Anglo-Jews and
Eastern European Jews
in a White Australia

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Contents

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Dedication

To my four migrant grandparents – Johnny and Anyu, Saba and Savta – whose stories of displacement, resilience and the rebuilding of their lives in Australia have made me painfully aware of both the importance and the evanescence of memory; and whose attachment to books instilled in me a love of reading and learning and the compulsive need to analyse the world.
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Abstract

This thesis traces the story of Australian Jewish identity from the colonial period to the end of the 1920s. Anglo-Jews aligned themselves with 'white Australia', arguing that their Jewishness was merely a private trait. Moments of crisis in the 1890s and 1920s, prompted by the possible and actual migration of Eastern European Jews to Australia, threatened to destabilise the place Anglo-Jews had carved out in Australian society, and forced a renegotiation of what it meant to be Jewish in Australia. These moments demonstrate that despite being notionally accepted in Australia, the whiteness of Jews was never guaranteed. Drawing on newspapers and government records, this thesis argues that since their arrival in Australia, Jews have been ambivalently/ambiguously placed in relation to Australian constructions of whiteness. As a group notoriously hard to define, Jews are an important case study in an analysis of the discursive world of 'white Australia', presenting new questions that challenge existing binaries of 'white' and 'coloured'.

Preface

Serious history, I have always assumed, demands a measured detachment from the subjects of my writing – both for the purposes of achieving an ever-elusive 'objectivity', and out of an awareness that 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'.[1] Feeling the strangeness of the past compared to the world in which I live, I have worked towards an attendant ability to assess that past on its own terms, without importing my own views and commitments. So I was surprised and unsettled by the visceral emotion I experienced while researching this thesis.

When I visited the National Archives of Australia, it was temporarily housed in the Museum of Australian Democracy in Old Parliament House. I spent my time in a small exhibition space that served as the reading room, repeatedly interrupted by curious Museum visitors. Receiving my requested files, I was initially horrified by my awareness that in directly handling these materials (without even a pair of gloves!) I was contributing to their inevitable degradation. But this unmediated handling enabled the sense of startling intimacy that followed.

Sifting through a series of Form 40s – applications for the admission of relatives or friends to Australia – I was captivated by the details of these prospective migrants' lives. Although most of these details were irrelevant to my thesis, I noted down names, ages, places of birth and professions. I found myself worrying about the success of their applications, compelled to locate ship manifests to check whether they had ultimately arrived and managed to start new and free lives. Desperation and hope emanated, in equal parts, directly from the tissue-thin paper I was so worried about tearing. Their last names – Cohen, Lewis, Rappaport, Perlman, Rosenblat – were so familiar, sometimes the surnames of my childhood friends, sometimes only slightly different; just enough to remind me that these people were technically strangers, but not enough to lose that sense that I could see and hear and understand them.

There is a strange paradox inherent in the retention of these sorts of administrative records by archival collections. Seldom seen again by the people who filled them out, they capture particular and very small moments in bureaucratic processes which were largely insignificant in the scheme of those peoples' real-life concerns, their questions of sustenance, belonging, safety, justice. And yet it is these papers which make their way into our official archives, to be accessed by historians and honours students a century later. In some cases, only this material survives as testament to an entire life.

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[1] L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953).

The story I wanted to tell in my thesis was, in a sense, much bigger than these individual lives. But I could not shake the uncomfortable feeling that these individual lives were also much bigger than the story I wanted to tell.

I had, of course, chosen a research topic of profound personal significance – the Jewish story, and my own family's story, being one of repeated displacements and migrations. With every form or Cabinet minute I read came the involuntary thoughts: *they're talking about me*; or, even more forcefully, *this could have been me*. My great grandparents migrated westwards from Galicia (now Ukraine) to Budapest, Vienna, and Brussels, in the same period that some of their peers chose or managed to move further, to the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia; these were the very migrants whose papers I was holding. Coupled with the anxious histories of persecution with which I was raised, and a deep awareness of the continued precariousness of the Jewish experience in the diaspora, my emotion in the archive was, in fact, entirely predictable.[2]

Neither did the empathy seem as problematic as I initially thought. For my Jewish community, writing history is therapeutic – and a very familiar modality. We know from personal experience that organising the details of our collective memory of suffering into a coherent narrative is one way to make sense of the seemingly senseless. Jewish tradition structures this therapy in a very intentional way; our festivals constituted as rituals of storytelling and retelling, of grappling with, and even reliving, the past.[3]

None of these modes sits comfortably within the traditional purview of academic history, with its reverence for the uniqueness and distance of the past. But I proceeded to frame and explore the more legal, administrative, and political questions of my thesis with the sobering awareness of the real lives affected by these questions. The conviction that this *mattered* was informed by my deeply felt historical empathy, and the potent memory of the affect of the archive.

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[2] I borrow the phrase 'anxious histories' from Jordana Silverstein, who uses it to describe the 'overwhelming anxiety' which permeates modern Jewish communities about their post-Holocaust place in the world. Jordana Silverstein, *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), pp. 3-4.

[3] The Jewish festival of Pesach (Passover), for example, is designed not only to 'retell' the story of the Biblical exodus of the Israelites from Egypt; but to relive it, through a mixture of texts, rituals and the eating of symbolic foods. In fact there is no Biblical/Rabbinic Hebrew word which literally translates to 'history' (modern Hebrew uses *historia,* taken directly from Greek); objective history is foreign to Jewish tradition. The Biblical word used instead, *zikaron,* more accurately translates to 'memory' or 'memorial'.

Chapter 1
Introduction

In 1934 Egon Kisch, Jewish Czechoslovakian communist and self-styled 'Raging Reporter from Prague', was invited to speak at an anti-fascism rally in Melbourne. The Australian government decided to prevent him from entering the country. It employed two separate grounds under the *Immigration Restriction Act* for his exclusion, including, infamously, the dictation test – administered in his case in Scottish Gaelic.[1] The use of the dictation test to keep Kisch out is interesting because on the surface, he was far from the test's intended target. His skin colour was undeniably 'white', and he was apparently seen as 'quintessentially European' – an educated journalist who spoke multiple European languages. Yet his politics and his racial identity were deemed objectionable enough to warrant the test's usage. Two separate pieces of litigation followed, both reaching the High Court. The submissions and decisions in each court case underscored the ambiguities and confusions surrounding the dictation test – a racial bar disguised as an education test, and articulated broadly enough to allow executive use in cases well beyond the initial intention, such as the case of a white, European, anti-fascist Jew.[2] The furore over Egon Kisch is a striking instance of the complex administration of the White Australia Policy and – most significantly for this thesis – of the place of Jews within it. It reveals that in White Australia, Jews were an ambiguous, transitional category, at once white and non-white.

For scholars of Jewish history, the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth symbolise mass dislocation. Millions of Jews left Eastern Europe and spread around the globe, fleeing persecution and seeking a better life. They settled in the highest number – at least two million – in the United States, with hundreds of thousands of others heading to other destinations. Approximately 10,000 made their way to Australia.[3] This wave of global Jewish migration coincides not only with the rise of European nationalism and antisemitism, but also with a new phenomenon of restrictive immigration legislation, enacted in many of the countries to which Jews

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[1] See full account in Heidi Zogbaum, *Kisch in Australia: The Untold Story* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2004). Kisch also wrote of his adventures: *Australian Landfall* (London: M. Secker & Warburg, 1937).

[2] *R v Carter; Ex parte Kisch* (1934) 52 CLR 221; *R v Wilson and another; Ex Parte Kisch* (1934) 52 CLR 234.

[3] Charles Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 5 Part 8 (1964), p. 375.

had fled. Australia's *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, Britain's *Aliens Act 1905*, and the United States's *Immigration Act 1924* utilised different mechanisms by which to exclude 'undesirables'. However, each was based on the same premise – that the nation's identity is constituted by who it excludes – and thus reflected that restrictive immigration laws had become the basic technique for white settler nations to determine the composition of their communities.

This thesis is not about Kisch, nor the 1930s; and it does not purport to make sense of the entire global picture of immigration restriction. But it does explore why, by the 1930s, a white European Jew was considered worthy of exclusion from Australia. It argues that, to understand the government's use of broad policy, legislative and administrative tools to exclude Jews by that decade, we need a more complex understanding of what had come before – both in terms of policy and public discourse. It traces the history of the identity negotiations of Australia's Jewish community – conversations within it, and conversations about it – as a test case in re-examining the boundaries of whiteness in Australia's 'imagined community'.[4]

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Australian Jews have not been neglected by historians. A sizeable body of scholarship exists, mainly social in focus, and best described as 'contribution history'.[5] It includes institutional histories of synagogues, schools and other communal bodies, biographies of a select list of high-profile (male) Australian Jews, and demographic histories of the compositions and locations of various Australian Jewish communities. Often rigorously researched, these histories are a fount of detailed information, invaluable for my research. But they remain for the most part localised and inward-looking, examining details of personnel and institutions of profound significance to the community

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[4] My language borrows from Benedict Anderson's influential work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983).

[5] The key works roughly corresponding with my period of study include: Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Collins Australia, 1988); Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, Vol. I (1788-1945)* (Melbourne: Heinemann Australia, 1991); William D. Rubinstein (ed.) *Jews in the Sixth Continent* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Peter Y. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968); John S. Levi and G. F. J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1974); Israel Getzler, *Neither Toleration Nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation* (Melbourne, 1970); Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994); Michael Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 1933-1948* (Sydney: Croom Helm Australia, 1985). Serge Liberman's *The Bibliography of Australasian Judaica 1788-2008* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2011) is useful summary of the field.

of which they write, but of less relevance to the wider context within which that community functioned and was shaped.

This historiography cannot address the question of how White Australia and Jewish identity converged. It does not set its material within broader ideological understandings of Jews in the West, or the complex interrelationship of ideas about race and the nation-state central to Australia's development. Few of the works mention White Australia.[6] Even less do they connect their scholarship to general Australian historiography, asking what the status of the Australian Jewish community says about Australian society as a whole, and histories of white Australia – focusing mostly on Chinese migration – have little to say about exclusion of Jewish people.[7] A single (brilliant) article by Jon Stratton from 1996, which begins to theorise the situation of Jews as a category in the context of White Australia, helped me to frame my thesis question.[8] But there has been little to follow it. An important part of my research process therefore has been to explore why, in a country preoccupied with racial boundaries, the intersection of Jews and whiteness is so neglected.

The problem is that in its focus on the local and the particular, Australian Jewish history fails to justify the significance of that information for its readers – other than those community insiders for whom it represents a history of things precious and familiar. In other words, there is no analytic grit or meaningful framing for the raw information. The *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* is a case in point. Like many historical societies, its focus is local and commemorative; in this tiny

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[6] Rutland's *Edge of the Diaspora* makes no explicit mention of 'White Australia' at all. Rubinstein's *The Jews in Australia* mentions 'White Australia' six times in its 600 pages; four of those references briefly mention the way the policy affected Jews, with no examination of the broader ideological underpinnings of the policy.

[7] Note, for example: Stephen Castles et al, *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1992) and A. C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967), from which Jews are entirely absent. This focus on Asian immigration is common across historiography in Australia, the UK, and US: Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law and "The Chinese Puzzle" in Imperial Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (University of California Press, 2012); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); David Atkinson. *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[8] Jon Stratton, 'The Colour of Jews: Jews, Race and the White Australia Policy', *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol 20 Issue 50-51 (1996), p. 51. The article reappears as a chapter in Stratton's book: Jon Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish* (London: Routledge, 2000).

field, the journal dominates, so that the broader historiography bears the imprint of this narrow focus.[9] The AJHS's 2001 volume, to take one example, includes histories of institutions (the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Education Board, the Eastern Suburbs Hebrew School Parents and Citizens Association, and Perth Jewry's Memorial Cemetery), significant communal figures (including one Reverend) and families (the Heiser family), as well as two archival histories, of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation and Spielvogel Register.[10] The subjects themselves might be fertile ground for micro-historical work, illustrating the complexities and textures of past lives. But within the pages of the journal, the interpretive meaning assigned to these celebratory histories is limited and problematic. Institution-building in the 1920s is celebrated as a 'reawakening of Jewish communal spirit'.[11] The history of Jewish educational institutions is valuable as a reminder of 'those who volunteered their time and effort towards supporting Jewish education in Sydney in less affluent times'.[12] And the story of the establishment of a public memorial for a former Jewish cemetery matters because 'youthful members of the community… can draw some pride and satisfaction from the Memorial and what it symbolises'.[13]

In his famous essay 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', Nietzsche identifies three types of history. The person who does 'monumental' history examines the past with the explicit intent of finding models for her own life, excavating great moments in the history of humanity that provide the reassurance that greatness has previously been attained, and therefore may be again. 'Antiquarian' history is that which 'belongs to the preserving and revering soul – to him who with loyalty and love looks back on his origins' and 'gives thanks for his existence'. This history helps people form a connection, or an identity, in relation to a 'venerable' past. Finally, there is 'critical' history; for this, a person must bring the past to 'bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it'. Each of these forms serves basic human needs – for inspiration, for reverence, and for deliverance. All three, in Nietzsche's view, are problematic. Under his categorisation,

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[9] It should be noted that a second peer-reviewed journal, the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, has been published annually since 1987 by the Australian Association of Jewish Studies (under the *Menorah* in the years 1987-1990). 'Devoted to the study of Jewish culture in all aspects and all periods' its international and interdisciplinary focus, with papers spanning Biblical, literary and cultural studies, makes it less relevant to this survey of Australian Jewish historiography. See http://www.aajs.org.au.

[10] *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Volume 15 (2001).

[11] ibid, p. 590.

[12] ibid, p. 626.

[13] ibid, p. 665.

Australian Jewish history is intensely 'antiquarian'. Nietzsche's critique of this type equally applies: 'Many things are not noticed at all; the others are seen in isolation, as through a microscope'.[14]

Nietzsche's scheme alerts us to a deeper issue with the existing field. The very conviction that it is thrilling – the sense that there is or should be interest in doing Australian Jewish history this way – is based on a limited, reductive paradigm of Jewishness and the Jewish story. The history is driven by the quest for strong, authentic Jewish identity; details matter because all components of that quest need to be located, identified, and celebrated. And so, these histories contain within them a series of moral judgments, assumptions about the purpose of history, and simplifications and distortions of the complexities of Jewish identities and experiences.

Most salient for the purposes of this thesis is the binary assessment of assimilation as bad, and the maintenance of a strong sense of Jewish difference as good. This fixed moral argument plays out in discussions that either condemn or defend Anglo-Jewry. Medding, for example, argues that 'one should not… make the mistake of thinking that the leading Australian Jews were anything but proud and loyal Jews'.[15] Rubinstein conversely claims that the Anglo-Jewish emphasis on Judaism as a denomination 'accelerated the process whereby Judaism was relegated to the status of an outward, formalised religion', and bemoans Australia's non-Jewish Cohens and Levys who are proof of 'the high levels of assimilation which took place in colonial Australia'.[16] She concedes that Anglo-Jewish leaders were, 'despite all their limitations, indeed loyal Jews', because 'they chose to remain within the fold' and busied themselves with institution-building and charity-giving. But, she adds, 'to explain is not necessarily to condone'; ultimately, she disapproves of their approach.[17] Rutland's concluding chapter is devoted to anxieties about Australian Jewry's 'assimilation problem': she argues that 'the demographic profile of Australian Jewry still raises doubts as to whether the community is capable of reproducing itself'.[18] There is an element of linearity, even teleology, in

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[14] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations,* translated by R. J. Hollingdale (first published 1874. Reprinted Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 57-124.

[15] Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival*, p. 39.

[16] Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 24.

[17] Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, pp. 54-55.

[18] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, pp. 392-398, chapter titled 'Where to Now?'. Rutland also notes with satisfaction the high enrolment of Jewish students in Jewish day schools and the growth of other Jewish institutions and hopes for 'many colourful chapters yet in the Australian Jewish success story'.

this, suggesting that Australian Jewish communities, and Australian Jewish identities, have been progressively 'strengthened' and 'improved' by successive waves of migration. This is informed, of course, by the numerical growth of the community, but also by an implicit moral judgement: that, with the migration of European Jews, 'the tide of assimilation was stemmed' and 'Australian Jewry had come of age'.[19] Beyond their anachronism (long criticised by the contextualist school of intellectual history)[20] these discussions leave little room for more interesting concerns – the textures of how Australian Jewish identity has been shaped by negotiations, concessions, compromise, cross-pollination between groups; or the constitution of Jewishness in Australia.

The landscape is slowly changing, and this thesis draws significantly on the recent work of Michael Lever, Jennifer Creese, and Margaret Taft and Andrew Markus.[21] All bring significant theoretical framing to their explorations of different groups of Australian Jews, and provide insight into issues of broader significance for Australian history in different ways.[22] Brilliant scholarship on Jews in Britain, Continental Europe and the United States also showcases a more nuanced treatment of Jewish history, especially developing a less judgmental analysis of assimilation.[23] Promoted by Jewish leaders and Christian supporters of Jewish emancipation, and later decried by Zionists and

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[19] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, pp. 223, 324.

[20] See Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, Vol 8 No 1 (1969), pp. 3-53.

[21] See Michael Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact: Unmarked Graves in the Jewish Section, Melbourne General Cemetery', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol 13 No 4 (2009), pp. 464-487; Jennifer Creese, 'Negotiating "Russian-ness": Politics, Religion, Nationalism and Identity in the South Brisbane Russian Jewish Community, 1912-22', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* Vol 30 (2017), pp. 74-91; and Margaret Taft and Andrew Markus, *A Second Chance: The Making of Yiddish Melbourne* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2018), pp. xv-xvi.

[22] Lever places Anglo-Jewish acculturation in a class context; Creese uses theories of 'diaspora' and 'creolisation' to analyse Russian Jews in Brisbane; and Taft and Markus paint a vivid picture of Melbourne's Yiddish speaking community based on bringing archival sources and interviews into conversation.

[23] On British Jews, see Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1983) and *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1992); David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). On American Jews, see Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folk and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Deborah Dash Moore (ed.). *American Jewish Identity Politics* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008). The literature on European Jews and assimilation is particularly extensive: *Uriel Tal, Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914*, translated by Noah Jonathan Jacobs (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1975); Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in Nineteenth-century France* (Brandeis University Press, 1977); Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University press, 1987); Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968).

Orthodox figures as a betrayal of the Jewish people, 'assimilationist' became an epithet of opprobrium, as Jews were chastised for 'abandon[ing] the traditional Jewish community in order to embrace modern secular culture'.[24] Traditional scholarship on the issue thus tended to be very polemical, obscuring varieties of behaviour and nuances of identity in modern Jewish history. Recent scholarship moves beyond Katz's 'Germanocentric' and flattened picture of Jewish assimilation,[25] looking more closely at the multiple influences that forge both individual and collective identity, and the coexistence of the desire for full civic integration with the retention of ethnic particularism.[26]

This scholarship also sheds light on the possible reasons for Australian Jewish historiography's narrow focus and binary analysis. Todd Endelman points out that for Jews, as a persecuted minority, 'the present always seems to be unsettled and crisis-ridden, freighted with memories of the past and fears for the future'.[27] Thus the relentless presentism and inherent antiquarianism of Jewish historians is linked to their social insecurity as Jews.[28] It is also a result of the field's relative youthfulness – and prolonged isolation from the academy.[29] Paula Hyman points out that, before the 1970s in the United States, Jewish history was a parochial enterprise, conducted not in university history departments, but in smaller community-run institutions. She argues that, as Jewish history became integrated into the academy, it also became 'normalised', that is, it began to be conducted by the same rules as other fields of historical research, weakening the tendency to make it 'a vehicle

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[24] Paula Hyman, 'The History of European Jewry: Recent Trends in the Literature', *The Journal of Modern History* Vol 54 No 2 (1982), p. 303 and Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), p. 10.

[25] Katz's work tells the story of Jewish modernisation through the attitudes ad activities of a tiny segment of the Jewish population: German 'maskilim' and their patrons: Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). See Ira Katznelson and Pierre Birnbaum (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1995), for a well-articulated critique of Katz. Newer scholarship shifts from elites to focus on 'village Jews… yeshivah students… protesters and consumers… renegades, criminals, and no-goodniks everywhere': Todd M. Endelman, 'In Defense of Jewish Social History', *Jewish Social Studies* Vol 7 No 3 (2001), p. 55 and Hyman, 'The History of European Jewry', p. 304.

[26] Hyman, 'The History of European Jewry', p. 303.

[27] Endelman, 'In Defense of Jewish Social History', p. 52.

[28] David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (eds.), *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 2-3.

[29] Endelman, 'In Defense of Jewish Social History', pp. 52-54.

of Jewish politics' (whether nationalist, integrationist, socialist, or religious).[30] This normalisation was a product of the normalisation of Jewish life itself – the decline of antisemitism and destigmatisation of Jewishness in the 1960s.[31] As the position of Jews in the United States solidified, Jewish historians were less concerned with the existential question of Jewish destiny, and 'less likely to use their work to advance this or that solution to a "Jewish Question" that had slipped from sight'.[32] Instead, historians of modern Jewry are now 'probing more deeply the connections, and tensions, between ideology and behaviour, between elites and masses, between acculturation and the assertion of minority-group identity'.[33] A comparable 'normalisation' is not yet evident in Australian Jewish history. Informed by the scholarship on other Jewries, my work hopes to contribute something to that process.

My research is also informed by a growing body of international and Australian scholarship on whiteness. Exploring the pervasive reach of race in colonial encounters and indigenous dispossession, as well as the way settler-colonial societies across the globe claimed, appropriated, and ultimately defended the superior status of the white race, this work demonstrates how and why whiteness was an inherent part of Western nation-building.[34] It is also beginning to acknowledge the 'indefiniteness' of whiteness, and the ability of various migrant groups to 'become' white,[35] 'by distinguishing themselves from other groups, through careful self-representations and selected

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[30] Hyman describes how, until the 1970s, scholars of Jewish history were more likely to hold appointments in religious seminaries, teachers colleges, Near Eastern studies departments, or even earned their living as pulpit rabbis, rather than in university history departments, and JPS (Jewish Publication Society) was the main publisher of scholarly Judaica, rather than university presses. In her assessment, the field was 'on the institutional margins of academic historiography in the United States, if not outside it altogether': Paula Hyman, 'The Ideological Transformation of Modern Jewish Historiography' in Shaye J. D. Cohen and Edward L. Greenstein (eds.), *The State of Jewish Studies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), pp. 143-157

[31] Endelman, 'In Defense of Jewish Social History', p. 59.

[32] Endelman, 'In Defense of Jewish Social History', p. 60.

[33] Hyman, 'The History of European Jewry', p. 319.

[34] Perhaps most influential is Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008), which demonstrates the ways in 'white countries' worked in connected ways to exclude people they defined as non-white. See also Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy*, and Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey, Katherine Ellinghaus (eds.), *Re-orienting Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the History of an Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.149-164.

[35] See for example David Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (Cambridge, MA, 2006). Also Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press, 1998).

cultural practices.'[36] Recent work on Italians and Greeks demonstrates that whiteness was not only a marker of division between white citizens and Asian migrants, but also between and among more ambiguous groups.[37] Scholars Andonis Piperoglou and Helen Andreoni address shifting racial attitudes towards Greeks and Italians within 'the discursive and legislative operations of whiteness'.[38] Francesco Ricatti and Luke Vitale focus on the complex, inventive and resilient strategies developed by migrants as a result, positioning them as active agents in constructing and performing whiteness in Australia.[39]

My thesis attempts to bring Australian Jewish history into conversation with this exciting scholarship, asking how we can shift the gaze towards a more connected, integrated and sophisticated history of Australian Jews – and what happens when we do.

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The central premise of this thesis is that White Australia's discursive world forced certain forms of identity-construction within the Anglo-Australian Jewish community, while the potential and actual migration of Eastern European Jews catalysed anxious renegotiations of that identity. On the one hand, Jews were present from the beginning of colonisation as convicts and free settlers, and Australia's early Jewish community enjoyed equal political and civil rights, seemingly equal partners in building a 'White Australia'. On the other hand, public and official discourse at

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[36] Suvendrini Perera, 'Whiteness and Its Discontents: Notes on politics, gender, sex and food in the year of Hanson', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol 20 Issue 2 (1999), p. 185.

[37] Luke Vitale, '"They're just as good as white people": Locating Italians in the Australian Field of Whiteness, 1891-1996' (University of New South Wales, unpublished Honours thesis, 2013). The US literature is the most developed, see: Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, *Are Italians White? How Race Is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Australian literature includes: Vanda Moraes-Gorecki, '"Black Italians" in the Sugar Fields of North Queensland: A Reflection on Labour Inclusion and Cultural Exclusion in Tropical Australia', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* Vol 5 No 3 (1994), Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Catherine Dewhirst, 'Collaborating on Whiteness: Representing Italians in Early White Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol 32 No 1 (2008).

[38] Andonis Piperoglou, '"Border Barbarisms", Albury 1902: Greeks and the Ambiguity of Whiteness', *Australia Journal of Politics and History* Vol 64 Issue 4 (2018), p. 530 and Helen Andreoni, 'Olive or White? The Colour of Italians in Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol 27 No 77 (2003).

[39] Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia: History, Memory, Identity* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Vitale, 'Locating Italians', p. 5, pp. 22-24. See also Luke Vitale, '"The Chinese of Europe": Italian and Chinese workers at the end of the nineteenth century' (University of Sydney Postgraduate Conference, December 2018).

moments of crisis in the 1890s and 1920s indicate confusions and a level of ambivalence about the desirability of Jews. In telling the story of this shift, this thesis interrogates how racialised ideas about Jews featured in the delimitation of Australian racial boundaries; how contrasting and overlapping identifications like white, European, British, Jewish and Australian intersected; and the divergent identities within the Jewish community which emerged as a result.

Newspapers – both Jewish and non-Jewish – are crucial to the analysis. A wealth of news reports, editorials, letters to the editor, and other articles give texture to particular historical moments; these media act as a vehicle for people's anxieties, providing glimpses of how institutions, organisations and individuals responded to moments of crisis, both real and imagined. The parliamentary discussions recorded in Hansard articulate why and how legislators drew racial distinctions and how they used the law to defend the polity.

The government records proved more complicated. The *Immigration Restriction Act*, modified many times throughout its lifespan, incorporated multiple mechanisms for the exclusion of Chinese and other undesirable migrants. The archives are replete with records that document the implementation of these provisions, as well as the negotiations and manoeuvres of both migrant groups and government officials.[40] Official policy relating to assisted passage schemes also generated huge amounts of paperwork – cabinet minutes, memoranda, and letters amongst government departments, and between the Commonwealth and state governments. Identifying Jews within this vast archive is tricky. Although at a few specific moments in the 1920s the desirability of Jews was indeed a main bureaucratic conversation, most of the references to Jews are tangential to bigger or different questions – about Eastern and Southern Europeans in general; about 'white aliens'; or about the assimilability of other migrant groups. When they are explicitly referenced, it is unsystematic, as the operative category for immigrant policy was nationality, or country of origin;

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[40] Kate Bagnall has done fascinating work demonstrating the negotiated nature of the White Australia Policy – 'revealing its unfolding, living history and its ongoing effects', and the way that boundaries of belonging were defined and refined: Kate Bagnall, 'Potter v. Minahan: Chinese Australians, the law and belonging in White Australia', *History Australia,* Vol 15 No 3 (2018), p. 474.

so Jews are subsumed under such categories as 'Russian', 'Polish' or 'Roumanian'.[41] Locating and assembling government documents relating to Jews became a process of weaving together fragments and throwaway references.

The very difficulty of positively locating Jewish organisations, congregations and individuals in the archive reflects broader trends in Australian society in the late colonial period and the first decades of Federation – it says something about the discursive world into which Australian Jews had to locate themselves. The community's self-conscious negotiations were *intended* to help them become, and remain, invisible as a separate group. These processes of classification – both the internal Jewish communal processes which consciously pursued invisibility, and the administrative processes which further erased Jews – are themselves interesting and worthy of examination. They lead us to a story which does not recuperate the social experience of actually *being* a Jew in Australia in this period. Rather, it is a story of identity formation as a tentative and contested *process*, and of what happens when a community's identity comes under threat – particularly when it had seemed as though it never would.

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The remainder of this thesis follows a chronological structure, which reveals the deepening complexity of Jewish experiences and identities in Australia.

I begin, in chapter two, by exploring in depth the acculturation and assimilation of Anglo-Jewry – first in Britain, and then in Australia. Anglo-Australian Jews consciously self-defined as British, white, and therefore non-threatening. They were 'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion', 'Hebrews' or 'Israelites', but never 'Jewish'. Their Jewishness was merely a matter of private conscience –

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[41] Demographer Charles Price points that even determining numbers of Jewish migrants in this period is tricky: he relies heavily on naturalisation records, but only some Jews chose to identify themselves as Jewish alongside their nationality (e.g. 'Polish Jewish' or 'Russian Jew'). So he analyses patterns of Jewish name adoption and patterns of chain migration to arrive at estimates. The numbers are necessarily conservative because not all migrants are represented in naturalisation records – some remained in the country as aliens although their children were born as British subjects: by 1947, only 76% of Czechoslovakians, 77% of Estonians, 79% of Poles, 80% of Hungarians, 82% of Germans, 85% of Austrians, 87% of Lithuanians, 88% of Romanians, 89% of Latvians, 90% of Russians were naturalised. And, of course, under Australian naturalisation law, women are automatically achieve their husband's nationality, so they are entirely absent from this record: Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', pp. 361-362.

Jews were part of a 'denomination' and a 'faith'; nothing more expansive. For the most part, this strategy of 'group invisibility' was successful, and Jews participated fully in colonial public life.

Chapter three analyses a moment of crisis which threatened to undermine this acceptance, and brought to the fore some of the internal tensions in the conception of 'private' Jewishness that these Jews had advocated. In the decade 1891-1901, while the notion of White Australia was being developed and debated, reported influxes of Russian Jews generated pushback in the press, parliaments, and the labour movement. Anglo-Jews responded by opposing Russian Jewish immigration, and racialising them as 'Asiatic', in an attempt to prove their own whiteness by comparison. Although the reports were mere rumours, this moment is a fascinating demonstration of the insecurities both of non-Jewish and Jewish Australia in this formative nation-building decade.

Chapter four moves to the 1920s, when the threat became more real as Eastern European Jewish migration increased. This was also the decade during which Australian immigration policy became more complex and sophisticated, and shifted its focus from the threat of 'Asiatic' migrants to the threat of 'white aliens'. Jews as a category (along with specific groups of non-British Europeans) challenged and complicated previous understandings of desirability, as 'whiteness' came to mean something more than skin colour, and more akin to the capacity for a particular type of citizenship.

A key component of this story is the agency of the Jewish communities themselves. Both Anglo and European Jews consciously and strategically adopted institutions, cultural practices, and political views which would enable their survival as an accepted minority group in an Australia obsessed with racial boundaries. While traditional histories of Australian Jewry saw this process as a linear, *degenerative* process of assimilation, such value judgments are historically unhelpful. Moments of crisis, this thesis argues, prompted active, creative and *generative* renegotiations of identity, as Jews learned to navigate life in a 'new' world.

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Chapter 2
'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion':
acculturation and assimilation of colonial Australian Jews

Cromwell invited Jews back to England in 1656. In the two centuries that followed, Anglo-Jewry, determined not to endanger its continued welcome, was driven by two somewhat paradoxical urges: it remained adamantly orthodox in the face of reforming influences from continental Europe, while also being explicitly committed to assimilating into British society.[1] Most interestingly, there was no intellectually conscious *haskalah* movement in England which propelled this assimilation.[2] Distant from the exciting intellectual scene which accompanied emancipation on the Continent, the assimilation of Anglo-Jewry is fascinating in that it reveals that significant cultural change can occur without either ideological justification or the stimulus of a sudden change in political status.[3] Instead, emancipation and assimilation occurred through social contact and imitation. Facing little structural discrimination – no special Jewish tax, no mandated living areas or dress, no institutional quotas – Anglo-Jews could participate freely in British social and cultural life. This process was not, as traditional accounts of emancipation claim, driven by or limited to the upper classes; middle-class Jews and the Jewish poor adapted in parallel ways to the habits and lives of their Gentile peers. While the Anglo-Jewish elite shaved their beards and acquired country estates, the Jewish traders and hawkers who comprised the majority of English Jewry – living among, and affected by, the same socio-economic conditions as the English poor – were no strangers to pickpocketing and street fighting.[4] Synagogue attendance and consumption of kosher meat decreased equally among

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[1] Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 1; Cecil Roth, 'The resettlement of the Jews in England in 1656', in Vivian D. Lipman (ed.), *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History* (Cambridge: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1961), p. 1.

[2] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p. xi. Although there was a less coherent *haskala* movement in England, as David Ruderman has demonstrated, individual Jewish thinkers draw on the intellectual trends in broader English society, developing what he terms a 'Jewish Enlightenment in an English key': see David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[3] Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. xii. Endelman takes this view despite (or because) English Jewry produced fewer figures of intellectual stature, compared to Continental Jewish communities.

[4] Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane, with large concentrations of working class Jews, was described as full of 'disorder and confusion' with 'quarrels and fights': John Mills, *The British Jews* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1853), p. 265. See also Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 227-247.

all classes, while intermarriage with non-Jews increased dramatically, reflecting the ease with which Jewish practice and Jewish identity could be adjusted or abandoned.[5]

These trends were enabled partly by the relatively weak communal structure of the British Jewish community. European Jewish communities had been semi-autonomous and self-governed – similar to the self-governing and tax-paying political units across feudal Europe – since the Middle Ages; a consequence of their treatment as foreigner non-citizens. These communities were run by a *kahal*, a council with control over tax-collection, relationships with landlords and social and religious services (including sanitation, commerce, Jewish education, charity, kosher food, the *mikva* and Rabbi). The *kahal* also enforced *halakha*, Jewish law, and had the power to excommunicate community members for social or religious wrongdoing; a not insignificant enforcement power when, without civic rights, it was impossible for a Jew to live outside of the community. Alongside the extension of citizenship and civic rights to Jews, the abolition of the *kahal* and the breakdown of its cultural authority was a necessary precondition for Jewish assimilation in Continental Europe.[6] In contrast, English Jews were politically and legally integrated into the citizenry as individuals, and without the historical ties of a *kahal*, they were also relatively free of religious coercion. When Anglo-Jewry's first communal body, the Jewish Board of Deputies (a name derived from the Board of Protestant Dissenting Deputies) was founded in 1760, British Jews acquired a structure comparable to their Christian neighbours – an important step in the process of assimilation and normalisation. Partnering with the Chief Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue of London only on strictly spiritual matters, the Board self-regulated communal and congregational affairs, represented community interests to government, and acted as a 'Jews' Parliament'.[7] Together, these institutions fulfilled some of the functions of the *kahal* of pre-emancipation Europe. However, with lay leadership as the driving force, 'rather than being a vanguard against social assimilation' the Board and the rabbinate helped to cultivate a 'non-distinctive Jewish orthodoxy'.[8]

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[5] Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 133.

[6] See Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 11-35 and Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 79-98.

[7] Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry*, p. 38; Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 8, 15.

[8] Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 160.

The assimilated nineteenth century English Jew was proudly depicted by Grace Aguilar, Anglo-Jewish writer:

> In externals and in all secular thoughts and actions, the English naturalised Jew is an Englishman, and his family is reared with the education and accomplishments of other members of the community. Only in some private and personal characteristics and in religious belief does the Jew differ from his neighbour.[9]

This emphasis on the 'privacy' of Judaism represents a revolutionary shift in the conception of Jewish identity. Previously understood as all-inclusive membership of a political, social and religious community, this new notion of a 'private' religious belief allowed Anglo-Jews to see themselves as members of a broader British political community, their Jewishness merely a 'personal characteristic' akin to a particular taste in literature. Aguilar's mentions of 'education' and 'accomplishments' as the key points of similarity with other 'Englishmen' are telling, reflecting the Anglo-Jewish adoption of Victorian-era notions of respectability and virtue, and their desire to be seen as a respectable group, undifferentiated from their Christian fellow citizens. Indeed Jewish clergy in Britain, in a major departure from the distinctive religious dress of European rabbinic figures, adopted the manner, dress, and even titles of their Anglican counterparts.[10] And yet, they remained staunchly orthodox, uninfluenced by the German Reform movement. Religion, for mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Jews, meant both respectability *and* tradition.

This shifting Jewish identity, and the attendant elevation of divisions of class, nationality and respectability above transcendent religious bonds, is particularly evident in the spheres of charity and education, both hallmarks of Victorian-era social reform, and at the heart of the Anglo-Jewish project of assimilation. Founded in 1732 as a charity school for orphaned boys, The Jews' Free School explicitly saw its role as the Anglicisation and upward social mobility of its students. It was hugely successful and influential in the constitution of English Jewry. By the late 1800s, now co-

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[9] Grace Aguilar (1816-1847), Jewish-English writer and poet of Sephardi background, quoted in Bryan Cheyette, 'The Other Self: Anglo-Jewish Fiction and the Representation of Jews in England 1875-1905', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), p. 97.

[10] Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler, for example, took on the title 'The Very Reverend': Geoffrey Alderman, 'The British Chief Rabbinate: a Most Peculiar Practice', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* Vol 23 No 2 (1990), p. 46. See also Immanuel Jakobovits, 'The Evolution of the British Rabbinate since 1845' in Raymond Apple (ed.), *Yismach Yisrael: Historical Essays to Honour Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush, O.B.E., on his eightieth birthday* (Sydney: Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1988), p. 14.

educational, the school had more than 4,000 students enrolled, representing over a third of Jewish school-aged children in London.[11] Meanwhile, contemporaneous studies of the Jewish community by social researcher Henry Mayhew and Welsh Calvinist Methodist minister John Mills demonstrate the influence of Victorian class attitudes about the poor on Jewish charity practice. Mayhew's influential study of the conditions among mid-nineteenth century London poor – a 'distinct race' with an aversion to 'civilised' work[12] – included a section on 'Street Jews'.[13] He noted with approval that Jewish charities aimed to reform paupers; applicants for relief were scrutinised for 'proper character'.[14] Mills, writing for the noted Whig reformer Lord John Russell a 'faithful account of the domestic, social and religious condition of the Jews in this country', discussed Jewish charities in similar terms, describing 'almshouses for twelve poor *respectable* families' (emphasis added).[15] This adoption of Victorian values quite contrary to the Jewish legal understanding of helping the poor as *tzedaka* (justice) – which is mandated as a tax rather than voluntary, and without distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' – demonstrates the thoroughness of Anglo-Jewry's acculturation.

Political equality is often seen as a necessary step for assimilation, but the removal of all legal discrimination against British Jews occurred only *after* they had attained significant social acceptance through acculturation. Political emancipation then proved a relatively easy process. The British state of the early nineteenth century already (in theory) extended its protection to individuals regardless of origin.[16] The tiny Jewish population was, in fact, not even the locus of the question; Catholics were. The problem was a technical one. Jews, Catholics, and other religious minority citizens were enfranchised at common law, subject to the usual property qualifications. But the

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11 L. Wolf, 'Article on Jewish Community', *The Graphic* (London), 16 November 1889. See also R. D. Barnett, 'Anglo-Jewry in the Eighteenth Century', in Lipman, Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History (Cambridge: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1961), p. 53.

12 Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: a cyclopaedia of the condition and earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work. et al. Volumes 1 and 2* (Originally published 1851. Reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1968), pp. 1-3.

13 Mayhew, *London Labour*, pp. 115-132.

14 Mayhew, *London Labour*, pp. 127-130.

15 Mills, *The British Jews*, p. iii and p. 286. He also flattered Russell as 'one of the brightest examples of a member of a noble and illustrious family devoting his time and talents to the improvement and elevation of the people' and for his efforts to remove 'the last remains of Jewish disabilities', which would make his name 'transmitted to posterity as the chief advocate of complete civil liberty to the British Jews'.

16 See, for example, John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689).

requirement to take the 'Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy', and a further declaration required for those taking office, precluded practicing Jews from holding political office.[17] Although 1829 legislation allowed Catholics to substitute the oath, and thus be elected to municipal offices, the House of Lords long resisted Bills to similarly emancipate Jews.[18] Political results were achieved incrementally only after Jewish candidates forced the issue. Specific legislation was passed in 1835, to allow (Jewish) David Salomans to assume the elected offices of London's City Sheriff,[19] and in 1845 of Alderman.[20] The benefits of the 1845 Act were not extended to all offices until 1858, allowing Salomans and Lionel de Rothschild (also Jewish) to take their seats in Parliament.[21] By the 1860s, the 35,000 or so British Jews were well and truly British.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The Australian Jewish community has its origins in this acculturated community. The first Australian Jews were convicts on the First Fleet in 1788 (estimates vary from eight to fourteen), and at least 1,000 Jewish convicts (mostly from London's East End) had been transported to Australia

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[17] The last line of the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy read: 'and I make this Declaration upon the true Faith of a Christian'. The additional Declaration required upon election to office, per the *Sacramental Test Act 1828* (9 Geo. IV, c. 17), read as follows:

> 'I, _____, do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God profess, testify, and declare, upon the true faith of a Christian, That I will never exercise any power, authority, or influence which I may possess by virtue of the office of _____ to injure or weaken the Protestant Church as it is by law established in England, or to disturb the said Church or the Bishops and Clergy of the said Church in the possession of any rights or privileges to which such Church or the said Bishops and Clergy are or may be by law entitled.'

Note that Benjamin Disraeli, born Jewish, had taken a seat in Parliament in 1837, but having been baptised into the Church of England as a child, he was willing to make the requisite Declaration.

See discussion in H. S. Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law* (originally published Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908, 'in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the passing of Acts enabling Jews to sit in Parliament, July 23, 1858. Reprinted New Jersey: Lawbook Exchange, 2006), pp. 246, 251-252.

[18] *Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829* (10 Geo. IV, c. 7). Similar legislation was passed in 1837 allowed Quakers, Moravians and Separatists to do so too: *Quakers, Moravians, and Separatists Relief Acts 1837* (1 & 2 Vict., c. 5 and c. 15).

[19] *Sherriffs' Declaration Act 1835* (5 & 6 Will. IV, c. 28), Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, p. 253.

[20] *Municipal Offices Act 1845* (8 & 9 Vict. c. 52), also called *Jewish Disabilities Removal Act*. The Act allowed for an amended wording; the Jewish person would 'solemnly, sincerely, and truly' declare not to injure or weaken the Protestant Church. The Religious Opinions Relief Act 1846 (9 & 10 Vict., c. 59) removed some further minor disabilities affecting British Jews. See Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, pp. 254-255.

[21] *Oaths of Allegiance, etc., and Relief of Jews Act 1858* (21 & 22 Vict., c. 48) and *Jews Relief Act 1858* (21 & 22 Vict., c. 49) respectively. In 1866, the obligation to make these Declarations was removed entirely: *Declarations Before Taking Office Act 1866* (29 & 30 Vict., c. 22). See Michael C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain: The Question of the Admission of the Jews to Parliament 1828-1860* (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982).

altogether by the end of transportation in 1852.[22] Free Jewish settlers began arriving from 1816, and numbers increased with the Gold Rushes of the 1850s.[23] The community experienced steady growth: according to census data, Australian Jewry numbered 13,809 in 1891; 15,239 in 1901; 17,287 in 1911; 21,615 in 1921; and 23,553 by 1933, always constituting between 0.03% and 0.05% of the general population.[24] The presence of Jews from the very beginning of Australian settlement established their place as partners in the colonial project, and set the scene for the remarkable degree of acceptance and influence which they would experience in colonial Australia.[25] In a petition sent by the Jewish community to the Victorian Legislative Council in 1854, they asked:

> Neither for toleration in a Colony where all Her Majesty's subjects are upon an equality, nor favour from those who are bound to mete out justice for all; they claim it as a right, being good Citizens and loyal subjects, that they be not excepted from participation in… the said Grant… or that they not be compelled to an equal burden in the State with the recipients of such Grant.[26]

The petition was sent in the context of debates over the provision of state funding for religion, which the petitioners argued should be granted equally to all religions, given the equal contribution of all through taxation. Their position was significant, going beyond a politics of mere 'toleration' and the old world *kahal* model of 'favour', separate and less-than-equal. They were laying a claim to equal substantive citizenship. Notably, emancipation – franchise and taxation – was a non-issue:

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[22] John S. Levi and G. F. J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1974), p.10. This was at a time when London Jewry was only 30,000 at its most.

[23] Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', pp. 369-376.

[24] Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', Appendix I: 'Jewish Population of Australia', from Australian censuses, declared religions. Note, however, that this census data is limited, relying on people to answer 'Jewish' to the question of religious affiliation. While 5-12% of the entire population failed to answer the question in the relevant census years, it has been argued convincingly that Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution, fearful of the consequences of official recognition of their Jewishness, were over-represented in that group, thus making the census figures even more conservative: see Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', p. 362.

[25] Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 4; Israel Getzler, *Neither Toleration Nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation* (Melbourne, 1970); Margaret Chapman, 'Jews and Freemasonry in the Colony of Victoria 1840-1900', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 11 No 3 (1991), p. 428.

[26] 'State aid to religion: petition to the Honorable Legislative Council of Victoria: the humble petition of the members of the Hebrew faith, resident in the city of Melbourne', *Victorian Parliamentary Papers* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1854).

their petition for the equal provision of funds *assumed* a level of basic political equality, which was not contested in parliamentary debates on this issue.

Already acculturated to British society, these Jews established in Australia an outpost of Anglo-Jewish orthodoxy. They viewed religion as a matter of private conscience, insisting that this alone would distinguish them from other citizens, and describing themselves as 'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion'. The choice of words was absolutely intentional. 'Persuasion' suggests an element of choice, while the 'Mosaic' refers to the attribution of the Bible to Moses, and so draws on the common Biblical heritage of Jews and Christians, rather than that which more obviously defines modern Jewish practice – the Talmud. They self-consciously used the terms 'faith' and 'denomination', promoting the image of Judaism almost as a branch of Christianity.[27] Echoing the imperial relationship of colony to metropole in its religious affairs, colonial Jewish congregations fell within the jurisdiction of Britain's Chief Rabbi, also considered the Chief Rabbi of the Empire. And again, the Australian rabbinate remained stubbornly orthodox while advocating social integration and acting as models for assimilated appearance. Going one step further, even, than their English counterparts, Rabbis in Australia wore dog-collars, and frequently went bare-headed altogether.[28] Anglicisation of prayer services was also arguably more pronounced in the colonies, and included changes that arguably compromised religious standards but made services look more like church services: Sydney's Great Synagogue read the *haftara*, additional reading from the Prophets, in English rather than Hebrew; omitted the repetition of the *mussaf* prayer to shorten the service; and was the first synagogue in the Empire to introduce a mixed choir.[29] In crucial distinction from British Jewry, Australian Jews established no centralised lay or rabbinical bodies until well into the twentieth century. The lack of any overarching religious authority closer than the Chief Rabbi in England saw many unresolved inter-synagogue spats; perhaps more significantly, it allowed the community greater freedom in its interpretation of British-style assimilationism. In a

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[27] Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 6.

[28] Without the *yarmulke*, *streimel*, *spodik* or homburgs worn by traditional European Jews. See Daniel J. Elazar and Peter Y. Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia and South Africa* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), p. 274; Peter Y. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968) and Newman H. Rosenthal, *Look Back With Pride: The St Kilda Hebrew Congregation's First Century* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1971).

[29] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, pp. 80-81.

'new' country where institutions were as yet unconsolidated, Jews could form new identities with little restraint.[30]

Synagogue buildings were a high priority for early Jewish colonists, as visible symbols of group acceptance and achievement. But they left the communities 'asset-rich but cash-strapped'.[31] The Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in 1853 resolved to build a large synagogue building, 'in order that it may no longer be a reflection on this important congregation that she is so far behind the neighbours of other denominations' – reflecting the community's self-consciousness and insecurity about its status. The foundation stone was laid for Sydney's Great Synagogue in 1875 with great ceremony: the burying of a time capsule, a religious service and multiple speeches, all attested to the community's sense of occasion and self-importance. In his speech, Saul Samuel, the colony's first Jewish parliamentarian (elected five years before Rothschild took his seat in the Commons), and later the Synagogue president, narrated that they had resolved to raise funds for a new synagogue, 'an ornament to the city in which we live, and a temple in which we might with feelings of true devotion offer up our prayers'. He expressed his hope that 'the edifice' would be a 'beacon of light and a serene haven'. In describing the synagogue as an 'edifice' and 'ornament' to the city *before* mentioning the prayer that would take place within it, he suggested that, for many of the colonists, the synagogue's appearance was of more importance than its function. The effusive description of the building plan which accompanied the speech's reproduction in *The Empire* – describing its 'grand' and 'imposing appearance… richly carved', 'magnificently ornamented screen' and the ark 'of a beautiful kind'– underscored the point. Indeed, with colonial synagogue architecture mirroring church architecture, the buildings themselves staked the community's claim to normalcy. Rev Alexander Davis[32] also addressed the audience, describing his hopes for the building, specifically emphasising that 'here they could look forward to give proof of their serious

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[30] Hilary L. Rubenstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1935* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 27. For a comprehensive description of the intra-communal fights in nineteenth century Melbourne, see Joseph Aron and Judy Arndt, *The Enduring Remnant: The First 150 Years of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, 1841-1991* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991).

[31] Michael Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact: Unmarked Graves in the Jewish Section, Melbourne General Cemetery', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol 13 No 4 (2009), p. 477.

[32] Alexander Barnard Davis (1828-1913) arrived in Sydney in 1862, serving as minister of the York Street Synagogue, and then the Great Synagogue (which united the York Street Synagogue and dissenting Macquarie Street Synagogue) until his retirement in 1903. Davis founded the local branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association in 1872 and was its first president. See G. F. J. Bergman, 'Davis, Alexander Barnard (1828–1913)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972). http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davis-alexander-barnard-3379

loyalty by their… supplications for their gracious sovereign the Queen.'[33] For Davis, the synagogue was paradoxically both a way to assert the congregation's Jewishness, and a mechanism of assimilation; a way to prove, on a weekly basis, their 'Britishness'. As we will see, the prayer for the sovereign and royal family would resurface persistently over the next half century, whenever the loyalty or 'Britishness' of Australian Jewry was questioned or endangered (or the community perceived it to be so). The weight given to this prayer is both fascinating and amusing to an 'insider' given its lowly status in Jewish tradition: an additional and discretionary prayer, said in English rather than Hebrew, it can be recited by a minor, i.e., someone without full Jewish legal personhood.[34] But the construction of Anglo-Jewish identity proceeded regardless of traditional/ *halakhic* notions of value and, notwithstanding the technical insignificance of the prayer, it became a powerful symbol – just like the synagogues themselves – of the community's successful assimilation.

These imposing buildings remained largely empty, but nonetheless fulfilled what was arguably their main task as communal facades in an era obsessed with the *appearance* of respectability over respectability itself.[35] A visitor to Melbourne in 1887 observed that while the Jewish community numbered over 4,000, its three 'splendid' synagogues attracted only around 30 people on an average Saturday, including clergy, men paid to make a *minyan* (quorum) and mourners (required to attend synagogue to say the mourner's *kaddish* prayer), apparently because Jewish business were increasingly kept open on the Sabbath. Another visitor described the community as an 'anaemic invalid'.[36] The consumption of kosher meat was also reportedly low.[37]

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[33] 'The Great Synagogue – Foundation Stone', *The Empire* (Sydney), 27 January 1875, p. 2.

[34] One of the earliest mentions of this practice of praying for the non-Jewish monarch is found in the Bible, in the book of Ezra, in which the Persian king Cyrus II orders that, alongside the offerings brought in the newly dedicated Temple in Jerusalem, the Israelites should 'pray for the life of the king and his sons': Ezra 6:10. That story sheds light on this one: praying for the non-Jewish monarch is an expression of loyalty as well as an expression of insecurity, as the community relies on the goodwill and good health of a particular monarch. For the earliest modern record of this practice, See Leon Modena, *The history of the rites, customes, and manner of life, of the present Jews, throughout the worl*d (Originally published in Italian in 1637, translated by Edmund Chilmead in 1650. Reprinted Oxford: Text Creation Partnership, 2006).

[35] Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact', p. 477.

[36] Editorial, *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 13 September 1889, pp. 8-9. Elazar and Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies*, p. 267.

[37] Leib Aisack Falk (trans.), 'A Hebrew Travel Book (Part V)', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 1 (1941), p. 90.

Communal attitudes to Jewish education were further evidence of Australian Jewry's religious laxity: Jewish schools established in Sydney and Melbourne shrank and closed towards the end of the century. More significantly, prominent Jews opposed the existence of separate Jewish day schools altogether as inconsistent with their project of social integration. They took the view that all state-funded education should be secular, because publicly funded religious schools would jeopardise the secularity of the polity and, by extension, their full political equality.[38] Edward Cohen[39] declared in 1870:

> This being a new and free country, let us leave behind us all the superstitious nonsense of the Old World… Let us send all our children to the same schools, irrespective of creed or country, and let them be brought up in the creed of kindliness and friendliness, which will make them forget that their other creeds divide them.[40]

Thus the community aligned itself not with Catholic advocacy for 'religious education' but with the Protestant call for 'secular education', and supported the passing of Victoria's *Education Act 1872* and the *Public Instruction Act 1880* in New South Wales – which, it has been noted, legislated a form of secularism that reflected and incorporated a liberal middle-class Protestant agenda.[41] In doing so, they effectively precluded the adoption of the 'free school' model which had enabled the exponential growth of successful British Jewish schools.

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[38] Geulah Solomon, 'The Jewish Contribution to the Church-State Debate and Education in Victoria 1872-1900', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 6 Part 4 (1968), p. 32.

[39] Cohen arrived in Sydney from London as a child. He managed his father's grocery firm, H. Cohen & Son, George Street in Sydney, before moving to Melbourne and involving himself in various business ventures. He was director and chairman of the Colonial Bank of Australasia, and represented East Melbourne in the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1861-1865 and 1868-1877. Cohen was active in the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, and the first President of the Anglo-Jewish Association of Victoria. Geulah Solomon, 'Cohen, Edward Aaron (1822-1877)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 3 (Melbourne University Press, 1969), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cohen-edward-aaron-3241.

[40] Barbara Falk, *No Other Home: An Anglo-Jewish Story 1833-1897* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), pp. 37-40, 57. And Solomon, 'The Jewish Contribution to the Church-State Debate', p. 227. Ironically, despite this support for public schools, Cohen sent his children to Wesley College, a prominent Melbourne Methodist private school. Many of Melbourne's leading Jewish families sent their children to Wesley or Scotch College, suggesting that for these Jews, secular equality was not quite enough.

[41] Geoffrey Sherington and Craig Campbell 'Australian Liberalism, the middle class and public education: From Henry Parkes to John Howard', *Education Research and Perspectives* Vol 31 No 2 (2004), p. 62.

The second half of the nineteenth century has been characterised by historians as a 'Golden Age' of Jewish involvement in Australian public life, with Jews represented with a frequency far out of proportion to the community's small numbers.[42] Traditional histories of Australian Jewry have produced a laundry list of prominent (male) Jews in this period: parliamentarians, bankers and entrepreneurs, including, most famously, Isaac Isaacs, who was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1892, proceeded to federal Parliament, was appointed High Court Justice in 1906, and the first Australian-born governor-general in 1931; his career was held up as 'an example of the full acceptance of Jews within Australia society'.[43] Strikingly, many of the Jews most prominent in public life were also the people at the head of Jewish institutions; the latter being proof of Judaism's normalcy in the colonies.[44]

Freemasonry was another signifier of Jewish acceptance. This fraternal institution, founded in 1717 in London, sought to unite 'men of good character' from different religions, ethnic and social backgrounds, who 'shared a belief in God and the brotherhood of mankind'. Anglo-Jews in Britain and Australia were attracted by this promise of egalitarianism, and the neutrality of freemason monotheism. Admission as a freemason was a symbol of equality, and allowed Jewish men to form important beneficial social relationships with gentiles.[45] High profile Australian Jews (including clergy) were members, even leaders, of Masonic Lodges.[46]

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[42] Rubenstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 3; Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 107.

[43] Suzanne Rutland, 'Jewish Immigration 1881-1933' in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Canberra: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 530.

[44] Henry Emanuel Cohen, member of the Legislative Assembly and first president of the Industrial Court, was on the board of the York Street Synagogue in Sydney; Julian Salomons, Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court, was secretary of Sydney's Great Synagogue; and Saul Samuel was its president. Four of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's presidents in its first 40 years were also members of Parliament: Rutland, 'Jewish Immigration' in Jupp, *The Australian People*, p. 530; Walter Jona, 'Jews in Victorian politics 1835-1985', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 10 Part 1 (1986), p. 3.

[45] Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, p. 270. See also Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 127; Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 20.

[46] Rabbis Jacob Danglow and Israel Brodie were members, and Rev. Moses Rintel was first Worshipful Minister of the Judah Lodge, elected in 1858: see Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria* and Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 19. Rubinstein notes the close connections between Lodges and Synagogues – many congregations used Masonic Lodges as their premises before they built their own. The foundation stone laying of the Launceston Synagogue was 'as much a Masonic as a Jewish affair', with the marching band playing Masonic airs and preceded by a Masonic banner; Masonic terminology was invoked at the ceremony for the opening of Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's building on Bourke Street.

The speed and thoroughness of this assimilation is explained, perhaps, by the economic motivations behind the migration of free settlers in this period: in contrast to other forced Jewish migrations caused by persecution, these Jews chose, knowingly, to migrate from an orthodox environment which already offered relative freedom, to a place which posed challenges to religious observance, prioritising economic over religious interests.[47] Mostly middle-class or aspiring middle-class, with little, outwardly, to distinguish them from non-Jews, they identified strongly with middle-class British values and British imperial interests.[48] Jewish newspapers celebrated social and cultural practices familiar in Anglo society columns, musical soirees, high teas, dances and balls, and 'effused with the antics of the glitterati'.[49]

Language was central to this new, assimilated Anglo-Jewish identity. Australian Jewry very intentionally constructed a Jewish identity in which the word 'Jew' was conspicuously absent. Seeking to avoid derogatory stereotypical associations, Australia Jews preferred to call themselves 'Hebrews' or 'Israelites'. Congregations were always 'Hebrew congregations', and communal organisations also used 'Hebrew': the Hebrew Philanthropic Society; the Hebrew Mutual Benefit Society; the Hebrew Ladies' Maternity and Benevolent Society; the Hebrew Ladies' Bazaar. The names of the various Jewish newspapers are also illustrative of this trend: *Voice of Jacob* or *The Hebrews' Monthly Miscellany Sydney Edition* (Sydney, 1842); *The Australian lsraelite* (Melbourne, 1871-1875); *Australian Hebrew Times* (Sydney, 1894); *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney, 1895-1953); *Australasian Hebrew* (1896). *The Jewish Herald* (1879-1935, Melbourne) was the single exception to this pattern.[50] The colonists were also adamant about speaking only English, shunning Yiddish although many of them could speak it – they took the view that it would undermine their determination to be similar to and equal with other colonists. If correspondents wrote to the Jewish press in Yiddish, or using Yiddish vernacular, they were rebuked; even *shul*, the

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[47] Getzler, *Neither Toleration Nor Favour*, p. 84.

[48] Lazarus M. Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: Goldman, 1954), pp. 17-18; Lazarus M. Goldman, 'The Early Jewish Settlers in Victoria and Their Problems, Part I', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 4 Part 7 (1958), pp. 337-349.

[49] Taft and Markus, *A Second Chance*, p. 29. They relate that when Jewish performer Frances Alda retuned to Australia after some time abroad, the *Jewish Herald* enthusiastically informed its readers that she had played Peep-Bo in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*: *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 4 February 1921.

[50] Suzanne Rutland, *Seventy Five Years: The History of a Jewish Newspaper* (Sydney: Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1970).

commonly used Yiddish word for synagogue, was labelled 'an ugly word belonging to no living language'.[51]

In Milton Gordon's model of assimilation as a sociological process, the final stage is the dissolution of the minority through biological merger with the majority through intermarriage.[52] High rates of intermarriage did characterise Australian Jewry throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[53] But the Jewish project of assimilation stopped just short of entire dissolution or 'structural assimilation', with an insistence instead on some form of continuity of a distinct (albeit inconspicuous) Jewish community, so intermarriages met with resistance. As early as 1848, the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation passed a motion condemning intermarriage,[54] and nothing had changed by 1921, when a religious leader declared that 'of all the evils that can descend upon Jewish lives, intermarriage is undeniably one of the worst and most to be feared and guarded against'.[55] Yet Jewish colonists moved with remarkable fluidity between communities, constructing complicated new identities at will. Anglo-Jewish settler Samuel Hart married his first wife in 1854 in a Christian ceremony, and had five children with her. She died in 1868, and in 1870 Samuel remarried a Jewish woman, raising their Jewish children together with his non-Jewish children. Jewish law definitively divided the family into gentile and Jew; but the realities of family life were more integrated.[56]

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[51] *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 1 October 1897.

[52] Gordon describes a three-part process of: (1) acculturation or 'cultural integration', the acquisition of the basic markers of the larger society, including language, dress, recreational tastes, values; (2) integration of minority-group members in majority institutions and consequent weakening of minority institutions; (3) intermarriage or 'social integration'. This full process requires both a desire on the part of the minority to become like/join the majority, and the receptivity of the majority to the participation of minority-group members in its midst: Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[53] In 1891, 20% of Jewish husbands in NSW had non-Jewish wives; this increased to 24% in 1901; and by 1911, 27% of Jewish husbands in Australia were married to non-Jewish women (with particularly high rates in Queensland – 45%, Tasmania – 42%, and South Australia – 32%). This number increased until the 1940s with the influx of significant numbers of more traditional European refugees. Note that the percentage of Jewish wives were married to non-Jewish men in 1911 was only 13%, reflecting both the community's gender imbalance, and differing role expectations for men and women, the latter seen as more important in determining a family's Jewishness both in terms of Jewish law, and cultural transmission: Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia': Appendix XI: Jewish-Gentile Intermarriage in Australia 1891-1933.

[54] Goldman, 'Early Jewish Settlers', p. 383.

[55] *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 21 October 1921.

[56] Muriel H. Chesler, 'A Link in the Chain: The Life and Work of Samuel Hart', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol 10 Part 3 (1988), pp. 159-169.

The community's thorough acculturation is also evidenced by the charitable institutions it established. Anxious to portray themselves as contributing to, but never taking from, the colony, Jews founded tens of Jewish charities in the nineteenth century; resulting in Marcus Clarke in 1871 dismissing the possibility of an impoverished Jew, and Christians publicly expressing admiration for Jewish philanthropy in the pages of the colonies' papers.[57] But the image of communal prosperity was not entirely accurate. For the social acculturated Australian Jew, pauper Jews presented a threat to the image of respectability that they considered essential to their goal of integration with Australian society.[58] Jewish almshouses were empty not because there were no poor Jews, but because those poor Jews were not considered suitably respectable. In his fascinating archaeological study of the Jewish section in Melbourne's General Cemetery, Michael Lever demonstrates that, contrary to public insistence that Melbourne Jewry had abolished its public graves and bore the costs of gravestones for those unable to afford them[59] – in fact local Jewish poor, 'excluded from their coreligionists' charity by their lack of respectability', *were* buried in unmarked graves.[60] Anglo-Jewish identity, despite appearances to the contrary, was very much 'in flux'. The process of colonial assimilation was influenced heavily by class and position; and the Judaism of the Old World did not transfer neatly to this community in the New.[61]

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[57] 'Letters to the Editor: "Distribution of Charities"', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 9 January 1868; 'Letters to the Editor: "The Benevolent Asylum. 250 refused admission"', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 28 February 1879. See also Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 107.

[58] Later this same discomfort would affect Anglo-Jewry's willingness to provide charitable services to the poorer Eastern European Jews: Michael Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact: Unmarked Graves in the Jewish Section, Melbourne General Cemetery', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol 13 No 4 (2009), p. 473.

[59] Lazarus M. Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: Goldman, 1954), p. 198. 'All other denominations buried their poor in paupers' graves. To Jews, a second burial in one grave as paupers were buried is not permissible and a distinction between the rich and poor in death would have been considered intolerable. Melbourne Jewry, therefore, abolished its public graves in its portion of the cemetery…' Goldman even depicts Melbourne synagogues squabbling over the right to provide a free funeral for a specific hospital patient (p. 304). This quote is reproduced verbatim in Aron and Arndt 1992, p. 361. Victorian legislation passed in 1854 made cemeteries responsible for providing free pauper burials, with the state funding transportation, coffin, undertaking and payment to clergy for services. Gravestones or other monuments were not permitted on such publicly funded graves without payment of the trustees' 1pound fee.

[60] Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact', pp. 480-481 and Michael Lever, 'No Yizkor in the Ghetto of the Dead: Historical Archaeology of the Jewish Section, Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton' (Melbourne: La Trobe University, unpublished Honours thesis, 2006), pp. 40-44.

[61] Lever, 'When Absence is the Artifact', p. 482.

The tensions inherent in this construction of Anglo-Jewish identity were on full display in an 1898 editorial in the *Hebrew Standard*. The author proudly listed Jewish contributions to politics and the arts, as well as 'the struggles of war, even in the countries where they are now worst treated'. He repeated the refrain that 'there is not a public service in any Jewish Synagogue from which a prayer "for the welfare of the State" is absent'. And he connected a commitment to Jewishness itself with patriotism and loyalty: 'The greater the Jew, the greater the patriot'.[62] This reflected a key paradox at the heart of the Anglo-Jewish assimilation project: while it encouraged shedding external markers of Jewishness, it still supported religious, educational and philanthropic institutions that maintained Jewish particularism. To make this work, the community had to deny the possibility of conflict between religious and civic obligations.[63] Most interestingly, the author chose the career of Benjamin Disraeli, born an English Jew and twice British Prime Minister, as proof of this symbiosis between Jewishness and patriotism. The irony of the choice brings to the fore the contradictions and tensions upon which this conception of 'Jewishness' rely: Disraeli's political career, occurring before full English emancipation, was enabled only by his baptism into the Church of England as a child. Notwithstanding his conversion, he was subject to anti-Jewish attitudes and antisemitic taunts. This, and the continued communal claim of him as a Jew after conversion, underscore the essential fiction at the heart of the 'Englishmen of Mosaic persuasion' model of Jewishness. Although Anglo-Jews insisted that 'Jewishness' was simply a matter of private faith, they could not escape the fact that Jewishness had always been – to themselves and to others – something more expansive, more akin to a cultural or racial/ethnic identity. When controversies arose in the 1890s about the possibility of 'other', non-English, Jews making their way to Australia, Anglo-Jews were forced to confront this inconvenient reality in new ways.

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[62] 'The Jew – his Friends, and his Foes', *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 23 September 1898, p. 3. Todd Endelman labels this 'a persistent weakness on the part of Jews to claim as their "own" prominent artists and savants of Jewish birth, regardless of their late relationship to Judaism and Jewry', and that 'historians who describe Disraeli as a proud Jew almost always ignore, or are ignorant of, the fact that he was a believing Christian'. He may have felt some kinship towards Jewish people, but he remained a Christian in all matters of faith, explicitly anticipating the future conversion of all Jews to Christianity: Todd M. Endelman, 'Disraeli's Jewishness Reconsidered', *Modern Judaism* Vol 5 No 2 (1985), pp. 109, 115, 121.

[63] Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, pp. 16-17.

Chapter 3

'The Russian Jew invasion':

an identity under threat, 1891-1901

When Anglo-Australian Jewry faced a crisis of identity in the 1890s, the problem had its origins on the other side of the world. The period from the mid-nineteenth century to the interwar years is characterised by historian Patrick Manning as the most intensive period of migration in human history: an estimated 150 million people left their homes for new shores.[1] Technological innovation – railways and steam transport – irrevocably altered human migration patterns, enabling people to actualise their dreams of a new life. This explosion of transoceanic migration was constituted mostly of fifty million Chinese and thirty million Indians who left their lands, forming the new 'global working class of the British empire';[2] but a significant minority, around two and a half million, were Eastern European Jews. These Jews were mostly from the 'Pale of Settlement', a defined zone in the Russian Empire in which they had been required to live from 1791, and in which they had experienced 'a convoluted process of social engineering' in the form of economic and social restrictions, limited voting rights, over taxation, and violence from the Christian population. Centuries of persecution culminated in 1881 with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II: the new government under Alexander III introduced the 'May Laws' (further economic and social restrictions on Jews), and sponsored pogroms (violence directed against Jewish people and property) across the empire.[3] The majority of those who left as a result travelled to the United States, with significant groups also reaching Britain, Canada, South Africa, Argentina, Palestine and the more tolerant capital cities of Western Europe.[4] By the 1890s, the persecution of Russian Jews was a regular subject of international news, and London, New York, Chicago and Toronto swelled with Jewish migrants. As this wave of migration showed no sign of slowing, Western nations began reconsidering their open-door migration policies and enacting restrictive policies.

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[1] Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 149. See also William M. Spellman, *The Global Community: Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002).

[2] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 6, 23.

[3] John D. Klier, 'Russian Jewry on the eve of the pogroms', in John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (eds.), *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 3-12.

[4] Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Increased global mobility was thus accompanied by heightened state control of trans-border movement. Labour markets became nationalised and the state took an increasing interest in overseeing both 'its' workforce and the growing population of itinerants seeking economic security. Indeed, modern definitions of the state highlight the regulation of population – framed as the preservation of its revenue and security – as a crucial component of state power. Thanks to new technologies of generating and organising data (such as photographs, filing systems, fingerprints), and a growing administrative bureaucracy (involving censuses, tax rolls, visas and passports), the nation-state in the nineteenth century established a monopoly over the legitimate means of movement; not only describing and identifying its membership, but also controlling it.[5] New systems of visas and work permits emphasised the foreigner's temporary and unassimilable status.[6] In this period of global nation-building, focused as it was on ethnic and racial unifying concepts, immigrants posed a particular threat by collapsing the isomorphism between people and citizenry. Immigration laws thus emerged as tools to concretise national identity, entrenching the language and logic of exclusion.[7] In other words, this period was somewhat paradoxically one of both high mobility, and increased limitations on mobility. Adam McKeown labels this phenomenon the 'mutual entanglement of borders and flows', noting that migration and the consolidation of the international system of sovereign states were symbiotic processes. Interaction, he argues, generated opportunities for seeing sameness, as well as new categories for framing difference.[8]

The Australian version of this story is usually told with reference to the Chinese 'other'; numerically they were the most obvious minority group, and legislation to restrict and control Chinese immigration was passed in all Australian colonies in the second half of the nineteenth

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[5] This language draws on the Marxist concept of control over the 'means of production', borrowed by Max Weber who defined the state as a body which successfully expropriated the 'means of violence' from individuals. One important outcome of the process of monopolising the 'means of movement' described by Torpey is that individuals began to depend upon the state for the possession of an 'identity' which then shaped their access to various spaces: John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 4-6; Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalisation of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 6.

[6] Eve Lester, *Making Migration Law: The Foreigner, Sovereignty, and the Case of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 82-83, 86; Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology', *International Migration Review* Vol 37 No 3 (2003), p. 590.

[7] This racial concept of peoplehood has been contrasted with the civic approach initially articulated by Enlightenment philosophers and concretised in the course of the American, French and Haitian revolutions in the previous century: Wimmer and Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism', pp. 584, 588.

[8] McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, pp. 4-5.

century.[9] But in the lead up to Federation, as the character of the nation was being rigorously debated in politics and public discourse, other groups provoked significant anxiety, including, notably, persecuted Russian Jews. Rumours began of the migration of large numbers of these poverty-stricken Jews to Australia. The reactions to these rumours as they played out in contemporary newspapers and colonial parliaments reveal the manifold anxieties around colonial Australian identity in the 1890s, and the way those anxieties played out for Gentile and Jewish colonists in similar but divergent ways. For non-Jewish colonists, particularly during Australia's most severe Depression, the importation of a pauper class threatened their 'worker's paradise'; for Anglo-Jewry, these 'other' Jews endangered their successful integration into Australian society.

As early as February 1891, the Australian press was reporting (with some scepticism as to their feasibility) the plans of German Jewish philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch, 'a generous Hebrew nobleman', to 'remove the downtrodden Jews' from Russia and resettle them in 'the Argentine Republic'.[10] A March report claimed that Hirsch had already purchased land in Argentina.[11] But on 30 April, Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* repeated an English report that, for the first time, involved Australia: after a discussion in Paris 'surrounded by his ablest advisors', Hirsch had apparently pledged three million pounds towards resettling 500,000 Russian Jews in 'Brazil and Australia', and was already in consultation with Russian authorities.[12] Repeated in papers across the colonies,[13] the story grew through the first week of May, with additional reports surfacing that Hirsch was being joined by the Rothschild family in England to fund the scheme, along with 'a number of other wealthy Jews'.[14] One paper took advantage of the interest generated around this mysterious foreigner, running a biographical piece on Hirsch as 'philanthropic Croesus'.[15]

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9 Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 19-20, 35-36.

10 'The Jews in Russia: Conflicting Reports of Their Persecutions', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 2 February 1891, p. 4.

11 *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 14 March 1891, p. 8.

12 'Summary', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 April 1891, p. 1. The story originated in the English *Pall Mall Gazette*.

13 *The Week* (Brisbane), 1 May 1891; *Western Mail* (Perth), 2 May 1891; *Broadford Courier and Reedy Creek Times* (Broadford, Vic), 2 May 1891.

14 *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW), 2 May 1891, p. 3; 'The Jews in Russia', *The Maffra Spectator* (Maffra, Vic). 4 May 1891, p. 3.

15 'Baron Hirsch: The Philanthropic Croesus', *The Australian Star* (Sydney), 2 May 1891, p. 8.

The story had a short shelf life. By 8 May, Saul Samuel (ex-President of Sydney's Great Synagogue, now Agent General for New South Wales in London), was officially informed that the story was false. London's *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Hirsch was only 'inquiring' about the Argentina option.[16] One paper reported that Hirsch, noting the 'hostility' which the rumour generated in Australia, had retorted that – whether or not he was considering it – he certainly would not send Jews to Australia now, because they 'would not receive the goodwill indispensable to a new life'.[17] But the rumour persisted unhampered by this information; it is the intense reaction to this *perception* of the threat, despite its emptiness, that is so interesting.

Without fail, editorials protesting the possible influx began by acknowledging the suffering of Jews in Tsarist Russian, albeit sometimes in limited and self-centred ways. Sympathy for the 'unfortunate Jews in Russia' came from every British subject's 'deep... sense of freedom and liberty'.[18] One self-satisfied commentator noted that Russian Jews were indeed 'robbed of the privileges of citizenship' by 'autocracy in its worst form' – as a way of contrasting Russian politics to the freedom and civility of British democracy.[19] Another, after detailing the state-sponsored persecution of Russian Jews, observed that 'no humane man can fail to sympathise profoundly with' them. This writer ironically proceeded to employ exaggerated, explicitly dehumanising description of Jews 'huddled together more like salted herrings than human beings', and to argue why such sympathy should be separated from the policy question: 'to pity the Russian Jew is one thing, to welcome him to Australia is another.'[20] The dominant reason for opposition was self-interest; a fear, heightened by the 1890s Depression, about how these people could be supported:

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16 'Anti-Jewish Crusade', *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 9 May 1891, p. 4; 'Russian Jews', *Tasmanian News* (Hobart), 11 May 1891, p. 3; 'The Jewish Emigration Scheme', *The Brisbane Courier* (Brisbane), 11 May 1891, p. 5; 'The Jews in Russia', *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 16 May 1891, p. 10; 'Foreign Telegrams', *Western Mail* (Perth), 16 May 1891, p. 10.

17 'London Cablegrams', *Broadford Courier and Reedy Creek Times* (Broadford, Vic), 16 May 1891, p. 4. By September 1891 Hirsch had founded the Jewish Colonisation Association (ICA), and began to purchase large tracts of land in Argentina. By 1892, the Russian Government had apparently agreed to his plan: 'Russian Jews: Baron de Hirsch's Scheme', *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 15 June 1892, p. 2. The number of Russian Jews who were eventually resettled in Argentina was closer to 120,000.

18 'The Persecuted Jews in Russia', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 29 May 1891, p. 7.

19 'A New Invasion', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 April 1891, p. 4.

20 'Russian Jews and the Case Against Them', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) and *Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 4 May 1891, p. 6 and p. 3.

We insist that the first duty of the Australian people is to themselves... they must insist on precluding any wholesome [sic] influx of people wholly incapable of assimilating with them, unfitted by their condition to become immediately self-supporting, and almost certain to be a burden and a source of future discord if admitted.[21]

The concerns that these Jews were unassimilable and a burden, and that prospective Jewish migrants would cause and therefore be responsible for Australian antisemitism ('future discord'), are common themes which we will see repeated. Later, the author claimed that this would be an 'incursion of an army of helpless and downtrodden' Jews – their helplessness, although belying the military imagery, was the very thing which supposedly made them a threat to Australian living standards.[22]

An Adelaide paper explicitly compared this threat with Australia's other 'other', even elevating it above the 'Chinese problem' in its urgency, given that the latter had already been dealt with by colonial legislation: 'with the Chinese difficulty we are familiar. But at the present moment it is the Jew... who monopolises the attention of the civilised world'. This commentator is careful to note the assimilation and acceptance of Australia's Jewish community, and the contributions of 'the Hebrew' to government, literature, art and commerce: 'To the Jew, *as a Jew*, it need hardly be said no Australian would take the slightest exception'.[23] The problem lay only with the Russian 'paupers and outcasts' who would 'fatten the sweater and impoverish the artisan and the laborer'. Although Baron Hirsch's plan proposed to use Jews to colonise the sparsely populated areas of the country, this would 'fail utterly' as 'the Jew is a dealer rather than a laborer'. Australians, the author concluded, 'profoundly as they may admire the liberality of the great Hebrew financiers, will not allow that liberality to be displayed in a fashion which would reduce the working classes here to the level of their *confrères* in the old world.'[24] This essentialising of Russian Jews as 'dealers' incapable of physical labour, and the distinction between 'the Jew, as a Jew' and such 'Russian Jews', are fascinating indications of the intersections and confusions between class, religion and ethnicity in

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[21] 'A New Invasion', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 April 1891, p. 4.

[22] ibid.

[23] 'Russian Jews and the Case Against Them', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) and *Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 4 May 1891, p. 6 and p. 3 (emphasis added).

[24] ibid.

defining Jews in the 1890s. 'The Jew, as a Jew', also identified as a 'Hebrew', is recognisable as a fellow citizen: proof, perhaps, of the successful imaging of Australia's Anglo-Jewish community as middle-class British Australians, their religion merely a private matter. Even Baron Hirsch, his money and education perhaps making him respectable, is seemingly respected as a 'great Hebrew financier'. The prospective migrant Russian Jew, however, is both racialised and essentialised as belonging inevitably to a particular economic class. This distinction between recognisable, fellow-citizen Jews, and threatening Jews, would be replicated not only in public discourse about Jews, but in the strategic positioning of the Jewish community itself.

Some reactions were less negative, but not for the reasons the Jewish community might have hoped. Similarly concerned by the colonies' dire economic condition, one paper focused not on the impact of Russian Jews themselves on the labour market, but on the familiar (antisemitic) trope of the Jewish financier. The *South Australian Chronicle*'s Anglo-Colonial correspondent chided those objecting to the scheme, because 'if the Hebraic magnates of the financial world were to combine against a colony which had refused the chosen people an asylum they could make matters extremely sultry'. In the context of Australia's Depression, nothing could justify 'provoking the enmity of the controllers of the European money market. Not a penny more could you borrow in any capital if Rothschild, Hirsch, and the rest determined that you shouldn't.'[25] Indeed, in the same week, the Paris Rothschild family, following reports of the expulsion of Jews from Moscow, had refused a loan to the Russian government; 'ostensibly because of the times being inopportune, really – and confessedly – by way of protest against Russia's treatment of its Jewish subjects', causing Russian credit to suffer accordingly.[26] The readiness with which anxieties about Russian Jews could be linked to the eminently more respectable but still very Jewish families of Hirsch and Rothschild expresses the fixity or stability of an overarching category of Jewishness in Australian public discourse. It suggests that Anglo-Jewry had not, after all, succeeded in entirely divorcing ethnicity from religion, or separating themselves from their less fortunate and less respectable brethren.

Discussions on the issue in the Victorian Parliament exhibited the rumour's significant after-life. On 12 May 1891, after the refutation from London, Victorian Premier James Munro wrote to Agent General Graham Berry to stress the 'strong feeling which exists here against any influx of

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[25] 'Our Anglo-Colonial Letter', *South Australian Chronicle* (Adelaide), 20 June 1891, p. 5.

[26] 'Our Home Letter', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 19 June 1891, p. 2.

immigrants of the pauper or destitute class', noting that although the Jews 'already here' had 'proved themselves to be very desirable citizens', they were 'entirely different' from Russian Jews.[27] Premier Munro then announced again in the Legislative Council in July – two months later – that 'any attempt to land any of these pauper Jews in Victoria would be futile'.[28] One MP raised the issue again in August, comparing Russian immigrants to the Chinese, and noting that 'the steps taken against the Chinese had prevented their landing in the colony in any large numbers', requesting similar measures should to prevent the immigration of Russian Jews, as 'prevention was better than cure'.[29] Another member raised the issue yet again in September, in order to emphasise that the immigration of Russian Jews would be 'detrimental to the best interests of the country'.[30] The repeated reference to this feared influx is indicative of the fragility of colonial Australian identity; threatened not only by the actual presence of large numbers of Chinese, but also by the mere rumour of the arrival of a new, different 'other'.

Most fascinating, though, was the intense reaction of Australia's Anglo-Jewish community. Some community members did highlight the hypocrisy of the opposition to 'paupers' in a nation with a convict past: one asking 'leading Jewish citizens the amount of capital they had when they first landed' and another drily commenting that 'whatever prosperity Australia enjoys today has been largely derived from infinitely less promising material.'[31] But on the whole, community sentiment reflected the complex realities to be navigated as a Jew in 1890s Australia.

At a public meeting held in Melbourne to express sympathy with Russian Jews, Rev Dr. Joseph Abrahams, Rabbi of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation,[32] brought up the 'sensational report'

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[27] Read aloud in Parliament on 5 August. *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly Vol 66, 5 August 1891, p. 773.

[28] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council Vol 66, 16 July 1891, pp. 387-388.

[29] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly Vol 66, 5 August 1891, p. 773 (Patterson).

[30] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly Vol 67, 10 September 1891, p. 1336 (Laurens).

[31] *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 10 April 1891 and 28 August 1891.

[32] Born to a prominent Sephardi rabbinical family in London, Joseph Abrahams's father was the principal of Jews' College London. Abrahams studied at Jews' College, and in Berlin, obtaining both rabbinical qualifications and a PhD in Jewish literature. He came to Australia as rabbi of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in 1883. He was also named presiding rabbi of the Beth Din for Australasia. See John S. Levi, 'Abrahams, Joseph (1855-1938)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 7 (Melbourne University Press, 1979), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/abrahams-joseph-4966.

only in order to reassure those at the meeting that it was baseless. Baron Hirsch, he said, 'was too shrewd a man to send his brother Jews to a place which might prove unsuitable for them.'[33] The gratuitous reference to the report betrayed the anxiety it had generated.

Most worrying for Anglo-Jews were the comparisons drawn between Chinese and Russian Jewish immigrants. An edition of the *Bulletin* had exclaimed that 'even the Chinaman is cheaper in the end than the Hebrew… the one with the tail is preferable to the one with the Talmud every time'.[34] A reference to the prohibition of working on Jewish holidays, this reflected the substance of the Chinese/Russian Jewish comparison: contradictory perceptions of both groups as at once lazy and willing to work harder than white workers, under worse conditions. This was a particular concern of the Australian labour movement: after the failure of the Sydney tailors' strike in November that year, the Trades and Labour Council circulated reports that the strike 'would not have collapsed had it not been for the Jewish tailors'. It blamed 'foreign Jews' for 'work[ing] in direct opposition to the interests of the union' and charged that they were the greatest offenders in 'sweating time'.[35] Although official investigations found the allegations to be false and concluded that Jews 'are, for the most part, respectable workers', the story strengthened union opposition to Jewish immigration.[36]

The *Jewish Herald* quoted one article in the *Age* which rejected the comparison, arguing that Jews, 'not bound to a single country' like the Chinese, might be trusted to show loyalty to Australia. This defence inverted the common antisemitic trope which claimed that, precisely because Jews were not bound to a single country, they could *not* be trusted to show loyalty and allegiance.[37] Perhaps concerned that it was unconvincing, and that more papers were making the comparison than refuting it, the *Jewish Herald* argued that political expediency was more important than any commitment to their fellow Jews, because 'it is quite certain that a large immigration of Russian Jews would arouse the opposition of a certain political party' (presumably Victoria's labour party,

33 'The Persecuted Jews in Russia', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 29 May 1891, p. 7.

34 Peter Love, 'The Kingdom of Shylock: A Case-Study of Australian Labour Anti-Semitism', *Journal of the Australia Jewish History Association*, Vol 12 No 1 (1993), pp. 54-62.

35 'The Tailors' Strike', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 4 November 1891, p. 5.

36 'Sydney – From Our own Correspondent', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 12 February 1892, p. 2.

37 *The Age* (Melbourne), 11 June 1891, p. 4.

then named the Progressive Political League) whose 'influence and power may yet prove a powerful factor in the body politic.'[38]

A similar pragmatism motivated prominent Anglo-Jew Walter D. Benjamin to explain, in a letter to the London *Jewish Chronicle*, the community's attitude: 'We indignantly protest against the harsh treatment meted out to him [the Russian Jew]… but we would rather not have him in our midst.' Beyond the seeming callousness of this attitude, Benjamin's words were deeply strategic. In the letter, he compared the Russian Jew to 'the Chinese cook, the Hindoo hawker, the Kanaka plantation hand, the Tamil servant, or the Lascar sailor'.[39] Understanding that Russian Jews were *already* being racialised as similar to the Chinese and thus as 'Asiatic' and not white, Benjamin participated in this racialisation as part of a rhetorical move designed to show, by contrast, the whiteness of Anglo-Australian Jews. Underlying the rant was the implicit fear that Anglo-Jews would also be racialised as 'Asiatic'; that their acceptance as white, British, equal citizens would be endangered. Jon Stratton points out that this fear was not unreasonable, given the orientalising of European Jews during the nineteenth century.[40] Benjamin went even further, comparing the hypothetical problem of Russian Jewish migration to Australia with America's 'negro problem', which 'furnishes Australia with an eloquent warning'. Perhaps, he implied, Russian Jews were rhetorically 'black' – in the same way that in Britain, the Irish were sometimes described as 'black' as a generic term used for racial 'Othering'.[41] Indeed, much of the contemporary European racial and ethnological literature described Jews as 'swarthy' or 'black'.[42]

The Melbourne Branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association turned these rhetorical strategies into communal policy by passing a motion to advise the London branch not to facilitate the emigration of any Russian Jews.[43] Whether adopted as a strategic, defensive move, or reflecting a genuine embrace of Australia's ideologies of race and labour, the motion gained Parliament's attention and

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[38] 'The Russian Jews', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 19 June 1891, p. 8.

[39] Letter, *London Jewish Chronicle*, 19 June 1891.

[40] Stratton, 'The Colour of Jews', p. 55. See also Mitchell B. Hart, 'Racial Science, Social Science, and the Politics of Jewish Assimilation', *Isis* Vol 90 No 2 (1999), pp. 268-297.

[41] Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, p. 185.

[42] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 126-127.

[43] 'The Anglo-Jewish Association', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 28 August 1891.

was seen as demonstrating Anglo-Jewry's alignment with colonial priorities. In his note to London, Munro commented approvingly that 'this society also, you will observe, is averse to an influx of any pauper class'.[44]

The Association's London branch was less impressed. In a terse and scolding response, its Secretary, M. Duparc, noted that the Association was not currently involved in any schemes to assist emigration to Australia; he added somewhat sarcastically that given the considerable expense of a fare to Australia, any Russian Jews who did make their own way 'will not belong to that pauper class whose presence in your midst would appear to be unwelcome'. The letter finished with a didactic reminder of collective Jewish responsibility: 'whether refugees from Russian tyranny who would seek a home in your colony be poor or not, it is the duty of the Jews in every part of the civilised world… to make the lives of their Russian co-religionists more bearable'.[45] On the defensive, Nahum Barnet, Secretary of the Melbourne branch, attempted to explain the necessity of their actions for the wellbeing of Australian Jewry. Insisting that they objected only to 'unskilled' Russian Jews, Barnet cited 'the opinions freely and strongly expressed here, in Parliament, as well as in the Press, by the labour organisations, and by the public generally' to explain why Australian Jews felt forced to take the position they did, albeit 'with some degree of pain'. He cited financial donations as 'practical proof' of the community's sympathy.[46] Melbourne businessman Barnet Sniders visited Duparc in person to reiterate this message, telling him that Australian Jews 'could not officially recognise a scheme which... if seriously considered, *would render their own personal position unsafe'*. [47] Duparc was either unmoved or unable to comprehend the extent to which Australian Jewry felt under threat; he responded that, as a sign of its disapproval, the Association had decided not to allow any Jews to emigrate to Australia under its auspices. This exchange is an interesting demonstration of the divergence of British and Australian Jewry: although the communities were similarly invested in assimilation as a mechanism for social acceptance,

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[44] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly Vol 66, 5 August, p. 773.

[45] 'Letter from the Anglo-Jewish Association, 10 July', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 22 September 1891, p. 5.

[46] 'The Anglo-Jewish Association', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 22 September 1891, p. 5. This ignored the fact that the May Laws negatived external donations to Russian Jewish communities; any donations would not be permitted to reach the intended recipients. The London AJA pointed out that 'it is only for purposes of immigration that pecuniary help can be efficacious'.

[47] 'A Returned Colonist: Mr Barnet Sniders Interviewed', *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 1 July 1892, p. 3 (emphasis added).

Australian Jewry felt unable to support European refugees amidst contemporary nationalist and protectionist movements. We might imagine Barnet feeling vindicated, as the passing of England's *Alien Act 1905*, largely in reaction to the Eastern European migrants crowding London, indicated that the status of British Jewry was, in fact, somewhat affected/compromised by the presence of these 'paupers'.[48]

A resurgence of the rumour in 1893 stirred these intellectual and social currents once more. A cablegram message published on 9 February stated that four hundred Russian Jews were to be shipped to Australia that week. Evidently seeing this as credible, South Australian Premier John Downer determined that his government would take action to prevent 'an invasion of destitute persons'; New South Wales Premier George Dibbs agreed to immediate and joint action.[49] In a report two days later, the story was further inflated by the threat that 'a larger shipment is to follow in a month's time'.[50] Echoing the concerns of two years previous, the *Western Mail* commented that, given levels of unemployment and the crowded labour market, 'a worse time for any project of this sort could not have been conceived'. Comparing the threatened 'invasion' to the Chinese influx of the 1850s, it expressing the hope that the incident would galvanise the movement for 'combined action with regard to the introduction of aliens'.[51] Another editorial, ironically using the previously disproved Hirsch scheme to prove that 'the Russian Jew invasion is only too true', also called for 'united action' from colonial governments to prevent this 'scum and dirt of the world' arriving in Australia. It explicitly connected the spectre of the Jew with other racial threats: 'the Hindoo has frightened us, and the Syrian has come down like a 'wolf on the fo'd', and now the nightmare which attacks us is that the Jews have looked upon Australia with favor'.[52] Noticeably, it did not

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[48] Between 1881 and 1905, approximately 120,000 European Jews had settled in Britain, and congregated in poor, overcrowded inner city areas. Concerns about labour practices and assimilability, similar to Australian public discourse, led to the establishment of a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1902. The end result – the *Aliens Act 1905* – limited subsequent Jewish immigration to Britain. See Alison Bashford and Catie Gilchrist, 'The Colonial History of the 1905 Aliens Act' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol 40 No 3, pp. 409-437; L. P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960); Leonard D. Smith, 'Greeners and Sweaters: Jewish Immigration and the Cabinet-Making Trade in East London, 1880-1914', *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol 39 (2004), pp. 103-120 and Benjamin L. Lammers, 'Alien Dick Whittingtons: The National Imagination and the Jewish East End', *Jewish Culture and History* Vol 1 (1998), pp. 41-58.

[49] 'The Shipping of Russian Jews to Australia', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 9 February 1893, p. 6.

[50] 'Refugee Jews for Australia', *Western Mail* (Perth), 11 February 1893, p. 30.

[51] 'Refugee Jews for Australia', *Western Mail* (Perth), 11 February 1893, p. 30.

[52] 'The Jews and the Gentiles', *Eastern Districts Chronicle* (York, WA), 4 March 1893, p. 5.

consistently specify 'Russian Jew', but simply 'Jew' – an indication, again, that Anglo-Jews would be affected by association, and that their attempts to distinguish themselves from these paupers were not entirely successful.

Within a week, this story, too, was shown to be false. British chief Rabbi Hermann Adler assured the South Australian Agent General that there was no intention of sending destitute Jews to Australia. The press remained unconvinced,[53] citing London's East End as proof that 'their presence spreads demoralisation', and 'it behoves the colonies to be on the alert, and to keep a strict watch on the foreign steamship lines carrying passengers to the Antipodes.'[54] The Jewish community, too, remained on edge, commenting in 1894 that 'there is among the working classes a strong feeling against all immigration… we may be sure that, in the case of Russian Jews coming in large numbers to this country, a very strong feeling, something like antisemitism, would at once come up.'[55] The official communal response was to assume responsibility for the prevention of antisemitism by pursuing invisibility. Impeccable personal behaviour, argued Rev Elias Blaubaum, would starve antisemites of ammunition.[56]

Historians of Australian Jewry have long dismissed this fear and rejection of Russian Jewish migrants as 'oversensitivity' or an 'overreaction'.[57] Rubinstein argues that 'the same hue and cry would have been raised whatever the origin of the rumoured 500,000', the objections being based merely on economics and 'the general xenophobia which accompanied the emerging Australian nationalist school'.[58] Rutland notes the positive portrayals of Jews in the Australian press (usually celebrating the achievements of prominent Jews), to prove that the Australian public was not antisemitic, merely 'aggressively nationalist'.[59] These accounts, focused only on the binary question

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[53] 'Russian Refugee Jews', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 13 February, p. 3; *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* (NSW), 17 February 1893, p. 29.

[54] 'Jews for Australia', *The Australian Star* (Sydney), 24 March 1893, p. 5.

[55] *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 2 November 1894.

[56] Elias Blaubaum, *On the Mountains: Or, the Essence of Judaism* (Melbourne: Jewish Herald Office, 1892), pp 26-27.

[57] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 95 and Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 25.

[58] Hilary L. Rubinstein, 'Australian Jewish Reactions to Russian Jewish Distress', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 9 Part 6 (1984), pp. 444-456.

[59] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 95.

of whether or not the Australian public held antisemitic attitudes, ignore the way in which a particular combination of racialised boundaries and labour protectionism were *constitutive of* Australian nationalism in the 1890s rather than adjunct to it, and the place of anti-Jewish attitudes in that scheme. They thus fail to treat the construction of assimilationist Anglo-Jewish identity on its own terms, as internally logical and apparently necessary.

Instead, the alignment of Anglo-Jews with the priorities of non-Jewish British Australians should be understood as a self-protective and strategic move, designed to ensure their continued acceptance as partners in the settler-colonial project. By the end of the 1890s, anti-Asian sentiment sat comfortably alongside antisemitic tropes. The narrative about new Jewish migrants either taking Australian jobs, or lowering Australian working standards, echoed the story of Chinese labour in the 1850s, and reflected the close connection between labour protectionism and the belief in a homogenous British-based Australian identity.[60]

The furore over the 1891 and 1893 rumours coincided with growing political discussions about Federation, and it might be argued that fears of Russian Jewish immigration, more immediate, even, than the Chinese problem, contributed materially to the momentum resulting in the creation of a unified immigration and foreign labour policy. As we have seen, resistance to foreign immigration included the concern of labour unionists, who saw Chinese diggers and Russian Jewish 'sweaters' as unfair competition because of their willingness to work in inferior conditions. This was intertwined with the argument that foreign labour represented a threat to a racially pure society.[61] The emerging notion of a 'White Australia',[62] according to Ann Curthoys, is a reminder of 'the exclusionary desires of the 'post-1492' nation-state, with its ideal unity of people, ethnicity, language, religion, mores and culture' – racial exclusion arising not *in spite of* the liberal project but

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[60] See Peter Love, *Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism, 1890-1950* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984) for a more detailed discussion of the connection between Australia's labour movement and racist nationalism.

[61] Raymond Markey, 'Race and Organised Labor in Australia, 1850-1901', *The Historian* Vol 58 No 2 (1996), p. 343; Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since 1901* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), pp. 163, 167; Jonathon Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself "White": White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol 12 No 4 (1999), p. 405.

[62] According to Myra Willard, used explicitly from 1896: Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne University Press, 1923), p. 99.

as an *integral part* of it.[63] Liberal democracies, said colonial leaders, must protect their borders so that their people can continue to be free and equal members of their own national culture; some are simply not 'ready' for that freedom. The construction of a liberal society is inherently exclusive of those incapable of enacting the freedom that liberalism demands. Selective membership was thus essential to the construction of liberal-democratic society; white equality necessitated racial inequality.[64] It was colonial liberals, therefore, who most strongly objected to the importation of a 'degraded class' – whether Chinese or Jewish – which would threaten the liberty of the entire community, equality being impossible without shared civilisation.[65]

Charles Henry Pearson (1830-1894), the colonies' 'outstanding intellectual', is a prime example: a committed liberal reformist, he advocated for universal suffrage and education reform – but also for immigration restriction, to protect 'the last part of the world in which the higher races can live and increase freely for the higher civilisation'.[66] Pearson's work, *National Life and Character*, was published 1893 – the same year as the second panic about Russian Jews. His book addressed Australian geopolitical anxieties about being part of a 'British race… at the end of the world',

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[63] Ann Curthoys, 'Liberalism and exclusionism: A prehistory of the white Australia policy' in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds.), *Legacies of White Australia: race, culture and nation* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), pp. 9-32. See also theorists Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) and Barry Hindess, 'The Liberal Government of Unfreedom', *Alternatives,* vol. 26 (2001). This argument is reflected in developing Australian historiography: Russell Ward's picture of Australia's unique working-class culture in *The Australia Legend* (1958) has been challenged by historians like Humphrey McQueen, in *A New Britannia* (1970), who analysed how this working-class utopia was tinged with racist nationalism, and the way that it relied on the exclusion of coloured labour. And Lake and Reynolds, in *Drawing the Colour Line* (2008), have demonstrated that the White Australia Policy was not contrary to Australia's liberalism, but vital to its maintenance of a small, white, relatively prosperous male workforce.

[64] Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2006), p. 18; McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, p. 16.

[65] Curthoys, 'Liberalism and exclusionism', pp. 19-20. Henry Parkes, for example, argued that it was better to 'prevent the arrival of the immigrants than to discourage or harass them after they are arrived'. Unless colonial governments were willing to grant Chinese immigrants 'the same rights and privileges' afforded white settlers, 'you are simply supporting them in coming here in order to establish a degraded class… an eternal curse to the country': *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 13 July 1881, pp. 97, 100 and 2 August 1881, pp. 414-17 (Sir Henry Parkes, Premier).

[66] John Tregenza, *Professor of Democracy: the Life of Charles Henry Pearson 1830-1894, Oxford Don and Australian Radical* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1968); Charles Henry Pearson, *National life and Character: A Forecast* (1893), p. 32.

explaining that opposition to Chinese immigration resulted from 'the instinct of self preservation'.[67] He famously declared:

> The day will come, and perhaps is not far distant, when the European observer will look round to see the globe girdled with a continuous zone of the black and yellow races… We shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon as servile… Is that not something to guard against?[68]

Only with 'vigilant opposition' – migration restriction – could the colonists ensure that the day would *not* come.[69] Pearson's horrified prediction of an inverted world epitomised Australia's defensive national story about white identity in need of fortification, and his forecast resonated among white settler-colonial nations around the world.[70]

Less well known is Pearson's commentary on Russian Jews. Jews were his chief example of how an 'inferior race' might displace a 'superior' one – because 'they were a mere fraction of the population when Lithuania and Poland were first incorporated, and are now numerous enough to appear a danger to the Empire.' In Pearson's analysis, the legal and social position of Jews 'though not… dignified or pleasant', had been 'most favourable' for population increase:

> Given security to life, limb, and property, which there has been till very lately, the power to enjoy wealth being limited, while its value as a safeguard is enhanced, and all the checks of self-restraint being removed, the Jewish population has had no motive to limit its reproductive powers… The Jew has no reason for living in a palace, for keeping up unnecessary servants, or for spending extravagantly on social pleasures… His risk of attack from the populace, and the percentage he pays to officials, will be less in proportion as he is

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[67] Pearson, *National Life,* p. 36. See extended discussion in Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, Chapter 3, pp. 75-94.

[68] Pearson, *National Life,* pp. 84-5.

[69] Pearson, *National Life*, p. 50. See discussion in Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 188, 196.

[70] US President Theodore Roosevelt apparently regarded the book as a clarion call: Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 289-90, and 98-100.

shabbily dressed and poorly housed. Naturally he accumulates money, and naturally, also, he marries young and does not dream of limiting his family.[71]

For Pearson, the growth of Russian Jewry was due to the community's supposed wealth (the reality of Jewish poverty apparently a facade to avoid taxation and discourage persecution), and while acknowledging some state-sponsored discrimination, he argued that 'as contractors, merchants, tradesmen, money-lenders, middlemen, and smugglers, they have been able to do a great deal of profitable business.' The essential problem, therefore, was that 'since it has become impossible to deny inferior races the protection of the law in civilised communities, they are bound to increase faster than the privileged part of the nation.' Liberal democracies were unwilling to treat 'inferior' citizens as less than citizens; this would compromise their liberal democratic project. But granting full citizenship to 'inferior races', according to the view that these groups were unassimilable, would compromise the character of the nation – in the case of Russian Jews, they were 'too numerous, and, it may be feared, too detested to be absorbed into the general population.'[72] The only solution, then, was to expel or exclude them. Indeed, Pearson quotes with approval Russia 'taking very strong steps' against the Jews; their expulsion would ensure 'a homogenous nationality'.[73]

As it became clear that restrictive immigration policy would inevitably be part of the anticipated federal agenda, Anglo-Jews aligned themselves with the White Australia project, to prove that they, too, wished to protect the identity of a British colony of British inhabitants. The Australian Natives' Association included several native-born middle-class Jewish men, Isaac Isaacs perhaps the best known. The son of a Russian immigrant, and a successfully assimilated Anglo-Australian Jew, Isaacs was a vehement advocate of the White Australia policy and the abolition of non-White labour.[74] As a parliamentarian, he argued that the policy would allow the nation to develop free 'for all time from the contaminating and degrading influence of inferior races'.[75] These views were later

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[71] Pearson, *National Life*, pp. 78.

[72] Pearson, *National Life*, pp. 77-80.

[73] Pearson, *National Life*, p. 285.

[74] Michael Kirby, 'Sir Isaac Isaacs - A Sesquicentenary Reflection', *Melbourne University Law Review* Vol 9 No 3 (2005), pp. 880-904.

[75] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 12 September 1901, p 4804 (Isaac Isaacs).

reflected in Isaacs's judicial decisions, which included a reference to illegal migrants as 'loathsome hotbeds of disease' who conspire to 'defy and injure the entire people of a continent.'[76]

Bipartisan support for the passing of federal immigration restriction legislation – alongside bipartisan expressions of racial prejudice[77] – reflect the way that exclusion of certain groups constituted a legislative declaration of racial identity. Linguistic choices in the Parliamentary discussion of the proposed laws are very telling: constant juxtapositions of 'purity' and 'contamination' and references to 'degeneration' indicate the way 'whiteness', for these early Australians, constituted not a categorisation, but a construct to be fortified and defended.[78] Pearson's 'instinct of self-preservation' was key to these discussions, being held up by Prime Minister Edmund Barton as 'the highest law', rising above international law and imperial relations.[79] Attorney-General Alfred Deakin declared that 'nothing less than the national manhood, the national character, and the national future… are at stake.'[80] Debate in the House of Representatives therefore centred not around the purpose of the legislation, nor its desired result, but merely the most effective way to achieve this. The resulting *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901* (Cth) regulated labour by enabling the importation of an expendable, deportable class of temporary workers;[81] while the companion *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Cth) regulated race by granting absolute discretion to administrative officers to subject attempted migrants to the dictation test;[82]

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[76] *Williamson v Ah On* (1926) 39 CLR 95, p. 104.

[77] See, for example, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 12 September 1901, p. 4804 (Alfred Deakin), p. 4826 (Billy Hughes), p. 4845 (Isaac Isaacs).

[78] See, for example, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 7 August 1901, pp. 3502–3 (Edmund Barton, Prime Minister); 12 September 1901, p. 4812 (Alfred Deakin), p. 4847 (Isaac Isaacs); 26 September 1901, p. 5233 (Edmund Barton), p. 5270 (Sir John Forrest); 27 September 1901, p. 5317 (Isaac Isaacs), pp. 5320–2 (Edmund Barton); *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates,* Senate, 13 November 1901, pp. 7142–3 (Richard O'Connor).

[79] Pearson, *National Life*, p. 16; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 7 August 1901, p. 3506 (Edmund Barton) and 12 September 1901, p. 4828 (William Wilks).

[80] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 12 September 1901, p. 4804 (Alfred Deakin, Attorney-General)

[81] See Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labor Trade* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), on the use of Pacific Island labourers for work on Australia's northern sugar plantations.

[82] *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Cth), s 3a.

creating an offence of being a prohibited immigrant,[83] and imposing 'carrier sanctions' on any ship master, owner or charterer caught carrying a prohibited immigrant.[84]

Faced with this stark legislative reality, Australia's Jewish community continued, with perhaps even more urgency, to position itself as British, white, and therefore on the right side of Australia's 'colour line' and part of Australia's 'imagined community' of masculine whiteness. The high value placed on the maintenance of a 'white Australia' should be seen as the discursive world in which Australia's Jewish community negotiated its identity.[85] Jon Stratton argues that 'the Jew' existed as an 'Other' in Australian discourse at this time much like the categories 'Oriental' or 'Asiatic' – indeed, sometimes overlapping with those categories – yet was simultaneously and ambivalently considered to be white, Western and European.[86] The incidents of the 1890s represented contests over exactly how the category of 'Jew' should be understood – both by gentile and Jewish Australians – and whether there might be different types of Jews, some white, some not.

The continued persecution and migration of Russian Jews over the next few decades would leave Anglo-Jewry continually embattled and defensive. By the 1920s – amidst developing anxieties in Australia about other undesirable European migrants, including notably Italians, Greeks and Maltese – it was increasingly clear that national racial boundaries were being formed not only against a Chinese 'other', but against a new category of 'white alien', in which Jews were very much included.

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[83] Ibid, s 3(a)-(g). Being a prohibited immigrant could be for one of the following reasons: failing the dictation test, being a 'public charge', an 'idiot or insane person', suffering 'an infectious or contagious disease', or being a criminal, prostitute, or indentured labourer. A conviction carried a possible sentence of up to six months' imprisonment, which could be waived on provision of two approved sureties each in the sum of £50, which guaranteed departure from the Commonwealth within one month: s 7.

[84] Ibid, s 9.

[85] My language draws on Foucauldian discourse analysis, which looks at the way power relationships and dynamics in society are expressed through particular forms of language: Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (first published 1969, translated by A. M. Sheridan and reprinted London: Routledge, 2002).

[86] Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, pp. 2-3.

Chapter 4

'A minority is always wiser to be careful': collisions and collusions in 1920s Australia

In the 1890s, both Jewish and non-Jewish anxieties about 'Russian Jews' ultimately proved to be founded on a phantom threat. But, by the 1920s, that phantom was assuming a new, embodied form, as a growing number of Eastern European Jews actually arrived in Australia. Waves of pogroms and violence in the Russian Empire and following the Russian Revolution significantly accelerated Jewish emigration.[1] Most did not come to Australia, but some did, and in growing numbers: perhaps 7,000 European Jews between 1881 and 1920,[2] and in the decade to 1930, 3,000 more,[3] mostly from Eastern Europe. Some were simply escaping persecution and in search of a better life. Some were political refugees, arriving after the defeat of the White Army by the Bolshevik forces. Their presence gave new urgency to the question of Jews and whiteness.

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[1] Between 1921 and 1925 alone, 400,000 Jews left Europe. These moves were more permanent for Jews than other migrant groups: between 1908 and 1924, 33% of all immigrants to America returned to their countries of origin, while only 5.2% of Jews did. There was less to return to: Taft and Markus, *A Second Chance*, p. 37; Gur Alroey, 'Out of the Shtetl: In the Footsteps of Eastern European Jewish Emigrants to America, 1900-1914', *Leidschrift* Vol 22 No 1 (2007), pp. 91-92.

[2] According to Charles Price's examination of naturalisation records, 3,234 Jewish European men arrived in this period: 2,119 from Eastern Europe (Poland, 'Russia proper', Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine and Romania); the rest from Central Europe (Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) or arriving via Palestine and the Turkish Empire. More than a third arrived in the period 1881-1890, reflecting the initial wave of pogroms; the 1890s were quieter; and the numbers for 1901-1910 and 1911-1915 each slightly larger, reflecting the 1905 failed revolution and accompanying pogroms, and the turmoil in the lead up to 1917. Due to the war, almost no migrants arrived 1915-1920. The number 7,000 is reached by adding an estimate of women and children, plus the proportion of the migrants who were never naturalised: Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', Appendix II: 'Non-British Jews (Naturalised Males Only): Country of Origin by Years of Arrival'. Rubinstein inaccurately quotes Price's total number of Jews from the Russian Empire as 2,110 (p. 108); possibly as a consequence of the faulty table reproduced from Price on p. 110. While replicating all of Price's individual counts, the table counts both individual countries within Empires (e.g., Lithuania, Austria) and Price's 'total' columns for the Russian Empire, and for Austria-Hungary, which of course means double-counting individuals, and results in inflated subtotals for each period (for 1881-1890, 1,531 rather than 1,192; for 1891-1900, 579 rather than 438; for 1901-1910, 1,128 rather than 780; for 1911-1914, 1,185 rather than 772). Inexplicably, even the double-counting wouldn't generate those exact numbers; each subtotal is off by between 5 and 20 (e.g. double-counting the totals for 1881-1890 would result in 1,523; for 1891-1900, 596; for 1901-1910, 1,119; and for 1911-1914, 1,181). Whether the numbers are internally coherent or not, the figures are significantly overstated compared to Price: Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 110.

[3] According to Price's numbers, 1,532 Jewish European men arrived in the period; 1,217 from Eastern Europe and the rest from Central Europe. Compensating for women and children, and those who were not naturalised, leads to the estimate of 3,000: Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', Appendix II: 'Non-British Jews (Naturalised Males Only): Country of Origin by Years of Arrival'.

Across the same period, the character of Australian immigration policy had shifted and hardened. During the first few decades of Federation, the newly created Commonwealth government managed only the implementation of the *Immigration Restriction Act*, with States controlling migration schemes. It took until the 1920s for the federal government to consolidate its power over migration, develop a coherent immigration policy, and learn to utilise the law to the fullest extent. The decade saw both increased migration – facilitated by the establishment of the Joint Commonwealth and State Immigration Scheme in 1921, the *Empire Settlement Act 1922*, and a £34 million agreement between Commonwealth and State governments in 1925 – and increased control of that migration, both through the widening of provisions of the *Immigration Restriction Act*, and more indirectly through an increasingly complicated system of visas and permits.[4] With both heightened mobility and heightened state control over that mobility, Australian migration policy in 1920s is a textbook example of the mutually constitutive processes of state-building and border control.

The locus of exclusion had also changed. The dictation test, designed to exclude prospective Chinese immigrants, had been shown to be 'foolproof': even English-speaking applicants could be required to take a test in a European language they did not speak.[5] No one passed the test after 1909, which deterred prospective Asian migrants, stopping the flow almost completely.[6] In the meantime, World War I fundamentally changed official attitudes towards European foreigners, especially those who were the enemy during the war – they were now linked with subversion, disloyalty and thus undesirability. The *Enemy Aliens Act 1920* prohibited the entry of Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Bulgarians and Turks for the next five years. An embargo on immigration from Russia was also enforced between 1917 and 1922, during the Russian revolution and subsequent Russian Civil War.[7] The government also became increasingly anxious to stem the flow of Southern and Eastern Europeans, especially as quotas were instituted in the United States in

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[4] A. C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967). See also Herbert I. London, *Non-White Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970).

[5] Instructions to Immigration Officers noted that 'the test should be applied in a language with which the immigrant is not sufficiently acquainted to be able to write out at dictation.' See Circular from Collector of Customs, Melbourne, 4 March 1927, NAA: B13, 1927/5347, Home and Territories Department, 'Immigration Act 1901 - 1925 - Dictation Test'.

[6] A.T. Yarwood, 'The Dictation Test – Historical Survey', *Australian Quarterly* Vol 30 No 2 (1958), p. 25, and Barry York, *Immigration Restriction: Annual Returns as Required Under the Australian Immigration Act between 1901 and 1957* (Canberra: Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, ANU, 1992), p. 24.

[7] NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

1921[8] and 1924[9] disproportionately affecting these groups, and raising the possibility of large scale influxes to Australia instead.[10] In this context, the White Australia policy, initially designed to exclude Chinese migrants, could be and was expanded and adapted to enable the exclusion of new categories of 'undesirables' – 'white aliens'.

By the 1920s, the crucial question for Australian nation-building was the nuances of whiteness itself. Most interestingly, while racial hierarchies determined eligibility for entry: 'country of origin' rather than 'colour' had become the major criterion in immigrant policy, leading, for example, to the classification of Jews born in Palestine (albeit to European parents), or even European Jews who had lived for a few years in Palestine, as 'Asiatic'.[11] Indeed, this use of national origin as the operative category meant that despite the evident awareness of and numerous references to Jews as a class of migrant, there were no specific statistics provided about Jews. Instead they were dispersed through different European and Asian groups, highlighting an underlying problem: Jews are not obviously legible in a system which defines people by nationality.[12]

Partly because of this problem of categorisation, Jews were not explicitly singled out in policy debates about the boundary of whiteness. They were, however, affected by evolving policy regarding Southern and Eastern Europeans in general, and numerous policy files indicate both that Jews were seen as a threat, and that administrators were not exactly sure where to place them in the developing scheme of desirable/undesirable white aliens, or why exactly they wished to exclude them. Administrative confusion was evident, for example, in the response to a request from Jewish communal advocates in 1921 for the settlement of a group of a 'panic-stricken' Jews, 'fugitives

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[8] The *Emergency Quota Act 1921* limited the number of immigrants annually from any country to 3% of those already in the United States from that country according to the 1910 census.

[9] The *Immigration Act 1924* fixed an overall immigration limit for the first time, as well as further limiting quotas to 2% of the population from that country recorded in 1890. Populations which were smaller at that point, including Jews (as well as Italians, Greeks, Poles and Russians), were seriously affected; Jewish immigration was brought almost to a halt.

[10] Charles Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 83-139.

[11] NAA: A1066/4, M45/17/4, Department of External Affairs, Correspondence files, 'Palestine - Entry of Jews into Australia'.

[12] In Barry York's documentation of all migrants admitted to the Commonwealth, he omits this 'Palestine Jews' category for 1922, using only 'Palestinian' throughout: see York, Barry. *Admitted 1901-1946: Immigrants and Others Allowed into Australia Between 1901 and 1946* (Canberra: Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, ANU, 1993).

from an indescribable anarchy and carnage' in Eastern Europe. The High Commission at Australian House in London, the Superintendent of Immigration, and the Department of Home and Territories, while united in opposition to such a proposal, gave multiple and contradictory reasons for their refusal. These included: the general embargo on Russians due to their possibly objectionable politics; high levels of unemployment; the existing scheme of settling British ex-servicemen ('to welcome the Jews would be to exclude the British'); and the possible public objection ('I fear that public opinion will be outraged by any proposal to bring in these unfortunate Jews').[13]

As anxiety about white aliens grew, correspondence amongst the relevant departments reveal the development of a more utilitarian approach to the *Immigration Restriction Act*, and a growing cognisance of its broad discretionary powers. In 1923, the government formally appointed both the Director of Migration and Settlement and the Chief Medical Officer at Australia House in London 'Officers' under the Act, allowing them to administer the dictation test and implement other sections in the Act defining 'prohibited immigrant'.[14] This is the first hint of official policy encouraging use of the dictation test to prevent undesirable white migration, although the government continued to protest that the dictation test was not to be administered to European migrants. The government also created obstacles beyond the Act, enacting its first formal restrictions on European migrants in April 1924, when it raised the landing money for non-British entrants from £10 to £40, requiring prospective immigrants to possess both this amount (or a written guarantee of sponsorship) and the fare to Australia.[15]

As the state's control over its borders hardened, Jews became a more significantly confounding case for administrators, even influencing the direction of migration policy. In 1921, the Commonwealth's assisted passage scheme for friends and close relatives, designed to facilitate the reunion of

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13 Letter from Robert M. Samuel (President of the Jewish Board of Deputies) and Claude G. Montefiore (President of Anglo-Jewish Association), 6 May 1921; Letter from Superintendent of Migration to Prime Minister's Department, 23 May 1921; Letter from Department of Home and Territories to Prime Minister's Office, 24 May 1921; Cabinet Memorandum, 31 May 1921; and Cablegram, 1 June 1921. NAA: A457, H400/5, Prime Minister's Department, 'Immigration. Immigration of Jewish Refugees'. See also NAA: A6006, 1921/12/31, Prime Minister's Department, Correspondence Files, 'Proposed Emigration of Russian Jews to Australia'.

14 Memorandum, 'Question of preventing unsuitable or undesirable Migrants from sailing from England for Australia', 13 February 1923; approval on 5 March 1923. NAA: A1, 1923/3669, Department of Home and Territories, 'Immigration Unsuitable Immigrants'.

15 NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

families, had been extended to a specific list of European nationalities: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, France, Belgium, Poland, Switzerland and Italy.[16] The decision sparked much angst-ridden correspondence. Representatives of other countries wrote to the Commonwealth government, advocating for their nationals to be added to the list of approved non-British migrants. Correspondence among government officials debated the relative desirability of various national groups.[17] In thus formalising the line between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' European nations, administrators drew upon a growing body of global administrative practice, including advice requested from US migration officials. That advice, when it came, singled Jews out as a particularly undesirable class of European foreigner, both for the oft-repeated reason of their supposedly low living standards and, more significantly, because they eluded national categories, being, of course, not a nationality at all: 'these people who have been so long without a country, have no love of country…. they have not, in the slightest, patriotism or any public spiritedness.'[18] As discussions in Australia over which nationalities to include and exclude became more convoluted and frustrating, this singling out of Jews was repeated. Lionel J. Hurley, Deputy Director of Commonwealth Immigration Office, proposed that nominations be considered for close relatives from *any* European country, with officials granted the discretion to accept or reject applications based on perceived desirability. This would avoid 'giving offence to… the nationals of any particular country'. The current policy's explicit preferencing of some foreign countries over others, Hurley pointed out, placed officers 'in a somewhat delicate position':

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[16] In March 1921, a letter from the Superintendent of Migration to the Prime Minister's Department recommended extending the scheme to specific non-British countries, and this was announced in a letter to Premiers of all States, 22 April 1921. These two communications evidence the contradictions in Australia's immigration policy: the former reasoned that this would 'keep alive the flow… from approved countries', while the latter noted only that this would 'enable the reunion of families': NAA: A1, 1936/13639. Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

[17] The Commonwealth Government agreed to extend the scheme to Finnish migrants (August 1921), and Czecho-Slovakian, Estonian and Dalmatian agriculturists (July 1922); but refused such request from Greece (April 1923). Tentative, most informal quotas were set in place in 1922: a memorandum from the Prime Minster's Department to Acting Superintendent of Migration stated that number of non-British migrants receiving assisted passage should be 'limited in such a way that the total number admitted shall bear the same fixed proportion to the whole population as it does at present…': NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

[18] Memorandum for Prime Minister's Department, from D. B. Edward, Official Secretary, Office of the Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Australia, New York, 'Relative Desirability of Peoples of European Nationalities – As Immigrants', 10 March 1922. NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, File of Papers, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

For instance, a nomination might be submitted through a particular State Immigration Office in favor of, say, some Jew refugees. In the ordinary course it might be considered offensive to intimate that nominations would not be accepted in favor of Jews, whilst such nominations could be accepted in favor of Italians or Poles. Under the policy which is suggested… We will be able to satisfactorily deal with all such cases without causing offence.[19]

It is striking that in a proposal for removing national distinctions because of the possible offence to specific *nationalities*, the chief example is a Jew, although Jews were never identified in government documents as being of 'Jewish nationality', but rather as Russian, Polish, etc. When the policy was adopted and subsequently explained to State Immigration Offices, the veiled implications were made clear: it would allow officials to 'refuse assisted passages (without giving reason).'[20] The policy, then, would allow immigration officials to refuse assisted passage to Jews without articulating what exactly was 'undesirable' about them, suggesting that migration decisions were made based on personal whims or prejudices that could not be articulated in the language of either colour *or* nationality. By July 1925 the policy was abandoned entirely, assisted passage for relatives available once again only to naturalised British subjects.[21] But this small administrative incident stands as an astonishing example of how Jews were a source of particular confusion in 1920s migration policy, and how they were, therefore, hugely important in policy negotiations, despite the relative insignificance of their numbers compared to other migrant groups.

Polish Jews were discussed more explicitly when the 1924 US legislation prompted fears of an influx. Internal memoranda and notes between departments reveal a series of concerns about Polish Jews that echo the scaremongering of the 1890s: considered an 'undesirable type of emigrant', they often spoke only Polish and Yiddish; they were 'men of poor physique' and unlikely to be agriculturists or skilled labourers; they had a disregard for working/living conditions; their presence would spark 'antisemitic disturbances'; and there was no way to confirm 'the safety of their

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[19] Memo from Deputy Director of Commonwealth Immigration Office to Acting Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 'Nomination of Migrants from Foreign Countries', 19 September 1923, NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

[20] Circular to all State Immigration Offices, 7 August 1924, and Budget to London from Commonwealth Immigration Office, 18 August 1924, NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

[21] Memorandum, Secretary Prime Minister's Department to Commonwealth Immigration Office, 8 July 1925, NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

political views'.[22] Their assimilability was of particular concern: they were 'a peculiarly backward class, living as their ancestors lived about 2,000 years ago, and not assimilating with the general community', likely to 'form into communities as they have done in East London.'[23] Finally solidifying the government's policy on Polish Jews, the Home and Territories Department instructed British Passport Control Officers to 'discreetly' discourage Polish Jewish immigrants, and to use their discretion to prioritise the granting of visas to those of 'superior standing': either well-educated with business interests, or agriculturalists with independent capital.[24] The same series of concerns was rehearsed throughout debates over the propriety or otherwise of using the dictation test to limit the numbers of Eastern European immigrants. Despite denials throughout the 1920s that the test was was ever intended for use on European migrants,[25] the Government signalled its growing awareness of the broad discretionary powers provided by the *Immigration Restriction Act* in bluntly recommending that British consulates deliberately create difficulties with the language test.[26] These acts reflected the desire to preserve not just the 'whiteness' but also the 'Britishness' of Australia.

Despite these measures, the number of 'white alien' arrivals increased as the 1920s progressed, leading to the adoption of formal quotas in 1928 on migrants from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Greece and the Balkans. Palestinians – classified as 'Asiatic' – and Russians required special

[22] Letter from F. C. Derbyshire to Major H. E. Spencer, Passport Control Department, Foreign Office in London, 20 June 1925, NAA: A458, N156/2, Prime Minister's Department, 'Immigration Restrictions – Jews'.

[23] Memorandum, Home and Territories Department, 30 September 1925, NAA: A434, 1949/3/3196, Department of Immigration, 'Admission of Jews to Australia'.

[24] Letter from F. J. Quinlan, Prime Minister's Department, to Australia House, 3 October 1925, NAA: A434, 1949/3/3196, Department of Immigration, 'Admission of Jews to Australia'. A query in January 1926 abut the position of the Commonwealth Government on 'the immigration into Australia of Jews in general and the Estonian Jewish element in particular' from the British Passport Control Officer in Reval, Estonia, referred to this Warsaw letter, stating that the advice was the same.

[25] See, for example, Letter from Prime Minister to Premier of South Australia, 26 September 1924, 'it was never intended, however, that the Dictation Test provisions of the Immigration Act should be applied in any general way for the purpose of excluding white immigrants': NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'. Also letter from Atlee Hunt, Secretary of Department of External Affairs to Philip Frankel, Jewish leader from Brisbane, in 1916, stating that 'It is the usual practice to admit into Australia, without requiring them to pass the dictation test prescribed by the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1901-12, all immigrants of European race or descent who are of sound health and capable of earning their own living': Letter, 10 May 1916, NAA: A1, 1916/10708, Department of External Affairs, 'Admission of Refugee Russian and Polish Jews'.

[26] A Circular to Immigration Officers around the country explicitly authorised use of other languages to exclude even English-speakers, and was seemingly by the paradoxical situation of the Officer themselves not being able to speak the other language. Circular from Collector of Customs, Melbourne, 4 March 1927, NAA: B13, 1927/5347, Home and Territories Department, 'Immigration Act 1901 - 1925 - Dictation Test'.

individual permission.[27] Quotas were enforced quite stringently, and any special requests to allow more Jews to emigrate – including the suggestion that the government create a special Jewish quota for all of Eastern Europe, in addition to the existing categories for those countries – were rejected.[28]

Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the government was 'sheltering', so to speak, behind the White Australia policy while making decisions to exclude certain types of migrants – 'European foreigners', 'white aliens' – which went far beyond the Act's original intention. As we have seen, the concerns about these migrants were complicated: sometimes racial, or relating to their assimilability; sometimes economic, concerned about their impact on Australian workers; usually a mixture. Indeed, these dual desires to legislate race and labour were the driving forces behind the White Australia policy.[29] What was meant by 'white', evidently, was more complex than merely 'not coloured'. Instead, it related to the character and nature of the person, and their capacity for a certain type of citizenship. Critically, the debates over assisted passage, possible exclusion through dictation test, and the airing of concerns about particular characteristics or qualities of Eastern European Jews, all placed Jews in a more problematic category: potentially 'undesirable', ethnically distinct, and therefore threatening the homogeneity of 'white Australia'. Jews were becoming less 'white'.

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Cognisant only of official announcements of policy, and thus unaware of what 'Jew' was coming to mean inside the bureaucracy, Anglo-Jewry was nevertheless anxious about Russian and Polish Jews, and beginning to feel their 'Britishness' and 'whiteness', yet again, jeopardised. Although the communities in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane ran fundraising campaigns – construing the sending of money and supplies as a 'PRACTICAL attempt to solve the Jewish problem' – the

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[27] Letter, F. J. Quinlan, Assistant Secretary of Home and Territories Department, to Secretary of the Development and Migration Commission, 19 May 1927, NAA: A1, 1936/13639, Department of Markets and Migration, 'Immigration from Countries other than United Kingdom'.

[28] Memorandum of interview at Australia House 18 December 1928, between Mr James R. Collins (Financial Adviser to the High Commissioner) and Colonel Manning (Australian Director of Migration) and Lucien Wolf, representing Hias-Ica-Emigdirect, 23 January 1929. NAA: A434, 1949/3196, Department of Immigration, 'Admission of Jews to Australia'. See also for example, Letter from Far Eastern Jewish Central Information Bureau, Harbin, China, 2 December 1924, NAA CP211/2, 53/44, Commonwealth Immigration Office, 'Migration – Jewish Refugees from Eastern Europe'.

[29] Eve Lester, *Making Migration Law: The Foreigner, Sovereignty, and the Case of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 82-86.

arguably more practical solution, immigration to Australia, was rejected because of the threat this would pose.[30] Their interests, and the government's, collided: Anglo-Jews seemed to approve of the various restrictive measures implemented. As Chief Minister at Sydney's Great Synagogue, Rev Francis Lyon Cohen was approached numerous times by Jewish migrant advocacy groups overseas, and his responses epitomised the growing anxieties of respectable Anglicised Jewry as the issue received more and more official attention.[31] When asked by Emigdirect in 1926 to enquire about the use of the dictation test as a pretext for excluding Jewish migrants, he politely did so. But when the response from the Home and Territories Department avoided the question, noting only that an immigrant is 'greatly handicapped' without a 'good working knowledge of the English language', Cohen merely forwarded the reply, responding to the Department that he would try to impress upon Emigdirect that 'there are two sides to the question, and that neither are the Australian authorities unreasonable, nor their own more fortunate British-born coreligionist leaders heedless of the difficulties of the situation'.[32]

At a sermon preached on Saturday 9 August 1924, Cohen had articulated the community's defence of its besieged identity, infusing it with religious significance. Delivered just over two months after US quotas were tightened, the sermon is particularly unique in its use of traditional Jewish texts to defend a particular political position on the question of Eastern European immigration. The day was Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people from Judea by the Romans. Cohen's sermon began with an articulation of the classical Jewish doctrine of reward and punishment, a relevant message for the day because of the rabbinic teaching that the Judeans were responsible for their own defeat: 'it was because of our sins that we were exiled from our land'. In typical rabbinic style, Cohen then bemoaned the

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[30] Melbourne's Ukrainian Jewish Relief Fund: *Australian Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 24 June 1920; Sydney's Eastern European Reconstruction Campaign; 'Eastern European Reconstruction Campaign (N.S.W.)', *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 17 August 1928; Brisbane's Eastern European Jewish Reconstruction Fund; 'An Appeal: Jewish Relief Scheme', *The Brisbane Courier* (Brisbane), 6 October 1928, and *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 7 October 1928.

[31] Born in England to a well-established family and educated at Jews' College, London, Cohen was the first and, for most of his ministry, only spiritual leader in Sydney with rabbinical qualifications. He was active in all facets of Jewish communal life, including as President of the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education, and as a founder of the New South Wales Jewish War Memorial, Darlinghurst. See Suzanne Rutland, 'Cohen, Francis Lyon (1862-1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8 (Melbourne University Press, 1981), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cohen-francis-lyon-5710.

[32] Letters dated 1 September 1926, 15 October 1926, 28 October 1926, 1 November 1926, NAA: A434, 1949/3/3196, Department of Immigration, 'Admission of Jews to Australia'.

religious failings of his community, claiming it had forgotten that human beings were responsibility for tragedy.

Remarkably, Cohen then proceeded to apply this theological doctrine to contemporary politics, invoking religious authority for assimilation. Acknowledging that the new US quotas were particularly hard on Jews, Cohen nevertheless dismissed the claims of 'the emotional Jewish masses' and 'hysterical Jewish journals' that the restriction was due to 'anti-Jewish feeling'. Echoing Pearson and Australian parliamentarians, he explained that immigration restriction came from a 'natural desire for self-protection'. Australians should learn from American mistakes and take preventive action; he endorsed the White Australia Policy's resolution to keep the population 98% British and implied that Australia would benefit from US-style quotas. Here was a fascinating alignment not only with the objects of the policy, but also with its substance: the claim that he and his congregants were white implied that other groups of Jews were essentially apart from that whiteness, incapable of assimilation. He then put the familiar argument about communal survival, arguing that Jewish acceptance in Australia, 'scarcely rivalled anywhere', resulted from the community's co-operation with its neighbours on the immigration issue; support for a White Australia was a precondition of Jewish survival. But the entire community was 'benefitted by the virtues, and injured by the faults' of its members – so acceptance would be threatened by the presence of Eastern European Jews, whose different social and cultural norms would mark them, and thus their coreligionists, as different. It 'would not be the fault of the other fellow, but of our unwise selves', he urged, 'if we allowed our standing here to be damaged':

> *A minority is always wiser to be careful…* [we should] trouble to examine and revise our own conduct, so as to retain the cordial respect and regard of our neighbours as individual Jews, and as well as to stand blameless before God and man as members of an ancient and honourable Community.[33]

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[33] 'Whom to Blame, A Sermon Preached at the Great Synagogue, Sydney, on Sabbath last', *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 15 August 1924, p. 3 (emphasis added). There was possibly even a deeper message in his use of Tisha B'Av specifically to articulate this message: the Roman Revolt in 70 CE which led to the Jewish diaspora was an insistence on Jewish sovereignty, self-determination, and *difference*; the lesson to be learned was not to regain that sovereignty or be ostentatious about or proud of Jewish difference, but to assimilate better into the surrounding culture. In other words, national disaster occurs when/if Jews refuse to be like the people around them.

The gentile, 'the other side/fellow' is not responsible for antisemitism: Jews are. We might be tempted to see in Cohen's attitude evidence of a cautious, fearful, diaspora Jew, one who apologises for the prejudices which others hold about her, and who sees herself as responsible for her own persecution. But this is an act of strategic positioning. The concept of 'divine retribution' and its corollary of 'human responsibility' is particularly meaningful in modern Jewish communities, lacking a religious authority which can compel Jews to follow Jewish law: it teaches that, despite this, there are cosmic consequences to sin. But it is also a doctrine that, when applied to politics, is profoundly empowering: responsible individuals are able to effect change in their surroundings; either creating or avoiding disaster for their community. Australian Jews, Cohen was saying, could regain their agency and become 'masters' of their destinies within Australian society by strategising in this way. Of course, this ignores the structural or systemic factors at play – minority behaviour cannot account for the extent and influence of racial prejudice in Australia's immigration policy. The two-part solution – both to assimilate better, and to collude with the government in preventing desperate European Jews from emigrating to Australia – would also become incomprehensible with fifteen years of hindsight, as Hitler began his genocide of European Jewry. But in 1924, Anglo-Jews opposing Eastern European Jewish migration seemed, bizarrely, to make sense.

There was silence from Anglo-Jewry in 1928, when Australia in turn adopted quotas. Activist Solomon Yankelevitch Jacobi met with Sydney Jewish leaders that year to advocate for European Jews, describing the pogroms, famine and epidemics which had left them 'without means of support, physically shattered, morally broken'. The meeting passed resolutions simply noting their distress at this suffering, and calling for further donations.[34] A *Hebrew Standard* editorial even noted the new quotas with approval: there had been imminent danger, wrote Harris, that 'the progress of a century might be suddenly undone, and Australian Jews swamped by a sudden irruption unable to speak English, and… failing to understand the Australian outlook'. He calculated that only twenty-five persons per month from Eastern Europe would be now admitted – of course not all of these would be Jewish, nor all coming to Sydney – so the community had avoided 'any large immigration of helpless persons'. The formation of a Jewish Emigration Questions Committee, in contact with HIAS-Emigdirect, also allowed them to 'warn intending

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[34] 'Shall Half of Jewry Disappear?', *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 27 July 1928, p. 3. Rev Cohen was conspicuous in his absence; he sent apologies.

immigrants... [to] save such poor folk further bitter disappointment.'[35] Although seemingly paradoxical – weren't these organisations *advocates* for Jewish immigrants? – Harris's understanding of the role of the new Committee demonstrates what Adam McKeown has labeled 'entwined enforcement'. Private organisations were tolerated by the state only where they collaborated with state restrictions.[36] The extensive network of Jewish emigration organisations did help migrants with temporary lodging and onward tickets; they also expended much energy ascertaining that these migrants satisfied immigration restrictions, and repatriating those who did not. Circulars were also sent to villages and towns across Europe to persuade unsuitable migrants not to leave in the first place.[37] Shocking as it appears in hindsight, this collusion with restrictive immigration policies showed the extent to which the Anglo Jewish community now perceived its own safety to be endangered.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Notwithstanding such collaboration between government and Anglo-Jewish leaders, the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews who made it to Australia had a dramatic impact on the character of the Jewish community, prompting more negotiations about what Australian Jewishness meant. In particular, Anglo and European Jews had resolved the ethnicity/religion question in different ways. While Anglo-Jews, as we have seen, argued that Jewishness was merely private religious practice, a survey of Form 40s filled out by European Jews across the 1920s indicates that their notion of Jewishness was more expansive. If they were naturalised, the applicants wrote that they were 'British by naturalisation' as instructed in the form.[38] But if they were not, although the question was not about religion, many identified themselves as 'nationality Jewish'[39] and their nominees as

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[35] 'Immigration Question', *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 19 October 1928, p. 6.

[36] McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, pp. 107, 110-112.

[37] David Feldman, 'Was the Nineteenth Century a Golden Age for Immigrants? The Changing Articulation of National, Local and Voluntary Controls', in Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (eds.), *Migration Control in the North Atlantic: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), p. 171.

[38] NAA: A261, 1927/164, Joseph BASSKY; 1926/1235, Alfred LEWIS; 1926/806, Herman GORDON; 1926/2086, Abraham STILMAN; 1926/2008, Boris SONKIN; 1926/1789, Arthur ROSE; 1926/1762, Joshua RABINOV.

[39] NAA: A261, 1927/147, Sholem AUSUBERE. Note that this is a misreading of his surname, which should read Ausuebel; 1926/1609, Casper Jacob PERLSTEIN; 1927/170, Sam BAKER; 1925/340, Jacob LEVIN.

'of Jewish nationality'[40] 'of Palestine Jewish nationality'[41] 'of Polish (Jewish) nationality'[42] 'of Polish Jewish descent'[43]. Some forms evinced a tension between self-identification and state-identification. Alfred Lewis described his mother-in-law and sister-in-law, Dora and Hilda Rappaport, as being 'of Jewish nationality' – an official in pencil bracketed 'Jewish' and added 'Russian'.[44] Arthur Rose described his friend Binum Pesach Rosenblat as being 'of Jewish Polish nationality' – an official bracketed 'Jewish'.[45] Others displayed internal confusion. Abraham Stilman wrote that his niece Norma Toaster was 'of Jewish nationality', but in the same handwriting, corrected this to 'of Palestinian (Jewish) nationality'.[46] One man couldn't decide how to describe his son, leaving the question blank.[47] These migrants were clearly uncomfortable identifying themselves and their nominees as simply Polish or Russian – having never been treated as such in those countries, but rather singled out and persecuted for their Jewishness.

Their continued political inequality had meant that these Jews retained a strong consciousness of Jewish difference. The *kehila*, while abolished in Western Europe, remained operational in Poland in the interwar years; a symptom of the continued status of Eastern European Jews as separate and unequal. Forced by this model to support themselves, Jews engaged in intensive institution-building, as relationships and networks ensured Jewish survival and thriving.[48] Contrary to popular perception of Jews as provincial 'paupers', over half were from cities and large towns,[49] where they had established and sustained a complex range of cultural and political organisations and activities,

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[40] NAA: A261, 1927/164, Joseph BASSKY; 1926/1609, Casper Jacob PERLSTEIN; 1925/340 Jacob LEVIN; 1926/1762, Joshua RABINOV.

[41] NAA: A261, 1927/170, Sam BAKER.

[42] NAA: A261, 1926/806, Herman GORDON.

[43] NAA: A261, 1926/2008, Boris SONKIN.

[44] NAA: A261, 1926/1235, Alfred LEWIS.

[45] NAA: A261, 1926/1789, Arthur ROSE.

[46] NAA: A261, 1926/2086, Abraham STILMAN.

[47] NAA: A261, 1927/147, Sholem AUSUBERE. Note that this is a misreading of his surname, which should read Ausuebel.

[48] Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), p. 20.

[49] Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', p. 378. 27% of the migrants came from capital centres; another 33% from towns, the remaining 40% from smaller towns and villages.

often focused around Yiddish culture, as distinct from Polish or Russian culture. Spoken in cafes and studied in schools, by the 1920s Yiddish was a public, visible identity marker of an entire people as different from their neighbours.[50] For these migrants, the Anglo-Jewish understanding of Judaism as a 'denomination' was unintelligible; their Jewishness constituted the entirety of their lives. They could not understand why Anglo-Jews continued to identify as Jewish at all – donating time and money to their synagogues – given their low commitment to Jewish cultural life. 'Disturbed' by the 'cold formality' of the established Anglo-Jewish community, they scorned their focus on 'having the stamp of respectability and acceptance conferred upon him by non-Jews'. This would not, in their recent, searing experience, prevent the sort of antisemitism they had faced in Europe.[51]

Instead, Eastern European Jews transposed their self-reliance model to Australia, forming new, ethnically and culturally distinctive, congregations and communities, in direct contrast to the Anglo-Jewry's strategy of invisibility.[52] The new immigrants formed enclaves, as Anglo-Jews had never done: in Melbourne, for example, they concentrated intensively in Carlton.[53] They established new synagogues in the Polish/Russian *minhag* (tradition), holding daily prayer services for the first time in the colony – weekly Sabbath services had been enough for Anglo-Jews.[54] They refused to speak only English: they saw Yiddish not as a 'shunned jargon' but as the 'life-blood' of Jewish existence; the only language through which centuries of the Jewish experience could be communicated.[55] Yiddish literature and theatre flourished particularly in Melbourne, which received an influx of

[50] David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), pp. 83-137. The 1931 Polish census reported that Yiddish was the first language of 80% of Polish Jews: Wasserstein, *On the Eve*, p. 224.

[51] Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival*, pp. 37-39.

[52] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, p. 8. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival*, pp. 10-11.

[53] Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', p. 400. Notes that Carlton was both an enclave, and an area in which Jews mixed with and lived amongst other immigrants. See also Charles Price, 'Chain Migration and Immigrant Groups, with special reference to Australian Jewry', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* Vol 6 No 2 (1964), p. 165, for a detailed breakdown of the impact of chain migration in the case of Eastern European Jews by city/town of origin.

[54] In NSW: Druitt Street (1881-5); Newtown (1883); Broken Hill (1922); Surry Hills (1912), later became Central Synagogue in Bondi Junction; Bankstown (1913). In Victoria: Ballarat (1908-1912); Carlton (1912). See Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 78. See also *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 7 October 1898, for the announcement of the Baron de Hirsch Memorial Aid Society's first daily *minyan.*

[55] Writer Pinchas Goldhar, arriving in Melbourne in 1928, declared: 'Only through language can the secrets of the deepest inner recesses, of our essence, be elevated to immortal value': quoted in Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, p. 73.

Yiddish writers, playwrights and communal figures throughout the 1920s.[56] The Kadimah institute, established in 1911 to promote Yiddish culture, attracted 200 Jews to its first annual meeting. In contrast to the Anglo-Jewish ecclesiastical (Christian) model of communal governance – unelected, uncontested – the Kadimah was a sort of stand-in for the *kehila*, and imitated its democratic governance model.[57] Melbourne's Anglo-Jewish establishment attempted to retain their hegemonic control: in 1921 Jacob Danglow created Australian Jewry's first umbrella body, the Melbourne Jewish Advisory Board, consisting of the Melbourne, East Melbourne and St Kilda Congregations, to deal 'with matters of importance to the Jewish community'.[58] Professing to speak for all Melbourne Jewry, Danglow had conspicuously excluded the Carlton *shul*.[59] This was soon challenged by the rival Judean League, established in 1923, with 1,000 members within the first months.[60] The community was thus described by the *Australian Jewish Herald* as full of 'schisms, cliques, and conflicting communal organisations'.[61]

Margaret Taft and Andrew Markus, in their vivid portrayal of 'Yiddish Melbourne', credit the willingness of these Jews to challenge Anglo-Jewish hegemony for the pluralism and diversity of Australia's modern Jewish community.[62] More interestingly, their description of the impact of Eastern European migrants on the Australian Jewish community includes something of a paradox. These Jews were the 'strengtheners' of religious and cultural Jewish life: they 'felt no compunction to assimilate and blend into their surroundings'. On the other hand, they were radicals and

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[56] These included future Kadimah presidents Samuel Brilliant and Israel Sher (arrived 1914), founding member of the I.L. Peretz School Myer Silman (1922), Zionist leaders Aron Patkin and Yehuda Honig (1926), Jewish Welfare Society stalwart Jonas Pushett (1927), Bund leader Sender Burstin, writer Pinchas Goldhar, and professional Yiddish actor Yankev Ginter (1928). In 1925, the Kadimah Drama Circle was founded. Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, pp. 51-52, 60-61.

[57] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, pp. 46-47.

[58] *Australian Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 10 June 1921.

[59] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, p. 86; Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia,* p. 38. Ironically, the East Melbourne Congregation had faced accusation that it was a community of 'foreigners' during the first wave of migration; evidently by this point it was sufficiently assimilated to be included on the new Board: *Australian Israelite* (Melbourne), 12 December 1873; *The Jewish Herald* (Melbourne) 23 August 1895.

[60] *Australian Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 23 November 1923. See also Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 38, Taft and Markus, p. 21. Trevor Rapke, 'The Pre-War Jewish Community of Melbourne', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 7 Part 4 (1973), p. 297.

[61] *Australian Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), 29 April 1921. The new Judean League was a combination of the Jewish Young People's Association, the Young Jewish Social Club, and the Young Judean Zionist Society).

[62] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, p. 45.

'disruptors' who 'donned the cloak of modernity' to push against the 'conservative' establishment, and towards a secular, non-congregational Jewishness.[63] This paradox of a non-assimilated but secular Jewish identity illustrates the key difference between Anglo and European conceptions of Jewishness: for the latter, Judaism was perhaps not *at all* a religion, but a cultural, even ethnic/ national community.

But this account falls into the trap which plagues Jewish history: judgment. To characterise the new immigrants as 'comfortable in their own skin' and proud of their Jewishness, having lived 'full cultural Yiddish lives' with high visibility in Europe,[64] is to dismiss the pride that Anglo-Jewry had in their own, albeit less conspicuous or visible, form of Jewishness. Rather than seeing one group as embodying a more 'authentic' Jewish identity, we should see both Anglo-Jewish and European-Jewish identity construction as conscious, meaningful, strategic and internally consistent, and responding to different sets of values and priorities. Indeed, the identity of European Jews in Australia was also not fixed – they had their own strategic decisions to make.

This may be powerfully illustrated by an examination of the Brisbane Jewish community's identity negotiations both before and after the Reg Flag riots of 1919. The city received a large number of Russian migrants (both Jewish and non-Jewish)[65] due to being the first port for ships arriving from Asia – many Russian emigrants embarked from Manchuria, having been driven to Siberia by the Red Army, or came through Russian enclaves in China.[66] Russian Jews, although fewer in number in Brisbane than the arrivals to Sydney and Melbourne, were proportionally more significant – the Jewish population of Queensland doubled between 1911 and 1921 – and therefore had a significant

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[63] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, pp. 21-22.

[64] Taft and Markus, *Second Chance*, p. 21.

[65] The Queensland Russian community was the largest in Australia; Evans estimates that by 1918, 4,000 of the 6,000 Russians residing in Australia were living in Queensland: Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), p. 28.

[66] Solomon Stedman, 'From Russia to Brisbane, 1913', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 5 No 1 (1959), p. 22 and Solomon Stedman, 'The Russian Revolution in Australia', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol 65 Part 3 (1979), p. 201. Stedman (1893-1979) was born a Russian Jew in Siberia and came to Australia in 1913 at age of 19. His chief interest became the history of the Jewish people and the history of Russia and he wrote chiefly of this in his long career as a writer. See also Creese, p. 76.

impact on the community's character.[67] In her ground-breaking analysis of Russian Jewry in this period, Jennifer Creese argues that it navigated diasporic identity (characterised by continued attachment to a traditional 'homeland'), as well as showing sign of 'creolisation' (mixing 'traditional' cultural forms with those of the host land).[68]

Russian Jews navigated two diasporic identities: they identified as a minority within the secular Russian majority in south Brisbane, and they were also a minority within the Anglo-Jewish majority.[69] Displaced from a 'romanticised vision' of *shtetl* life in the Pale of Settlement,[70] and, like their counterparts across the country, unimpressed with the 'laxity' of the Anglo-Jewish Margaret street synagogue, they formed South Brisbane Hebrew Congregation in 1915 and opened their small wooden synagogue on Deshon street – in stark contrast to the imposing Anglicised synagogues across Australia – in 1917.[71] While Margaret street officially worshipped in English,[72] the Deshon street community spoke Yiddish and prayed in Hebrew. The two communities showed disparate attitudes to WWI service: Anglo-Jews enlisted in large numbers[73] but Russian Jews did not.[74] Some

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[67] Morris S. Ochert, 'A History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation 1865–1965', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 9 Parts 6-7 (1984), pp. 509-521 and 'Further History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol 10 Part 1 (1986), pp. 28-39.

[68] Jennifer Creese, 'Negotiating "Russian-ness": Politics, Religion, Nationalism and Identity in the South Brisbane Russian Jewish Community, 1912-22', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* Vol 30 (2017). The Jewish diaspora in fact is taken by William Safran as the 'ideal type', because of the reliance of Jewish text and culture on the language of diaspora, and the tendency of settled, seemingly permanent Jewish communities to continue to define themselves as diasporic: William Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* Vol 1 No 1 (1991), pp. 83-99. Robin Cohen, 'Creolization and Cultural Globalization: The Soft Sounds of Fugitive Power', *Globalizations* Vol 4 Issue 3 (2007), p. 381. See also Cohen's work on the more traditional conception of diasporic identity. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[69] Creese, 'Negotiating Russian-ness', p. 79.

[70] Stedman, 'From Russia to Brisbane', p. 27. Stedman narrates that: 'in the street one could hear Yiddish...spoken loudly, and one could smell the titillating aroma of Jewish cooking...[this] brought relief to the lonely and often bewildered immigrants who were torn from their natural surroundings'

[71] See accounts of the building of the synagogue and its dedication in: 'Russian Jews in Brisbane', *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 1 September 1916, p. 2 and 'Russian Jews New Synagogue', *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 13 March 1917, p. 2.

[72] Jennifer Creese, *Jewish life in Queensland: Celebrating 150 years since 1865* (Brisbane: Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, 2016), p. 221.

[73] 13% of the eligible male Jewish population enlisted voluntarily when there was no conscription, compared to 9% of the general population: Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 133.

[74] See discussion in Creese, 'Negotiating Russian-ness', p. 89. Creese's analysis of lists of Brisbane Jewish ANZACs created as part of the Centenary of ANZAC Jewish Program (CoAJP) found very few Russian names.

remained philosophically committed to the restoration of a Jewish place in Russia through socialist ideals: Russian Jew Boris Taranov-Skvirsky edited 'The Worker's Life' (*Rabochaia Zhizn*) and the famous Peter Simonoff was possibly also Jewish.[75] But they were also differentiated from the Russian majority. Apparently, some non-Jewish Russians refused to join the Russian association in 1910 because Russian Jews were committee members.[76] And many Jews, having suffered at Russian hands, felt uncomfortable socialising with them, forming a breakaway Jewish Workers Association in 1914.[77] But the JWA and Russian Workers Association continued to collaborate on theatrical productions 1914-19, indicating a complex relationship between the groups.[78]

By August 1918, as WWI was ending and after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March, Russia's image in Australia shifted from ally to traitor, and Russian Jews began to be tainted by association. A letter to the editor in the *Daily Mail* signed 'Vigilance' described 'a considerable Bolshevik community' in South Brisbane, claiming that the 'so-called "Russian Synagogue"' was 'chiefly used for Bolshevist and I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World] meetings'. Echoing tropes about Jews and money, the writer was particularly suspicious that 'the men seem to do no work', yet have well-furnished homes, and their children have '21s dolls' and 'that expensive toy "Meccano"'. The writer proposed that, as 'spies, traitors and potential revolutionaries', 'the whole crowd ought to be interned'.[79]

The letter itself should perhaps be taken only as seriously as we might take such a rant today. More interesting are the two Jewish responses – one from a Russian Jew and one from an Anglo-Jew – which indicate the different ways each community defended themselves against such charges and

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[75] Creese quotes journalist Arthur Vogan's 1920 description of Simonov as having 'the "Jew-eye"', although this is not universally considered conclusive evidence of his Jewishness: Arthur Vogan, Interview with P. Simonoff, Communist Propagandist in Sydney, 30 August 1920, NAA: A3932, SC294, 'Bolshevism, Sedition and Disloyalty'; Creese, 'Negotiating "Russian-ness"', p. 88.

[76] Olga Doubrovskaya, 'Political Characteristics of Russians in Brisbane in the 1900s' in R Fisher and B Shaw (eds.), *Brisbane: The Ethnic Presence since the 1850s* (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group Papers No 12, 1993), p. 72.

[77] Solomon Stedman recounted that 'There were those… to whom everything Russian was anathema; those who had personally suffered at the hands of the Russians and… did not feel at home in the company of Russians': Stedman, 'From Russia to Brisbane', p. 23.

[78] Evans, *The Red Flag Riots*, p. 27. See for example 'A Jewish Play', *The Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 29 December 1915, p. 6.

[79] 'Russian Bolshevists in Queensland', *Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 19 August 1918, p. 6.

the power plays between them. E. Craft, identifying himself as Trustee of the Russian Jewish Synagogue, tactically reversed the accusation of disloyalty back on to the writer, concluding that 'Vigilance' 'is not a Britisher', because he had questioned the Russian community which sent 'over a thousand Russian boys with the A.I.F… who fought so gallantly on the battlefields of Gallipoli and France'.[80] He then countered the charge against the synagogue with the familiar Anglo-Jewish declaration of imperial loyalty: the building is a place of worship, 'where they pray for the safety of the King, Queen, and Prince of Wales', adding (for the WWI context) that they also used it to hold memorials for fallen soldiers. Craft was particularly sharp in response to the comments about wealth. He explained, in a thinly veiled attack at the leisure habits of Anglo-Australians, that all the men did indeed have jobs, but that 'instead of going to hotels and racecourses, they spend their money on furniture, and see that their wives and children are well clothed', with the toys ensuring that their children were not running about the streets.[81] This appeal to notions of respectability and order demonstrate a growing acculturation of the Russian Jewish community to middle class values and habits.

By contrast, the priority for Henry L. Friedlander, member of the Margaret street synagogue, was to disassociate himself entire from the Russian community and even the possibility of such disloyalty, pointing out that 'the Russian Synagogue… has no connection whatsoever with… the Synagogue in Margaret street'. He did come to the defence of Russian Jews, but only to express his hope that this own community would not be affected by their reputation: 'His Majesty the King has no subjects more loyal than the Jews, and I trust the Russians of Deshon street have not done anything to sully the good name… of their British coreligionists in Brisbane.' It is not clear whether Friedlander meant this sincerely, or as something like a warning to the Russian Jewish community. Either way, in his language he drew a clear distinction between himself and these other Jews, in order to secure his own community's reputation as loyal and untainted.

The Reg Flag riots of 24-27 March 1919, usually studied in the context of the broader history of the Australian labour movement and Australian radical politics, are also important to this story. They were an important moment of crisis for the Russian Jewish community of Brisbane – similar, perhaps, to Anglo-Jewry's 1890s crisis. Tension grew between the growing trade union movement,

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[80] This, of course, was somewhat of an exaggeration, see above.

[81] 'A Rejoinder', *Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 21 August 1918, p. 7.

with ties to Russian socialist political activists, and ex-servicemen, who had returned from war to an unemployment rate of 14%.[82] The violence is generally understood to have been a result of spontaneous mob behaviour by returned soldiers. It took the form of a series of riots over three days, in which hundreds were wounded, and the Russian clubhouse in South Brisbane was attacked. The Deshon street synagogue seemed under threat, so police and local Jewish residents formed a protective barrier.[83] This and the aftermath of the riots – Russians across Queensland faced increased state surveillance and restrictions – prompted Jews to reassess their ties to Russian-ness, and to adapt and renegotiate their identities.

The process which followed has been presented in a negative light by historians of Australian Jewry. Rutland, for example, characterises the mingling between Anglo-Jewry and Russian Jews as leading to 'an overall lessening of orthodoxy and Yiddish culture'.[84] Newer histories, however, are beginning to recognise that this process is illuminating in its own right, and worth studying. Creese argues that the riots were a turning point in the South Brisbane Jewish community's understanding of itself; sparking a 'dramatic reinterpretation of group cultural identity'.[85] This is evident in an open letter from Isaac Meerkin, Minister of the Deshon street synagogue, written to all Brisbane papers on behalf of the community the day after the riots. He proclaimed his community had 'no connection or sympathy whatever with the Bolsheviks', reminding readers of all the logical reasons why this would be the case: pointing out that Jews had been persecuted by them, and also noting the conflict between faith and socialism; 'bolsheviks have no religion… we are highly religious today'. Referencing the usual hallmarks of Imperial loyalty, and echoing Anglo-Jewry of the 1890s, Meerkin noted that the community prayed for the Royal Family; they were 'loyal and devoted

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[82] Evans, *The Red Flag Riots,* pp. 127-144. The riots were named for the demonstrators' flags, which had been banned under a September 1918 extension to the *War Precautions Act*, because of their Bolshevik and trade union associations.

[83] Creese, 'Negotiating Russian-ness', p. 83.

[84] Rutland, 'Jewish Immigration 1881-1933' in Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People*, p. 529.

[85] See for example Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1988); Verity Gurmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australian from Origins to Illegality* (St Leonards: Allen, 1998).

subjects to the British Empire', having never 'admitted anyone with Bolshevist views into our religious circles.'[86] He finished with a plea to be left to live 'in peace and quietness'.[87]

Following the riots, Deshon street synagogue appears more regularly in Brisbane papers. Advertisements and editorials announced festival services, in an apparent attempt to communicate to the broader Brisbane public the actual content of Jewish practice, and thus to be less threatening. Two weeks after the riots, an announcement appeared in the Brisbane *Courier* that 'Easter services will be held in the Jewish Synagogue, Deshon street' on 14-16 April 1919. There is no Jewish holiday of Easter, and certainly no Easter service would be conducted in any synagogue. A quick calendar search reveals that those dates coincide with the first two days of the Jewish festival of Pesach (Passover) – Good Friday, in fact, was not until 18 April. This use of Easter to explain Jewish practice to Christian Australia exemplifies Russian Jewish identity negotiations. The announcement ended with the familiar refrain that services would include 'special prayers offered for the Royal Family and nation', and that 'all are welcome to attend'.[88] This invitation – an outwards gesture to the 'other' – is a significant attempt at bridge-building, whether or not it was accepted. As noted, this emphasis on the prayer for the royal family is amusing in the way it exploits the ignorance of its reader – it is, in fact, a single small paragraph within a service that often takes more than two hours. But it would prove Russian Jewish loyalty and, as a part of the service which was readily understandable to a non-Jewish reader, it served a useful purpose.[89]

The Deshon street synagogue at the time of the riots is a study in microcosm of the pressures placed on both Anglo- and European Jews in the interwar period to prove their Australian-ness. While the communities disagreed with and misunderstood each other at the time, developing and advocating

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[86] 'Not Bolsheviks: Disclaimer by Russian Jews', *Brisbane Courier* (Brisbane), 28 March 1919, p. 10 and *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 28 March 1919, p. 5.

[87] Creese points out that this is not entirely truthful; several Jewish socialists and members of the JWA had in fact left the community along with hundreds of local non-Jewish Russians, given free sea passage back to Russia by the new Soviet administration. Meerkin's 'never' may have been a stretch or a white lie; 'but there were likely very few hardline Bolshevik supporters left in the congregation by the time of his letter': Creese, 'Negotiating "Russian-ness"', p. 89. Stedman notes wryly that 'some people felt a deep relief' at these departures: 'From Russia to Brisbane', p. 28.

[88] 'Jewish Synagogue', *Brisbane Courier* (Brisbane), 15 April 1919, p. 8.

[89] See also the announcement of 'solemn services' held for Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) in 1922 in both Margaret street and Deshon street synagogues, along with a description of Rosh Hashana: 'not a merry-making festival, but rather a time of awe': 'Jewish New Year', *Brisbane Courier* (Brisbane), 22 September 1922, p. 4.

vastly divergent notions of 'Jewishness', they were nevertheless engaged in strikingly similar processes of negotiation. As suspicion of European foreigners grew and Australia's migration policy hardened, both groups fought desperately to establish and maintain acceptance in the Australian polity.

Chapter 5

Concluding thoughts on the colour of Australian Jews

'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the Colour Line' ~ W. E. B. Du Bois[1]

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Continued debates over Jewish migrants in the 1930s – prompted this time by the rise of Nazism in Germany and Hitler's annexation of Austria – demonstrate a remarkable continuity with public discourse of the 1890s and 1920s, with similar concerns aired in newspapers and parliaments about the racial and economic desirability of Jews. The government's desire to restrict 'white alien' immigration continued too: in 1930, as the Great Depression took hold, Commonwealth assistance for immigrants was discontinued altogether, and landing permits were only issued to 'white aliens' who were close dependent relatives of Australian residents. By the end of the 1930s, to regulate Australia's first formal quota on Jews as a category, the question 'Are you Jewish?' was added to Forms 40 and Form 47 – both making Jews more legible in government documents, and making more explicit the latent and unexplained prejudices of earlier periods.[2] Discomfort about this prejudice remained: John McEwan, the minister responsible, falsely claimed in October 1938 that 'there is no specific discrimination against Jews in the policy of the Australian government'.[3] All of this culminated in the famous declaration of T. W. White, Australia's Minister for Trade and Customs, at the Évian conference in July 1938, regarding Australia's response to the Jewish refugee problem: 'As we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration.'[4] Even the announcement that the government would admit 15,000 Jews – a tiny amount considering the number of refugees – generated a public outcry,

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[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Of the Dawn of Freedom' in *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1903), p. 19.

[2] Form 40 is 'Application for Admission of Relative or Friend to Australia', Form 47 is 'Application for Permit to Enter Australia'. See, for example, NAA: A433, 1943/2/46, Department of the Interior, 'Refugees (Jewish and others) - General policy file'; NAA: A434, 1949/3/7034, Department of Immigration, 'Admission of German Jews - Cabinet decision'.

[3] Quoted in Andrew Markus, 'Jewish Migration to Australia: 1938-49', *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol 7 Issue 13 (1983), p. 19.

[4] ibid, p. 21.

with letters written to politicians objecting to an 'invasion' or 'tide', 'Jewish aliens', who are 'exploiters of humanity'.[5]

Perhaps most surprisingly, the Jewish establishment in Australia remained uneasy about and largely opposed to the immigration of their desperate fellow Jews. Isaac Boas, President of the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board, echoed communal leaders from the 1920s when he said that Australian Jews were 'subscribing to funds for the relief of persecuted Jews in Europe', but that 'the Jewish community of Australia was opposed to anything in the nature of mass migration'.[6] Sir Samuel Cohen, President of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, wrote that the prospect of large-scale migration was 'awful, not only for the Jews, but for this country… The present Jewish communities of Australia prize above all things the respect and goodwill of their fellow citizens.'[7] Viewed in the context of a longer story about Anglo-Jewish assimilation and identity-construction, these positions are entirely logical. One Australian Jew declared:

> I do not want this place overrun with foreigners, no matter where they come from. I can't stand them, their outlook or their method of living. I live Australian, think Australian and play Australian. My kids are Australian and won't have a bar of foreign kids. Maybe that seems intolerant, but I want to make it clear that I am an Aussie of the Jewish religion.[8]

Australian Jews, feeling ever more vulnerable, continued to both declare their allegiance and minimise their Jewishness.

<div align="center">*</div>

An imagined community, John Torpey points out, must be 'codified in documents rather than merely imagined', enacted through specific mechanisms for identifying and controlling that

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[5] NAA: A445, 235/5/6, 75578, Department of Immigration, 'Protests re Jewish Immigration'; A433, 1943/2/4588, 74087, Department of the Interior, 'European refugees - Views of public re admittance of'.

[6] 'Migration of Jews – Influx Opposed', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 19 April 1938.

[7] *Sydney Sun* (Sydney), 2 November 1938; also *Sydney Truth* (Sydney), 6 November 1938.

[8] *Sunday Truth* (Sydney), 4 October 1938.

community.[9] In 1901 it was manifestly clear that Australia's 'imagined community' centred around British racial homogeneity.[10] The 'documents' which codified this, forming legislative declarations of Australian identity, were the first two pieces of substantive legislation passed by the fledgling nation: the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Cth) and *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901* (Cth).[11] Indeed, the story of the White Australia policy's ascent and decline continues to occupy a central place in Australians' self-understanding – whether through present-day echoes of exclusive white nationalism, or in the apologetics and anxieties of current immigration debates.[12] Certainly Du Bois was right when he declared that 'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the Colour Line'. But who, exactly, was on either side of that defining line in Australia?

While Chinese immigrants were unequivocally on the 'wrong' side of the line, and initially formed the target of Australian migration policy, this thesis has argued that the locus of government attention was drawn quickly towards a more ambivalent, ambiguous, indeterminate third category of 'foreign' or 'white alien' – one which was not easily placed on either side of a line, and which complicates the binary of 'white' and 'coloured' upon much 'white Australia' scholarship relies. Despite their small number among other white aliens, Jews are a crucial sub-plot in this story, because they are a group whose identity – with overlapping religious, racial, and cultural components – confounded officials even more than other 'white alien' groups. The overlooked story of Australia's Jewish community thus has the potential to introduce a layer of complexity and nuance to the developing language and historiography of race in Australia. Variously understood in the documents as a religion, nationality, ethnicity or race, Jews challenged the particular conflation of 'country of origin', nationality and race which is so prevalent in Australian government

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9 Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, p. 6.

10 Jon Stratton and Men Ang, 'Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USE', *Continuum* (1994), p. 141.

11 Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 7 August 1901, p. 3497 (Edmund Barton, Prime Minister); Lester, *Making Migration Law*, p. 112. The only previous bills passed in the first sitting established government machinery rather than enacting policy.

12 See for example James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2006) for the argument that the *ideology* of the White Australia policy continues to shape twenty-first century Australian immigration policies, despite there remaining no *legal* remnant of the policy.

documents. Indeed, Stratton argues that the only thing which does or can define Jews in the modern world is, in fact, this characteristic of defying definition: ambivalence and indeterminacy.[13]

Jewish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in *Modernity and Ambivalence* posited that in modern society there are friends, enemies and strangers. Friends are 'like us', enemies threaten our order, but a stranger is one who is 'ineradicably ambivalent' – threatening not society itself but its homogeneity, by calling into question the assumptions through which the nation constructs itself.[14] Critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha discusses a similar category of ambivalence in the context of British colonisation in India. He describes how colonialism educated the 'other' while continuing to mark them as other, resulting in a form of ambivalence: the 'other' is in some ways the same, but ultimately excluded and constructed as merely a mimic.[15] Thus for Bhabha Jews would be 'almost the same but not white', for Bauman they were 'both white and non-white'. As an ambiguous case within an already ambiguous category, Jews were the 'strangers' who blurred the racial boundary line used to construct Australian nationhood.

This thesis has tried to open up the field of Australian Jewish history; to imagine a history that is complex, connected, contextual and textured. Rather than view them through the lens of contemporary political, ideological or religious concerns, such a history attempts to understand the actions and agency of Jewish migrants and communities from their own perspective, as strategic compromise and negotiation. We need to see, and understand – though not necessarily defend – the intersecting ambitions, vulnerabilities, self-interest and fears that prompted cohesion and compromise, but also competition and even exclusion. And we need to see how Jewishness complicated categories, confusing officials, and even prompting major policy change. For this reason, too, the Jewish case may prove instructive for the study of other overlapping religious/national identities. Jewish immigration was a small part of the White Australia story. But it is one that might help us to rethink what 'whiteness' meant.

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[13] Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, pp. 6-9.

[14] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 53-63.

[15] In one of Bhabha's most famous articles, he described this concept of colonial mimicry as: 'the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.' See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* Vol 28 (1984), p. 126. Reprinted in Bhabha's *The location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

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