the erasure of Indigenous people. In Byrd's critical reading of Deleuze and Guattari she suggests that frontier and wilderness tropes are endemic to their critical theory, associating the potential for 'transformational new worlds' with striking out into new empty territory.⁸¹ As discussed in the previous chapter it behoves us to question the extent to which the post-war Australian cultural boom formed a national imaginary which depended on settlerism as part of the source of its nominally egalitarian and

⁷⁹ Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 67–71.

⁸⁰ Though as Carter suggests Australian social realism was in fact highly formally inventive and innovative. David Carter, *Always Almost Modern: Australian Print Cultures and Modernity* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), 169–208.

⁸¹ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 13–21.

transformational capacity. I suggest below that the 1950s texts of Judah Waten provide perhaps the best example, along with Yosl Bergner's paintings, of how the Jewish antifascist imagination could break from the racial ideologies of settler colonialism.

Judah Waten's 'The Loser is Black'

In the mid-1940s Judah Waten had a conversation with his close friend, the writer and editor Pinchas Goldhar. Waten had been attempting to write short stories set contemporaneously. He had an interest in writing about Aboriginal people and had written at least one story on the subject.⁸² Speaking three decades later, Waten remembered that Goldhar was critical of his focus, suggesting that he did not know from the inside what it was like to be Aboriginal. Waten replied that what he did know was how Aboriginal people were treated and perceived from the outside by whites. Goldhar suggested that he should instead write about his own childhood and the Jewish world. He knew this world intimately but also had a perspective from the outside, given his ongoing association with non-Jewish cultural and political milieus. This was the impetus for Waten to start writing the stories which would end up being collected in *Alien Son* (1952), his most successful and well-known book.⁸³ *Alien Son* is a semi-autobiographical work of fiction based on Waten's own childhood and told from a child's perspective. As outlined by Carter, *Alien Son* can be said to have invented the genre of Australian migrant fiction.⁸⁴

Alien Son contains the story 'Black Girl' about Lily Samuels, the narrator's teenage Aboriginal neighbour, who he has a crush on. In the climactic scene of the story a local white teenager Tommy Jamieson attempts to sexually assault Lily and is fought off by Lily's father and brother. This is all witnessed by the narrator who is hiding behind a tree in the park. Throughout the story Lily is described in passages that foreground the male gaze such as: '[a] breeze fluttered her rose-coloured skirt and played with her black coppery-tinted hair. Her pink blouse tucked into her skirt tightly embracing her breasts and slender shoulders.'⁸⁵ The narrative voice of *Alien Son* is not straightforwardly a first person point of view, instead it melds the child's point of view and the narrator's, as if it is somewhere in between a third person point of view and a later recounting by the grown up child.⁸⁶ Waten plays subtly with this ambiguity in 'Black Girl' so that what is at first read as something of an objective view of Lily becomes compromised by the end of the story and revealed more clearly as reflecting the child character's subjective position. After the scene has played out at the park, the child narrator says

⁸² Judah Waten, interview by Suzanne Lunney, Box Hill, Victoria on 27 and 30 May 1975, National Library of Australia, available at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-215032167>; Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 158.

⁸³ Judah Waten, interview by Suzanne Lunney, Box Hill, Victoria on 27 and 30 May 1975.

⁸⁴ Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 51–72.

⁸⁵ Judah L. Waten, *Alien Son* (Melbourne: Sun Books; repr., 1965), 139.

⁸⁶ Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 61.

‘[a] feeling of mingled guilt and shame swept through me. Not only Bert Johnson and Tommy Jamieson were to blame, but in some way I too. Then I remembered that I was long overdue at home, and I ran, my heart heavy with guilty secrets.’⁸⁷ Waten here combines a childhood coming of age story involving the guilt and confusion of childhood sexuality with a social critique. What seems to be at first a third person objective description of this Aboriginal character is revealed as contingent and indeed complicit.

Waten here is following Goldhar’s advice, by making clear that he is writing from the outside and that this is a certain position infused with power. Waten’s character is not only positioned as male, a boy looking at older teenagers for models of masculinity and sexuality, but also as a kind of junior settler. Waten’s Jewish migrant child learns how to look at and assess Aboriginal people from older boys who are non-Jewish and more established non-migrant settlers. Akin to David Martin’s story about ‘Mr Cowen’, we have depicted here an uncomfortable acculturation into a settler polity. Waten shows this acculturation as particularly gendered, modelled through male settler hostility to Aboriginal women. This story represents Waten’s realisation of his position as an outsider in terms of Aboriginal people and his own implicated positioning as a settler.

In 1953, around the same time as Waten was working on his first novel *The Unbending* (1954), discussed below, he also authored a play that was never performed titled ‘The Loser is Black’, where he returned to the character of a slightly older Lily Samuels.⁸⁸ As far as can be ascertained, this was the only play script ever written by Waten. It seems that he utilised this form to help him address the subject position problem outlined above: a production of ‘The Loser is Black’ would not have been only a creation of its writer, it would have been interpreted and represented by Aboriginal actors. Figured this way, Waten’s play was a compelling social realist depiction of the gendered racism facing Lily. The play revolved around the theme, succinctly put by Lily’s mother, that ‘in their eyes you’re an abo, and abo girls don’t have to be treated right’.⁸⁹ One of the notable things about the dialogue and exchange between the mother character and Lily is how it mirrored contemporary discussions around

⁸⁷ Waten, *Alien Son*, 146.

⁸⁸ Waten sent the script for ‘The Loser is Black’ to the Theatre Council of Western Australia who sent it on to Stanley Middleton, Western Australia’s Commissioner for Native Affairs. Middleton, thoroughly misunderstanding the play’s politics, assessed that putting it on would not ‘be of any advantage to natives in W.A.’. This viewpoint seems to have been unquestioningly accepted by the Theatre Council who rejected the play. Given the play’s setting in inner-city Melbourne and Waten’s close CPA links, it is odd that he did not submit the play for a performance by the New Theatre in one of the Eastern capital cities. “Letter from Theatre Council of W.A. To J.L. Waten,” Papers of Judah Waten, MS 4536, Box 2, National Library of Australia (1953). On Jewish connections with the New Theatre in this period see Max Kaiser and Lisa Milner. “‘Part of What We Thought and Felt’: Antifascism, Antisemitism and Jewish Connections with the New Theatre,” *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History* 120, no. 1 (2021): 95–116.

⁸⁹ Judah L. Waten, “The Loser Is Black,” Papers of Judah Waten, MS 4536, Box 9, National Library of Australia (ca.1953), 11.

Jewish identity, internalised antisemitism, and consciousness of racial discrimination. Waten used his insight into the microdynamics of racial oppression from his knowledge of the Australian Jewish world whilst still illustrating the distinct character of the dehumanising racism facing Aboriginal people.

Lily, a light skinned Aboriginal woman, says she is ‘just like all the other girls’ at the factory where she works. She says that, people may talk behind her back, but ‘they wont keep on saying it for long if I behave decent like’. Mrs Samuels replies: ‘[y]ou’ll never be the same to them’ and points out that Lily’s friends in the factory ‘haven’t once asked you to their house ... you know why they don’t? They don’t think you’re human like, if you’ve got colour.’ Later in the dialogue Lily complains about her brother and his friend being lazy and that ‘all they give us is a bad name’, to which Mrs Samuels replies ‘all of us have a bad name, all of us. We got the bad name the day we was born.’⁹⁰ Waten through Mrs Samuels suggests that racism is systemic and not something which can be escaped through more respectable behaviour by Aboriginal people. She says in a warning to Lily’s individualist approach, ‘it don’t matter what you do lil, but god sake don’t go dog on your own. That’s the worst you can do.’⁹¹ As discussed in previous chapters, this idea as applied to antisemitism was a key tenet of the Jewish antifascist left.

The play was obviously based on Waten’s knowledge of and association with Aboriginal people in Melbourne, likely through left connections. The character ‘Mr Tucker’ is a prominent Aboriginal activist and community figure, likely modelled on William Cooper and/or Doug Nicholls, who urges Lily to attend Aboriginal socials and protest meetings. The campaign for Fred Waters figures prominently: when Lily’s brother Charlie questions Tucker on his alliance with white ‘parsons’, Tucker replies that ‘[t]hey’re not a bad crowd Charlie. You oughtn’t to laugh at them. They want to help us ... There’s plenty beside the parson fellows with us.’ Charlie replies that talk is cheap. Tucker says ‘you’re not right. When the old fellow up north got sent away for that strike a lot of them helped to get him back. I took up a petition for him where I work and not one of the men refused to sign.’⁹² We see here a direct rendering of a contemporary Aboriginal political struggle and its social ramifications. Waten’s play is somewhat self-referential here in that he is indicating the political pathways Aboriginal people had available to them which involved relationships of solidarity with, rather than sympathy from, the non-Indigenous working class. ‘The Loser is Black’ was itself a result of Aboriginal industrial and political action and its ability to garner solidarity from non-Indigenous people.

Akin to Mushin’s analysis of the pressures placed on Jewish intra-group dynamics, Waten portrayed the particularly gendered pressures placed on Aboriginal families by racial oppression. This plays out through Lily’s wish to date Blue, a white man, as

⁹⁰ Ibid., 11–13.

⁹¹ Ibid., 72.

⁹² Ibid., 17–18.

a means of escaping her racial oppression. Lily develops a negative attitude towards Aboriginal men and Charlie is intensely resentful of this. Charlie thinks that Lily regards herself as too good/white for him, speaking of himself he says, ‘Charlie’s too black ain’t he?’⁹³ ‘The Loser is Black’ is centrally concerned with the material survival and life prospects of the characters in the Samuels family. The family live in an urban poverty conditioned by their oppression. While Lily works in a factory, she has no way of fitting in more fully in white society or becoming friends with her workmates. Charlie was exploited as a boxer; in his words, his manager ‘taught [him] all there is to know about the whites’.⁹⁴ Charlie’s fate sees him go from hyper-exploited boxer to having a fundamental mistrust of whites to being dependent on small time criminality for survival. This focus on the materiality of the struggle for survival makes ‘The Loser is Black’ a kitchen sink drama *avant la lettre*. The very first scene involves Lily cooking dinner whilst fighting with Charlie over the family’s income; Lily says ‘[o]nly mum and me go to work here. You don’t bring nothing in.’⁹⁵ The central themes and drama of the play revolve around how the material circumstances and social and economic positioning of the central characters is played out through their race and gender.

Both ‘The Loser is Black’ and *The Unbending* (discussed below) can be said, in Stuart Hall’s words, to be depictions of ‘race [as] the modality in which class is “lived”’.⁹⁶ As outlined by Benjamin Balthaser, this reflected a great number of the major mid-century US proletarian novels which depicted race and class as intimately interconnected. In Balthaser’s terms, many famous US texts by Jewish, Black, and migrant authors in the 1930s and 1940s were ‘exploration[s] of the ethnic and/or racial self through the classed structure of power’.⁹⁷ Both ‘The Loser is Black’ and *The Unbending* are Waten’s attempts to put these models of the raced proletarian novel into practice in a specifically Australian context. As noted by Waten himself, Mike Gold, who wrote the raced proletarian novel ur-text *Jews Without Money* (1930), was a major influence.⁹⁸ We can also speculate that US novels which depicted social tragedies induced by systemic racism, such as the African American communist Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940), were also influential.⁹⁹

⁹³ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁶ Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. H.A. Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55, cited in Benjamin Balthaser, “The Race of Class: The Role of Racial Identity Production in the Long History of U.S. Working-Class Writing,” in *Working Class Literature(s): Historical and International Perspectives*, ed. J. Lennon and M. Nilsson (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2017), 31.

⁹⁷ Balthaser, “The Race of Class,” 52. These categories should not be taken as mutually exclusive.

⁹⁸ Judah L. Waten, “My Two Literary Careers,” *Southerly*, no. 31 (1971): 83. For analysis of *Jews Without Money* (1930) along these lines, see Balthaser, “The Race of Class,” 45–51.

⁹⁹ Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper, 1940). The title of *Alien Son* also seems to be a reference to Wright’s novel.

‘The Loser is Black’ ends with Lily stabbing Charlie to stop him interfering with her chances with Blue, who has obviously (to everyone but Lily) absconded after getting her pregnant. The play comes to a head with what we would now deem lateral violence.¹⁰⁰ It is made clear that this violence is an effect of the intensity of white racist oppression. While ‘The Loser is Black’ ends in a perhaps overly dramatic tragedy, what separates this drama from other settler narratives about Aboriginal people of the time is firstly its urban setting—as in Yosl Bergner’s paintings, Aboriginal people in inner-city Melbourne are seen as just as Aboriginal as people anywhere else. This marks an immediate distinction from contemporaneous literary works, written under the sign of the dying race trope, keen to force Aboriginal people into typologies of authentic, inauthentic, ‘tribalised’, ‘detribalised’, and so on, all tropes aimed at eventual assimilation or elimination.¹⁰¹ Secondly, the mother character and the activist character, despite not being able to control the eventual situation, are positioned as giving sage and positive advice; as providing a social answer, in the same vein as Jewish antifascism’s answer to antisemitism, through appeals to the importance of strengthening group belonging and collective Aboriginal political activism.

‘The Loser is Black’ represented Waten’s desire to delve more deeply into Aboriginal racialisation and oppression. It was his attempt to write beyond a settler subjectivity through the tools of social realist drama and through an analytic in which race and gender are envisioned as central determining factors conditioning exploitation and oppression.¹⁰² As we will see below, Waten was doing similar work in *The Unbending*. Both ‘The Loser is Black’ and *The Unbending* succeed through their social and historical specificity. ‘The Loser is Black’s’ Aboriginal characters are not simply Jews of a different skin colour, rather attention is paid to the manner in which Aboriginal racialisation and oppression is historically and politically distinct. Waten made clear that anti-Aboriginal racism, although it intersected with class exploitation, had its own social logic. ‘The Loser is Black’ represents a coming together of Waten’s Jewish antifascist knowledge of the microdynamics of racial oppression and his effort to familiarise himself with the struggles of Aboriginal people.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ On lateral violence, see S. Roberts, “Oppressed Group Behavior: Implications for Nursing,” *Advances in Nursing Science* 37, no. 9 (1983): 21–30.

¹⁰¹ See discussion above. On ‘repressive authenticity’, see Patrick Wolfe, “Nation and Miscegenation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 36 (1994): 110–118.

¹⁰² We can speculate that ‘Rocket Range’ (play) was an influence on Waten to write a play featuring Aboriginal people as its central characters, and Yosl Bergner’s paintings were likely influences on his attempt to depict the lives of *urban* Aboriginal people.

¹⁰³ According to Waten’s semi-autobiographical *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* (1982), his engagement with these issues stretched back to seeing William Cooper, the famous Aboriginal leader give speeches at the Melbourne Assembly Hall in the 1930s. Judah Waten, *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* (Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson, 1982), 44.

‘One fine happy band of mates’: Judah Waten’s *The Unbending*

The Unbending was Waten’s first published novel and was one of the first books published by the Australasian Book Society.¹⁰⁴ Waten wrote *The Unbending* in 1952–1953. Despite being a historical novel set in Australia around World War One, it expressed a number of contemporary themes. Firstly, it was an anti-war novel, that fitted well with the politics of the peace movement.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, despite the CPA’s move towards a more accommodatory stance towards the ALP in the period after the referendum (on banning the CPA), Waten’s novel was clearly positioned to ruthlessly criticise the ALP for its social role. The ALP was depicted as joining forces with the ruling class and having no faith in the working class to control its own destiny. Waten was especially damning of the pro-war and pro-conscription leading elements of the ALP. Thirdly, the novel was an interrogation of the terrible effects of political repression. While Waten’s focus in *The Unbending* is on the repression faced by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) during World War One, the situation was clearly analogous to that faced by the CPA and its fellow travellers in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁰⁶

Waten’s novel also expressed the Jewish antifascist politics of the time. The central characters are the Kochanskys, a Jewish family from Russia who migrate to Australia and move into the small district of Stirlington in Western Australia, near Perth. Hannah, the mother, and Solomon, the father, are very different character types and have differing attitudes towards establishing themselves in Australia and relating to their non-Jewish neighbours. Hannah is doubtful of Solomon’s lack of firm principles or political commitments. He is an attractive man with a very appealing personality, but she and the novel are ultimately damning of his impracticality and flights of fancy. He only occasionally has principles which pierce through his petit bourgeois mentality.

Hannah for her part is a strong character with firm political principles. We see by the end of the novel, against the background of the incredibly trying testing ground of World War One Stirlington (replete with xenophobia and political repression), that Hannah sees herself as fundamentally diverged from and disillusioned by her husband. She hopes to bring up her children according to her own values rather than Solomon’s. Upon the family’s move to Perth in the last pages of the novel, Hannah thinks:

They were starting again, without illusions, not in a new land, but in a land which willy-nilly had become theirs. And although it was not at all as she had imagined it she had learnt greater, deeper truths about the new land

¹⁰⁴ Judah L. Waten, *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. The cover was notably drawn by Noel Counihan.

¹⁰⁶ On the history of the IWW in Australia, see Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

in faraway Stirlington. Her sons would absorb those truths and despise the Mandys and the Johnsons.¹⁰⁷

The ‘Mandy’ referred to here was their initial friend in Australia, a Jewish man who had become very wealthy and associated with the elite. Solomon has a rather rocky and uncertain relationship with him throughout the novel, looking to him for advice and seeking to emulate his success. Johnson is the main villain of the piece, a wealthy conservative politician who runs the town and is the Kochansky’s landlord. Waten’s portrayal of the 1910s was largely historically accurate. While the family are targeted as Jews at certain points, they are just as often targeted as foreigners more generally. Their negative racialisation is worsened by their perceived association with IWW members, drawn together as disloyal or foreign to the body politic.¹⁰⁸ In this sense antisemitism is seen as being generated by imperialism and nationalism.

As the quote above suggests, part of Hannah’s political journey through the novel is to realise new ‘truths’ about Australian society and dispose of certain myths. While Waten’s novel in proper socialist realist style exposes the complex classed nature of society, he also takes aim at particularly Australian ideologies which cover over this truth. In this sense he was positioning his novel as an intervention in the cultural debates taking place in the left and its associated cultural institutions of the time. As Carter notes, in the early 1950s Waten was far closer to Vance and Nettie Palmer and their left liberal cultural nationalist literary circles than the Marxists of the RWG.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Waten’s novel, published by the Australasian Book Society, critiqued the putative myth of egalitarianism of Australian society and the idea of an essential Australian character. As discussed in the previous chapter, this was a myth used by radical nationalists such as Ian Turner and those associated with him as a tool of critique and mobilisation that could replace class politics.¹¹⁰

Crucially Waten himself was coming from a Jewish migrant positionality and saw that if one told a story from such a point of view one could more easily explicate how Australia was not truly a ‘new land’ with a classless society and boundless opportunity but was in fact a replication of the class societies of Europe in a new situation. While Aboriginal characters are absent from *The Unbending* and Aboriginal dispossession does not feature as a theme, it is notable that Waten has his central characters the Kochanskys, shipboard on their way to Australia, discuss the Indigenous people of the continent in the first two pages of the novel. In this section, a fellow migrant asks Solomon Kochansky if he is not worried about ‘the blacks’; he has heard that they outnumber the whites. Solomon Kochansky, the dreamer of the classless society of

¹⁰⁷ Waten, *The Unbending*, 302.

¹⁰⁸ Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 112. Despite not having a large amount of active involvement in the RWG, Waten’s papers contain a full set of the *Realist Writer* as well as other associated publications.

¹¹⁰ In one instance Waten stages a direct confrontation between a revolutionary character and a character who idealises rural bush lifeways. Waten, *The Unbending*, 215–216.

boundless opportunity promised by settler colonial ideology, replies that in fact the blacks have nearly been ‘killed off’, a reiteration of the dying race trope.¹¹¹ Waten has the character think, in a rather ironic mode, ‘[h]aving satisfactorily disposed of this matter—it had momentarily cast a shadow over the promised land—Kochansky proceeded to buoy up hopes by recounting the great riches that were to be found there’.¹¹² Waten here recalls the theme of David Martin’s short story, tying together the ideology of settler classless opportunity with the constitutive exclusion of Indigenous people from this vaunted egalitarian polity.

Early in the novel Solomon gets told by his IWW neighbour George Feathers that he cannot trust Johnson and that ‘[t]he big lurk in this country is to make out we’re all the same, see. We’re all mates, rich and poor alike. You get it?’¹¹³ Later another revolutionary character says to Feathers, who is experiencing the social pressures of WWI jingoism:

You’ve always told me, George, that the boss class works the mateship business in this country ... they’re doing it now more than ever. That’s how they’re getting so many to join up ... The arms makers and the dead, the masters and the slaves, the labour fakirs and the generals, all friends and mates now. One fine happy band of mates. Only the rich and the politicians will stay at home and their poor mates’ll rot in foreign soil.¹¹⁴

Thus, Waten took aim at an ideological mystification that functioned to simultaneously disavow Indigenous sovereignty and paper over the classed structure of society.

Some of the dialogue speaks directly to the type of arguments then happening in the Jewish community and is strongly reminiscent of the discourse of Laurence Collinson’s ‘Traitor Silence’ written in the same period of 1952–1953. In Waten’s novel Hannah’s approach to the rising xenophobia and political repression in the town is to assert that ‘now more than any other time we must look the world boldly in the face. Otherwise we’ll be spat on.’ Solomon replies that they need to keep their heads down: ‘the less we say the better. As long as we live here we must keep a tight control on our words.’¹¹⁵ Of course, Solomon’s approach proves self-defeating. When Solomon is caught up inadvertently in a brawl defending members of the IWW against attacks from right wingers, Mandy, his rich Jewish friend, cruelly severs his relationship with him suggesting that he ‘place[s] the reputation of the community before anything else and any Jew who lowers it is deserving of the strongest condemnation’.¹¹⁶

Hannah’s approach is to be far more openly critical and combative, which comes out in a scene where the family visit the synagogue in Perth. Waten emphasises the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 95.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 278.

class divisions in the Jewish community, suggesting along the more radical lines of Jewish antifascist politics that Jewish working-class interests lay with an alliance with the working class more generally rather than with bourgeois Jews, Jewish politicians, or conservative Rabbis. Hannah becomes angry during the Rabbi's speech when he says that 'the loyal Jewish community would not hesitate to support the strongest means to win the war', including by endorsing conscription. Hannah rhetorically asks: 'How many more Kaddishes does the Rabbi want recited?'¹¹⁷ Waten's politics here also touch on the Jewish antifascist critique of assimilation discussed in previous chapters. Upon a reproach from a member of the synagogue for not joining them more regularly and that being 'the beginning of assimilation', Hannah replies: 'Really I don't see how your ideas differ very much from those we hear in Stirlington day in and day out from Christians ... What does your Jewishness consist of, you might answer me that?'¹¹⁸ This is an echo of the Jewish left line that the problem with assimilation was the imitation of 'reactionary ways', that is, a political quiescence and the taking on of bourgeois values and morality.¹¹⁹

What brings Waten's novel and his play 'The Loser is Black', both written in 1952–1953, together is the depiction of the complex nature of racialisation's material and psychological impact. This also brings Waten's social realist project in alignment with the Jewish left analysis of antisemitism. Waten's is an account of how racism works at a historically specific point on everyday life, on different character types within a family, and the gendered dimensions of how racism affects one's economic and social prospects in society. This is played out within both family dynamics and on an individual psychological level to produce people's experience and ways of interacting with the world. What is common across these depictions is that although both an Aboriginal perspective and a Jewish migrant perspective are used by Waten to critique society, to gain what could be deemed a more critical and truthful perspective on the whole of society, Waten also made clear that this excluded or racialised perspective of his characters was no guarantee of gaining that larger social critique or of forming a political subjectivity with the capacity to challenge existing power relations.¹²⁰

As we have seen in 'The Loser is Black', Waten foresaw that the extent of Australian racism against Aboriginal people just as often meant a forcing of tragedy. This was also demonstrated in how Hannah and Solomon's migrant experience informs their actions in differing ways. Hannah has the benefit of her political knowledge of Russian history and society combined with her sceptical outsider's view of Australian society.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 177.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 178–179.

¹¹⁹ See discussion in Chap. 3.

¹²⁰ The project of *The Unbending* was misunderstood by contemporary readers, including by its defenders, see Carter, *A Career in Writing*, 73–99. Waten's approach aligned with Lambert's call for 'better realism'. Waten depicted not simply the truth of individual characters, but how their plights related to the whole truth of society. This approach necessitated breaking with bourgeois realism and its techniques. Ibid., 90–99.

Her understanding of the naked class conflict and open repression in Tsarist Russia becomes completely apposite in supposedly democratic and egalitarian Australia.¹²¹ Solomon, on the other hand, dreams of being able to emulate Mandy and use his wealth to escape any social stigma based on being Russian or Jewish; in other words, to participate in the fantasy that one can transcend race through class ascension. It is precisely Solomon's migrant positionality which makes him more susceptible to an individualist or petit bourgeois mentality.¹²² Thus, there was no straight line between a racialised subjectivity and an emancipatory collective political subject. As in Hannah's character arc, to journey from the first to the second required a wider social critique learned through political struggle.

Thus, in *Alien Son* the story 'Black Girl' had reflected a subtle understanding that the Jewish migrant perspective could not be the same as an Aboriginal perspective: a Jewish perspective represented a certain positionality within an exploitative and eliminationist socio-economic structure. 'The Loser is Black' and *The Unbending* then examined these subjectivities, asking how they were constituted and what social options were available to those wishing to resist racialisation. In social realist style, Waten demonstrated that only actions based in a wider social critique could offer successful resistance. Waten's depiction of the interlinked nature of race, class, and gender as they played out in the lives of his characters reflected Jewish antifascism's tenet: that if one did not see racialisation as imbricated with the exploitation and oppression of class societies and imperialism, one ended up with the political dead end of a nationalist response. In the Jewish antifascist account, a political answer to racism and colonialism rested instead on solidarities that could stretch across groups whose racialisation stemmed from differing ideological formations based in war, exploitation, and dispossession.

As suggested by Carter, Waten's engagement with the non-Jewish cultural world (including through Dolphin Publications and the Australasian Book Society) made clear his claim for a migrant fiction as Australian literature. There is a strong continuity here, however, with Waten and Fitzpatrick's claims for this Australian literature as outlined in *Southern Stories*. Waten's clear inspiration to write socialist realist literature as in the United States, which depicted the joint imbrication of race and class (and also here gender), meant his alignment with a more critical non-Australianist left-wing cultural movement as outlined in the previous chapter. Waten's production of these texts in 1952–1953 represents a high point of the Jewish antifascist imagination. Far from the production of simple propaganda or a crude roadmap for political action, Waten's three texts here reflect what I would suggest is a fulfilment of his claim in *Southern Stories* for art to take its place within larger social and political

¹²¹ See, for example, the scene where Hannah asks the headmaster angrily, 'Mr Grogan: are you pedagogue or gendarme's agent?' Waten, *The Unbending*, 254.

¹²² This is echoed by the Lily character, in 'The Loser is Black', who tries to choose an impossible path of racial escape after being presented with the extremely limited options available to Aboriginal women by the intensity of Australian racism.

questions through ‘subtle and varied means’. As I have outlined above, the Jewish antifascist imagination at work here was conditioned by several complex factors, chief among them Aboriginal anti-racist struggle, better figured as ‘dynamic expression of Aboriginal sovereignty’, and its complex mediation through both CPA ideology and associated civil society activism.¹²³

The persistence of themes that problematised settlement and drew attention to the plight of Aboriginal people in Australia reflects the cultural positioning of this literary and artistic work. Through an understanding of the Holocaust and the consequences of fascism, a wider critical and anti-racist imagination was developed by Jewish antifascists. *Jewish Youth*’s minor culture project was not separate from Australian cultural nationalism; in fact, the spaces opened through cultural nationalism, such as Dolphin Publications, were key to the emergence of the possibility of *Jewish Youth*. As I have outlined, Australian cultural nationalism of this period itself was split: on the one hand, ‘Australianism’ tended to reproduce settler colonial tropes of pseudo-egalitarianism and, on the other hand, many versions of this cultural nationalism reflected an anti-imperialist and anti-racist imagination which aligned with Aboriginal political movements to interrupt the reproduction of racial ideologies. *Jewish Youth* exceeded the boundaries of a narrowly defined cultural nationalism, representing one of the best examples of the non-Australianist wing of the new cultural expression of the period. As a minor culture it acted as an imaginative support to movements counterposed to the status quo. Jewish antifascist literature in this sense had a dialectical relationship with the project of constructing a non-nationalist and transnational Jewish political subjectivity.

I do not suggest that ‘transnational’ thinking is a byword for progressive or anti-racist. As in Goldhar’s ‘Australian Literature’, it could be a means by which to assert a ‘Jewish as settler’ futurity without explicitly addressing the dispossession inherent in settler colonialism. However, in another register more attuned to the problems of power, exploitation, dispossession, and racism, the transnational scope of Jewish antifascist thinking could be a method for seeing past ‘Australia’ as the only space to make political claims or as a ‘natural’ unquestioned setting for those writing or painting in Australia. The Jewish antifascist oeuvre more often than not reflected an anti-racist internationalism, making it open to being pushed and pulled by global anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles, including Aboriginal resistance movements. The Jewish antifascist cultural expression that served to question and interrupt most forcefully the reproduction of settlerist ideology were the works of those such as Waten and Yosel Bergner which were based on engagement with Aboriginal people. The work of those such as Goldhar’s reproduced some of the attitudes prevalent at the time, even within left circles, and showed the least faith in the possibility of class politics or that political change could happen within the Jewish community. Here we can see the homologous nature of certain forms of cultural nationalism, settler ideology, and Popular Front

¹²³ McKinnon, “Expressing Indigenous Sovereignty,” 10.

antifascism in eschewing a class analysis for broader cross-class political categories of solidarity and identification.

The three texts by Judah Waten that I have assessed in this chapter indicate that an anti-imperialist Jewish antifascism could be deployed in wider anti-racist solidarity. Jewish antifascism's potential for reshaping Jewish subjectivities towards a challenging of settler colonial ideologies was dependent, however, on how it intersected with expressions of Aboriginal sovereignty within a wider political field. Waten's first step in developing Jewish solidarity with Indigenous people was to understand the structural position of Jewish people within Australian society as settlers. Waten's work suggests he understood the possibility of anti-racist solidarity between groups whose racialisation was based on different material bases of exploitation and oppression. By situating his depiction of the complex impact of racialisation within a wider critique of capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism, he suggested that effective Jewish participation in a wider struggle against racism was congruent with a critical anti-racist Jewish antifascism that was willing to employ class politics in an effort to remake, question, and disrupt Jewish communities and the foundations upon which they were built.

8. Conclusion

Max Kaiser⁽⁸⁾

They are always singing the song of People and Nation, of akhdes [unity] and klal yisroel [the whole of the Jewish people], to make you forget your real hardships, to make you forget that there can be no akhdes between factory owner and worker, between landlord and tenant, between evictor and evictee!

Jewish Labour Bund poster for 1928 Polish Sejm elections¹

This book has attempted to answer questions about Jewish politics that I first came to through my involvement with the Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS), an organisation where I worked as a community organiser for three and a half years. This was my entrée into the small but passionate world of the Melbourne Jewish left. Norman Rothfield, one of the organisation's founders, had passed away the year before I was employed. He along with Evelyn Rothfield and others carried through aspects of a politics that began with the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism and carried through to the AJDS.

In April 2015, the month after I began researching this history and resigned from my position at the AJDS, the first 'Reclaim Australia' rally was held in Melbourne, an incident which turned out to be the first of many occasions for fascists to mobilise openly in Victoria. Two years later Donald Trump was elected President emboldening fascists everywhere. In 2018, the far-right racist Alternative für Deutschland became the third largest party in the German parliament, not to mention the rise of the far right and a resurgence of antisemitism elsewhere in Europe. Parallel to this, more cracks in the mainstream of Australian Jewish discourse are emerging, particularly influenced by the growth of the Jewish left in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the growing strength of Aboriginal activism. New radical Jewish left groups such as Tzedek in Sydney and the Loud Jew Collective in Melbourne have sprung up in the last couple of years. It seems as if the notion that right-wing Zionism is the only

¹ Quoted in Gertrud Pickhan, "Yiddishkayt and Class Consciousness: The Bund and Its Minority Concept," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2009): 259.

⁽⁸⁾ University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Max Kaiser
Email: kaiserm@unimelb.edu.au

acceptable politics for a safe and flourishing Jewish community is gradually being displaced. Antifascism once again has become a highly relevant political framing for the Jewish left both in Australia and internationally.

This book has tracked the emergence of the Jewish antifascist left as a collective political subject and argued that it developed out of a complex political ethic of Holocaust memorialisation. I outlined how this ethic was multidirectional and geared towards a horizon of redemption and radical social change. This orientation, along with an understanding of the racist nature of the Holocaust, led to the opening of possibilities for new lines of political solidarity with other oppressed peoples.

The Jewish antifascist left rejected internalised antisemitism and respectability politics and developed a critical consciousness of, and approach to, Australian society. This consciousness was the result of a particular understanding of antisemitism as inextricably linked with fascism. Australian Jewish antifascism was in alignment with a broader transnational Jewish antifascism, reflecting a Jewish internationalism. In this Jewish internationalist cultural politics, Jewish nationalism was countered with a view that Jewish cultures could be expressed and developed with equal validity and importance in multiple languages around the world. The Australian Jewish antifascist left developed an understanding of antisemitism as a structural ideology within Australian society. Antisemitism was viewed as contingent and combatable through wider processes of political struggle with non-Jews against reaction and oppression more generally.

The Jewish antifascist left's internationalist politics and cultural programme put it at odds with Zionism, assimilationism, and Melbourne's post-war Bundism. In this respect, the Jewish antifascist left rejected a definition of Jewishness as race, religion, or nation; they instead understood Jews as an internationally distributed and diverse people, constituted through history rather than divine or national will. In their view, this dispersed and diverse characteristic was a positive rather than negative formation. Against the political assimilationist and Jewish nationalist view, a Jewish antifascist politics transcended allegiance to any particular nation-state; instead they viewed Jewish antifascism as part of an internationalist progressive political struggle.

While the embrace of Israel by the United States and allied powers such as Australia in the global Cold War (and since) meant an ongoing disaster for the Palestinian people, it also had the effect of allying Zionism in Australia with a repressive Cold War political consensus. As such there came to be no contradiction between political allegiances to the Australian state, Western imperialism, and Israel. Zionism came to authorise a drastic circumscription of Jewish identity and politics in Australia. The excision of the Jewish left from mainstream community institutions meant the severing of connections between the Jewish community and civil society groups, including those concerned with broader opposition to racism, colonialism, and solidarity with Indigenous justice campaigns. The anti-German migration campaign was both the most developed and public form of the assertion of an independent Jewish left political subjectivity, as well as the occasion of its rapid demise. Although this campaign at times articulated

itself within a left nationalist framework, it was not confined to a nationalist discourse. The convergence of anti-communism and Zionism meant that the Jewish right could develop a new form of political assimilationism, making a claim to whiteness and governmental belonging through the destruction of an independent collective Jewish political subjectivity that challenged existing racialised power structures in alliance with a broader non-Jewish movement.

Part of Jewish antifascism's legacy for today's politics is its complex cultural and political resistance to racialisation. This resistance was always necessarily multilayered and dialectical. It emphasised: the strengthening of group belonging as a means of transcending the group; the deepening of Jewish consciousness in order to perceive more keenly the wider world; the formation of a Jewish political subjectivity as a necessary pre-condition for effective political co-operation with non-Jews; and the memorialisation of the specifically antisemitic racism of the Holocaust in a mode that was comparative and multidirectional. These ideas came about in dialogue with the politics of the (long) Popular Front: in a moment where the threat of fascism meant a new approach to antisemitism. Jewishness was encountered anew as the site for the organisation of a certain type of progressive political subjectivity.

While 'unity' made sense as a call to intra-Jewish solidarity against outside antisemitism, it did not offer a viable defence against a near fatal attack from the Jewish right, carrying out the political repression of the ruling class inside Jewish communities. While the Jewish left was eventually forced to split from the mainstream, a combination of its own class composition and political orientation, the strength of anti-communist political repression, and its discrediting through its denial of Soviet bloc antisemitism meant it could no longer provide a viable challenge to the Jewish right's communal hegemony. A 'unity' politics could not mount a coherent or sustained resistance to Zionist Jewish nationalism. Envisioning the Yishuv's struggle as anti-imperialist in the lead up to 1948 led, for the most part, to disorientation or tacit support for Israel in the period immediately following this, despite Israel's growing position as a key ally of Western imperialism.

The emphasis on the national-popular cross-class fight against fascism meant that Jewish antifascists were susceptible to the reproduction of settler ideology in Australia, which similarly promised a vision of egalitarian and multi-ethnic national belonging without the prospect of class conflict. More critical strands of Jewish antifascism, however, emphasised an internationalist anti-racism and anti-imperialism and found alignment with, and informed, a critical current of Australian culture in the 1940s and 1950s. A Jewish antifascist minor literature transcended both Australian national literature and a Jewish national literary project. This somewhat amorphous critical current of Australian cultural expression was evidence of class struggle politics, Jewish antifascism, anti-colonial movements, and continued expressions of Aboriginal sovereignty all creating a space for new solidarities which could challenge established power structures.

As Jewish communities face new political crossroads, I hope my re-assessment of the legacy of the Australian Jewish antifascist left, including mistakes made and pos-

sibilities quashed, can help to inform future struggles. Fundamental diasporic Jewish safety and flourishing can only come about through the formation of a Jewish critical class politics that is willing to challenge the structural inequalities of Jewish communities, to reorient solidarities away from allegiances to empires and nation-states and towards revolutionary movements aimed at finally abolishing racism, colonialism, and capitalism. In settler colonies such as Australia and Israel/Palestine, these movements would constitute a process of decolonisation led and determined by Indigenous people. The Loud Jew Collective envisions ‘a Jewishness that is not tied to Zionism. Where Jews are responsive to the Aboriginal sovereignty and law of the lands and waters on which we live. Where Jewishness is fostered through cross-border relationships, histories, cultures and knowledges. Where this conception of Jewishness joins our work to locally based and international movements fighting exploitation and domination.’ It is such a vision that functions as the imagined standpoint of redemption from where I have attempted to consider the history analysed in this book.

I have written this history in accordance with a conceptualisation of the temporality of emancipatory movements as belonging together in a string of discontinuity, linked not causally but through a common emancipatory horizon. If the thought of the Jewish antifascist left can still provoke, challenge, convoke, and inspire us today, this suggests that it cannot be fully reduced to its discrete historical context. Thus, this book was written not simply to challenge previous renderings of this past, but also contemporary rendering of the present.

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Primary Sources

The key primary sources utilised in this book comprise newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and literary works published by the Jewish antifascist left in the immediate post Second World War period in Australia. It also includes other contemporary national and international sources that illuminate this body of work. I identify key archives below and then also cite individual references by kind.

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University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

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